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# Applause, Laughter, Chants, and Cheers: An Analysis of the Rhetorical Skill of the “Great Communicator”

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Applause, Laughter, Chants, and Cheers:  
An Analysis of the Rhetorical Skill of the “Great Communicator”

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Political Science

by

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This thesis approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

This study takes a content analytic approach to analyze the use of rhetorical devices in televised Republican National Convention (RNC) addresses by former U.S. President Ronald Reagan. By measuring rhetorical strategies and their relationship with the type, strength, synchrony, and duration of audience responses during the 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1992 RNCs, this study finds that Reagan had the ability to control speech factors to his advantage to promote positive audience response. This study finds that Reagan was adept at utilizing humor, external attacks, and advocating for his policy agenda in a way that elicited positive audience responses such as applause, laughter, affiliative booing, or affiliative chanting from his audiences. Furthermore, by analyzing RNC addresses, this study expands scholarship regarding group behavior in partisan audiences. The findings of this study not only provide insight into the rhetorical underpinnings of Reagan's speeches, but also reveal the relationship between the speaker and audience in a distinctive partisan environment.

*Keywords:* presidential rhetoric, Ronald Reagan, audience response, agenda setting

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband, Russell McKinley Dye, for his constant support through it all. Thank you for always being there for me.

*“Win the day”*

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## **I. Introduction & Literature Review**

President Ronald Reagan's legacy as "The Great Communicator" is agreed upon by his biggest fans and harshest critics. Despite holding greatly polarizing policy stances, the Reagan persona appealed to many Americans and won him landslide victories in 1980 and 1984. Nearly thirty years after his presidency, and over ten since his death, his legacy as a master of public opinion is still a subject of academic study due to the standard it set for the Presidents that followed (Greenstein, 2000; Smith, 2017).

To further understand the evolution of Reagan's communication style, it is important to trace his political career from its beginning to his senescence. Studies of the "rhetorical presidency" place Reagan among other presidents who were particularly adept at setting the agenda through speech. Scholars such as Stuckey (1989; 1990) and Ritter and Henry (1992) have explored Reagan as a communicator. Ritter and Henry (1992) argue that Reagan's early start as a "citizen orator" through radio broadcasting, President of the Screen Actors Guild during the Hollywood communist threat, and television spokesperson for General Electric allowed him to develop rhetorical skills years before he made his debut on the political stage, while also setting him up to have a strong conservative political stance on communism. Reagan's career in the public spotlight permitted him to master his public image and use the power of television to his advantage. Through this process, Reagan learned how to communicate with every day people and put them at ease by providing policy solutions to "correct" the ills of society (Muir, 2003; Stuckey, 1990).

This study focuses on a central question: How did Reagan's use of rhetorical and non-rhetorical speech content devices effect his public perception as a "Great Communicator"? Charisma, a trait commonly associated with successful presidential communicators such as

Reagan, John F. Kennedy, and Bill Clinton (Greenstein, 2000), connects audiences with the speaker (Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001) and makes for more effective delivery of one's message (Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999). Extant literature regarding the relationship between rhetorical strategies such as imagery and charisma find that increased use of these techniques in political speech lead to a more positive view of the speaker by the audience (Naidoo & Lord, 2008; Emrich et al., 2001).

Reagan was able to maintain a personal connection with his audience through oratory techniques, such as his unique transcribing method in which he used shorthand notation to refer to his speaking notes without having to lose eye contact. According to his closest advisors, Reagan's desire for unwavering eye contact with the audience led the near-sighted orator to only wear a contact lens in his left eye so that he could see the audience and use his right eye to refer to his shorthand notecards (Ritter & Henry, 1992, p. 116). By working on every speech up until the very last minute, Reagan was able to personalize his speeches and tailor them to the audience he was speaking to.

In this study, audience response to Reagan's employment of rhetorical devices leads to scholarly reaffirmation of the charismatic nature of the speaker. Specifically, it connects extant historical scholarship about Reagan's communication style (Stuckey, 1989; Stuckey, 1990; Ritter & Henry, 1992; Greenstein, 2000; Muir, 2003; Kengor, 2014; Smith, 2017) with current rhetorical theory (Bull, 2003; Bull, 2016) through content analysis. How did audience responses, such as applause, laughter, boos, and chants shape public perception of Reagan's charisma?

While the study of Reagan as a communicator is not a novel pursuit, the application of this rhetorical framework provides a fresh and quantifiable analysis of rhetoric. Previous study has explored Reagan's use of rhetoric through speech analysis (Stuckey, 1989) and historical

study of his skill as an orator (Ritter & Henry, 1992), but this study provides a replicable mixed methods framework with reliable findings. The goal of this scholarly application is to strengthen the Atkinson/Bull framework (Atkinson 1984a, 1984b; Bull 2003; Bull, 2016; Choi, Bull, & Reed, 2016) through replication and synthesis of theories regarding applause, chanting, laughing, and booing behavior, as well as expand the knowledge of Reagan's use of rhetoric and his relationship with audiences using modern technology and theory.

Over the course of Reagan's political career, specifically from his launch into the political spotlight with the 1964 "A Time for Choosing Speech" through his 1980 presidential candidacy, he developed rhetorical style through practice and staff guidance. Stovall (1984) argues that Reagan held "a highly visible leadership role in the Republican Party...and was also comfortable in front of a television camera" (p. 629). By speaking on behalf of Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign, Reagan had the opportunity to become a representative of the conservative message and establish himself as a leader of the Republican Party.

With the help of communications experts, Reagan was able to craft an image that appealed to the disheartened American electorate of 1980. Global conditions such as a woeful economy, oil shortages, and the Iran Hostage Crisis prepared the way for Reagan's electoral victory. The media narrative was at first positive towards President Jimmy Carter, a sign of "the rally effect" but soon turned public opinion against the President as the days ticked on with no action (Gallup, 2016a). The President's "crisis of confidence" quickly turned into "malaise" as the nation turned towards Reagan's conservative policy solutions (Glad, 1989; Scott, 2000). Reagan had an opportunity to take advantage of Carter's difficulties and served as a voice of reassurance for many struggling Americans by promising to bring the hostages home, restore American values, and fix the staggering economy. Reagan's ability to set the agenda through

story-telling, emotional and persuasive “value-centered themes”, and symbolic speech gave the President a “priestly” quality that provided Americans with solace and reassurance (Ritter & Henry, 1992, p. 62).

The legacy of Reagan as “The Great Communicator” has been assiduously analyzed by political and communications scholars. Perceptions of him are divided in literature between those that believe Reagan was a skilled mouthpiece of conservatism guided by experienced staff, in other words, Reagan as master orator (Lewis, 1987; Weiler & Pearce, 1992; Erickson, 1985; Leyh, 1986; Johnson, 1991) and those that believe that Reagan himself was a great crafter of rhetoric and truly subscribed to his own policies; in other words, Reagan as political savant (Busch, 1997; Hoekstra, 1997; Hantz, 1996; Mervin, 1989; Sloan, 1999; Darman, 1996; Noonan, 1990).

Conservatism as a political ideology represents a focus on an originalist interpretation of the Constitution, as well as Judeo-Christian moral values regarding the role of family in society. Reagan re-introduced conservatism as “time-tested” values of freedom, faith, family, sanctity and dignity of human life, American exceptionalism, the Founders’ wisdom and vision, lower taxes, limited government, peace through strength, anti-communism, and belief in the individual to form a new brand of “Reagan” conservatism (Kengor, 2014, p.9).

Conservatives have existed in American politics as early as its founding, albeit “classical liberals”, with figures such as Thomas Jefferson, who referenced Scottish and Irish philosophers Adam Smith and Edmund Burke’s views on a laissez-faire political economy (Huntington, 1957), and advocated in interpreting the Constitution with “original intent” when making judicial decisions, as well as emphasizing the role of division of power and state’s rights in the Constitution (Smith, 2017). While defining conservatism is often simplified to resistance against

change, longitudinal studies of conservative policy reveal that change is implemented under conservative leadership but takes an incremental approach and is done in the name of bettering society as a whole (Allen, 1981; Müller, 2006). Over the course of history, conservatism and the concept of “state’s rights”, have evolved in their intent and application. From the American Civil war to the Civil Rights movement, invoking the concept of state’s rights became an argument for racially discriminatory policies. Conservatism became synonymous with racial discrimination and created a challenge for conservatives like Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona when he ran for the Republican nomination for President in 1964.

According to Smith (2017), Reagan’s revival of conservatism used rhetoric to separate conservatism from its racially-charged past by emphasizing “traditional” American values, including family, the sanctity of life, self-reliance, limited government, and personal liberty. As a supporter of Goldwater’s campaign in 1964, Reagan emerged on the political stage by providing a “compassionate” perspective on conservatism. By equating liberalism with government, Reagan was able to re-focus the conservative message (Hayward, 2001, p. 615). As the Republican presidential nominee in 1980, Reagan’s message of smaller government and lower taxes specifically appealed to Americans that were struggling in a period of economic downturn, historic “stagflation”, while fearing the omnipresent threat of communism (Alford, 1988; Edwards, 1999; Ritter & Henry, 1992; Hayward, 2001). Reagan was able to shape the policy agenda through a refocusing of these conservative values, using the bully pulpit to provide a message of hope for Americans. This appeal to values allowed the President to connect with the audience on a personal level with a brand of authenticity and humor that was specifically directed at the audience he was speaking to, without paying mind to media criticism (Stuckey, 1990).

Reagan was particularly adept at “understand[ing] the minds and hearts of Americans and the ongoing philosophical battles” of the era in which he led (Muir, 2003, p. 209). By pairing values with conservatism (Smith, 2017; Edwards, 1999), the message of individual liberty set the policy agenda without the President having to explicitly mention policy issues (Muir, 2003). Reagan’s brand of conservatism led to an ideological shift in the Republican Party, away from big government providing solutions, and set a standard of conservative values that all Republican presidents have since ascribed to (Smith, 2017, p. 51; Edwards, 1999).

The skill of Reagan as a communicator is split between his supporters and critics regarding his involvement in his own speechwriting. The “conventional wisdom” in political communications scholarship states, in sum, that “Reagan's legacy could be summarized as extreme conservatism, showmanship, and a rhetorical practice empty of serious ideas” (Rowland & Jones, 2002, p. 85). Presidential speechwriters in the White House who carefully wrote the President’s speeches paired with Reagan’s natural charisma and ability to tell jokes and use wit are largely credited for Reagan’s success in the conventional school of thought (Muir, 2003). However, communications scholars have rebutted this conventional wisdom through content analysis of 330 of Reagan’s radio addresses over the course of his presidency. Known as the “revisionist” hypothesis, Rowland and Jones (2002) argue that Reagan was not only a great communicator designated as the messenger of conservatism for the Republican Party, but exceptional at connecting conservative values to palatable rhetoric. Therefore, the question still lingers: Was Reagan simply a figurehead for the Conservative agenda who employed rhetorical strategies crafted by his speech writers, or was he particularly involved and adept at employing and delivering rhetorical devices in his addresses due to his lifetime of experience in the public eye? While the former is a question is far too broad for scope of this analysis, a narrower

question enquires about the relationship between audience response and a speaker's use of rhetoric.

Measuring audience response allows for systematic prediction of the levels of intensity, synchrony, and invitedness that result from the employ of certain rhetorical devices. Specifically, certain types of rhetoric such as three-part lists, contrast, and headline-punchline will produce positive, strong, coordinated, and appropriately timed (beginning within a second of their intended start and not interrupting the speaker) responses from an audience (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000; Bull, 2003). A well-coached speaker is versed in the art of employing these devices to insure appropriate and collective audience applause or laughter. These positive audience responses make the speaker appear successful and well-liked (West, 1984), as well as emphasize key points that the speaker wants to make.

To answer these questions, four Republican National Convention addresses from the years 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1988 were coded using ANVIL content analysis software. The hypothesis tested in this analysis is that Reagan's strategic use of rhetorical devices contributed to his perception as "The Great Communicator" in Presidential history. Specifically, Ronald Reagan used the Atkinson/Bull (Atkinson 1984a, 1984b; Bull 2003; Bull, 2016; Choi et al., 2016) rhetorical device strategies to elicit more frequent, intense, and synchronous audience responses among Republican National Convention audiences. The following research questions are posed to guide the following analysis and test the dependent variables of frequency, intensity, synchrony, and invitedness of audience response.

*RQ<sub>1</sub>*: How do rhetorically formatted statements influence the frequency of audience responses in comparison to non-rhetorically formatted statements?

*RQ<sub>2</sub>*: How do rhetorically formatted statements influence the intensity of audience responses in comparison to non-rhetorically formatted statements?

*RQ<sub>3</sub>*: How do rhetorically formatted statements influence the synchrony and invitedness of audience responses in comparison to non-rhetorically formatted statements?

### **Literature Review**

The theoretical basis for this content analysis is based upon Bull's framework (Bull, 2003). Bull's framework, in turn, has its scholarly roots in Atkinson's (1984a; 1984b) conversation analysis and its application to political speeches. Traditional conversation analysis provides systematic evaluation of speaker-audience interaction, not unlike the interaction between two people in conversation, by using transcript notation (Jefferson, 2004). However, instead of inviting verbal and/or nonverbal small-group conversational responses, these categories of rhetorical devices invite audible audience responses. Despite its number of applications, the theory continues to find that certain types of rhetorical devices are used by speakers to induce a positive reaction from their audience (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986; Clayman, 1993; Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000; Bull & Wells, 2002; Bull, 2003; Bull & Miskinis, 2015; Bull, 2016). Affiliative, or positive responses are defined as "applause, cheers, and laughter", while disaffiliative, or negative responses are defined as "boos, jeers, and heckles" (Atkinson, 1984b, p. 371). The collective manner of pre-verbal audience responses in political settings indicates underlying group behavior and arguably shared positive emotions (Bono & Ilies, 2006) that provide for significant insight into the group behavior, specifically in settings of ideologically similar individuals (Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007; Greene, 2004). Below, a review of extant literature will introduce and discuss rhetorical devices that are used to invite audible audience response.



## **Rhetorical Devices**

Collectively, audiences have been found to be more likely to respond to namings, which include “commending, thanking, or introducing someone to the audience” (Atkinson, 1984b, p. 379), three-parted lists (Jefferson, 1990), that implicitly indicate completeness of a statement and signal an invitation to respond, and contrasts which stage the “juxtaposition of two contrasting items” to be used in attacks and insults (Atkinson, 1984b, p. 392). Applause is consistently found to occur in greater volume than other responses such as laughter, booing, and chanting, as well as tending to overtake these other forms of responses. This is thought to be caused by the ease of the behavior in comparison to “costly” behaviors such as booing (Clayman, 1993).

Three primary rhetorical devices applied to political discourse (Atkinson, 1984a; Atkinson, 1984b; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986), have set the stage for further application of this rhetorical framework and allowed for expansion of the theory to include more devices that generalize cross-culturally to political speaking engagements. In the context of the present study, the analysis of partisan political events, such as the Republican National Convention, provides insight into group behavior among audiences that are similar in their political ideology and worldview. Specifically, it is important to differentiate between nomination acceptance speeches, election campaign, and inaugural speeches (Choi et al., 2016, p. 601).

Previous studies applying Bull’s framework have mixed different types of speech contexts and therefore make it difficult to apply the findings to all types of addresses (Atkinson, 1984a, 1984b; Bull, 2000; Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000; Bull & Wells, 2002; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986; Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012; Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Therefore, Choi and colleagues sought to differentiate their findings in Korean political speeches by their type, finding that nomination speeches have a specific purpose to “accept the

nomination, to show appreciation for it, to convey the speaker's visions and pledges for policies, [and] to ask the party members for solidarity to win the presidential election" (2016, p. 604). Therefore, there will be an expected difference between the results of this study and those that do not include party nominating convention speeches.

Partisan audiences are intriguing, as they provide a context for a specific type of group identity that is directly related to partisanship, and in this case, Republican partisanship (Mason, 2015). Party events such as the Republican National Convention allow party-members to coalesce around their candidate and platform and share a "collective goal" of obtaining or keeping the presidency (Choi et al., 2016, p. 605). In a time of heightened political polarization, partisan identity defines one's social identity to a greater extent than before (Mason, 2013). Polarization, in the American political context, is the concept of a growing ideological gap between those that identify as conservative and liberal which in turn has led to a decrease in moderate political beliefs and the ability to compromise (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). Partisan identity, political ideology, and the core values and attitudes towards policy that groups share work together to explain the current state of polarization. In this way, the strengthening importance of partisan identity further reinforces shifts towards the outer left (liberal) and right (conservative) poles of the ideology spectrum, leaving few moderates to facilitate compromise (Kimball, Summary, & Vorst, 2014).

While the study of polarization and partisan behavior are an expansive topic on their own, it is important to acknowledge that this body of knowledge has a cross-discipline effect on the study of group behavior and political rhetoric in the context of this paper. Reagan's role in the rebranding of conservatism, referred to as the "Reagan Conservative Revolution", was the beginning of a partisan realignment that began the polarization process seen today (Edwards,

1999; Hayward, 2009; Muir, 2003). Therefore, investigating Reagan's rhetoric as the father of this "revolution" may provide insight into the twenty-first century conservative and Donald Trump conservative.

Heritage and Greatbatch's (1986) transcription analysis of British party conferences in 1981 is the only study so far to apply Atkinson's (1984b) rhetorical scheme to public addresses by party leaders in a party convention setting. The current study will apply the most current theory with modern content analysis methods to analyze US Republican party conventions in which speeches were delivered by former President Ronald Reagan. In a previous study of partisan audiences, the influence of conformity and group identity evidently led to a predominance of affiliative rather than disaffiliative responses (Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Even in the case of the latter, these tend to be invited.

There is a high level of social pressure from other members of the party to conform to the stance that the party holds, leading to more synchronized responses. Applause and laughter thrive from mutual monitoring, and with it, the conscientiousness that members of an audience have regarding the possible responses of other group members, leading to a notable relationship between the volume and duration of affiliative audience responses in political settings (Clayman, 1993). Previous studies suggest that audience responses are more likely to occur when they are signaled by the speaker's use of rhetorical devices and non-verbal behavior that indicate that applause, laughter, etc. are anticipated by the speaker (Atkinson, 1984a; 1984b).

If used carefully, rhetorical devices such as naming, lists, and contrast can be employed by speakers to emphasize their message and ensure the proper timing of a positive audience response. Arguably, the timing of an audience response precisely when it is desired by the speaker is key to the perceived "success" of that rhetorical appeal. Seminal literature (Atkinson,

1984a) identified that the “ideal” audience response would occur within one second of the end of a speaking turn and pause subsequent to when the speaker signals that they are ready to continue speaking by beginning their next phrase (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000; Bull, 2003). Therefore, when rhetorical devices are utilized improperly or without the intention of inducing a response, asynchronous and/or interruptive audience utterances may occur.

Two key aspects that induce audience response are emphasis and projection (Atkinson, 1984a). While emphasis draws special attention to certain words and solidifies the point the speaker is trying to make, projection describes the ability for an audience to predict when the speaker will complete their concluding point and “commence applauding only at a moment when they believe that others will do the same” (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986, p. 116). This phenomenon of mutual monitoring among audience members is integral to the presence of audience responses, as it is one of the two avenues for achieving synchronous responses.

By applying Atkinson’s (1984b) scheme using contrast and lists to political speeches, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) develop six additional categories (Tables 4 and 5). The addition of these supplementary categories sought to further explain the effect of rhetorical devices on audience responses, particularly applause. While contrast remains the most common applause-inducer, defining other specific rhetorical devices provides support for the hypothesis that craftily employed rhetorical devices lead to more collective and positive audience responses (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986).

Further application of rhetorical analysis led to the development of eight additional explicit rhetorical categories in which to classify claptraps (Bull & Wells, 2002; Feldman & Bull, 2012; Bull, 2016). These include: 1) jokes and humorous expressions, witty amusing remarks that invite laughter, 2) negative naming, in which the speaker invites the audience to respond to

criticism or ridicule of a named person or groups (sometimes through booing), 3) greetings/salutations, in which the speaker introduces him/herself and addresses the audience, 4) expressing appreciation, in which the speaker thanks the audience for attendance and/or support, 5) requesting agreement/asking for confirmation, in which the speaker asks questions of the audience that are responded to through applause-cheering, 6) asking for support, direct appeals to the audience for support of a particular candidate, 7) description of campaign activities, story-telling of campaign activities designed to highlight the speaker's reception as a candidate, communicator, and campaigner, and 8) miscellaneous, to cover extraneous categories that may appear in certain contexts, but do not appear to relate to laughter at a rate that allows for reliable classification (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986, p. 137)(Tables 4 and 5).

An example of a miscellaneous categorization in the context of this study is when there is audible audience applause after the statement: "Crowds spontaneously began singing 'America the Beautiful' or 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic'" (Reagan, 1984). While this statement was part of a narrative about the 1984 Olympic Torch crossing the United States, the mention of these songs does not explicitly fall into any of the Atkinson/Bull categories (Atkinson 1984a, 1984b; Bull 2003; Bull, 2016; Choi et al., 2016), yet induced applause (Bull, 2016, p. 482). These categories, as well as the initial eight established by the preliminary framework, will be treated as independent variables in the present study.

Jokes are intentional forms of humor in which a setup and punch line are employed to induce laughter (Long & Graesser, 1988). While jokes may occur in conversational speech, they are apparent in more formal and planned situations such as a political address. If timed correctly, a successful joke can control the audience's emotions by inducing mirth, delivering an important campaign or policy message, and inviting a positive response, such as laughter and may do so

more effectively by bypassing “critical” assessment of the substance of the message by the respondent (Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2007; Martineau, 1972; Greatbatch & Clark, 2003).

Self-disparaging humor (also known as self-deprecatory, see Long & Graesser, 1988) is an effective way for speakers to not only appear witty, but also “own” their flaws to detract from an opponent’s ability to highlight them. Despite the context of self-disparaging humor, it has been found to improve an audience’s perception of the speaker and improve the connection between speaker and audience, despite its ability to underscore a speaker’s weaknesses (Chang & Gruner, 1981; Meyer, 2000; Stewart, 2011; Rhea, 2012; Stewart, 2012; Bitterly, Brooks, & Schweitzer, 2016). In political humor, attacks are often hidden within other-deprecatory humor to make their reception more palatable and effective (Meyer, 2000; Stewart, 2011). These jokes within the context of a group setting are more effective because they take on a meaning that is unique to the group’s idioculture, the shared knowledge and beliefs that identifies a group and what it means to be a member of that group (Fine, 1977; Provine & Fischer, 1989). In the scenario of a Republican National Convention, the group not only holds a shared admiration for Reagan, but also a shared distaste for the opposing Democratic Party and its members. This aversion provides the ideal environment for other-deprecatory ridicule statements to be received positively, rather than in a mixed crowd such as a general election debate (Stewart, 2011).

### **Non-Rhetorical Devices**

Non-rhetorical devices are identified as content themes and statements that are found to induce audience responses without using the aforementioned “claptraps” (Atkinson, 1984a; Atkinson, 1984b; Heritage and Greatbatch. 1986, Bull, 2000). Non-rhetorical statements are necessary to explain instances when there is synchronous audience response in the absence of rhetorical maneuvering. While Atkinson (1984a; 1984b) emphasized the power of rhetorical

devices over content themes as applause inducers, Heritage and Greatbatch's (1986) results supported and expanded these findings to analyze non-rhetorical speech content devices. The findings led to a non-rhetorical classification framework, not unlike the one used to define rhetorical devices, which conceptualize common non-rhetorical content devices that are successful pseudo-claptraps in political speech.

Prior studies have found that within partisan political audiences, rhetorical statements were more likely to be applauded than non-rhetorical statements (more than two-thirds of the sampled speeches), leaving a remaining one-third that were not attributed to the seven known rhetorical devices. These statements were found to be heavily policy-laden and were more successful if they expressed majority-held policy statements (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986, p. 146; Bull, 2000; Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000).

Six non-rhetorical content devices identified by Heritage & Greatbatch (1986) and refined in further analysis (Bull, 2000; Bull & Wells, 2002) are common pseudo-claptraps, with the ability to induce audience applause without using rhetorical claptraps. These explicit content-based devices include: external attacks, general statements of support or approval for the speaker's party, internal attacks, advocacy of particular policy positions, commendations of particular individuals within the speaker's party, and combinations. For the purpose of this analysis, two additional categories have been established to classify devices that were found to not fit into any of the aforementioned categories and were prominent themes throughout the selected addresses. These categories are personal/political accomplishments and value statements/encouraging promises about future and/or country.

Even without rhetorical maneuvering, the collective nature of political conferences where audience members are more or less ideologically similar, makes audiences more likely to

applaud more often and more cohesively due to the shared group emotion that takes place in such an event (Alford, 1988). Events such as a political party convention feature policy laden speech that may be applauded based on audience support for the content more so than the way they are rhetorically formatted. The policy statements that receive audience response will be sorted based on their policy content, specifically the use of wedge issues that divide partisans ideologically such as immigration, equality, family and moral values, tax policy, and government spending (Hillygus & Shields, 2008; Miles, 2016).

When speaking to an ideologically similar audience, majority held statements are more likely to receive applause in this context, leading speakers to emphasize majority-held opinions to maximize positive responses. External attacks towards the opposition party are also likely to be applauded by a partisan audience due to the presence of affective polarization. Whereas the “impute [of] negative traits to the rank-and-file of the out-party” may be based upon someone being a member of the out-group (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012, p. 407). Polarization can be directly attributed to the pervasiveness of contempt towards the opposite party and the strengthening of emotional attachment to one’s partisan identity, and in turn, their political party (Kimball et al., 2014; Mason, 2013). The positive feelings associated with being among a group of like-minded individuals in an exclusive setting such as the Republican National Convention can re-affirm and even amplify the attachment one feels towards their partisan identity (Mason, 2015). In this case, the level of excitement and synchronization of shared responses may be due to the psychological attachment individual delegates have towards the group as a whole and their shared feelings towards the speaker.

Often the social cost of responding without being joined by other audience members either leads to independence in decision making, in which audience members rely on the



speaker's rhetoric and signals; or mutual monitoring, in which audience members monitor their peers to mimic their verbal or nonverbal cues and predict the type of response (Clayman, 1993). The difference between independent decision making and mutual monitoring in crowd behavior will influence levels of synchrony in audience responses.

### **Invitation & Synchrony**

The timing of audience responses is an indicator of the success or failure of rhetorical devices in political speech (Atkinson, 1984a). Bull's model (2003) of invited and uninvited applause breaks down audience responses into categories of invited versus uninvited, synchronous versus asynchronous, and rhetorical versus non-rhetorical. The interconnected nature of invitation, synchrony, and rhetorical devices led to the establishment of an "ideal" audience response (Atkinson, 1984a; Bull, 2003). Therefore, a consummate speech appeal would use a known claptrap and be delivered in a way that invites the audience to respond at a specific time and in a certain way. This idyllic response is successful due to its timing, as well as the level of synchrony among the audience, as the audience must agree on the response for it to cohere and deliver the full might of the response desired by the speaker. While the three concepts of invitation, synchrony, and rhetorical devices closely rely on one another, invitation and synchrony are ultimately determined by the speaker's delivery of the speech content and rhetorical strategies.

**Invitation.** For the purpose of this study, three designations of responses - claptraps, speak overs, and interruptions, will be used to classify the "invitedness" of audience responses. Claptraps are rhetorical devices that are expected to elicit applause or clapping due to their delivery and rhetorical construction (Atkinson 1984a; Bull & Wells, 2002). By delivering a clear rhetorical completion point, claptraps invite the audience to respond for one second or longer.

Claptraps are inherently invited due to their purposeful use to evoke applause in an audience. For this analysis, claptraps will also be analyzed in the context of the ability of certain rhetorical devices to anticipate responses of laughter and booing as well as applause to expand current scholarship regarding the rhetorical invitation of responses other than applause.

Uninvited responses will be classified as either speak overs, in which the speaker continues to speak through the audience response, or interruptions, in which the audience response forces the speaker to stop for at least one second. Designated as “mismatches”, Bull (2003) also finds that instances of isolated and interruptive applause and speak-overs occur due to mistiming in speaker-audience turn-taking. This occurs either through the misreading of cues, failures of rhetoric, speaker-audience signaling error, or applause in response to speech content instead of rhetoric (Bull, 2003, pp. 59-65). Being inherently uninvited, interruptive applause may result from error on the speaker’s part, in which they improperly signaled applause or did not anticipate applause for content such as a popular policy statement.

**Synchrony.** By identifying whether a rhetorical or non-rhetorical device is attributed to an audience response will allow for classification of a response as rhetorical or non-rhetorical, as well as identification of the synchrony of the response as interruptive, isolated, or delayed. As identified previously, interruptive responses will cause the speaker to pause for at least one second, while isolated responses will be attributed to one or two audience members, and delayed responses occur when there is a pause of at least one second between the completion of the speaking turn and the audience response (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000; Bull, 2003). Bull (2000) found that while non-rhetorical devices may induce applause, they often lack the synchronization cues that rhetorical devices provide to audiences. Particularly, the lack of clues and completion points in non-rhetorical statements may lead to more disruptive and/or interruptive responses.

Analyzing the degree of invitation and synchrony allows for measure of the “success” of rhetorical devices and further study of the phenomenon of synchronization in the absence of rhetorical devices (Bull, 2000; Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000; Bull, 2003).

To further break down the synchrony of response, additional categories have been developed to denote the collective nature of a response – unitary, composite, and sequential. Unitary responses are those in which one type (i.e. applause, laughter, or booing) occurs in isolation, while composites are responses in which multiple types of responses (i.e. combinations of applause and laughter) occur within one response event. Sequential responses account for the order of composite responses that do not occur at the same time, but instead naturally differ over the course of a single audience response event (i.e. applause that fades into chanting) (Feldman & Bull, 2012; Choi et. al, 2016).

Bull (2000) found that while non-rhetorical appeals may induce applause, they often lack the synchronization cues that rhetorical devices provide to audiences. Particularly, the lack of signaled completion points in non-rhetorical statements may lead to more disruptive and/or interruptive responses. Analyzing the degree of invitation and synchrony allows for measure of the “success” of rhetorical devices and further study of the phenomenon of synchronization in the absence of rhetorical devices (Bull, 2000; Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000; Bull, 2003). The present study will investigate the relationship between rhetoric and the level of invitation and synchrony of audience responses based on the framework provided by extant literature (Atkinson, 1984a, 1984b; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986; Bull & Wells, 2002; Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012).

## **II. Audience Response**

Audience responses of applause, laughter, booing, and chanting have been acknowledged in the current body of scholarship to provide a reference for the success of rhetorical devices in political speech. A speaker's goal is to use rhetorical devices to determine when and how an audience will respond to their statements. While this gives the speaker a level of control over the audience, the relationship is complicated, with the audience processing mutual monitoring and cues from the speaker as well as cues from their fellow audience members. Without proper signaling on behalf of the speaker, an audience may that may be overcome by emotion or mirth may engage in more disruptive behavior such as chanting that interrupts the speaker. By exploring each type of audience response and the nature of audience response, the results of the content analysis can be interpreted fully. Atkinson (1984b) and Bull (2003; 2016)'s theoretical framework of rhetorical devices also includes systematic testing of the effect of these devices on audience responses, providing a robust body of literature regarding the nature of audience response.

### **Applause**

Applause is a primary focus of audience behavior in extant scholarship using the Atkinson (1984b) and Bull (2003; 2016) framework due to its prevalence and its ability to signal approval of the speaker. While laughter is more of a physiological reaction to a humorous comment and booing largely depends on situational circumstances (such as mutual monitoring) for success, applause occurs naturally in the presence of both mutual monitoring and independent decision-making (Stewart, 2015). The prevalence of applause over other forms of audience responses has led to most of the theory regarding rhetoric and audience response to be based upon applause behavior. Even the term 'claptrap' categorizes the rhetorical device scheme

developed by Atkinson (1984b) and Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) as precursors to applause, without focusing on other audience responses. Initial theory posited that the proper employment of rhetorical devices will almost always produce synchronized applause and that synchronized applause does not occur due to speech content. In other words, when it appears that applause is directly attributed to speech content, often the rhetorical strategies embedded within a statement are the underlying precursors to this response.

However, Bull (2003) found that applause can be asynchronous owing to signaling and mutual monitoring, by either occurring too early, too late, or interrupting the speaker altogether. While the previously established rhetorical devices (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986) continue to explain most audience responses, there are also cases in which applause occurs in the absence of these devices, particularly regarding speech content advocating policy. This indicates that there is a role of speaker signaling and cues that imparts upon the audience the need to anticipate and project completion points (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000). This relationship between rhetorical devices' ability to project leads to smooth timing (applause at or near the completion point) and synchronization (audience coordination) between speaking turns and audience applause more so than other types of audience responses (Bull, 2003; Bull, 2006).

In the context of policy-laden party speeches, such as those that take place at the Republican National Convention, asynchronous applause in the absence of rhetoric is more common. Non-rhetorical audience responses are characteristically less invited and synchronous than rhetorical responses, due to the lack of signaling and cues that these statements have. Audience-speaker mismatches occur when a speaker resumes speaking during an audience response (speak-over) or when an audience responds during a speaking turn, causing the speaker to pause (interruption). These uninvited applause sequences are mismatches that can occur with

or without rhetorical devices. They are attributed to poor structuring, timing, or over-complication of rhetoric and are assumed to be uninvited by the speaker, simply because they lead to an interruptive instance that disturbs natural conversational turn-taking between audience and speaker (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000, p. 292). Empirical studies have found that in some cases, 40% of non-rhetorical statements in a sample were interruptive and therefore uninvited, in that they occurred before the completion of the speaking turn (Bull, 2000, p. 35). The closely-knit relationship between applause and synchrony will be further explored in the findings of the present study.

### **Laughter**

Laughter is a complex psychological and physiological response to humorous statements and jokes made in every day conversations, advertisements, media broadcasts, and even political speeches (Meyer, 2000). Humor in politics may be used by speakers to lighten the harshness of an attack and engender mirth in an audience. Mirth, “the distinctive emotion that is elicited by the perception of humor” explains the emotional experience that occurs within individuals in audiences when they are exposed to humor and jokes that provides positive emotions (Martin, 2007, p.8). The physiological nature of laughter makes isolated and asynchronous instances rare, especially in group settings, due to the contagiousness of the act of laughing itself in which it is not uncommon to laugh simply because you hear someone else laughing (Provine, 2000).

Especially in group settings, such as a party convention, group identity is greatly tied to humor. Through humor, encrypted wit and external “dog whistle” attacks can focus on hot-button issues and reinforce group identity by distinctly designating the in-group from an out-group (Flamson & Barrett, 2008). In politics, where group dynamics are closely tied to political affiliation, group dynamics are an important part of understanding why someone may find

something humorous or not (Stewart, 2012). In the same light, speakers will employ humor that they know will lead to cohesive collective laughter among an audience by appealing to in-group status and alienating out-groups. According to Shiota and colleagues, the contagiousness of laughter as an act provides a group component to the act of laughter itself (Shiota, Campos, Keltner, & Hertenstein, 2004). Therefore, laughter can encourage group cohesiveness through shared laughter and spread a mirthful emotional state within a group by “establishing and maintaining close relationships, [and] enhancing feelings of attraction and commitment” (Martin, 2007, p.114).

Humor can also be used in political discourse to gauge support for the speaker. Due to the constraints of content analysis, the only way that humor can be measured is through instances of laughter. Even though all “successful” humor does not necessarily lead to applause, it is not possible in the scope of this study to determine whether humor is received in the absence of audible laughter (Stewart, 2012). Like applause, laughter is an affiliative response that acts as a measure of the audience’s support for the speaker and his or her message (West, 1984; Atkinson, 1984; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986).

The connection that laughter brings between audience and speaker provides a sense of shared group identity that validates possible affiliations, such as partisanship, that the two may already share (Stewart, 2012). Comradery through shared partisanship allows for these groups to feel free to laugh at political humor that may normally expose their partisan identity in a different setting (Carlson & Settle, 2016). Laughter responses are inherently invited with rhetorical devices, such as jokes, like other forms of audience responses such as applause (Wells & Bull, 2007). Therefore, shared laughter in group activities, such as party conventions, will further

validate existing group identities and one's individual opinion of the speaker through shared mirthfulness (Meyer, 2000; Stewart, 2015).

## **Booing**

The case of booing in political discourse has been largely understudied apart from mentions by Atkinson (1984b), Heritage and Greatbatch (1986), and Clayman (1993). The differences between booing and applause are important when studying the use of rhetorical and non-rhetorical devices, timing, and responses. Termed as an “unfavorable” response, Clayman (1993) expanded the analysis of audience response to specifically focus on booing instances in political speeches. Depending on what is said by the speaker, booing may be either affiliative, in which the audience approves of what is said and boos an opponent, or disaffiliative, in which the audience disapproves of what is said and boos the speaker (Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Therefore, the presence of booing does not necessarily mean that the audience is reacting negatively towards the speaker but may instead be expressing approval of an external attack.

Within booing, mutual monitoring induces collective behavior due to the “costliness” of booing compared with other types of responses. As the first extensive analysis of booing in political speeches, it was found that the targets of booing responses were often initiated by an “unfavorable remark concerning a political adversary” (Clayman, 1993, p. 114). Audiences may boo in instances when the orator speaks favorably about themselves (and the audience disagrees) or when a contrast between the speakers' in-group is made to disparage the outgroup. In this scenario, booing may occur after rhetorical or content devices. Unlike applause responses, booing almost always occurs in a lagged fashion, (indicating it stems from mutual monitoring), as well as often occurring subsequently or in conjunction with bouts of audience applause, heckling, jeering, or even laughter (Clayman, 1993). Within the context of party conventions, it



can be expected that affiliative booing behavior will take place in response to external attacks of political opponents.

### **Chanting**

Chanting in political context is largely understudied. Scholarly literature has found the presence of group chanting along with other affiliative responses such as applause, cheering, and clapping in political environments. While Bull and Miskinis (2015) recognized and observed the presence of chanting behavior in 2012 U.S. presidential election speeches, they did not analyze the components or timing of it and only remarked that it is considered an affiliative audience response among laughter and applause. However, Choi and colleagues (2016) filled in the gaps of prior research by expanding the study of affiliative audience response to examine chanting in Korean political speeches. By doing so, they observed “repetition, rhythm, syllables, rhythmic claps, affiliation, and collective responses” among Korean audiences like they had observed among American audiences in prior study (p. 608). By breaking down the timing and patterns of chanting, Choi and colleagues found that chanting was often part of a sequential response, which began with a unitary or composite response, such as applause or laughter, and then naturally melded into chanting. The presence of chanting is thought to display approval for the speaker’s statements or leadership, especially in the context of acceptance speeches.

In the Schweingruber and McPhail (1999) coding scheme for classifying collective actions, chanting is categorized as “voicing”, under the subcategory “vocalizing”, among other responses such as booing, “ooh/ohh/ahhing” and other. Chanting, according to this scheme, is “verbalizing the same words in unison, usually repeatedly, and often in rhythm” (Schweingruber & McPhail, 1999, p. 465). Besides clearly defining the difference between chanting and these other responses, the analysis largely applies the coding scheme to political protests in the

Washington D.C. area using event history analysis and therefore does not provide insight into the presence of chanting in response to the process involved with political speeches and their use of rhetorical devices.

The invitedness of chanting is difficult to determine without extant empirical evidence. However, the collective nature of chanting allows that it would be a synchronous event, in which isolated instances would not likely occur. Isolated instances of chanting would either be inaudible in content analysis (one or two people among a crowd) and would most likely fail in a short matter of time if the chant does not “catch on”. Asynchronous chanting would result in unintelligible crowd murmuring (much like the “Walla” or “Rhubarb” technique used in film production to induce the sound of indistinct chatter) due to the inability to understand the chant itself without consistent coordination of the same phrase. Therefore, mutual monitoring is also involved in one’s decision to join in on an audience chanting event. Initiating a chanting sequence is costly, as it requires others to join to be successful. Additionally, the choice of what phrase to make into a chant is a conscientious decision. A successful chant would need to be a concise, yet powerful statement that expresses a collective group thought. The effect of rhetorical and non-rhetorical devices on chanting will be further explored in the current study to further current knowledge of the pre-cursors to chanting behavior, and whether political leaders initiate chanting intentionally or if it occurs due to audience group dynamics and mutual monitoring.

The present study seeks to further scholarship of affiliative chanting in political speeches, particularly in party conventions and its relationship with responses such as applause and laughter. Chanting provides an exemplar of the effects of collective behavior in a political audience, including the prevalence of mutual monitoring and affiliative responses, as it requires a group to participate in an often-interruptive repetition of a word or phrase that they feel

expresses their emotions as a group. The relationship between chanting, applause, and laughter will also be expanded in the context of partisan political environments.

### **Methods**

The methodological approach taken in this study consisted of multiple steps. The first step was to purchase and download Reagan's Republican National Convention addresses from the C-SPAN archives. These videos were then loaded into the editing software Adobe Premier Pro and cut into short clips to meet the maximum two gigabyte file restriction within by ANVIL. This resulted in a total of twenty-eight clips with an average of seven clips per Republican National Convention address. In compliance with ANVIL's requirements, the video codec used to export the videos was CINEPAK (.MOV) and the audio codec was IMA4 (Kipp, 2014).

ANVIL allows for content analysis by reading an HTML-formatted specification file that dictates what variable(s) the coder is looking to record into an annotation file. Using Stewart (2012) and Stewart and colleagues (2016) as an example, I employed the following variable coding scheme with some additional variables to fit the parameters of my research agenda. The primary variable coded was speaking time (in seconds) in order to measure speaker-audience interaction, followed by duration, strength (1 = barely audible; 2 = slightly audible; 3 = moderately audible; 4 = very audible; 5 = extremely audible, Ekman & Friesen, 1978), and type of audience responses to the speaker (1 = applause; 2 = laughter; 3 = boos; 4 = composite applause & boos; 5 = composite applause & laughter; 6 = composite laughter & boos; 7 = composite applause & chanting; 8 = composite applause, laughter, & chanting, Atkinson, 1984b; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1984; Clayman, 1993; Bull, 2003; Feldman & Bull, 2012).

Beginning and ending applause were excluded from this analysis due to its nature as a welcoming and customary gesture rather than a response to what the speaker may or may not

have said. It should be noted that any audible audience utterance, from a single audible “whoop” or whistle to full-blown applause was coded as an audience response.

While coding the Republican National Convention addresses, personal notes were taken regarding the coder’s initial educated guess on the presence of rhetorical and non-rhetorical devices, synchrony, and invitedness of responses (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000; Bull, 2016). Multiple reviews of the ANVIL output data were necessary for the coder to become fully confident in the type of rhetorical and/or content devices used. Annotated transcripts of the addresses provided by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum also served as a supplementary tool for post-coding analysis of rhetorical and non-rhetorical devices. After coding the entirety of the addresses, the annotation files were exported to, consolidated, and analyzed in Microsoft Excel, and were then transferred to R for descriptive statistics.

Descriptive statistics in both Microsoft Excel and R provided means, standard deviations, and correlation measures. Pearson’s correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is used to determine if two variables are correlated to one another. Due to the hypothesized relationship between the strength (loudness) of a response and its duration (length), Pearson’s is used to determine if an additive “intensity” variable is statistically appropriate. In the entirety of the sample ( $N = 342$ ), the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was 0.51 ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a positive and significant correlation between duration and strength.

Inter-coder reliability was conducted for the rhetorical and content device measures, invitation, and claptraps. Six videos (~18% of the total project) were randomly selected for inter-coder reliability of quantitative content analysis regarding speaking time, audience reaction, and strength of responses, rhetorical and/or content device type, and level of invitation. After both coders completed the inter-coder analysis, an in-person mediation process was conducted to

discuss the differences in perception of the presence of devices and invitation. During this process, these measures reached a 100% agreement rate as to the classification of rhetorical and/or content devices and invitation. This mediation process allowed for the primary and secondary coder to agree on the working definitions for the coding scheme and invitation measures, and for the primary coder to subsequently evaluate the rest of the content with this level of understood reliability. Subsequently, the remainder of the content was coded for the presence of rhetorical devices, synchrony, and invitedness by the primary coder.

The internal validity of the ANVIL-based findings was determined by ANVIL's built-in inter-coder agreement (ICA) function which calculated Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa$ ) (Cohen, 1960). This function breaks two independent coders' files down into time slices (each set to .01 second), and then compares each time slice across the clips to assess whether, and to what extent overall, the coders agree within the annotated area.

Inter-coder agreement on video clips from the four addresses was carried out by using 6 randomly selected portions of the 1976, 1980, and 1984 addresses<sup>1</sup> (time = 28.25 min (1,695 s)  $\approx$  18% of the total addresses, 159 min, 40s; 9580 s). The result was an acceptable measure of Cohen's kappa (1976 (9 speaking tracks, 8 reaction tracks; 475 sec):  $M(\kappa) = 0.73$ ); 1980 (37 speaking tracks, 29 reaction tracks; 955 sec):  $M(\kappa) = 0.89$ ; 1984 (29 speaking tracks, 19 reaction tracks; 265 sec):  $M(\kappa) = 0.76$ ) (Cohen, 1960). Therefore, the reliability of the coding scheme is supported by the acceptable measures of Cohen's Kappa ( $\kappa$ ) to affirm inter-coder reliability.

**Procedure.** To measure audience response in the presence of rhetorical devices, selected Reagan Republican National Convention addresses were coded using ANVIL content analytic software. In ANVIL, start and end times of speaking turns and the dependent variables, audience

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<sup>1</sup> Randomization of the clips did not produce any from 1992 as a matter of chance

responses of applause, laughter, booing, chanting, and composites (combinations of response that co-occur within one audience response (Feldman & Bull, 2012)). The present study does not include applause events that occur after the speaker's introduction nor at the end of a speaking turn. These applause events are long (sometimes lasting two or three minutes) and are not due to what the speaker said, but instead serve as an introductory response or expression of approval or gratitude as the speaker exits. Including the length of the beginning and ending applause events in the addresses analyzed would skew the data and misrepresent the amount of applause that occurred during the speaking time of the address itself.

By creating an additive measure of strength and length of the audience response, an intensity variable is developed to measure the success of rhetorical and content devices (the timing of speaking turns and subsequent audience responses allow for measures of synchrony – another measure that determines the success of rhetorical and content devices) (Stewart et al., 2017). The intensity measure will address the research question regarding the relationship between strength and length of audience responses, particularly the effect of contagion that surrounds group behavior in a partisan environment such as the Republican National Convention. Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated and was determined to meet a sufficient level of significance in the correlation between strength and duration ( $r = 0.51; p < 0.01$ ).

By evaluating audience responses through rhetorical and content devices, synchrony, and intensity, the audience-speaker relationship between Reagan and the Republican National Committee members over time can further the study of "The Great Communicator." Transcript analysis allows for examination of the independent variables, rhetorical and non-rhetorical devices, using Bull's framework (Bull, 2016). Levels of synchrony and invitedness of responses

are determined by the coordination and audible strength of audience responses. Likewise, the beginning and end of audience responses are compared with the beginning and end of the speaker's speaking turn. Interruptive audience utterances occur either when the audience cuts off the speaker before they finish or forces the speaker to continue talking over the response. Synchrony is determined by the collectiveness (whether it is isolated or involves many participants) and strength (loudness) of an audience response. More audible responses are more likely to be due to multiple participants, indicating more synchrony among the audience.

### **Audience Response in Republican National Convention Addresses (Tables 1, 2, and 3)**

#### **1976 Republican National Convention Address**

One of Reagan's most famous speeches, "A Time for Choosing", was delivered on behalf of presidential candidate Barry Goldwater via television in 1964. This entrance to the national political stage served as a launching pad for Reagan's election to Governor of California in 1966. In 1968, Reagan mounted his first, yet unsuccessful Presidential bid against later Republican nominee Richard Nixon. At this time, Presidential primaries were only held in a few states and nominations were decided by party elites at the national convention (Polsby, 1983). After serving two terms as Governor of California and establishing a record of leadership, Reagan shored another attempt for president in 1976 against incumbent Republican, Gerald Ford (Brenes, 2015, p. 100). Despite being coy about officially declaring a presidential run against Ford, Reagan began campaigning on the national level as early as 1974. Although Reagan's conservative ideals "ran against the grain" (Hayward, 2001, p. 448) of the Republican Party, he decided to buck the rumors of a third-party presidential run and challenge Ford in the Republican primary. The reception of Reagan's conservatism into the fold of the Republican Party establishment would later determine the outcome of the primary election.

Despite his narrow loss to Ford, it was clear that the nation was supportive of Reagan's uncompromising foreign policy stances towards the Soviet Union, due to his success in the Republican primaries (Brenes, 2015; Williams, 1985). Presidents Nixon and Ford's implementation of détente was not supported by the public, which left an electoral gap for Reagan to step in and garner support for his position on foreign policy. In particular, Nixon's position on the nuclear arms race was a hands-off approach, termed détente, which was in part, a ramification of America's involvement in Vietnam. Détente sought to contain the Soviet Union's nuclear proliferation from afar through trust and diplomatic negotiation (Williams, 1985). The lack of support by the public for Ford's foreign policy positions was apparent through Ford's early primary losses (Brenes, 2015, p. 103). These losses for Ford allowed Reagan to re-focus his campaign message from reducing government spending to containing communism through increased defense expenditures (Brenes, 2015, pp. 93-94).

The 1976 Republican National Convention took place in Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Missouri from August 16 through 19, 1976. Running for re-election in 1976 was a difficult choice for Ford. Ford's presidency was only owed to Nixon's resignation and his presidency was tarnished by his pardoning of Nixon, among other damning political events such as Cabinet corruption and falling trust in government. When it came time for the 1976 Presidential election, Ford was an easy target for Reagan in his pursuit of the Republican nomination. By this time, Reagan had established himself as a conservative leader in the Republican Party and was seeking to restore the status of the Republican Party after the Watergate Scandal. Despite a conservative policy platform, Reagan's second term as Governor of California was marked with liberal policy



initiatives such as legalizing abortion, tax increases, and bureaucratic expansion<sup>2</sup> (Putnam, 2006, pp. 27-31). Notwithstanding, Reagan “remained an exemplar of right-wing principles and a reliable polestar of conservative practice” (Putnam, 2006, p. 33) through his charisma and ability to communicate. Whereas running against an incumbent in one’s own party is typically considered a fruitless effort, Reagan’s view on détente positioned him to pose a formidable primary campaign (Hayward, 2001; Brenes, 2015).

These circumstances allowed Reagan to undermine the power of incumbency when facing Ford as an opponent from his own party. By associating the incumbent’s record with incompetence, Reagan threatened Ford’s ability to use his incumbency as a testament to his fitness to be president. Despite a successful record in Congress, Ford was neither elected to his position as vice president or president, pardoned Nixon after the Watergate Scandal, and did not exude charisma or the ability to effectively communicate. Even though Ford had ample knowledge of Congress and policy, possibly more so than most Presidents before and after him, the inability for Ford to effectively communicate to the American people coupled with the weight of the Nixon scandal hindered his success (Vanocur & Rist, 1994).

Reagan represented an alternative to the Northeastern-dominated Republican Party that was wrought with policy disagreements and scandal, and proposed a return to traditional, conservative values (Hayward, 2001). After a heated primary and delegate vote between Reagan and Ford, the latter was projected to win the nomination during the formal delegate count. Therefore, the convention was not only the formal proceeding of selecting a nominee, but also served as a time for healing a divided party as it prepared its platform against Democratic Party

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<sup>2</sup> Therapeutic Abortion Act of 1967, California Mental Health Act of 1967, California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (Putnam, 2006)

candidate, former Georgia Governor, Jimmy Carter and his running mate, Minnesota U.S. Senator Walter Mondale.

Entering the convention, Ford had a narrow margin of delegate and popular votes that did not allow for a decisive win as the party nominee until the formal delegate votes were cast. Therefore, political “wheeling and dealing” was conducted by both Reagan and Ford before the convention in an attempt to secure their respective nomination. As incumbent president and former high-ranking Congressman, Ford had a positional and relational advantage with key delegates and was able to secure enough votes to win the party nomination. The final delegate counts clinched Ford the nomination with a narrow margin of votes<sup>3</sup>, leaving the party largely divided (Hayward, 2001). On August 19, the following day of convention proceedings after the formal count, Ford invited Reagan to address the audience in an “impromptu” concession speech (Ritter & Henry, 2003) that allowed the two candidates to appear congenial towards one another and portray an image of party unity as the incumbent president entered the general election. There are mixed records as to whether Reagan was prepared in advance for this speech due to his eloquence and targeted message, despite it being a seemingly spur-of-the-moment invitation by Ford (Hayward, 2001, pp. 478-479). If this is a veracious account, it serves as an illustration of Reagan’s communication prowess and its relationship with his acting skills.

Reagan’s address to the 1976 Republican National Convention consisted of ten speaking turns ( $N=10$ ) of approximately 4.65 minutes (278.74 s) in total length with an average length of twenty-eight seconds ( $M=27.87$  s;  $SD=52$  s). There were six audience responses ( $N=6$ ) of approximately one minute and ten seconds (69.57 s), in which 1.06 minutes were applause ( $M=12.71$  s;  $N=5$ ) and 6.01 seconds ( $M=6.01$  s;  $N=1$ ) were composites of applause and laughter.

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<sup>3</sup> 1,187 to 1,070 delegates, in favor of Ford

Four of the six (66.7%) responses were invited via claptrap, while the other two were uninvited interruptions of the speaker (33.3%). The overall strength of the responses was strong, with the six reported having a measured strength of 5, “extremely audible” ( $M=5$ ). The mean intensity (strength + duration) of the address’ audience response is 16.6<sup>4</sup>.

These preliminary results indicate a consistently excited, yet polite reception of Reagan by the audience due to the predominance of invited claptrap responses and minimal amount of uninvited responses. Reagan’s loss of the nomination and subsequent address to the 1976 Republican National Convention is largely considered a pivotal moment for the Republican Party. Reagan’s eloquence and strong uniting policy platform coupled with his ability to emotionally connect with the audience led many Republican Party elites, as well as the mass media, to acknowledge that the Republican Party made a mistake in nominating Ford over Reagan (Hayward, 2001, p. 480). Whereas this loss delayed Reagan’s presidency, it positioned him as an accepted member of the Republican Party for the 1980 presidential election.

### **1980 Republican National Convention address**

By 1980, the political climate in the United States was primed for a change in leadership and Americans were being driven by an increasingly consumerist culture to pursue individualism (Troy, 2005; Busch, 2005). Over the 16 years from his famous “A Time for Choosing” speech, Reagan had developed his political skills, established himself as a representative of conservatism, held two terms as Governor of California, and ran for the Republican nomination twice. However, Reagan had an advantage in the 1980 primary due to his near-win against Ford in 1976 and his prominence in the Republican Party (Stovall, 1984). Facing an incumbent

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<sup>4</sup> Pearson’s correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is not applicable to the 1976 data due to the strength measures being identical for all five audience responses.

candidate in the general election is often a difficult task, but the struggles of Carter's presidency coupled with America's "malaise": staggering unemployment, economic, and foreign crises readied the electorate for change (Mattson, 2009).

Despite Carter's incumbent advantage, the Reagan conservative message provided for a positive outlook of the future (Finkel & Norpoth, 1984; Stovall, 1984). Stuckey argues that Reagan "gave Americans a way out of the crisis mentality that had been absorbing their political energies" (1989, p. 74). Alford's (1988) analysis of the psychological appeal of Reagan shows that the public's anxiety in 1980 about the economy, oil shortages, and the Iran Hostage Crisis primed Reagan's electoral success. By promising to restore American values and remedy the staggering economy, Reagan was a reassuring voice for many struggling Americans (Shanks & Miller, 1990) and provided a "path to a brighter future" (Hayward, 2001, p. 612).

The 1980 campaign was a delicate balance between negative criticism of the Carter administration and positive, hopeful messaging about "renewing the American Compact" set out by the founders of the nation (Reagan, 1980). Reagan's once burgeoning rhetorical style came to a peak at this very moment, as he addressed the Republican National Convention delegates and a nationwide audience via television as the Republican presidential nominee. In this speech, Reagan's rhetorical skill is apparent in his ability to balance the task of criticizing his incumbent challenger while also presenting a message of hope and unity (Stuckey, 1989, p. 61).

The 1980 Republican National Convention took place in Joe Louis Arena in Detroit, Michigan from July 14 to 17, 1980. An open Republican primary sought to unseat incumbent President Carter with the best possible candidate, resulting in Reagan's overwhelming election by the primary delegates as the party nominee<sup>5</sup>. This electoral mandate from the Republican

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<sup>5</sup> Reagan garnered 1,939 of the 2,258 votes cast

Party accelerated Reagan's momentum as he prepared to face President Carter in the general election. Reagan officially accepted the nomination for president on the last evening of the convention, July 17, 1980. The energy of party conventions, as well as the excitement surrounding Reagan's formal nomination provided for a raucous speaking event by the nominee to two audiences - the Republican Party stronghold present in Detroit and the rest of the nation via television broadcast.

Reagan's address consisted of approximately 33.43 minutes of speaking time (2005.79 s) across 116 speaking turns ( $N=116$ ) with an average length of seventeen seconds per turn ( $M=17.29$  s;  $SD=16.99$  s). A total of 104 audience responses consisted of approximately 12.4 minutes of applause (744.57 s;  $M=8.27$  s;  $N=90$ ), 25.62 seconds of boos ( $M=4.27$  s;  $N=6$ ), 7.6 seconds of composites of applause and boos ( $M=4.27$  s;  $N=2$ ), 45.44 seconds of composites of applause and laughter ( $M=11.36$  s;  $N=4$ ), and 45.92 seconds of composites of applause and chanting ( $M=22.96$  s;  $N=2$ ). Forty-six of the 104 responses were the result of invited claptrap (44.2%), while 22 (21.2%) were uninvited interruption, 35 (33.65%) were uninvited speak over, and one was a combination that began as uninvited speak over and turned into invited claptrap (> 1%).

In the combination instance, the audience was initially uninvited in their response, but Reagan continued to speak until finishing his statement. The statement itself invited applause, causing the existing applause that was initially speak-over to turn into invited applause. The response did not pause or falter, and therefore cannot be coded as two singular responses. The anticipation and excitement of the audience of what the speaker was about to say may have led to the initial uninvited response, which merged into an invited response once the speaker completed their intended statement. In other words, the audience may have preempted the speaker's

invitation to applaud, leaving the speaker with the challenge of finishing his point while not inhibiting the momentum of applause.

The strength of the responses was prominent, with a mean strength of approximately 3.9, between “moderately audible” and “very audible” ( $M = 3.9$ ), with a mean intensity (strength + duration) of 12.25 ( $r = 0.69$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The numerous uninvited response events, which account for over half of total response timing, are indicative of interruptive audience reactions and failures of the speaker to provide adequate signaling to the audience. If adequately signaled, the audience would have initiated invited instead of interruptive responses. In his extensive analysis of uninvited applause, Bull (2016) concludes that “uninvited applause may occur not only as a direct response to the content of the speech, but also through a misreading of rhetorical devices as applause invitations, when the associated delivery suggested that the politician intended to continue with his speech” (p. 479). An example of a “misreading” would be if an audience did not predict the completion of a three part-list and the response occurred too early, after the second part of the list, or led to an unnatural delay in the response after the list was completed.

Due to the predominance of applause, laughter, and chanting in this address, the number of interruptions and uninvited occurrences may be attributed to the contagiousness of these types of responses. Specifically, the audience’s elevated level of mirth and excitement (as seen in the frequency and duration of applause, laughter, and chanting) may be the explanation as to why more than half of audience responses in this address were uninvited. Therefore, emotion induced interruption more so than signaling failure or lack of rhetorical placement on behalf of the speaker may be the reason for these phenomena in this address.

## 1984 Republican National Convention address

The 1984 Republican National Convention convened in the Dallas Convention Center in Dallas, Texas from August 20 to 23, 1984. Reagan's first term as president was not free of complication, from an assassination attempt to a growing federal deficit. However, with economic growth and a decreasing unemployment rate on his side, paired with a positive persona of exuberant youth, Reagan was able to sustain his mandate for the presidency (Hayward, 2009). As a relatively popular incumbent, polling at 54% approval among the American public prior to the convention (Gallup, 2016b), President Reagan ran unopposed for the Republican nomination, allowing the nominating convention to be a celebratory event of party unity. Therefore, the program and speakers focused on honing a clear Republican Party platform as they entered the general election campaign in hopes of ensuring Reagan's re-election as president against Democratic candidate, former U.S. Senator and former Vice President Walter Mondale. After nearly four years in office, Reagan's acceptance speech on the final evening of the convention, August 23, was an opportunity for him to highlight his accomplishments as President, incite enthusiasm among Republican partisans, and craftily attack his opponents.

The total speaking time for Reagan's address consisted of 37.28 minutes (2237 s) across 159 speaking turns, with an average length of twelve and a half seconds per turn ( $M = 12.5$  s;  $SD = 15.86$  s). The high level of speaker-audience interaction is apparent with 151 total audience responses occurring throughout the address for a total of 21.57 minutes (1294.19 s). Applause consumed approximately 15.44 minutes (926.11 s;  $M = 8.42$  s;  $N = 110$ ) of response time, while laughter was 7.31 seconds ( $M = 1.83$  s;  $N = 4$ ), boos were 37.11 seconds ( $M = 4.64$  s;  $N = 8$ ), composites of applause and boos were 36.82 seconds ( $M = 2.83$  s;  $N = 13$ ), composites of applause and laughter were approximately 34.96 seconds ( $M = 5.83$  s,  $N = 6$ ), composites of

laughter and boos were 3.64 seconds ( $M = 3.64$  s;  $N=1$ ), composites of applause and chanting were 3.21 minutes (192.62 s;  $M = 24.1$  s;  $N=8$ ), and composites of applause, laughter, and chanting were 55.62 seconds ( $M = 55.62$  s;  $N=1$ ) of all audience utterances.

Ninety-eight of the 151 audience responses were a result of invited claptrap (~ 65%) while 29 were uninvited interruptions (19.2%), and 24 were uninvited speak overs (15.9%). The average strength of audience responses for the entire speaking engagement was approximately 4.19, “very audible” ( $M=4.19$ ). The average intensity of response in this address was 22.72 ( $r = 0.4$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a correlation between higher levels of strength and the length of responses. Despite the number of audience utterances, the majority of responses were invited, indicating Reagan’s ability to dictate the tone and timing of audience-speaker interactions.

### **1992 Republican National Convention address**

The 1992 Republican National Convention took place from August 17 through 20, 1992 in Houston, Texas at the Astrodome. As incumbent President George H. W. Bush sought re-election alongside his Vice President, Dan Quayle, the Republican Party faced youthful Arkansas Governor, Bill Clinton and his running mate, U.S. Senator Al Gore of Tennessee in the general election. Former President Reagan took the stage on the opening night of the convention, August 17, to support his former Vice President’s re-election bid and deliver his last speech as a public figure. Just two years later, in 1994, Reagan announced his diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease and lived a private life until he succumbed to the disease in 2004 at the age of 93. Therefore, analysis of the 1992 address allows for insight into Reagan’s rhetorical style at the end of his public speaking life and during a time that he was possibly battling undiagnosed Alzheimer’s disease (Berisha, Wang, LaCross, & Liss, 2015).



Reagan's encouraging, yet somber, farewell address to the 1992 Republican National Convention consisted of 138 speaking turns covering approximately 25 minutes (1499.59 s) of speaking time, with the average speaking turn taking approximately nine seconds ( $M=9.14$  s;  $SD = 18.4$  s). The high volume of speaking turns in comparison to the average audience response is a preliminary indicator of the nature of the relationship between Reagan and the audience. There were 81 instances of audience response ( $N=81$ ) lasting for a total of nearly 16 minutes (949.47 s). Applause was the most prevalent response, with a total of 33 applause events that were 4.52 minutes of response time (270.92 s;  $M= 8.21$  s;  $N=33$ ). Additionally, laughter accounted for 6.37 seconds of audience responses ( $M=3.19$  s;  $N=2$ ), boos approximately 41.02 seconds ( $M=5.86$  s;  $N=7$ ), mixtures of applause and boos 13.25 seconds ( $M= 6.63$  s;  $N=2$ ), mixtures of applause and laughter for 1.48 minutes (89.02 s;  $M= 12.72$ ;  $N=7$ ), mixtures of applause and chanting 6.45 minutes (386.7 s;  $M= 25.78$ ;  $N=15$ ), and mixtures of applause, laughter, and chanting for approximately 2.37 minutes (142.18 s;  $M= 28.44$ ;  $N=5$ ). Forty-two of the 81 audience responses (51.85%) were attributed to invited claptrap, while nine (11.11%) were uninvited interruptions, 27 (33.33%) were uninvited speak over, and while three (3.7%) began as uninvited speak overs and melded into an invited claptrap. The average strength of audience responses across the address was 3.8, indicating "moderately audible" to "very audible" audience utterances, while the mean intensity of responses was 15.52 ( $r = 0.62$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

### **Discussion**

Across the four sampled speeches, some patterns emerge as to the relationship between speaking time, audience response, and synchrony of audience response. Total speaking time by Reagan was 278.74 seconds in 1976<sup>6</sup> ( $N = 10$ ;  $M = 27.87$  s;  $SD = 52$  s), 2005.79 seconds in 1980

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<sup>6</sup> The 1976 speech in entirety was remarkably shorter than the other three sampled speeches.

( $N = 116$ ;  $M = 17.29$  s;  $SD = 16.99$  s), 2237 seconds in 1984 ( $N = 159$ ;  $M = 12.5$  s;  $SD = 15.86$  s), and 1499.59 seconds in 1992 ( $N = 164$ ;  $M = 9.14$  s;  $SD = 18.4$  s). Remarkably, there is a decrease in the amount of speaking time by Reagan in the latest speech, 1992, yet also an increase in total speaking turns. However, the speaking turns were shorter on average than the other sampled speeches. This, coupled with the amount of audience response in 1992 ( $N = 81$ ;  $M = 11.72$  s), indicates less frequent, but longer responses than 1976 ( $N = 6$ ;  $M = 11.6$  s), 1980 ( $N = 104$ ;  $M = 8.36$  s), and 1984 ( $N = 151$ ;  $M = 8.57$  s). These observations provide insight into heightened level of emotion and excitement that took place during the 1992 address in comparison to the previous addresses. Reagan's stage presence, while less energetic than his earlier years, clearly serves as a point of pride for the audience, who seeks him as an icon of their cause.

Additionally, comparing audience response throughout the four speeches provides insight into the emotional state of the audience in each scenario. Audience response as a total percentage of the speech increases throughout the years, with 1976 comprised of 19.97% response, 1980 comprised of 30.23% response, 1984 comprised of 36.65% response, and 1992 comprised of 38.77% response. To examine this even further, the type of response as a percentage of the total reveals insight into the prevalence of more traditional audience responses such as applause with those that suggest a higher level of mutual monitoring, such as booing or chanting.

A notable trend regards the incidence of applause as the most frequent type of audience response (63%) in the four speeches combined. However, when isolated by speech, all but 1992 follow this same trend. In 1992, the most seconds of response time were attributed to applause and chanting combined (40.73%), with a combination of applause, laughter, and chanting comprising 14.97%. While this also includes applause and/or laughter in addition to chanting, it

reveals the excited nature of the audience, as well as their ability to coordinate their actions into a succinct, rhythmic chant. Whereas chanting also occurs in 1980 and 1984, these instances only account for 5.28% and 19.18%, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that the environment and emotional state of the 1992 audience was functioning at a heightened level of emotion, as well as in-group coordination, then the earlier speeches. Within the parameters of this study it cannot be known for sure without speaking to the audience members themselves, but the study data advances that this is due to Reagan's status within the Republican Party as a beloved former president and his impact on the party as a whole as the father of the modern conservative movement.

### **III. Rhetorical Devices**

In addition to analyzing the relationship between speaking turns and types of audience response, the present study seeks to answer three posed research questions regarding the relationship between certain rhetorical devices and the timing of audience response. Specifically, how do rhetorically formatted statements affect audience response ( $RQ_1$ ,  $RQ_2$ ,  $RQ_3$ )? This study explores the relationship between types of rhetorical devices and the frequency, intensity, synchrony, and invitedness of audience responses. Each research question is discussed in light of the study findings.

#### **Rhetoric and Frequency of Audience Response ( $RQ_1$ , Table 6)**

The relationship between rhetorical devices and audience responses was found to be significant. One previous study (Bull & Miskinis, 2015) has applied the rhetorical framework to American political speeches, which is important due to much of previous research being conducted in the United Kingdom. Recent application of the framework has expanded to include seven additional rhetorical devices (Feldman & Bull, 2012), while still supporting the pattern found in the seminal literature (Atkinson 1984a; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986) regarding the predominance of contrasts, three-parted lists, and applause-cheering responses. Bull and Miskinis (2015, p. 529) find that combinations of contrasts and lists are the most used techniques used by Barack Obama and Mitt Romney during selected speeches from the 2012 Presidential Election (33.45% Obama; 35.08% Romney). The study data support the frequency of contrasts and three-parted lists in American political speech, as well as the predominance of applause-cheering.

Across the four selected speeches, the study data suggests that rhetorical devices accounted for 42.63% ( $N = 191$ ) of audience response, while content devices were 57.37% ( $N =$

257), with 12.28% of the total attributed to combinations of rhetorical and content devices ( $N = 55$ ). The most frequent rhetorical device utilized was an explicit appeal— jokes and humorous expressions (7.59%;  $N = 34$ ) followed by implicit naming (6.92%;  $N = 31$ ), contrast (5.58%;  $N = 25$ ), three-parted lists (5.36%;  $N = 24$ ), and requesting agreement/asking for confirmation (5.13%;  $N = 23$ ). Traditionally dominant contrasts and three-parted lists were 10.94% ( $N = 49$ ) of the total devices used in the selected speeches, supporting findings in previous literature (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986; Bull & Miskinis, 2015) that these two devices would make up a large portion of the total devices used. Combinations of rhetorical devices were 4.46% ( $N = 20$ ) of responses, with three-parted lists and contrasts frequently occurring together (1.56%;  $N=7$ ).

Content devices, first tested by Heritage and Greatbatch, are noted to play a role in affiliative audience responses, such as applause, due to audience support for attacks or policy statements (1986, pp. 145-149). However, the nature of these content devices in rhetorical speech has been summed as an “increased reaction to the rhetorically formatted statements of the speech rather than as increased general response to the speech’s content regardless of rhetorical structuring” (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986, p. 149). The results of the present study suggest otherwise, by indicating the important role of speech content when a leader is delivering an acceptance speech and/or addressing an excited, ideologically similar audience (Choi et al., 2016).

The leading content devices utilized, advocacy of particular policy positions (19.87%;  $N = 89$ ) and external attacks (17.41%;  $N = 78$ ), are indicative of the importance of policy content in a campaign speech, where rallying support for majority-held policies and attacking the opposition party and/or candidate are acting as content claptraps. The raucous crowd present at the Republican National Convention is also greatly influenced by their shared emotions with

fellow-audience members, arguably causing them to respond more boisterously than they typically would in a mixed setting. This study presented two new types of content devices that would have been otherwise coded as “other/ miscellaneous” due to their observed frequency throughout the speeches. These devices, personal and political accomplishments and value statements and encouraging promises about the future and/or country, encompass common themes in a campaign speech, and are attributed to 4.69% ( $N = 21$ ) and 14.06% ( $N = 63$ ), respectively, of observed audience responses in this sample. However, it should be acknowledged that the predominance of these novel devices in the sample may not be generalizable to other types of political speech, due to the specific group dynamics within Republican National Conventions during the time periods studied.

Combinations of two or more content devices are attributed to 6.47% ( $N = 29$ ) of audience responses, indicating the substantial impact of these devices when used together. In particular, external attacks and advocacy of policy were combined to accomplish two goals: shedding light on the opponent party’s faults and the Republican Party’s alternative policy solution (1.11%;  $N=5$ ). Additionally, the new variable, value statement, was impactful on audience response when paired with advocacy of policy, occurring together at a rate of 2.9% ( $N=13$ ) and was the most frequent combination found throughout the selected speeches. The most frequent combination of rhetoric and content devices were combinations of jokes/humorous expressions and external attacks (2.46%;  $N=11$ ), indicating the potency of other-deprecatory humor as an aggregation of external attack and humor (Meyer, 2000; Stewart, 2011). Combinations of request agreement/asking for confirmation and external attacks were also prominent (2.01%;  $N=9$ ), due to the pairing of external attacks and Reagan’s requests for response from the audience, through posed questions regarding Democratic Party policy stances.

Due to the type of audience, Reagan expected exuberant “no!” responses to these proposals, which he received.

### **Applause (Table 7)**

Applause (by itself or in conjunction with other responses) was by far the most frequent audience response in the selected speeches ( $N=314$ , 91.81%), accounting for 91.74% ( $N=411$ ) of all rhetorical and non-rhetorical appeals. Therefore, it is important to note which devices evoked applause in any form, whether it was applause by itself, in conjunction, or in sequence with laughter, booing, and/or chanting. The leading rhetorical devices that induced applause were namings (7.3%;  $N=30$ ), jokes/humorous expressions (7.06%;  $N=29$ ), contrasts (6.08%;  $N=25$ ), and three-part lists (5.6%;  $N=23$ ). The leading content devices were advocacy of particular policy positions (21.41%;  $N=88$ ), external attacks (15.33%;  $N=63$ ), and value statements/encouraging promises (15.09%;  $N=62$ ). Combinations of rhetoric and content account for 12.65% of responses ( $N=52$ ), with jokes/humorous expressions and external attacks (2.68%;  $N=11$ ) and requesting agreement/asking for confirmation and external attacks (2.19%;  $N=9$ ) being the most frequent combinations.

### **Laughter (Table 8)**

Laughter was the least frequent response type with 30 laughter responses (by itself or in conjunction/sequence with other responses) occurring throughout the selected speeches (8.77%). Laughter was predominantly caused by jokes/humorous expressions (60.47%;  $N=26$ ). However, blended rhetorical and content devices (25.58%;  $N=11$ ) of jokes/humorous expressions and external attacks (20.93%;  $N=9$ ) and jokes/humorous expressions and value statements/encouraging promises (4.65%;  $N=2$ ) were also successful at eliciting laughter in the

audience. This indicates the power of well-framed other-deprecatory humor in a partisan campaign environment, which can ascertain laughter from the audience when the speaker desires it.

### **Affiliative Booing (Table 9)**

Booing (by itself or in conjunction with other responses) occurred 39 times throughout the selected speeches, for a total of 11.4% of audience responses. Booing is considered affiliative when it is a positive response to the speaker or what the speaker said. Disaffiliative booing did not occur in the selected speeches; however, this is not unexpected due to the nature of the venue and the audiences being ideologically similar (Greene, 2004, p. 138). Requesting agreement/asking for confirmation (31.58%;  $N=18$ ) was the most prominent rhetorical device that elicited affiliative booing, followed by negative naming (8.77%;  $N=5$ ). In the requesting agreement phrases, direct appeals were made toward the audience that encouraged them to directly respond to the speaker. The predominant content device that evoked affiliative booing was external attacks (49.12%;  $N=28$ ). Nine combinations of requesting agreement and external attacks (15.79%) and four combinations of negative naming and external attacks (7.02%) were responsible for 22.81% ( $N=13$ ) of booing behavior. In these instances, Reagan made examples of his opponents by highlighting poor policy decisions and/or specifically naming members of the opposition and framed the appeals as requests towards the audience to respond. These requests resulted in affiliative booing that was often coupled with applause or laughter.

### **Affiliative Chanting (Table 10)**

Chanting was observed to occur with other responses, specifically laughter and applause, and was not observed to occur in isolation in the selected speeches. There were 31 instances of



chanting throughout the selected speeches, totaling approximately 9% of total responses. Apart from Choi and colleague's (2016) rhetorical analysis of chanting in political speeches, Bull's framework (Bull, 2003; Bull, 2016) has not been extended to closely analyze chanting. That being said, the results of this analysis are rudimentary in the understanding of rhetoric and chanting behavior and require further study in the future. However, some preliminary observations as to the nature of chanting are apparent in this initial analysis.

Unlike other types of responses, rhetoric and content devices that preceded chanting were spread across many different categories in this sample, with no one specific device standing out as the dominant type. Within rhetorical devices, jokes and humorous expressions were most frequent (18.18%;  $N=8$ ). However, value statements/encouraging promises (18.18%;  $N=8$ ) and external attacks (13.64%;  $N=6$ ) were also influential as content devices. Combinations of rhetorical and content devices were approximately 18.18% ( $N=8$ ) of the total, with combinations of jokes/humorous expressions and external attacks (9.09%;  $N=4$ ) being the most frequent type. The relationship between chanting and laughter is apparent due to this use of jokes/humorous expressions.

Whilst there are limitations of the sample size of this dataset, there is a pattern that emerges from what is available. Emotional contagion may be the driving force behind chanting, making the response removed or almost completely absent from the influence of preceding rhetorical and content devices. More specifically, it may not matter how the speaker framed a statement if they mentioned at least one "hot-button" word or phrase, such as their opponent's name or made a witty comment that made the audience feel a surge of emotion towards the speaker and their fellow group members. Additionally, the sequential behavior of chanting may lead precursors of applause, laughter, and/or booing to influence subsequent chanting. Again, the

limitations of resources regarding the nature of chanting in extant literature and within this study make these postulations skeptical at best.

Another interesting observation about the frequency of chanting is its distribution throughout the analyzed speeches. Specifically, whilst it does not occur at all during 1976, occurs twice during 1980, nine times during 1984, and 20 times during 1992. This provides information as to the attitude of the audience in these later speeches. An increase in chanting indicates a lack of individual decorum and a bubbling up of excitement in response to what Reagan said. Excitement and mirth, stemming from a successful joke or external attack often resulted in expected applause and/or laughter, which occasionally stretched into chanting of phrases such as “Four more years!” or “We love Ron!”. The timing of these transitions between applause and/or laughter and chanting indicate a sequential ordering of the two phenomena. The disproportionate occurrence of chanting in the later speeches, 1984 and 1992, may be indicative of Reagan’s popularity among Republican Party elites or even his ability to communicate with the audience. However, it is challenging to pinpoint specific devices that led to chanting, making it most likely not an intentional response signaled by Reagan. The interruptive and uninvited nature of the chanting indicates that Reagan did not intend to cause it, as he often signaled verbally and non-verbally that it made him uncomfortable by continuing to speak through the chanting.

### **Rhetoric and Intensity of Response (*RQ*<sub>2</sub>, Tables 11 and 12)**

The rhetorical devices that signaled the most intense audience responses were puzzle-resolution ( $M = 40.07$ ), expressing appreciation ( $M = 37.85$ ), and commendations of particular individuals ( $M = 32.56$ ). With intensity being an additive measure of strength and duration, it accounts for the relationship between length and loudness of a response. The range of intensity

measures in the sample is 3.3 (min) to 40.07 (max). However, the additive nature of the intensity measure can inflate outliers when there are only a few responses to a particular device type and those few responses are unusually long. Therefore, the relationship between rhetoric and intensity does not provide clear results, apart from a few observations. Content devices had an average intensity of 18.67, while rhetorical devices had an average intensity of 20.41, indicating increased intensity of response when rhetorical appeals were employed.

By aggregating explicit invitations (expressing appreciation, requesting agreement, jokes/humorous expressions, asking for support, and description of campaign activities) and evaluating them separately from implicit invitations (all other devices), the data reveals insight into the influence of explicit appeals on the efficacy of rhetorical devices. In the total sample, explicit appeals have a mean intensity of 16.5 while implicit appeals have a mean intensity of 17.52. Within particular speeches, implicit devices garner stronger and longer responses than their explicit counterparts (Table 10). However, this difference is minimal, and does not allow for certain conclusions about the relationship between explicit and implicit appeals in this sample. Additionally, outliers in the sample inflated mean intensity measures. For example, puzzle solution provides a mean intensity of 40.07; however, the standard deviation is 34.2. This may be caused by a total of three disproportionately intense occurrences of puzzle solution in the entire sample.

### **Rhetoric and Synchrony of Response (*RQ*<sub>3</sub>, Table 13)**

As a whole, invited claptrap responses comprised 55.26% ( $N = 189$ ) of total audience responses, followed by 25.15% ( $N = 86$ ) uninvited speak-overs, and 18.42% ( $N = 63$ ) uninvited interruptions (Table 2). The rhetorical devices that produced the most synchronous claptrap invited responses were jokes/humorous expressions (4.9%;  $N = 12$ ), namings (2.45%;  $N = 6$ ),

and request agreement/asking for confirmation (2.45%;  $N = 6$ ). Claptraps accounted for 44.44% ( $N = 44$ ) of total rhetorical devices ( $N=99$ ), while they were associated with 50.68% ( $N = 74$ ) of total content devices ( $N=146$ ). This indicates that despite rhetorical devices being thought to invoke invited and timed responses, content devices were more successful in inviting positive audience response.

Speak-overs occurred a total of 86 times within the sample, being attributed to rhetorical namings (4.08%;  $N=10$ ) and other/miscellaneous (4.08%;  $N=10$ ). In total, rhetorical devices accounted for 40% ( $N = 30$ ) of speak-overs, while content devices totaled 60% ( $N = 45$ ) of speak-over events. The frequency of “other” responses and speak-overs are indicative of the relationship between failed speaker signaling and uninvited responses. Specifically, these speak-overs were unable to be attributed to any of the rhetorical devices in the framework, yet still led to a response. However, this response was uninvited and was quelled by Reagan as he chose to continue speaking over the audience.

Lastly, uninvited interruptions, in which the audience’s response led Reagan to pause his speaking were 48.98% rhetorical devices ( $N=24$ ) and 51.02% content devices ( $N=25$ ). The leading rhetorical interrupters were naming (3.27%;  $N=8$ ), jokes/humorous expressions (1.63%;  $N=4$ ), request agreement/asking for confirmation (1.22%;  $N=3$ ), and other/miscellaneous (1.22%;  $N=3$ ).

Being classified as explicit invitations (Bull & Miskinis, 2015), request agreement/asking for confirmation and jokes/humorous expressions tend to incite responses due to their invitational nature. However, in these instances, they led to uninvited interruptive responses, indicating that Reagan may have incorrectly or unintentionally signaled these as explicit invitations in which he desired a verbal response. The more interruptive content devices were

predominantly advocacy of policy (4.9%;  $N=12$ ), value statements/encouraging promises (2.86%;  $N=7$ ), and combinations (2.45%;  $N=6$ ).

Levels of isolation in responses can be determined by their strength and beginning and completion points. Barely to slightly audible responses (1 and 2 on the strength scale) are due to a low magnitude of response and therefore indicate an isolated and scattered response, compared to moderately to extremely audible responses (3, 4, and 5 on the strength scale). A total of 64 (18.66%) of responses were isolated, with an average duration of 2.03 seconds ( $SD = 2.12$  s). Additionally, all but one of the isolated responses were not only uninvited speak-overs and interruptions but were attributed to content devices (90.63%;  $N = 58$ ) which provides support for the posed hypothesis.

By aggregating the synchrony of responses by address (Table 2), trends appear in the level of invitation and synchrony across time spans. In particular, uninvited and interruptive audience responses decrease in later speeches, while invited claptraps were predominant in all speeches. Notably, 1980 and 1992 had a disproportionate amount of uninvited responses through speak-overs and interruptions. While the 1980 address did not contain a disproportionate number of chanting ( $N=2$ ), the prevalence of applause ( $N=90$ ) indicates a level of excitement among the audience that may be due to it being the President's first nomination acceptance speech. On the other hand, chanting in 1992 was frequent, comprising of approximately 25% of responses ( $N = 20$ ) and led a pervasiveness of uninvited responses (Table 2). However, it is important to note that despite being uninvited in nature, these responses were affiliative chanting and boos that supported the speaker.

In conclusion, the results of  $RQ_3$  provide mixed support for the posed hypothesis that rhetorical appeals will produce more synchronous responses than non-rhetorical devices (Table

13). Content devices were invited 44.44% of the time ( $N = 74$ ), as opposed to rhetorical devices which were invited 50.68% percent of the time ( $N = 44$ ). This marginal difference in the level of synchrony and invitedness in content devices over rhetorical devices do not provide support the hypothesis. In this case, rhetorical devices did produce more synchronous and invited responses than non-rhetorical devices, but only slightly more so. Content devices contributed to 56.45% of uninvited and asynchronous responses ( $N = 70$ ), while rhetorical devices were 43.55% ( $N = 54$ ) of uninvited and asynchronous responses. Therefore, while these findings marginally support the hypothesis that rhetorical devices will be more synchronous and invited than non-rhetorical devices, they do not provide robust evidence as to the differences between rhetorical and non-rhetorical devices. The similar results among the rhetorical and non-rhetorical findings diverge from what was expected due to the findings in previous studies. While an interesting result, these observations may be due to the limitations of the sample size, as the sheer volume of content devices over rhetorical devices may have skewed the results of this study.

#### IV. Discussion & Conclusions

The present study explores the relationship between rhetorical devices and audience responses, intensity, and synchrony. Guided by the posed research questions ( $RQ_1$ ,  $RQ_2$ ,  $RQ_3$ ), this study provides findings that partially support the proposed hypothesis: Ronald Reagan strategically used the Atkinson/Bull (Atkinson 1984a, 1984b; Bull 2003; Bull, 2016; Choi et al., 2016) rhetorical device strategies to elicit more frequent, intense, and synchronous audience responses among Republican National Convention audiences.

$RQ_1$ : How do rhetorically formatted statements influence the frequency of audience responses in comparison to non-rhetorically formatted statements?

$RQ_2$ : How do rhetorically formatted statements influence the intensity of audience responses in comparison to non-rhetorically formatted statements?

$RQ_3$ : How do rhetorically formatted statements influence the synchrony and invitedness of audience responses in comparison to non-rhetorically formatted statements?

The primary research question,  $RQ_1$ , offers mixed support for the hypothesis. First, the data finds partial support for two of the key assumptions of the Atkinson/Bull framework: 1) contrasts and three-parted lists will comprise the most frequent rhetorical device types and 2) applause-cheering will be the most frequent type of audience response (Atkinson 1984a, 1984b; Bull 2003; Bull, 2016; Choi et al., 2016). The first assumption is partially supported, with contrasts and three-parted lists contributing occurring frequently ( $N = 25$ , 5.58%;  $N = 24$ , 5.36%), but they are not the primary rhetorical devices observed. Jokes/humorous expressions and naming ( $N = 34$ , 7.59%;  $N = 31$ , 6.92%) were the dominant rhetorical devices. This indicates the importance of humor in Reagan's speeches and its ability to prompt audience response.

The second assumption, regarding the prevalence of applause-cheering, holds true in this analysis. However, the data fails to support the remainder of the hypothesis regarding the prevalence of rhetoric over content devices. In this study, content devices were more frequent than rhetorical devices; findings that contradict positions held in prior literature (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986, p. 146; Bull, 2000; Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000).

The relationship between the intensity of audience response and the presence of rhetorical or content devices ( $RQ_2$ ) provides insight into the emotional interconnectedness of audience response in a partisan environment such as a party convention. In the sampled speeches, the sheer amount of uninvited responses, especially speak overs, that occur indicate a high level of audience excitement and absence of decorum while in the presence of a prominent figure such as the President of the United States. In later speeches, particularly 1992, it may be argued that Reagan's age may have contributed to an inability to adequately signal completion points, time claptrap devices to their full potential, and control the audience as a whole. Therefore, the relationship between rhetorical devices and the synchrony of responses ( $RQ_3$ ) was not only inconsistent across the entirety of the speeches, but also did not support existing theory that credits rhetorical devices for providing more synchronous and invited audience response. The abundance of content devices over rhetorical devices, as well as the ability for content devices to provide synchronous responses does not support the assumption that rhetorical devices are more capable at provoking audience response than non-rhetorical devices. In fact, the results of this study suggest that content devices are almost as successful at inducing invited and cohesive audience response as rhetorical devices.



## Implications

The findings in this study do not align with expected outcomes of previous research. Specifically, this study found that content devices were more prevalent than rhetorical devices in the sampled speeches. In particular, advocacy of policy was the most frequent device used by Reagan in the selected Republican National Convention speeches ( $N = 89$ ; 19.87%). Although these findings do not support the previous studies, the results allow for insight into the rhetorical and group dynamics of partisan convention settings. Prior to Choi and colleagues' (2016) application of the rhetorical framework, there was a lack of delineation between different types of political addresses and settings. Due to this, it is difficult to generalize this rhetorical framework to all types of political speech. Therefore, since this study's unit of analysis is addresses by Ronald Reagan at Republican National Conventions, it does provide support for the existing theory and frameworks in their ability to apply to all types of political settings. In other words, the results of this study do not invalidate existing theory, but provide an example of replication of the theory, regarding a specific leader, Ronald Reagan, and a specific political context, Republican National Conventions, despite its divergent findings.

The proliferation of content over rhetorical devices was also clarified by two content device types that were added by the researcher, personal/political accomplishment and value statement/encouraging promise about future and/or country. While these two devices were developed for this study, they provide an expansion of the framework that may apply to other political speeches. These two content device types may apply to party convention addresses or campaign speeches due to the tendency for speakers to not only tout their own accomplishments, but also make promises about the future. This study does not endeavor to alter the existing framework based on this one study but does allow for future applications that may include these

two variables. If replicable, this may provide evidence to support the notion that the content framework deserves to be augmented with further device types.

Previous study has not developed a coding approach that allows for the combination of both rhetorical and content devices occurring in the same phrase. This may have been done due to the distinct nature of the two types of responses or the general dismissal of the influence of content devices within speech. The leading reason for the ability of content devices to lead to audience response in the absence of rhetorical devices has been attributed to underlying rhetorical strategies within the way the content statement was presented to the audience. However, this study sought to look at the two coding approaches, rhetorical and non-rhetorical, and observe the possibility of both occurring in a single phrase or sentence.

The results of the study found a high frequency of combinations of rhetorical and content devices occurring in the same phrase or sentence. ( $N = 55$ ; 12.28%). Therefore, it cannot be discounted that rhetorical and content devices can occur in tandem. The pairings of certain combinations of rhetorical and content devices were frequently observed and are attributed to similarities in the type of appeal. For example, jokes/humorous expressions (rhetorical) and external attacks (content) occurred together 11 times across the selected speeches (2.46%). The relationship between these two devices is mostly attributed to the presence of humorous jokes that attacked an out-group throughout the sampled speeches.

This study also sought to expand the study of chanting in political speech by coding it as an audience response among the more frequently studied types of response – applause-cheering, laughter, and booing. The observation of chanting in the selected speeches supported Choi and colleagues' (2016) recent expansion of political speech analysis to analyze the nature of chanting. This study observed the sequential nature of chanting, in which it occurs in succession

of responses such as applause and laughter. Therefore, since chanting did not occur in the absence of other types of responses, within the findings in this study it can be concluded that chanting is largely a sequential response.

The relationship between applause, laughter, and chanting provides information as to the emotional contagion in which chanting originates. In other words, heightened emotions and excitement in response to a statement by the speaker may begin as applause, laughter, or both, and then develop into a coordinated chanting event. While the speaker may have invited the applause and/or laughter through the employment of a claptrap, they may not have necessarily invited chanting. In the selected speeches, it is clear that Reagan did not invite chanting due to his attempts to interrupt or speak over it and his displays of discomfort through sighs or failed interruptions of the response.

Chanting behavior is not only affiliative but requires a level of mutual monitoring that exceeds that of booing behavior. Whereas booing is costly, it does not require as precise a level of coordination as chanting does. Successful chanting requires repetition and rhythm (Choi et al., 2016, p. 608) that can only be achieved through group coordination within the audience. The words that the chant includes are meaningful to the audience and express a shared position or agreement with the speaker. The environment of a Republican National Convention lacks the decorum of an event such as an inaugural or State of the Union address, and therefore provides the possibility for chanting due to the elevated level of excitement and ideological agreement among the audience.

Along the same lines, this study observed an increased amount of uninvited crowd responses in comparison to previous studies. A lack of decorum may be due to emotion of the crowd in this type of political setting. The level of uninvited responses increases over the years,

occurring more frequently in the two speeches in which Reagan was the presidential nominee (1980,  $N = 57$ ; 1984,  $N = 55$ ) (Table 2). While this trend does not necessarily follow in 1992 ( $N = 39$ ), this shows a development in the relationship between the audience and Reagan over his years in the political spotlight. In both 1980 and 1984, the audience was ecstatic about their party nominee, leading to more uninvited responses that Reagan either interrupted or spoke over in order to continue his speech.

While this study's principle goal was to provide further application of the Atkinson/Bull framework (Atkinson 1984a, 1984b; Bull 2003; Bull, 2016; Choi, Bull, & Reed, 2016), it also sought to provide insight into the rhetorical strategies that made Ronald Reagan a renowned communicator. Specifically, this study's hypothesis posited that Reagan's use of rhetorical devices, such as the ones outlined in the aforementioned framework, were instrumental in Reagan's perception as the "Great Communicator". However, the results of this study do not provide sufficient evidence to support that claim. While Reagan did use rhetoric to his advantage, he was also able to captivate audiences through his sheer ability to time his speeches and jokes to prompt affiliative audience responses. Whereas existing scholarship argues that the employment of rhetoric and synchronous responses are related, this study provides evidence that Reagan had an aptitude for managing and inviting his audience's responses, even when he employed content devices in the absence of rhetoric. Therefore, it can be tentatively argued that Reagan had the ability to transcend the standard in which the subjects of existing literature followed.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited in its ability to fully encompass all the intervening variables (such as speechwriters, public speaking coaches, and pre-written jokes) that contribute to Reagan's

proclivity for communicating. While it examines his use of rhetorical devices and ability to evoke affiliative audience response, it does not fully explore the strategies used by Reagan and his speechwriters to draft these addresses. Therefore, the level to which these rhetorical and non-rhetorical devices were considered while drafting these speeches is not clear. However, it is apparent that great care was taken by Reagan and his speechwriters to construct and deliver addresses in a way that not only allowed Reagan to garner support for his policy agenda, but also engender an emotional connection between him and the audience as well as the audience members among themselves.

An important limitation is that this study does not truly encompass Reagan's speeches to Republican National Conventions throughout his career. While Reagan also addressed the 1964 and 1988 Republican National Conventions, those speeches were not included in this analysis due to the researcher's desire to limit the amount of speeches sampled.

### **Future study**

This study initially sought to provide practical implications as a quasi-guidebook for political practitioners. Particularly, this guidebook would allow political leaders and their advisors to determine what types of rhetorical and content devices are more likely to elicit desired audience responses such as applause-cheering, laughter, booing, and/or chanting. While the existing framework provides this in a way, this study sought to examine Reagan longitudinally to not only break down what contributed to his legacy as the "Great Communicator", but also Reagan's use of rhetorical and content devices over time. Although this study has provided insight into Reagan's use of rhetoric and, in turn, audience response, it does not deliver enough evidence to allow for a true guidebook to be produced from its results. Future study will seek to expand the sample size to fully encompass Reagan's use of rhetorical and

content devices and provide a well-rounded understanding of his speech techniques throughout his career.

The addition of the 1964 and 1988 addresses would allow for a more complete analysis of Reagan as he entered politics through his presidency. Future research will seek to analyze these additional addresses to more robustly encompass Reagan's speech strategy and ability to arouse audience response among Republican National Convention audiences. An additional interest to the researcher regards the possible influence of Alzheimer's disease on Reagan's public speeches. Whereas it is known that he developed Alzheimer's disease in 1994, it is not known as to when the onset of symptoms began to occur. By exploring Reagan's speech patterns in his later life, further analysis could specifically examine whether Alzheimer's symptoms effected his oratory style or ability to dictate audience response. Berisha and colleagues (2015) have developed a content analysis framework that searches for words and behavior often used by Alzheimer's patients to determine whether Reagan was suffering from the disease at an earlier date than is known. This framework could be applied to Reagan's speeches over time to provide insight into the possible influence of Alzheimer's disease not only on Reagan's speech, but also his presidency.

Although this study addresses humor through analyzing jokes and humorous expressions in the rhetorical coding scheme and coding for audience laughter, it could be improved with a more precise measure of humor. The use of Long and Graesser's (1988) theory of humor would provide a coding scheme that further explores the difference between jokes and wit. This would allow for further analysis of the type of humor used by Reagan and his ability to balance jokes, which are premeditated and planned, with wit, a more "on the fly" type of humor. The high

frequency of jokes and humorous expressions in the sampled speeches can be further illuminated by developing Reagan's use of jokes and wit.

Furthering current knowledge of Reagan as the "Great Communicator" is a difficult task, with many different aspects of communication to explore. Reagan's employment of rhetorical devices is apparent, but he also did not hesitate to induce audience response through non-rhetorical statements, such as advocating for policy or attacking a shared opponent. Future study will provide insight into additional factors besides rhetoric used by Reagan, such as the use of jokes and wit, as well as expand the sample size by evaluating a diverse set of types of Reagan speeches across different time periods. While many aspects of Reagan's communications strategies have been explored in the scholarly community in the decades since his presidency, Reagan's ability to employ specific rhetorical appeals to stimulate affiliative audience response is a fresh topic explored in this study. Advancing the study of the "Great Communicator" to include this topic will provide more tools in which to evaluate Ronald Reagan's use of rhetoric and his relationship with the audiences in which he addressed throughout his public life.

## V. References

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## VI. Appendix: Tables

**Table 1. Speaking Time by Reagan**

<i>Reagan speaking time in Republican National Convention addresses (in seconds)</i>				
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sum</i>
1976	10	27.87	52	278.74
1980	116	17.29	16.99	2005.79
1984	159	12.50	15.86	2237
1992	164	9.14	18.4	1499.59
Total	449	16.7	17.5	6,021.12

**Table 2. Synchrony and Invitedness of Audience Response to Reagan**

<i>Synchrony of Audience Responses in Reagan Republican National Convention addresses</i>					
	Claptrap – Invited <i>N</i>	Interruption - Uninvited <i>N</i>	Speak Over – Uninvited <i>N</i>	Speak Over & Claptrap (Uninvited to Invited) <i>N</i>	Total <i>N</i>
1976	4 (66.66)	2 (33.33)	.	.	6
1980	47 (45.2)	23 (22.12)	33 (31.73)	1 (0.96)	104
1984	96 (63.58)	29 (19.21)	26 (17.22)	.	151
1992	42 (51.85)	9 (11.11)	27 (33.33)	3 (3.7)	81
Total	189 (55.26)	63 (18.42)	86 (25.15)	4 (1.17)	342

*Note.* Length (in seconds) of response denoted in parentheses



**Table 3. Affiliative Audience Responses Received by Reagan**

<i>Affiliative Audience Responses Received by Reagan (sum in seconds)</i>																		
	Applause		Laughter		Boos		Applause & Boos		Applause & Laughter		Laughter & Boos		Applause & Chanting		Applause, Laughter & Chanting		Total	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sum</i>
1976	5	63.56 (91.36)	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	6.01 (8.64)	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	69.57
1980	90	744.57 (85.67)	.	.	6	25.62 (2.95)	2	7.6 (0.87)	4	45.44 (5.22)	.	.	2	45.92 (5.28)	.	.	104	869.15
1984	110	926.11 (71.56)	4	7.31 (0.56)	8	37.11 (2.87)	13	36.82 (2.85)	6	34.96 (2.7)	1	3.64 (0.28)	8	192.62 (14.88)	1	55.62 (4.3)	151	1294.19
1992	43	299.41 (31.53)	2	6.37 (0.67)	7	41.02 (4.32)	2	13.25 (1.4)	7	89.02 (9.38)	.	.	15	386.7 (40.73)	5	142.18 (14.97)	81	949.47
Total	248	2005.16	6	13.68	21	75.98	17	57.67	18	175.43	1	3.64	25	625.24	6	197.8	342	3182.38

*Note.* Percentage of speech total denoted in parentheses

**Table 4. Rhetorical Devices**

<i>Device</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Contrast	juxtaposition of word/phrase/sentence. Completion of similarly constructed contrast signals applause	Atkinson, 1984a
Three-Part List	completion of a three-item list signals applause	Atkinson, 1984a
Naming	speaker invites audience to applaud a particular individual (may be through expression of gratitude)	Atkinson, 1984a
Puzzle-Solution	speaker establishes puzzle/problem and subsequently offers an applaudable solution	Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986
Headline-Punchline	speaker proposes to make declaration/pledge/announcement and subsequently makes that declaration/pledge/announcement. Calling attention in advance to announcement increases applause.	Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986
Position-Taking	speaker describes a position on a policy/state of affairs without indicating his/her personal stance and then proceeds to take a strong stance, either in favor or against the aforementioned position.	Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986
Pursuit	speaker actively pursues applause when claptraps are unsuccessful (can be verbal or non-verbal)	Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986
Negative Naming	speaker invites audience to applaud criticism/ridicule of named person	Bull & Wells, 2002
Greetings/Salutations	speaker introduces him/herself and addresses audience	Bull & Feldman, 2011
Expressing Appreciation	speaker thanks audience for attendance/support	Bull & Feldman, 2011
Request Agreement/Asking for Confirmation	speaker asks question to audience, expecting response	Bull & Feldman, 2011
Jokes/Humorous Expressions	witty/amusing remarks that invite laughter; laughter often melds with applause	Bull & Wells, 2002; Bull & Feldman, 2011
Asking for Support	direct appeals towards audience for support of a particular candidate	Bull & Feldman, 2011
Description of Campaign Activities	story-telling of campaign activities, designed to highlight reception as candidate/communicator/campaigner	Bull & Feldman, 2011
Other/Misc.	miscellaneous statements that receive an audience response but do not fall into any of the above categories	Bull & Feldman, 2011
Combinations	when devices are used in conjunction to produce applause	Atkinson, 1984a

**Table 5. Examples of Rhetorical Devices**

<i>Device</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Contrast	“Isn't our choice really not one of left or right, but of up or down?”	RNC Address, 1984
Three-Part List	“Our tax policies are and will remain pro-work, pro-growth, and pro-family.”	RNC Address, 1984
Naming	“If Mr. Lincoln could see what's happened in these last three and a half years, he might hedge a little on that statement.”	RNC Address, 1980
Puzzle-Solution	“Now, we're accused of having a secret. Well, if we have, it is that we're going to keep the mighty engine of this nation revved up. And that means a future of sustained economic growth without inflation that's going to create for our children and grandchildren a prosperity that finally will last.”	RNC Address, 1984
Headline-Punchline	“I've said it before, and I will say it again: America's best days are yet to come.”	RNC Address, 1992
Position-Taking	“Now it's true: a lot of liberal democrats are saying it's time for a change; and they're right; the only trouble is they're pointing to the wrong end of Pennsylvania Avenue.”	RNC Address 1992
Pursuit	“I know one thing that'll be said in Washington. They will say, ‘Well if the British aren't going to have these weapons anyway they must stop badgering us about these multilateral disarmament talks.’ That's what's going to be said in Washington.”	Lord Patrick Mayhew, British Liberal party conference, 1981 (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986, pp. 133-134)
Negative Naming	“Can anyone compare the state of our economy when the Carter Administration took office with where we are today and say, 'Keep up the good work'?”	RNC Address, 1980
Greetings/Salutations	“As I was just introduced, I am Shimizu Koichiro and in this election for the Lower House I will take part in the campaign serving as the head of the [campaign] office in the [Kyoto] third constituency.”	Shimizu Koichiro, August 26, 2005 (Bull, 2016, p. 480)
Expressing Appreciation	“That, plus this, plus your kindness and generosity in honoring us by bringing us down here will give us a memory that will live in our hearts forever.”	RNC Address, 1976
Request Agreement/Asking for Confirmation	“Is the world safer, a safer place in which to live?”	RNC Address, 1980
Jokes/Humorous Expressions	“Tonight is a very special night for me. Of course, at my age, every night's a very special night.”	RNC Address, 1992
Asking for Support	“We need George Bush!”	RNC Address, 1992
Description of Campaign Activities	“I learned about some new ones from the first graders of Corpus Christi School in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Little Leah Kline was asked by her teacher to describe my duties. She said: 'The President goes to meetings. He helps the animals...’”	RNC Address, 1984
Other/Misc.	“We're not a warlike people.”	RNC Address, 1980
Combinations	“And tonight I come to tell you that I warmly, genuinely, wholeheartedly support the re-election of George Bush as president United States.”	RNC Address, 1992

**Table 6. Frequency of Device Type by Address**

	1976	1980	1984	1992	Total
<i>Rhetorical Devices</i>					
Contrast	.	5	13	7	25 (5.58)
Three-Part List	.	9	9	6	24 (5.36)
Naming	.	3	22	6	31 (6.92)
Puzzle-Solution	1	.	1	1	3 (0.67)
Headline-Punchline	.	6	3	4	13 (2.9)
Position-Taking	.	5	1	2	8 (1.79)
Negative Naming	.	3	3	.	6 (1.34)
<i>Expressing Appreciation</i>	2	2	2	1	7 (1.56)
<i>Requesting Agreement/Asking for Confirmation</i>	.	8	14	1	23 (5.13)
<i>Jokes/Humorous Expressions</i>	1	5	14	14	34 (7.59)
<i>Asking for Support</i>	.	.	.	3	3 (0.7)
<i>Description of Campaign Activities</i>	.	.	1	.	1 (0.22)
Other/Misc.	.	7	5	1	13 (2.9)
<i>Total Rhetorical Devices</i>	4	53	88	46	191 (42.63)
<i>Total Combinations</i>	0	5	6	9	20
<i>Content Devices</i>					
External Attacks	1	18	41	18	78 (17.41)
General Statements of Support or Approval for Speaker's Party	1	1	2	.	4 (0.89)
Advocacy of Particular Policy Positions	.	45	33	11	89 (19.87)
Commendations of particular individuals or factions within speaker's party	.	.	.	2	2 (0.45)
Personal/political accomplishment †	.	1	9	11	21 (4.69)
Value statement/encouraging promise about future and/or country †	.	27	13	23	63 (14.06)
<i>Total Content Devices</i>	2	92	98	65	257 (57.37)
<i>Total Combinations</i>	0	17	3	9	29
<i>Combinations (Rhetorical + Content)</i>	0	16	26	13	55
<i>Total Devices (Total Rhetoric + Total Content)</i>	6	145	186	111	448 (100)

*Note.* The percentage of category count relative to total speech devices is showed in parentheses; explicit invitations are italicized. When two or devices occurred together, they were coded as a combination. However, each device was added to the final count for their respective categories. For example, if a naming and negative naming co-occurred, they would be counted as a combination, but also as a naming and a negative naming (Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Therefore, combinations were not counted in the total, but instead counted individually by category. † Device added to this analysis by the author

**Table 7. Summary of Rhetorical Devices that Evoked Applause\***

	1976	1980	1984	1992	Total
<i>Rhetorical Devices</i>					
Contrast	.	5	13	7	25 (6.08)
Three-Part List	.	8	9	6	23 (5.6)
Naming	.	2	22	6	30 (7.3)
Puzzle-Solution	1	.	1	1	3 (0.73)
Headline-Punchline	.	6	3	4	13 (3.16)
Position-Taking	.	5	1	2	8 (1.95)
Negative Naming	.	1	1	.	2 (0.49)
<i>Expressing Appreciation</i>	2	2	2	1	7 (1.7)
<i>Requesting Agreement/Asking for Confirmation</i>	.	3	13	.	16 (3.9)
<i>Jokes/Humorous Expressions</i>	1	5	11	12	29 (7.06)
<i>Asking for Support</i>	.	.	.	3	3 (0.73)
Other/Misc.	.	7	4	1	12 (2.92)
Combinations	.	3	5	9	17
<i>Total Rhetorical Devices</i>	4	44	80	43	171 (41.61)
<i>Content Devices</i>					
External Attacks	1	17	33	12	63 (15.33)
General Statements of Support or Approval for Speaker's Party	1	1	2	1	5 (1.22)
Advocacy of Particular Policy Positions	.	44	33	11	88 (21.41)
Commendations of particular individuals or factions within speaker's party	.	.	.	2	2 (0.49)
Personal/political accomplishment †	.	1	9	10	20 (4.87)
Value statement/encouraging promise about future and/or country †	.	27	13	22	62 (15.09)
Combinations	.	17	3	8	28
<i>Total Content Devices</i>	2	90	90	58	240 (58.39)
<i>Combinations (Rhetorical + Content)</i>	0	16	24	12	52
<i>Total Devices (Total Rhetoric + Total Content)</i>	6	134	170	101	411 (100)

*Note.* Percentage of category count relative to speech audience response total denoted in parentheses; explicit invitations are italicized. When two or devices occurred together, they were coded as a combination. However, each device was added to the final count for their respective categories. For example, if a naming and negative naming co-occurred, they would be counted as a combination, but also as a naming and a negative naming (Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Therefore, combinations were not counted in the total, but instead counted individually by category.

\* Applause by itself or combined with laughter, booing, and/or chanting; † Device added to this analysis by the author

**Table 8. Summary of Rhetorical Devices that Evoked Laughter\***

	<i>1976</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Rhetorical Devices</i>					
<i>Jokes/Humorous Expressions</i>	1	4	9	12	26 (60.47)
<i>Description of Campaign Activities</i>	.	.	1	.	1 (2.33)
<i>Request Agreement/Asking for Confirmation</i>	.	.	1	.	1 (2.33)
<i>Other/Misc.</i>	.	.	1	.	1 (2.33)
<i>Combinations</i>	.	.	1	.	1
<i>Total Rhetorical Devices</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>29 (67.44)</i>
<i>Content Devices</i>					
<i>External Attacks</i>	.	3	2	7	12 (27.01)
<i>Value Statement/Encouraging Promise About Future and/or Country†</i>	.	.	.	2	2 (4.65)
<i>Total Content Devices</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>14 (32.56)</i>
<i>Combinations (Rhetorical + Content)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Total Devices (Total Rhetoric + Total Content)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>43 (100)</i>

*Note.* Percentage of category count relative to total speech devices denoted in parentheses; explicit invitations are italicized. When two or devices occurred together, they were coded as a combination. However, each device was added to the final count for their respective categories. For example, if a naming and negative naming co-occurred, they would be counted as a combination, but also as a naming and a negative naming (Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Therefore, combinations were not counted in the total, but instead counted individually by category.

\* Laughter by itself or combined with applause, booing, and/or chanting

† Device added to this analysis by the author

**Table 9. Summary of Rhetorical Devices that Evoked Booming\***

	<i>1980</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Rhetorical Devices</i>				
Three-Part List	1	.	.	1 (1.75)
Naming	1	.	.	1 (1.75)
Headline-Punchline	1	.	.	1 (1.75)
Negative Naming	2	3	.	5 (8.77)
Request Agreement/Asking for Confirmation	5	12	1	18 (31.58)
Combinations	2	.	.	2
<i>Total Rhetorical Devices</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>26 (45.61)</i>
<i>Content Devices</i>				
External Attacks	2	19	7	28 (49.12)
Advocacy of Particular Policy Positions	.	.	1	1 (1.75)
Personal/political accomplishment †	.	.	2	2 (3.51)
Combinations	.	.	2	2
<i>Total Content Devices</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>31 (54.1)</i>
<i>Combinations (Rhetorical + Content)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Total Devices (Total Rhetoric + Total Content)</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>57 (100)</i>

*Note.* Percentage of category count relative to speech audience response total denoted in parentheses; explicit invitations are italicized. There was no booming in 1976 and therefore it is not included in the above table. When two or devices occurred together, they were coded as a combination. However, each device was added to the final count for their respective categories. For example, if a naming and negative naming co-occurred, they would be counted as a combination, but also as a naming and a negative naming (Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Therefore, combinations were not counted in the total, but instead counted individually by category.

\* Booming by itself or combined with applause, laughter, and/or chanting

† Device added to this analysis by the author

**Table 10. Summary of Rhetorical Devices that Evoked Chanting\***

	<i>1980</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Rhetorical Devices</i>				
Contrast	.	.	1	1 (2.27)
Three-Part List	.	1	2	3 (6.82)
Naming	.	.	3	3 (6.82)
Puzzle-Solution	.	.	1	1 (2.27)
Headline-Punchline	.	.	3	3 (6.82)
Position-Taking	.	.	2	2 (4.55)
<i>Expressing Appreciation</i>	.	1	.	1 (2.27)
<i>Jokes &amp; Humorous Expressions</i>	.	2	6	8 (18.18)
<i>Asking for Support</i>	.	.	1	1 (2.27)
Combinations	.	.	4	4
<i>Total Rhetorical Devices</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>23 (52.27)</i>
<i>Content Devices</i>				
External Attacks	.	1	5	6 (13.64)
Advocacy of Particular Policy Positions	1	1	.	2 (4.55)
Commendations of particular individuals or factions within speaker's party	.	.	2	2 (4.55)
Personal/Political Accomplishment†	.	1	2	3 (6.82)
Value Statement/Encouraging Promise About Future and/or Country†	1	3	4	8 (18.18)
Combinations	.	.	1	1
<i>Total Content Devices</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>21 (47.73)</i>
<i>Combinations (Rhetorical + Content)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Total Devices (Total Rhetoric + Total Content)</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>44 (100)</i>

*Note.* Percentage of category count relative to speech audience response total denoted in parentheses; explicit invitations are italicized. There was no chanting in 1976 and therefore it is not included in the above table. When two or devices occurred together, they were coded as a combination. However, each device was added to the final count for their respective categories. For example, if a naming and negative naming co-occurred, they would be counted as a combination, but also as a naming and a negative naming (Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Therefore, combinations were not counted in the total, but instead counted individually by category.

\* Chanting only occurred with applause and/or laughter

† Devices added to this analysis by the author



**Table 11. Rhetorical Devices and Intensity**

<i>Device Type</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Rhetorical Devices		
Contrast	19.34	15.11
Three-Part List	15.77	16.49
Naming	16.58	13.79
Puzzle-Solution	40.07	34.2
Headline-Punchline	18.95	23.35
Position-Taking	18.56	4.16
Rhetorical Combinations	23.7	17.97
<i>Expressing Appreciation</i>	37.85	48.21
<i>Request Agreement/Asking for Confirmation</i>	8.58	3.03
<i>Jokes/Humorous Expressions</i>	21.83	19.76
Other/Misc.	3.3	1.6
Content Devices		
External Attacks	16.07	14.13
General Statements of Support/Approval for Speaker's Party	16.66	5.12
Advocacy of Particular Policy Positions	22.14	41.28
Commendations of Particular Individuals	32.56	4.91
Combinations	14.33	7.67
Personal/Political Accomplishment †	14.16	14.22
Value Statement/Encouraging Promise About Future and/or Country †	14.78	12.42
Rhetoric + Content Combinations	17.22	13.64

*Note.* Explicit invitations are italicized (Bull & Miskinis, 2015)

† Devices added to this analysis by the author

**Table 12. Mean Intensity of Explicit vs. Implicit Rhetorical Devices by Address**

1976		1980		1984		1992	
Explicit ( <i>M</i> )	Implicit ( <i>M</i> )	Explicit ( <i>M</i> )	Implicit ( <i>M</i> )	Explicit ( <i>M</i> )	Implicit ( <i>M</i> )	Explicit ( <i>M</i> )	Implicit ( <i>M</i> )
14.19	15.88	13.9	12.39	19.92	21.56	17.97	20.25

*Note.* All combinations were coded as “explicit” if they contained at least one explicit response.

**Table 13. Rhetorical Devices and Synchrony**

<i>Synchrony</i>					
	Claptrap (Invited)	Speak-over (Uninvited)	Interruption (Uninvited)	Combinations	Total
<i>Rhetorical Devices</i>					
Contrast	4	1	1	0	6 (2.45)
Three-Part List	3	3	2	0	8 (3.27)
Naming	6	10	8	0	24 (9.8)
Puzzle-Solution	2	0	0	0	2 (0.82)
Headline-Punchline	2	3	1	0	6 (2.45)
Position-Taking	4	0	1	0	5 (2.04)
<i>Expressing Appreciation</i>	5	0	1	1	7 (2.86)
<i>Request Agreement/Asking for Confirmation</i>	6	1	3	0	10 (4.08)
<i>Jokes/Humorous Expressions</i>	12	2	4	0	18 (7.35)
Other/Misc.	0	10	3	0	13 (5.31)
Combinations	12	2	1	0	15
<i>Total Rhetorical Devices</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>99 (40.41)</i>
<i>Content Devices</i>					
External Attacks	22	11	4	1	38 (15.51)
General Statements of Support/Approval for Speaker's Party	2	0	0	0	2 (0.82)
Advocacy of Particular Policy Positions	26	18	12	1	57 (23.27)
Commendations of Particular Individuals	1	0	1	0	2 (0.82)
Personal/Political Accomplishment †	6	5	1	0	12 (4.9)
Value Statement/Encouraging Promise About Future and/or Country †	17	11	7	0	35 (14.29)
Combinations	16	5	6	0	27
<i>Total Content Devices</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>146 (59.59)</i>
Rhetoric + Content Combinations	43	4	7	1	55
<i>Total Devices (Total Rhetoric + Total Content)</i>	<i>118 (48.16)</i>	<i>75 (30.61)</i>	<i>49 (20)</i>	<i>3 (1.22)</i>	<i>245 (100)</i>

*Note.* Percentage of category count relative to speech audience response total denoted in parentheses, explicit invitations are italicized. When two or devices occurred together, they were coded as a combination. However, each device was added to the final count for their respective categories. For example, if a naming and negative naming co-occurred, they would be counted as a combination, but also as a naming and a negative naming (Bull & Miskinis, 2015). Therefore, combinations were not counted in the total, but instead counted individually by category. † Devices added to this analysis by the author