



# Coded Language in US Political Speech Acts

An analysis of the McCloskey's RNC  
2020 speech

Theory

## **KHOO'S AUDIENCE BELIEF**

“Explicit Statement: x is C

Existing Belief: If something is C, then it is R.

Inferred: x is R” (2017:50)

## **LAKOFF'S MORAL LEADERSHIP**

Government as Family

Stern Father Morality



Photograph Credit: Laurie Skrivan



Introducing:

Mark and Patricia McCloskey

- Personal injury attorney's
- St. Louis, Missouri
- 28th June 2020: viral video of the McCloskey's
- 20th July 2020: charged with felony

## BELL AND GIBSON'S PERFORMANCE

Staged Performance:

(Bell and Gibson 2011: 557)

„involves the overt,

scheduled identification

and elevation of one or more people to perform“

Theory Con't

Intentionality at its core (557)

Modes of Performance:

Set

Appearance

Visual and Audio Information



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# REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

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**NIGHT 1**





## Setting the Tone

# Theme: Threat to the Second Amendment

*Guns protect you from protestors...who happen to be Black*

- “such a great country...do you have the right to own a gun and use it to defend yourself” (1:32:15)
- “What you saw happen to us could just as easily happen to any of you who are watching from quiet neighborhoods around our country.” (1:32:26)

“you may have seen us *defending* our home as a mob of protestors *descended* on our neighborhood” (1:32:07)

Theme: Democrats  
are anarchists

*...who also control  
the government*

Parallel Structure: (1:32:40)

defunding of police

ending cash bails

encouraging anarchy and chaos

They've actually charged us with felonies for  
daring to defend our home. (1:33:13)

## Theme: The next Red Scare

*“Controlled-market economies... impede the pursuit of financial self-interest. For this reason, advocates of Strict Father morality have seen socialism and communism as immoral” (Lakoff 2002: 95)*

The Marxist liberal activist leading the mob to our neighborhood stood outside our home with a bull horn screaming, “You can’t stop the revolution.” (1:33:24)

...won the Democrat nomination to hold a seat in the US house of representatives in the city of St. Louis. That’s the same as winning the general election. That Marxist revolutionary is now going to be the congresswoman from the first district of Missouri. (1:33:38)

They want to walk the halls of Congress. (1:33:57) / They want to take over. (1:33:59) / They want power. (1:34:00)

This is Joe Biden’s party. (1:34:02)

They are the people who will be in charge of your future and the future of your children. (1:34:04)



They're not satisfied with spreading the chaos and violence into our communities. (1:34:11)

- Abolish the suburbs (1:34:14)
- Ending single family home zoning (1:34:18)
- Forced re-zoning would bring  
crime, lawlessness, and low-quality apartments (1:34:20)

So make no mistake, no matter where you live, your family will not be safe in the radical Democrats America. (1:34:40)

Theme:  
*Our neighborhoods*

# Theme: Trump, defender of the Christian American Dream

Trump will defend the God given right of every American to protect their homes and their families. (1:35:10)

Calvinism: work hard and build the life you dream of (1:35:22)

Suburbs: play in the backyard (1:35:33)

Christianity: worship in a church (1:35:35)

First Amendment: express beliefs without retribution (1:35:38)

Trump brought us the greatest economy our country has ever seen. (1:35:41)

Theme:  
Fear and how to  
protect yourself

*Definite Futurate:* When we don't have basic safety and security in our communities, we'll never be free to build a brighter future for *ourselves*, our *children* or our *country*.  
(1:35:51)

God bless you. (1:36:07)

God bless the president. (1:36:08)

And God bless *these* United States. (1:36:09)

“Performance displays and heightens the social semiotic impact of language”

(Bell and Gibson 2011: 570)

## Q and A

3 Hypothetical Futurate/Definite Futurate

5 Parrallel Structures

2 References to the Second Amendment

3 References to policies that are not part of a party's platform

17 War/Violent Imagery

4 Ambiguous 3rd person references

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