

Generating Applause: A Study of Rhetoric and Response at Party Political Conferences¹

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Recent work in conversation analysis suggests that audience responses to political speeches are strongly influenced by the rhetorical construction of political messages. This paper shows that seven basic rhetorical formats were associated with nearly 70% of the applause produced in response to 476 political speeches to British party political conferences in 1981. The relationship between rhetoric and response is broadly independent of political party, the political status of the speaker, and the popularity of the message. Performance factors are found to influence the likelihood of audience response strongly.

Clapping and cheering constitute the most direct and immediate means by which an audience can display its collective support for a political argument and for the speaker who produces it. Such responses may, in turn, influence perceptions of the popularity of political arguments and their proponents not only inside the hall in which the speech is being made but also, through television and other news media, in the wider context of society as a whole.²

In a recent series of publications, Max Atkinson has proposed that a restricted class of rhetorical devices is consistently effective in evoking positive reactions to particular passages of political speeches from the audiences to which they are addressed (Atkinson 1983, 1984*a*, 1984*b*, 1985, in press). He has further suggested that mastery of the use of these

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² British prime-time television news reports of political speeches (including speeches to party political conferences) regularly include references to how the speeches were received. They also include filmed or videotaped extracts from the speeches that, in a majority of cases, incorporate footage depicting audience responses to the extracts selected.

devices is a characteristic skill of "charismatic" speakers (Atkinson 1984a, pp. 86–123; 1985) and that such devices are prevalent in those passages of political speeches that are selected for retransmission, quotation, or paraphrase in the news media (Atkinson 1984a, pp. 124–63; in press).

In this paper, we seek to evaluate and develop these proposals by reference to an analysis of audience responses to a substantial number of political speeches made to the British Conservative, Labour, and Liberal party conferences of 1981, focusing primarily on the relationship between the use of rhetorical devices and the generation of applause.

POLITICAL SPEECHES AND THE PROBLEM OF RESPONSE

The semantics of applause are exceptionally straightforward by any standards. The action of applauding is invariably a display of *affiliation* which, in the context of political speeches, expresses support or approval for the assertion that it follows (Atkinson 1984b, p. 371).³ Such an action may be treated as having a positive value, deriving from its expressive properties,⁴ for each individual who undertakes it; for the purpose of this discussion that value may be treated as fixed.⁵ In seeking to realize this value, however, each individual runs the risk of incurring costs. As Asch (1951) has demonstrated, most people have a basic fear of social isolation and prefer to express opinions or judgments that are in concert with their peers. Each individual audience member, faced with a political assertion with which he or she agrees, is therefore placed in a situation of choice in which the positive expressive value of applauding may be outweighed by the negative cost of being found to be alone in this expressive act.⁶

Thus the payoff from each act of applauding depends, for each individual, on whether other audience members applaud. The responses of

³ Atkinson further notes that the affiliative sense of applause may be particularized by the content of the talk to which it responds (1984b, pp. 405–6, n. 2).

⁴ For the purpose of this discussion, instrumental payoffs from clapping, e.g., payoffs arising from mobilizing others to clap, will be ignored.

⁵ The payoff from applauding, however, may well vary with the personality characteristics of individual audience members and with the content of particular political assertions.

⁶ Initial evidence for the existence of these conflicting pressures may be found in patterns of applause initiation. Applause initiated by one or two individuals is rarely joined by other audience members who, it may be suggested, infer the lack of popularity of the point being made from the lack of general response and react accordingly. The initiators of such applause rarely persist in it for more than two seconds. By contrast, applause that begins as a burst reaches maximum intensity within a second and normally persists for a further seven to eight seconds (Atkinson 1984b). It appears that the initiation of applause as a burst dramatically reduces the costs of joining in and, following Asch, may increase the costs of not doing so.

others, however, are to varying degrees uncertain. The position of each audience member is analogous to that of the participants in games of pure coordination (Schelling 1963, p. 54) in which the decision of each individual must be matched with the independent decisions of others if a positive payoff for each is to be realized.

The audience size in our data varies between 300 and 7,000 persons, and thus the multiple coordination problem is substantial. Moreover, the complexity of the problem is increased by the fact that the audience members are almost all facing the speaker, and, in raked or tiered seating arrangements, there is little opportunity to maximize coordination through mutual monitoring. In addition, audience members are presented, on average, with a sentence completion (and hence, in principle, an opportunity to applaud) every eight seconds. A collective decision concerning each of these opportunities must furthermore be made in real time. Most of the applause in our data was initiated within 0.3 seconds of sentence completion, and, on the basis of our observations, it is clear that the opportunity to applaud is effectively lost after approximately 0.5 seconds. Thus each audience member must arrive at a decision to applaud within a short period of time and in a context in which the positive value of such action may turn on the independent decisions of perhaps thousands of others.

Nonetheless, as will be apparent to anyone who has witnessed a political speech, coordinated solutions to these problems are found, and found regularly. In his discussion of games of pure coordination, Schelling notes that a prime requirement for successful coordination of independent decision making is "some kind of prominence or conspicuousness" that can serve as a focus for the matching of individual decisions (1963, p. 57). We propose to demonstrate that political speakers secure applause when their assertions, whether by accident or design, are prominent or conspicuous. Such assertions, we suggest, maximize the tacitly perceived payoffs of applauding for individual audience members and hence function to engender collective responses. This prominence, as we shall see, is very substantially a product of the constructional properties of speakers' assertions.

THE ROLE OF MESSAGE CONSTRUCTION IN GENERATING APPLAUSE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

What are the constructional features that secure prominence for a political assertion? A speech to a party conference may be usefully analyzed as a series of political messages or points for which the speaker seeks the attention, understanding, and support of the audience. Each of these messages will usually be constructed through a series of moves in which,

for example, necessary background information is supplied, the speaker's own position is adumbrated, and, finally, the point is made in a recognizably complete fashion. The making of a point in a political speech may thus be said to occupy the oral equivalent of a paragraph on the written page.

In such a context, one way in which the prominence of an assertion may be established is by shaping an audience's expectations across a series of sentences toward a "target" or "focal" sentence containing a core political message. For example, the following datum succeeds a lengthy passage, itself interspersed with applause, in which Liberal politician David Steel has advocated a number of arguments in favor of the use of an incomes policy as a means of controlling inflation. The passage culminates thus:

**(1) (Liberals: Tape 7: Leader's Address: David Steel:
Orthographic Transcript)⁷**

- Steel:* We don't pretend that incomes policy is an ideal
- (1) instrument of economic management against inflation.
 - (2) It isn't.
 - (3) It involves difficult and frustrating negotiation.
 - (4) But its justification is not that it's agreeable.
 - (5) It is that incomes policy is far superior to unemployment and recession.
- Audience:* Applause

In this simple case, David Steel begins with a disclaimer (sentences 1–3) about the merits of a policy that he has just extensively advocated. The audience may thus reasonably anticipate that some further, and perhaps final, reassertion of the benefits of the policy will occur next, and it is confirmed in this expectation by the reference to "its justification," which occurs at the beginning of sentence 4. This reference, however, turns out to be a false dawn. For the burden of the sentence is negative: a depiction of what is not being claimed as a justification of the policy. Yet sentence 4 is scarcely to be construed as a wasted sentence. For, in the way that it makes reference to the expected justification and simultaneously defers its arrival, it creates the strongest possible expectation that the very next

⁷ In this paper, orthographic transcripts (labeled "OT") show only the words uttered by the speaker without any attempt to represent the hesitations, timing, intonation, or voicing of the speech itself. Some attempt to represent these latter aspects of public speaking is made in the transcripts labeled "ST," which have been considerably simplified from the originals. The transcription conventions for these transcripts are contained in App. A.

sentence will finally contain the positive justification of the policy that is looked for. This expectation is fulfilled in sentence 5, and, it may be noted, the justification itself embodies a criticism of Thatcherite monetarist policies that were then in the ascendancy. Through this series of sentences, the audience's expectations are successively channeled toward the target or focal assertion, which is thereby given enhanced prominence as a point at which a collective response might be undertaken, and, in fact, applause occurs immediately on completion of Steel's final sentence.

Again, in the following passage from a speech by Geraint Howells to the Liberal Party Assembly, the impact of government policy on the provision of facilities in the rural areas is criticized.

(2) (Liberals: Rural Areas: Geraint Howells: OT)

- Howells:* Country people are now denied some of the
- (1) basic facilities enjoyed by town and city dwellers.
 - I quote one example that has recently caused
 - (2) great concern to my constituents and to many other rural dwellers throughout Britain.
 - And that is the decision of the Post Office to declare certain telephone kiosks in the
 - (3) rural areas uneconomical and to threaten to withdraw them unless the community council is willing to pay for their retention.
 - (4) This is disgraceful in my view.
- Audience:* Applause (5.6 seconds)
- Howells:* If a telephone call from one of the rural
- (5) kiosks will save one life, that kiosk is worth retaining.
- Audience:* Applause (7.2 seconds)

In this passage, the speaker begins with a generalization about the loss of facilities to country people (1), undertakes to exemplify it (2), does so by reference to the provision of telephone kiosks (3), and then condemns the state of affairs described (4). Subsequently, he justifies his condemnation by reference to the lifesaving potential of the rural kiosks (5). Both the condemnation and its subsequent justification are greeted with applause.

Although the message built up through this accumulation of assertions is undoubtedly applaudable, even the most casual reading of this passage shows that its several components are by no means equally likely to be applauded. For example, the opening generalization (1) is, understandably, not applauded both because of its pragmatic function as a general heading for the assertions that follow and because the inequality reported is one for which a show of support or acclamation is singularly inappropriate. Similarly, applause for the report of the Post Office's threat to

close rural telephone kiosks (3) would be an inappropriate response to a “negative” report and, moreover, could be construed as a rejection of the “concern” of rural dwellers that the speaker reports (2) in adumbration of his own position on the matter. Thus it is only after the speaker has unequivocally condemned this state of affairs (4) that the audience is presented with a first clear opportunity of showing its support for the position that he is taking.

The construction of this political point guides the audience across a series of possible response points, effectively inhibiting the possibility of response at some (1–3) and strongly potentiating it at others (4 and 5).⁸ Moreover, this “textual” process is powerfully reinforced by the speaker’s comportment during the making of the point. During the delivery of the first three sentences, the speaker is hunched over the podium and reads from the text of his speech, glancing briefly at the audience from time to time. As he delivers the condemnation (4), however, the speaker leans forward and gazes steadfastly at the audience, banging the podium lightly just before the completion of the sentence. His final justification (5), again delivered while gazing uninterruptedly at the audience, is uttered very deliberately and emphatically and is further underscored by a repeated wagging gesture with the index finger of his left hand.

Here then are two analytically separate dimensions of speaker conduct—the construction of the argument and the comportment of the speaker—that contribute to the structuring of audience response. In the case just discussed, the speaker’s vocal and bodily comportment is systematically aligned to the content of his unfolding argument so that both dimensions of his conduct inhibit the possibility of response at first and strongly encourage it subsequently.

Although these dimensions of speaker behavior are undoubtedly powerful and significant in the structuring of response, they are by no means the whole story. Drawing on the research tradition of conversation analysis, Atkinson proposes that a third dimension of speaker conduct influences the propensity of audiences to respond to political messages.⁹ This dimension occupies an intermediate position between the larger-scale units of argument structure and the small behaviors of speaker comportment and concerns the *verbal design* of the target messages themselves.

⁸ See Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) for a discussion of the main units out of which talk is constructed and the ways in which the completion points of such units are treated as possible response points.

⁹ For summary outlines of the perspective of conversation analysis, see, *inter alia*, Atkinson and Drew (1979, pp. 34–81), Heritage (1984, pp. 233–92), Heritage (1985), Heritage and Atkinson (1984), Levinson (1983, pp. 284–370), and West and Zimmerman (1982).

In essence, Atkinson's argument is a simple one. Audiences, he proposes, are more likely to respond to statements that are verbally constructed (a) to *emphasize* and thus highlight their contents against a surrounding background of speech materials and (b) to *project a clear completion point* for the message in question. Atkinson proposes that these two requirements are satisfied by certain conventionalized rhetorical formats—in particular, the contrast (or antithesis) and the three-part list—which are regularly used in political speeches and regularly associated with the generation of applause.

The role of emphasis in the generation of applause is intuitively evident. It is inherently associated with the achievement of prominence for a political message. Moreover, it calls attention to passages to which the speaker attaches particular significance and to which a supportive audience will properly respond. However, Atkinson argues, emphasis alone is rarely sufficient to ensure response. In addition, audiences must be able to project the point at which applause will become relevant.

Projectability is needed because the problems and risks associated with the general coordination of response are also operative in the context of the precise *initiation* of response. Audience members must determine not only *that* they will applaud but also *when* they will applaud. A failure of coordination on this latter decision will generate a "ragged" start to applause that may, in turn, result in a weakened and short-lived outbreak of clapping that leaves its initiators somewhat exposed. The fact that audiences can project the point at which they might begin to applaud is readily apparent from our data. The physical initiation of clapping from rest takes approximately 0.2 seconds, and, since most of the applause in our data is initiated within this period from the completion point of a sentence, audience projection of such completion points is clearly implicated. Moreover, the normal form of applause initiation is as a "burst" (Atkinson 1984a, pp. 23–25), which builds rapidly to a maximum intensity that is normally sustained for some seven to eight seconds. This form can only arise as a product of the ability of audience members to project the point at which the speaker's sentence will be complete.

The value of such projection is clear. If audience members usually commence applauding only at a moment when they believe that others may do the same, the projection of such a moment may become critical for the initiation of applause. By the same token, messages with clearly projected completion points may maximize the likelihood of applause because each individual may commence applauding at such moments in the strong expectation that everyone else will do the same. The operation of the self-fulfilling prophecy under such circumstances will normally result in a burst of applause.

In sum, conventionalized rhetorical formats can serve to supply addi-

tional emphasis to particular political messages and simultaneously give advance notice of their completion points. An audience that can see that a message is being given special emphasis and that is able to see in advance when the message is likely to be complete is thereby enabled to prepare to respond at the appropriate moment and in a context in which the tacitly perceived costs of such a response may be minimized. Atkinson proposes that the use of such formats amounts to an "invitation to applaud."

Below, after presenting our data base, we outline a number of rhetorical formats that are regularly associated with applause, and we assess their incidence and effectiveness. All of these formats, which were initially arrived at through the use of inductive search procedures, embody the features of emphasis and projectability discussed above. We then consider the functioning of the formats in relation to performance factors and message content.

THE DATA BASE

The data on which the findings of this paper are based comprise 476 speeches delivered to the British Conservative, Labour, and Liberal party conferences in 1981. These speeches constitute the total broadcast output of the three conferences that was transmitted by the BBC and represent an estimated 85% of the formal public proceedings of the conferences. The speeches occupied a total of 41.75 hours and contained an estimated 20,000 sentences.

This data base, as might be expected, is exceptionally heterogeneous. The overall role of the party conference within the constitutions and policy-making procedures of each of the three parties is distinctive. The procedures by which speakers are selected to speak and are allocated "platform" and "rostrum" status differ substantially from conference to conference.¹⁰ The organization of the conferences exhibited quite different levels of sensitivity to the fact that they were being televised. The debates showed substantial variation in levels of attendance, interest, and intensity of argumentation, and the individual speeches manifested every imaginable gradation of skill and competence in design delivery. These

¹⁰ In all three British party political conferences that provide the data for this study, a raised platform confronts the main body of the hall, and the conference is addressed from this position by the senior party officials entitled to occupy it. A separate and lower rostrum is the site from which participants from the floor of the conference make their contributions. At the Liberal Party Conference, only two speeches—those by the president-elect and the leader of the party, which effectively opened and closed the conference, respectively—were delivered from the platform. For statistical purposes, the rostrum-based "movers" and "replies" to Liberal debates were treated as platform speeches; see table 2 and subsequent discussion.

TABLE 1
TYPES OF APPLAUSE EVENTS

Type	No.
All applause events	2,461
End of speech applause	459
Isolated claps	414
Full intraspeech applause	1,588

variations were reflected in the character of audience responses. A 17-minute speech to the Liberal Assembly was received in total silence, whereas other speeches were applauded at an average rate of twice per minute—on average, every fourth sentence was applauded.

The data base contains 2,461 applause events (instances of applause) but, as table 1 shows, not all of these were suitable for the evaluation of Atkinson's hypotheses. The 459 applause events that occurred at the ends of speeches have not been considered in the present study because such applause is virtually obligatory at party conferences. An additional 414 events were discounted because they involved isolated clapping (often only a single clap) by one or two individuals. Although the analysis of these events has played a part in the present research, they have been excluded from the main sample because, as Atkinson (1984*a*, p. 21) points out, they do not properly constitute applause.

The rate at which the remaining 1,588 applause events were produced is summarized in table 2, which shows that Conservative speakers were applauded at a much higher rate (48.2 events per hour) than their Labour and Liberal counterparts (32.9 and 32.5 events per hour, respectively). Conservative and Labour platform speakers were substantially more successful in gaining positive audience responses than their rostrum counterparts. In both cases, the platform speakers were, with few exceptions,

TABLE 2
APPLAUSE EVENTS BY PARTY AND SPEAKER TYPE

	RATE OF EVENTS (per Hour)		
	Rostrum	Platform	Total
Conservatives	44.5	53.8	48.2
Labour	30.9	37.7	32.9
Liberals	32.2	33.0	32.5
All parties	35.6	42.5	38.0

nationally known political figures whose speeches were delivered on behalf of the leaderships of their parties and were inherently more likely to command higher levels of audience attentiveness and appreciation than those from the rostrum. These speakers were also advantaged by speaking from a physically raised platform.¹¹ Moreover, they were, by and large, experienced and competent in the art of political speaking and were able to use the longer periods of time available to them to deliver relatively predictable political messages in a clear and uncluttered way. In the case of the Liberals, only two of the platform speakers actually spoke from the platform (see n. 10). The remainder of the speakers grouped under this heading were generally not nationally known political figures and were not obviously more competent than their colleagues in debate. Here, not surprisingly, the platform and rostrum speakers were scarcely differentiable in terms of rate of audience response.

Turning now to the rostrum, Conservative speakers were nearly 50% more effective in gaining audience response than their Labour and Liberal counterparts. In general, the Conservative speakers spoke more slowly and clearly and seemed less troubled by time restrictions than rostrum speakers from the other parties.¹² Moreover, the Conservative speakers addressed a predominantly middle-aged, middle-class audience, which was neither distracted by the overt politicking that is a characteristic feature of the floor of the Labour Party Conference nor inhibited by the lack of focus that marked many areas of debate at the Liberal Assembly.

An examination of the content of the passages that were applauded shows that applause was reserved for a relatively narrow range of message types: (1) External attacks: criticism of other political parties—their policies, record, memberships, leaders, and so forth—and criticism of other external collectivities such as the Americans, Russians, European Economic Community, local authorities, nationalized industries, police, media, and so forth. (2) General statements of support or approval for the speaker's own party, its policies, position, leadership, record, or prospects. (3) Combinations of 1 and 2. (4) Internal attacks: criticism of individuals or factions within the speaker's own party and criticism of opposed positions with respect to the particular policy area under debate. (5) Advocacy of particular policy positions with respect to the policy area

¹¹ The symbolic and procedural advantages of speaking from the platform are discussed, in the context of the Labour Party Conference, by Minkin (1978, pp. 207–8, 217–18, and 231–32). For a more general discussion of the symbolism of formal seating arrangements in a variety of settings, see Atkinson (1982).

¹² Labour rostrum speakers spoke more than 6% faster than their Conservative counterparts, whereas Liberal rostrum speakers were over 20% faster than Conservative rostrum speakers.

TABLE 3

CONTENT OF APPLAUDED POLITICAL MESSAGES, BY SPEAKER TYPE (%)

Message Content	Rostrum (<i>N</i> = 961)	Platform (<i>N</i> = 627)	Total (<i>N</i> = 1588)
1. External attacks	15.3	26.3	19.6
2. Approve own party	7.7	28.4	15.9
3. 1 and 2 combined	1.8	4.0	2.6
4. Internal attacks	39.2	8.3	27.0
5. Advocacy	12.3	4.6	9.3
6. 4 and 5 combined	2.2	.8	1.7
7. Commendations	3.8	8.3	5.6
8. Other	17.7	19.3	18.3
Total	100	100	100

under debate. (6) Combinations of 4 and 5. (7) Commendations of particular individuals or collectivities.

In total, these seven categories of political message made up over 81% of all the applauded messages in the speeches under investigation. Their distribution, disaggregated by speaker type, is set out in table 3. An examination of the final (Total) column of table 3 shows that, in general, party members appeared to orient differently to points made within "external" and "internal" frames of reference. Thus, while the aggregate incidence of applause for attacks on outsiders (category 1) was approximated by that for general statements of support for the "home" party (category 2), this approximate balance was not maintained for messages having internal policy or doctrinal matters as their primary point of reference (categories 4 and 5). In this latter context, shorn of the overarching "us and them" framework of national party politics, audiences in all three parties were much better able to identify and mobilize in relation to what they were against than in relation to what they were for, applauding criticisms of policies and their proponents nearly three times as often as constructive policy recommendations. This tendency to respond to negative rather than positive internal assertions was stable across all three party conferences and was particularly marked at the Conservative Party Conference.

However, it can also be observed that platform speakers were mainly applauded for externally oriented statements (58.7%), but rostrum speakers mainly scored their successes with internally oriented remarks (53.7%). In relation to categories 4 and 5, both rostrum and platform speakers were applauded much more often for attacking statements (category 4) than for constructive policy assertions (category 5). This apparent

TABLE 4
SUCCESS RATES OF SELECTED CONTENT
CATEGORIES OF POLITICAL MESSAGE,
BY SPEAKER TYPE (%)

Message Content	Rostrum (<i>N</i> = 431)	Platform (<i>N</i> = 804)
1. External attacks	27.0	41.8
2. Approve own party . . .	12.9	20.4
4. Internal attacks	20.0	50.0
5. Advocacy	13.0	18.2

audience negativism is preserved, for rostrum speakers, in relation to externally oriented statements as well (categories 1 and 2), and only platform speakers have a greater gross incidence of applause for assertions in favor of the home party than for external attacks.

This underlying negativism becomes still more apparent when success rates for the different classes of speech content are considered. Table 4 shows that, within an aggregate tendency for platform speakers to be about 1.7 times as successful as rostrum speakers in eliciting applause for the categories in question ($\chi^2 = 20.17$; P [one-tailed] $< .001$, 1 *df*), there is also a consistent tendency for critical statements to be approximately twice as likely to elicit applause than supportive or constructive statements ($\chi^2 = 49.58$; P [one-tailed] $< .001$, 1 *df*).¹³ This tendency holds whether the statement is delivered by a rostrum ($\chi^2 = 6.72$; P [one-tailed] $< .005$, 1 *df*) or a platform speaker ($\chi^2 = 45.66$; P [one-tailed] $< .001$, 1 *df*) and whether the statement is externally ($\chi^2 = 37.8$; P [one-tailed] $< .001$, 1 *df*) or internally directed ($\chi^2 = 7.60$; P [one-tailed] $< .005$, 1 *df*).

In a contribution to this journal written over 80 years ago, Simmel observed that "social actions and regulations evolve in many ways the character of negativity in the degree of their numerical inclusiveness. In the case of mass actions, the motives in individuals are often so different that their unification is possible in the degree in which their content is merely negative and destructive" (1902, p. 12). The findings of tables 3 and 4 are consistent with this explanation, though it may be added that, to the extent that audiences learn that negative statements are more likely

¹³ In table 4, the figures for the rostrum are based on an analysis of a 10% random sample of rostrum speeches, stratified by party. The platform figures are based on an analysis of 15 platform speeches comprising 40.8% of the total platform time. The platform speakers were selected on the basis of the effectiveness of their speeches.

to be applauded, they may become more inclined to initiate applause in response to them—thus establishing a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹⁴

THE RHETORICAL DEVICES

We now turn to the central task of this paper: the assessment of Atkinson's hypotheses concerning the role of rhetorical constructions in the generation of applause. In essence, this task is a simple one. Excluding those sentences occurring at the beginnings and ends of speeches, our data base contains an estimated 19,000 sentences, of which 1,588 were applauded. If the applauded sentences are disproportionately drawn from those containing rhetorical devices, then, subject to a number of additional checks, the hypothesis can be treated as supported. If they are not, the thesis can be rejected.

Each applauded statement was transcribed and coded in terms of the categories set out below. In what follows, each category of rhetorical device that was associated with more than 2.5% of the applause events in the data base (40 events or more) will be briefly described and exemplified.

1. Contrast

The contrast, or antithesis, is perhaps one of the most basic resources of an orator. Well known to the rhetoricians of antiquity, its use was first widely taught by the Sophists.¹⁵ It is central to Atkinson's claims concerning the incidence of applause, and it naturally embodies both of the elements—emphasis and completion-point projection—which are, *ex hypothesi*, central to applause generation. Political messages conveyed with the use of contrasts are naturally emphasized because, in effect, the core assertion is normally made twice—in a “positive” and a “negative” form.¹⁶ Similarly, the completion point of the contrast can be anticipated

¹⁴ The phenomenon of crowd negativism, which has often been remarked on in the collective behavior literature (Berk 1974), may thus have a rational rather than an irrational foundation. More generally, though this task is beyond the compass of the present paper, audience behavior in the context of political speeches may readily yield to the kind of explicitly formulated game theoretical analysis advocated by Berk. See Brown and Levinson (1978) for a powerful and analogous discussion of the underlying rationalities of “face” behavior.

¹⁵ See Dobson (1919, p. 13 ff.) and Kennedy (1963, p. 61 ff.). An effective definition of the main types of contrast occurring in our data is quoted by Kennedy (p. 65) from a rhetorical handbook of the 4th century B.C., the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*.

¹⁶ In cases where a clear discrimination can be made, there is a general tendency for speakers to present the negative component of the contrast first, with the result that

through a process in which audience members match the unfolding second half of a contrast against its first half. This process is vividly exemplified when, as in extract (3), the second half of the contrast is exactly matched to the first.

(3) (Labour: Tape 3: Disabled: Alf Morris: ST)

- Morris:* Governments will argue: (0.8) that resources
are not available: (0.4) to help disabled
people.
(1.3)
- Ⓐ→ The fact is that too much is spent on the
munitions of war::,
(0.6)
- Ⓑ→ and too little is spent [(0.2) on the
munitions of peace.]
- Audience:* [Applause (9.2 seconds)]

In this case, the match between the two halves of the contrast was so precise that the audience was able to anticipate both the content and the completion of the speaker's point to such an extent that, as the transcript shows, a substantial number of audience members began to applaud the point in advance of its completion.¹⁷ A similar pattern is evident in (4):

(4) (Labour: Tape 2: Economic Policy: Tony Benn: ST)

- Benn:* And indeed it was rather appropriate that ITN
was swinging from the stock market (.) where
Ⓐ→ they're gambling (.) with the wealth of the
nation
(.)
- Ⓑ→ to Brighton where we represent the people who
create [(.) [the wealth of the nation.
Audience: [hear [hear
Audience: [Applause (13.2 seconds)]

In this case, by the time that Benn had paused slightly after uttering the word "create" in the second half of his contrast, the audience was again

the audience is presented with the affirmative component as the element to which an affiliative response will be directly juxtaposed. See extracts (1), (3), (4), and (5) for examples.

¹⁷ The placement of the audience's response in extracts (3) and (4) is structurally isomorphic with a form of recognitional overlap that occurs in natural conversation. This form has been described by Jefferson (1983b) as "thrust-projective" recognitional overlap because it occurs "where an understanding of at least the general thrust of an utterance can have been achieved."

able to predict the upcoming completion point of his utterance and began to applaud in anticipation.

While contrasts that mobilize audience response in advance of their completion are normally composed of first and second parts that are rhythmically balanced and contain similarities of length, content, and grammatical structure, these properties are by no means essential to the workings of more mundane variants. Thus extracts (5) and (6) below do not contain such similarities but are perfectly effective in engendering response. In these cases, however, the audience, lacking the resources with which to anticipate the exact form of the contrasts, began to applaud directly on their completion rather than, as in (3) and (4), prior to their completion.

(5) (Conservatives: Tape 8: Margaret Thatcher: ST)

Thatcher: Our country is weathering stormy waters.
(0.8)
 (A)→ We may have different ideas on how best to
 navigate them.
 (0.5)
 (B)→ But we sail the same ocean, (0.2) and in
 the same ship.
Audience: Applause (7.0 seconds)

(6) (Labour: Tape 7: Constitution: Helen Osborn: ST)

Osborn: The way to fight Thatcher
(0.4)
 (A)→ is not through the silent conformity of the
 graveyard,
 (0.5)
 but by putting party policies (0.2) powerfully
 (B)→ and determinedly from the front bench.
Audience: hear [hear
Audience: [hear [hear
Audience: [Applause (8.2 seconds)

In (7), an ironic contrast is achieved through a pun and is effective, though, given the complexity of the pun, it is not surprising that the audience's response is slightly delayed.

(7) (Liberals: Tape 7: Leader's Address: ST)

Steel: Our Prime Minister (0.7) is a woman who has first
 (A)→ (.) turned her back on those who elected her,
 (0.7)

Ⓑ→ and then had the nerve to claim that the people
are behind her.
(0.3)

Audience: Laughter
Audience: [Applause (6.8 seconds)

To be coded as a contrast, a political message had to contain an explicit contrast in words, or sense, or both. Many applauded messages contained strong implicit contrasts, but none of these were coded as contrasts.

2. List

The three-part list is the second rhetorical device identified by Atkinson as a major weapon in the armory of public speakers. This one too, he suggests, combines resources by which a political message is emphasized and through which its completion point can be anticipated. It is obvious enough that the repetition of an item can serve, as Atkinson puts it, “to strengthen, underline or amplify almost any kind of message” (1984*a*, p. 60). This process is apparent outside the domain of political persuasion in such mundane conversational extracts as the following:

(8) (Jefferson, in press)

Carol: Did this phone ring? I dialed twice and it n-
rang’n rang’n rang

A similarly emphatic message can arise from the use of closely related terms:

(9) (Jefferson, in press)

May: I think if you exercise it an’ work at it ’n’
studied it you do become clairvoyant.

In political speeches, too, a point can be emphasized by the use of a list. Thus in the following passage, Norman Tebbit identifies a number of disadvantaged groups as having been the victims of union actions.

(10) (Conservatives: Tape 6: Employment: Norman Tebbit: ST)

Tebbit: er: But in the winter of discontent (0.6) how
many of the o:ld, the sick, the unemployed, the
disabled (.) were bashed by unions.

Here, the listing of disadvantaged groups alleged to have been “bashed” by unions adds weight and emphasis to the point being made, which

could have been lost if these groups had been described with a single general term such as "the disadvantaged."

Atkinson proposes, following Jefferson (in press), that lists are normally produced in threes and that, regardless of whether the third item is preceded by the word "and," it is usually understood as the final item. Thus an audience, hearing a list in progress, normally anticipates that the list will be complete at the third item. This process is clearly evidenced in the following extract, in which Alex Kitson is criticizing the activities of a former Labour party M.P. who has just defected to the SDP. As the transcript shows, a substantial body of the audience began to respond prior to, and in anticipation of, his point.

(11) (Labour: ITV News at Ten, 2/10/81: Chairman's Address: Alex Kitson)

Kitson: I thought it was disgusting (0.4) this week (0.8)
that a Member of Parliament
①→ came he ↑ re:: (0.8)
②→ ③→ cast his vote in the election (0.5) and then
re ↑ signed (.)
Audience: hear he f ar
[Applause (5.2 seconds)
Audience: (cut by tape editor)

Three-part lists are a common and readily observable method of emphasizing a point and generating response. They normally take the form of triplets of noun phrases, as in (12), or of qualifying adjectives, as in (13).¹⁸

(12) (Conservatives: Tape 8: Margaret Thatcher: ST)

Thatcher: At a ti:me of growing dan ↓ ger (0.7) for all:
who cherish and believe in ↓ freedom (0.8) this
party of the soft centre is
①→ no shiel:d (0.2)
②→ no refu:ge (.)
③→ and no answer.
Audience: Applause (8.2 seconds)

¹⁸ Note that in extract (12) the list items are yoked together through the repetition of the word "no." Other methods of thus enhancing the integrity of lists include alliteration and the use of rhyme and repetition (e.g., "Government of the people, by the people, for the people"). These features also commonly appear in lists produced in ordinary conversation (Jefferson 1977, in press).

(13) (Conservatives: Tape 5: Inner Cities: Michael Heseltine: ST)

Heseltine: And however tight (0.4) the immigration legislation (0.4) and in everyone's interests (.) it should be tight (0.6) there will be a la:rge black community in this couuntry tomorrow (0.2) just as there is toda:y, and there are ↑ no schemes (0.6) of significant repatriation (0.2) that have any

①→ mora:l
(.)

②→ socia:l
(.)

③→ or political credibility. =

Audience: = Applause (11.8 seconds)

To enter into our coding scheme, an applauded list had to be complete at, or very close to, the third item.¹⁹ In addition, applauded items were coded as lists if longer lists were interrupted by applause at their third item, or if *N*-part lists were applauded at their final item where the latter was projected with the word “and.” These latter classes of lists made up approximately 20% of the applauded lists in our data base.

3. Puzzle-Solution

In this comparatively straightforward device, the speaker begins by establishing some kind of puzzle or problem in the minds of the listeners and then, shortly afterward, offers as the solution to the puzzle a statement that stands as the core of the message that he or she wishes to get across. The adumbrated message is emphasized by the puzzle, which invites the audience to anticipate or guess at its solution and, by the same token, to listen carefully to the speaker's own solution when it is delivered. Moreover, since the delivery of the solution naturally coincides with the completion of the political message, the audience is normally able to anticipate the point at which applause should properly begin. Speakers normally aid audiences in this process by presenting the solution as a simple, active declarative sentence.

(14) (Conservatives: Tape 6: Unemployment: Joan Hall: ST)

Hall: Unemployment Mister Chairman (0.6) immediately
brings to mi:nd (0.2) young people. (1.6)

¹⁹ This is consistent with Atkinson's observation that although, in many cases, list completion coincides with sentence completion, in some cases—most prominently adjectival lists—it does not. In either event, as Atkinson notes (1984b, p. 387), the list will normally function to permit the audience to anticipate sentence completion.

What they want (0.4) are real jobs. (1.2) Many a
business would like an apprentice.
(0.7)
Ⓟ→ So why do they do without?
(1.0)
Audience: } Because the minimum wage: [(0.4) laid down by
Hall: } (hear hear)
Ⓢ→ wages councils and joint negotiating agreements
Audience: } are more than they can aff [or:d
Applause (9.2 seconds)

In a somewhat less simple case, David Steel uses a well-known, but perhaps unmemorable, phrase to encapsulate a criticism of Conservative economic policy.

(15) (Liberals: Tape 7: Leader's Address: David Steel: ST)

Steel: Margaret Thatcher has portrayed herself (0.5) as the
↑ nation's ↓ nurse (0.5) administering: (0.2) nasty:
but necessary ↓ medicine to us)in the belief that
what ↑ ever (.) short term pain we may suffer in the
long run it's going to do us good.
(0.7)
Ⓟ→ And I'm surpris:ed that as a qualified chemist (0.2)
she seems to have forgotten (.) the wa:rning on
every bottle,
(0.2)
Ⓢ→ caution (.) it is dangerous to exceed [the sta [ted dose:.
Audience: [Laughter [.....
Audience: [Applause
(13.0
seconds)

Although most commonly found in the simple form illustrated by these examples, the puzzle-solution format is capable of considerable elaboration. Where, as in (15) above, the aptness of the solution is engineered by careful preparation, the device can be highly effective.

4. Headline-Punch Line

This format is structurally similar to the puzzle-solution format described above, although it is somewhat simpler and has less potential for elaboration. Here, the speaker proposes to make a declaration, pledge, or announcement and then proceeds to make it. The message (or punch line) is emphasized by the speaker's calling attention in advance to what he or she is about to say. Similarly, the audience is given to understand that

applause will properly be due at the completion of the punch line message, which, once again, is normally short and simple. This format is illustrated in (16) and (17).

(16) (Labour: Tape 2: Economic Policy: Arthur Scargill: ST)

Scargill: We have to recognise (0.6) against that background
 (H)→ (0.4) that this party (0.2) has to declare its
 policy.
 (0.8)
 NO MORE mus- must we go into power (0.4) on the
 (P)→ proviso (0.3) that we try to make ↑ WORKERS pay
 for the crisis of capital ism (.) ↑ THAT'S NOT OUR
Audience: Applause (7.5 seconds)
Scargill: RESPONSIBILITY.

(17) (Liberals: Tape 4: Defense: Michael Meadowcroft: ST)

Meadowcroft: The other point about that as we'll (.) and this
 is very very important I think, (0.3) is that passing
 this motion (.) can help the Alliance with the
 Social Democrats,
 (.)
 (H)→ and I'll tell you why.
 (.)
 It removes the last excuse for your idealistic
 (P)→ radicals to join the Labour Party.
Audience: Applause (8.0 seconds)

5. Combination

All the devices above may be combined with one another with the result that the political message will, other things being equal, be further emphasized with the retention of a clearly projectable completion point. Combinations of devices were relatively common in our data base; 91% of them comprised a contrast together with another device. The most common form of combination unites the contrast with the three-part list. Such a combination may be achieved in a variety of ways. Thus in (18) a three-part list forms the second half of a contrast:

(18) (Conservatives: Tape 6: Employment: Normal Tebbit: ST)

Tebbit: And I have a duty (.) a duty that falls upon
 all responsible politic↓ians
 (.)
 (A)→ to lead others to f:fi- to face reality.
 (0.4)

(B) {

- ① → Not a duty to feed the people a diet of compromising pap (0.2)
- ② → pie in the sky:
- ③ → and false hopes.

Audience: Applause (10.7 seconds)

In (19), the third of a list of statements contrasts with the two that precede it:

(19) (Conservatives: Tape 6: Employment: Norman Tebbit: ST)

Tebbit: (A) (1) → We're not union bashers.
 (2) → I've never bashed a union in my ↑ life.
Audience: Laughter..... [.....
Tebbit: (B) (3) → (0.6) how many of the ol'd, the sick, the unemployed,
 the disabled (.) were bashed by unions.
 (.)
Audience: Applause (11.5 seconds)

Less prominent, but comparatively common, were puzzles that were resolved by contrasts. These are illustrated in (20) and (21).²⁰

(20) (Labour: Tape 8: Common Market: Eric Heffer: ST)

Heffer: And we don't accept that argument on the National Executive. (0.8) BECAUSE: AT THE NEXT ELECTION
 (P) → (0.7) THE ELECTORATE WILL BE FACED WITH A CLEAR CHOICE comrades.
 (0.7)
 (S) { (A) → To vote LABOUR AND TAKE US OUT.
 (0.4)
 (B) → OR TO VOTE TO:RY (.) LIBERAL OR SD { P AND
Audience: Applause
 (11.7
 seconds)
Heffer: KEEP US IN.

(21) (Conservatives: Tape 4: Economic Policy: Robert Jones: ST)

Jones: You know Mister Chairman er Margaret Thatcher and
 (P) \longrightarrow Ted Heath (0.4) both have great vision.
 (0.7)
 The difference is: that Margaret Thatcher (0.2) has

²⁰ It may be noted that, in extract (20), the second half of the contrast that resolves the prior puzzle is itself constructed as a three-part list.

$$\textcircled{S} \rightarrow \begin{cases} \textcircled{A} \rightarrow \text{a vision that one day Britain will be great again,} \\ (0.4) \\ \textcircled{B} \rightarrow \text{and Ted Heath has a vision (0.2) that one day Ted} \\ \text{Heath will be great again.} = \\ \text{Audience: } = \text{Applause (19.4 seconds)} \end{cases}$$

The fact that these two forms of combination were the most prevalent in our data base confirms themes that were implicit in Atkinson's study. His primary examples of combinations involved contrasts in conjunction with three-part lists, and this format made up over 50% of the combinations located in our data base. Atkinson further notes that the use of contrasts often involves the posing of a puzzle (1984a, pp. 73–75), and this suggestion is confirmed by the present study.

6. Position Taking

The most effective single rhetorical format in our data base involves a process that we term "position taking." Here, the speaker first describes a state of affairs toward which he or she could be expected to take a strongly evaluative stance. The description contains little or no overt evaluation. At the end of it, the speaker overtly and unequivocally praises or condemns the state of affairs described. A return to extract (2) illustrates this format:

(2) (Liberals: Tape 3: Rural Areas: Geraint Howells: ST)

Howells: I quote one example .hhh that has recently caused great concern to my constituents .hh and to many other rural dwellers throughout Britain: .hh And that is the decision of the Post Office to declare: .hh certain telephone kiosks in the rural areas uneconomical .hh and threaten to withdraw: (0.5) them unless the community council is willing to pay ↓ for (0.2) their retention.
 (0.4)

$$\textcircled{PT} \rightarrow \text{This is disgraceful in my view.}$$

 (0.2)

Audience: [hear hear

Audience: [Applause (5.6 seconds)

Here, as suggested above, while both the speaker and the audience may share the expectation that each disapproves of the state of affairs described, the audience is unable to express its disapproval except through an act of affiliation with the speaker's position. It is therefore inhibited from such an act of affiliation until the speaker has overtly taken a

position. In this context, the ultimate position-taking comment is emphasized by being simultaneously expected and deferred. The response of the audience is first bottled up during the descriptive phase of the speaker's utterance and then released by its position-taking component. Moreover, the response is clearly due at the first completion point of the speaker's position-taking utterance, which is, once again, normally a single active declarative sentence.

Position taking may be simple or complex. In complex cases, such as (22), the pre-position-taking description of the to-be-evaluated state of affairs is itself emphasized through the use of one or more of the rhetorical devices already described. In this way, the audience's attention is more effectively caught and the potential of the position-taking utterance is enhanced. In (22), three successive contrasts are used to this effect:

(22) (Conservatives: Tape 8: Prime Minister's Address: ST)

Thatcher: For the unspoken assumption (0.2) behind policies
of withdrawal from the community (0.6) and unilateral
disarmament
(0.8)
① → { (A) → is that others: will continue to bear their burden:s
(0.3)
(B) → and pick up our:s as ↓ we:ll:
(0.4)
② → { (A) → that others would continue to accept our products
(0.4)
(B) → even though we refuse to accept ↓ their:s
(0.4)
③ → { (A) → that others would ensure the defence of Europe
(0.5)
(B) → and provide a shield behind which we could shel:ter.
(0.6)
(PT) → What a <contemptible> policy for Britain. =
Audience: = hear hear
Audience: = Applause (8.0 seconds)

In simple position taking, by contrast, the description is developed without this kind of special emphasis, as in (23) and (24).

(23) (Conservatives: Tape 6: Employment: Spencer Batiste: ST)

Batiste: There is a widespread practice in this country.
(.) whereby companies which use closed sho:ps (.)
pass that obligation on to small business sub-
contractors. (.) to use only s- sh- er- er union
labour (.) in meeting contracts in those places.
(.)

(PT)→ That practice must stop.
Audience: Applause (6.2 seconds)

(24) (Labour: Tape 2: Economic Policy: Arthur Scargill: ST)

Scargill: Time and time again (0.7) Labour Parties have
 been elected as Labour governments (0.7) and
 tried to implement (0.8) capitalist policies
 better than the Tories.

(.)
 (PT)→ We want to see no more [of that (.) with the next
 Labour government.
Audience: [Applause (8.4 seconds)

It may have been noted that all of the examples of position taking shown in this section have embodied criticisms of one kind or another. This is no accident. The position-taking format, we propose, is uniquely fitted for the packaging of criticisms. This is because the option of response is always available to an audience in the context of assertions that can be construed as “good news” for the “home” audience. In such a context, therefore, response cannot be bottled up in the manner described above. Again, in such a context, the position-taking components—which in effect assert that the good news is good news—tend to take on a reassertive, pursuit-like character (see next section). In the context of negative assertions, by contrast, audience response is firmly inhibited until the speaker has overtly adopted a position, and this latter action undoubtedly has a tension-releasing aspect. There is thus an inherent association between position taking as a rhetorical format and the production of critical political assertions.

7. Pursuit

If an audience fails to respond to a particular message, speakers may, as Atkinson has pointed out (1984a, p. 78), actively pursue applause. A common method of doing so is to recomplete the previous point, as in extract (25).²¹ Here the repetition in “That’s what’s going to be said in Washington” indicates that the previously made point has, in fact, been completed and, in so doing, draws attention to it.

²¹ The term “recompletion” is adopted from Sacks et al. (1974, pp. 718–19), where it is used to reference the use of items, such as tag questions, that solicit response to utterances that were already completed prior to the production of the reCompleting item.

(25) (Liberals: Tape 4: Defense: Lord Mayhew: ST)

Mayhew: And how will the Americans react if a British government says (0.3) we reject these (0.7) missiles unconditionally.
(.)

(H)→ I know one thing that'll be said in Washington.
(0.8)

(P)→ { They will say we::ll (0.4) if the British (.)
aren't going to have these weapons anyway (1.4)
they must stop badgering us about these multilateral
disarmament talks.
(0.4)

(Pursuit)→ That's what's going to be said in Washington. =
= [So finally..
Audience: [hear [hear
Audience: [Applause (4.4 seconds)

Alternatively, speakers may resummarize the gist of a previous point as a means of pursuing applause:²²

(26) (Conservatives: Tape 4: Economic Policy: David Evans: ST)

Evans: And you come to selling
(0.2)

①→ We've got to sell Great Britain
(0.2)

②→ We've got to sell Margaret Thatcher.
(0.2)

③→ We've got to sell her ↓ policies (.) ↑ to the people
(.)

(Pursuit)→ Tell the people [(0.2) what the plan is.
Audience: [Applause (8.7 seconds).

A third, systematic method of pursuing involves a shift of footing (Goffman 1979) in which, usually, speakers shift from speaking on their own behalf to speaking on behalf of a collectivity, as in (27):

(27) (Conservatives: Tape 6: Employment: Norman Tebbit: ST)

Tebbit: I am not willing to throw away the prospects
of lasting re ↓ covery (.) in an orgy of self

²² Strictly speaking, extract (26) incorporates two pursuit items. The first, which is unmarked on the transcript, consists of the slightly delayed syntactic continuation of the third list item ("to the people").

- ①→②→ indulgence, false sentimentality and self
 ③→ justification.
 (.)
 (Pursuit)→ And no one in this [government is.
Audience: Applause (11.6 seconds)

The tactic of pursuing, in that it involves reiterating or otherwise drawing attention to a point that has just been made, inevitably serves to reemphasize the point. In so doing, pursuits also provide audiences with a further opportunity to respond to the point.

However, the pursuit differs from the other devices discussed thus far in that it lacks the preliminary element that is characteristic of contrasts, puzzle-solutions, and headline-punch lines and that prepares the audience for the subsequent consummatory component of these devices. A similar, though less stereotyped element of preparation arises in lists through the production of second list items, which prepare audiences for a thoroughly expectable third. Because pursuits lack this preparatory element, audiences are able to recognize them only in a single, consummatory phase. Therefore, audiences may have fewer resources with which to anticipate the point at which they should properly begin applauding. This may be reflected in the fact that pursuits are less effective in eliciting applause than most of the other devices dealt with in this paper (see table 7 below).

Like position taking, pursuing may be simple or complex. In the complex cases, such as (25), (26), and (27) above, the pursuit is consequent upon a point that has already been made with another rhetorical device. The pursuit then constitutes a reemphasis. In a number of these cases, such as (26) and (27), the audience may already be on the edge of response and begin to applaud as soon as the speaker, by initiating the pursuit, has given a further indication that response is being looked for. Alternatively, the pursuit may be used in support of a statement that, although packaged in a rhetorical format, was either not very compelling or, as in (25) above, subject to a flawed delivery.²³

In the somewhat less effective simple cases, such as (28) and (29) below, the pursuit is used to emphasize and recycle a point that has not already been made with the use of rhetorical packaging. In these cases, the pursuit normally represents an attempt to secure response by stepping up the emphasis on a point that was previously insufficiently emphasized or one that, as in (28), had become somewhat lost.

²³ During the long pause (1.4 seconds) during the delivery of his claim about American reactions in extract (25), Lord Mayhew gives the appearance of having momentarily forgotten what he was going to say next.

(28) (Liberals: Tape 5: Alliance: Trevor Jones: ST)

Jones: And we are also prou::d (0.4) and I mean proud (0.7) of the people who have sacrificed jobs and caree:rs this last ten to fifteen years (1.7) to cre ↑ ate the gra:ss roots community based Liberal revolution (0.3) which has explo:ded across this la:nd, (0.5) in the biggest burst of spontaneous political activity (0.8) since the birth of the Labour and trade unions (0.2) the Labour Party and the trade unions (0.3) many decades ago:.
(.)

(Pursuit) → We are proud of those people, (.) and we must say so.

Audience: Applause (11.4 seconds)

In a small minority of simple pursuits, however, there are parallels with cases such as (26) and (27), in which the audience is already close to applauding prior to the pursuit. In these cases, once again, the onset of the pursuit is sufficient to generate applause, as in (29).

(29) (Labour: Tape 1: Local Government Cuts: Robin Cook: ST)

Cook: We've just finished an old folks home. (0.5) We cannot now afford to open it. (0.2) It's going to stand empty. (1.0) It is in the con ↑ stituency of the sa:me minis:ter who said vital services would not be ↑ cut. (0.9) We are painting a la:rge si:gn to go outside it. (0.4) Saying that this empty home: would have been fu:ll had it not been for his cuts.
(0.2)

(Pursuit) → THAT'S THE MESSAGE | WE'VE TO GET ACROSS

Audience: Applause (8.0 seconds)

It should be stressed that the term “pursuit” is here used to identify a particular structural configuration of speaker activities. It is not used to suggest that, in all cases, audiences have failed to respond to a political message and that speakers are attempting to “recover” a “lost” response. A number of political speakers systematically build pursuits into the making of a substantial proportion of their political points and engage in such pursuits regardless of whether the audience has begun to respond. Moreover, in cases such as (27) and (29) above, the pursuit is arguably

integral to the making of the point and, in (27) at least, was probably contained in the script of the speech.²⁴

8. Miscellaneous

The seven categories outlined above constitute all the classes of identifiable rhetorical formats that were associated with 2.5% or more of the applause events in our data base. All other applause-generating utterances were classified as "miscellaneous," and this category is thus a residual category. These utterances could not be coded in a consistent way to yield categories squarely based on the criteria that we had abstracted from Atkinson's work. Their success in generating applause derived, in all probability, from sources that were not the central focus of Atkinson's research.²⁵

RESULTS

The results of coding the applauded utterances in terms of the categories described above are set out in table 5. They show that the seven specific categories were associated with just over two-thirds of the applause that was produced at the party conferences.²⁶ Table 5 shows that the contrast

²⁴ The following cases were not coded as pursuits. (a) Cases in which audience applause preceded the production of the pursuit object. These cases were coded in accordance with the format category of the speech segment to which the applause onset was responsive. Thus in example (16) in the text, the coding was headline-punch line rather than complex pursuit because applause commenced prior to the pursuit that overlapped it. Although the point cannot be developed here, this postappliance onset pursuit of applause was instrumental, in a number of cases, in enhancing the intensity of audience response. (b) Pursuit-like objects that were produced subsequent to the dying away of applause and that engendered further applause. These items that in effect represented postappliance pursuit of applause were coded miscellaneous.

²⁵ Of the fully applauded miscellaneous statements, 51 involved direct commendations of individuals or collectivities and clearly invited applause by virtue of their content. In a further 61 instances, a miscellaneous statement contained a joke or quip element that was responded to with laughter and, subsequently, applause. These two categories constituted 21.8% of all the miscellaneous statements that were applauded. Applause for other miscellaneous statements seemed to arise from certain self-reinforcing preoccupations that were idiosyncratic to the mood of particular conferences—e.g., criticism of the nationalized industries at the Conservative Party Conference and of the Parliamentary Labour party at the Labour Party Conference.

²⁶ The initial coding of the statements was done directly off the videotape by one of the researchers. Each applauded statement was transcribed and coded, and two subsequent checks were made on each coding. Subsequently, a coding of a 10% stratified random sample of fully transcribed rostrum speeches was carried out by both coders. A code-recode reliability check showed a 96.7% agreement between the two codings.

TABLE 5
APPLAUDED STATEMENTS BY FORMAT, PARTY, AND SPEAKER TYPE

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal	All Parties	M.P.'s	Other	All Speakers	Estimated Incidence of Sentence Types
Total time (hours)	14.33	16.14	11.28	41.75	
No. of speakers	150	210	116	476	73	403	476	
Format (%):								
Contrast	24.9	25.4	22.9	24.6	24.8	24.5	24.6	11.1
List	6.5	5.1	8.7	6.5	8.0	5.6	6.5	5.8
Puzzle-solution	4.4	1.7	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.2	1.6
Headline-punch line	4.6	6.4	4.9	5.3	6.7	4.4	5.3	3.0
Combination	9.4	8.1	12.0	9.6	9.4	9.7	9.6	4.5
Position taking (complex)	2.9	1.9	3.0	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.6	.6
Position taking (simple)	4.9	3.6	3.3	4.1	3.4	4.5	4.1	1.5
Pursuit (complex)	5.9	5.1	5.7	5.6	6.4	5.1	5.6	2.1
Pursuit (simple)	6.2	5.8	6.3	6.1	6.7	5.7	6.1	2.8
All formats	69.7	63.1	70.1	67.6	71.6	65.0	67.6	33.0
Miscellaneous	30.1	36.9	30.0	32.4	28.4	34.8	32.4	67.0
Total	99.8	100	100.1	100	100	99.8	100	100
N	690	531	367	1,588	596	992	1,588	19,000

NOTE.—Percentage totals subject to rounding effects.

was by far the most commonly applauded format, being associated with the generation of nearly 25% of the applause events. The list (6.5%) was the third most common category. The significance of these two formats is, if anything, underestimated by these figures because both were prominent in the second most common format: the combination. If the incidence of these two formats within the latter category is taken into account, contrasts (whether singly or in combination) are found to be associated with no fewer than 33.2% of the applause events in the data base, while lists occur in association with 12.6%. Thus the two formats originally identified by Atkinson as significant in the generation of applause are, in fact, most prominently associated with the incidence of applause in our data base.

Table 5 also shows that the distribution of applause events among the various formats was almost identical at the Conservative and Liberal party conferences. The Labour Party Conference departs from that pattern in two respects. First, miscellaneous statements were associated with proportionately more applause events at the Labour Party Conference than elsewhere, and, second, the simpler rhetorical formats (headline-punch line and, to a lesser extent, contrasts) were associated with higher proportions of applause than in the other two conferences. This "deviant" distribution is largely accounted for by the character of the platform speeches at the Labour Party Conference. They are delivered on behalf of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the party and are largely occupied with listing and justifying NEC recommendations to the conference on how to vote on a package of complex motions. These speeches do not lend themselves to the use of complex rhetoric. A comparison of the Labour platform speeches with the more "set-piece" oratory of the Conservative platform shows that applause for the miscellaneous statements of Labour speakers was proportionately 50% greater than for similar statements by Conservatives and that Labour speakers also won a higher proportion of applause with the simpler formats.

In order to assess whether experience in public speaking influences the general pattern of audience responses, we have also compared the distri-

A similar exercise, in which a nonrandom sample of 40.8% of the platform speeches was transcribed and recoded, showed a lower level of code-recode reliability (89%) largely because of the greater verbal complexity of the platform speeches. Because of anxieties over the introduction of "halo" effects through the coding activities, conflicts between reliability and validity in coding were consistently resolved in favor of reliability considerations. Nevertheless, the results of the recoding that was done with the aid of transcriptions showed a general tendency for statements to be moved out of the miscellaneous category and, within the rhetorical devices, toward the more complex. This suggests that, if anything, the incidence of applause that was associated with the rhetorical figures discussed in this paper may be slightly underestimated.

TABLE 6
MESSAGES GENERATING FULL APPLAUSE
AND ISOLATED CLAPPING

MESSAGE TYPE	APPLAUSE TYPE		
	Full	Isolated	Total
All formats	1,074	191	1,265
Miscellaneous	514	223	737
Total	1,588	414	2,002

NOTE.— $\chi^2 = 62.25$, $P < .001$ ($df = 1$).

bution of applause produced in response to the speeches of Members of Parliament with that produced in response to the remainder of the speeches. The results of this comparison are also set out in table 5. It shows that M.P.'s secured a higher proportion of applause through statements produced with the use of rhetorical formats than did other speakers ($\chi^2 = 6.72$; P [one-tailed] $< .005$, 1 *df*). Moreover, this differential was concentrated on particular formats—lists, pursuits, and headline—punch lines. While these results suggest that experience and professionalism may play some role in influencing the general distribution of applause, the relationship is a weak one ($Q = .148$), and a broader view of table 5 argues for the overall stability of the association between the use of the rhetorical devices and the generation of applause regardless of particular speaker characteristics.

Taken as a whole, table 5 provides impressive general support for the hypothesis that political messages that are packaged in rhetorical formats embodying emphasis and projectability are more likely to be applauded than messages that are not so packaged. The distribution of applause in association with the various formats described is generally stable regardless of political party and type of speaker. This conclusion is qualified only by a slight tendency for more practiced political speakers to gain a higher proportion of their applause from rhetorical devices than run-of-the-mill conference participants. These results suggest that there is a fundamental tendency for audiences to respond to political statements that employ the rhetorical devices and that experienced political speakers use them more often, or more appositely, or deliver them more effectively.

To refine the evaluation of Atkinson's hypothesis, we further sought to test the claim that the rhetorical formats are more likely to engender *collective* than *individual* clapping. We compared the messages associated with full applause and those applauded by only one or two audience members (isolated claps). The results are set out in table 6, which shows

that while miscellaneous statements were associated with slightly less than one-third of the full-applause events, they were associated with over half of the isolated clapping. These results, which are significant beyond the 1% level, give some further support to the hypothesis that statements made with the rhetorical formats are more likely to engender collective responses and less likely to be associated with the responses of single individuals only than are miscellaneous statements.

In a further attempt to assess the relative efficacy of the rhetorical formats in the generation of applause, a 10% random sample of rostrum speeches, stratified by party, was coded on a sentence-by-sentence basis so as to yield a gross distribution of sentence formats. The overall rate at which particular formats were successful in eliciting applause in rostrum speeches was then computed by treating the rate at which they were produced in the 10% random sample as representative of the universe of rostrum speeches and comparing this with the real incidence of applause in the rostrum speeches as a whole. The results of this procedure were spectacular. An averagely successful rhetorical format such as the contrast appeared to be five times more likely to be associated with applause than a miscellaneous sentence, whereas the most successful rhetorical device—complex position taking—appeared to be more than 13 times as successful on the basis of a similar comparison.

This procedure, however, did not result in an adequate framework for assessing the relative efficacy of the various formats. Many sentences that contained rhetorical formats were, we felt, very unlikely to be met with applause and, moreover, since they were not occupied with the making of a substantive point, were unlikely to have been produced to such an end. It was also clear that many of the sentences coded miscellaneous could not realistically be treated as applaudable. To deal with this issue, the success rates described above were qualified by considering whether each coded sentence was intrinsically applaudable. For purposes of comparison, a similar procedure was applied to a selection of heavily applauded platform speeches. The results of this procedure, which are set out in table 7, show that the rhetorical formats are markedly more likely to be associated with applause than are messages drawn from the miscellaneous category. In speeches from the rostrum, the former were more successful by factors ranging from approximately two (lists) to eight (complex position taking). The superior success rates for the formats over the miscellaneous category were all significant at the .5 level or better. Within the formats themselves, success rates were better than average for position taking (both simple and complex) and for puzzle-solutions, and they were worse than average for the retroactively functioning pursuit categories. Among the remaining categories, lists were strikingly less successful than all other devices. This finding is the more remarkable because, as shown earlier,

TABLE 7
RATES AT WHICH APPLAUDABLE MESSAGES GENERATED APPLAUSE,
BY FORMAT AND SPEAKER TYPE (%)

Format	Rostrum	Platform	Thatcher
All messages	12.5	25.7	32.8
Contrasts	24.4	35.0	46.5
Lists	12.4	23.1	35.3
Puzzle-solution	27.6	38.5	100
Headline-punch line	24.9	20.0	46.2
Combination	22.4	43.7	66.7
Position taking (complex)	57.1	50.0	100
Position taking (simple)	32.6	32.4	100
Pursuit (complex)	19.2	46.3	60.0
Pursuit (simple)	15.9	52.9	50.0
All formats	21.8	34.5	52.6
Miscellaneous	6.8	15.1	14.0

NOTE.—For more information, see App. B.

lists are prominently associated with the aggregate distribution of applause.

Turning to the platform, all the formats were more successful in generating applause than miscellaneous sentences. With the exception of the headline-punch line category, the higher success rates were statistically significant at the .5 level or better. By comparison with the success rates for the rostrum speeches, most of the sentence types produced by the platform speakers were noticeably more successful in eliciting applause, though whether these higher rates are due to popularity, seniority, or sheer skill in public speaking remains open to question. However, the relative improvement in certain categories, such as lists, may be attributable in substantial part to skill in the delivery of these objects (see below).

Table 7 also shows that, in terms of success rates, Margaret Thatcher outperformed all other speakers in almost all categories. One commentator observed of this speech that “the audience applauded at every possible opportunity.” Detailed analysis of a videotape of the speech showed that it was applauded on 78 occasions (in 35 minutes of actual speaking time) and that the audience failed to respond at only two points where it clearly might have done so. The remainder of the “failures” depicted in the scores for Thatcher thus represent points at which the audience might have responded “interruptively” to what she was saying, by applauding statements that, though applaudable in themselves, were recognizable as parts of points that were not yet complete. Since no audience is likely to respond to every conceivably applaudable message, Thatcher’s aggregate success rate—between two and three times that of the rostrum speak-

ers—probably represents the maximum factor of difference between an average and a highly skilled and politically dominant speaker when the latter enjoys the wholehearted support of an audience.

THE ROLE OF DELIVERY IN STRESSING APPLAUDABLE MESSAGES

In his various publications, Atkinson gives detailed attention not only to the rhetorical structure of political point making but also to the role of intonation, timing, and gesture in the delivery of political messages. The significance of these latter will be readily apparent to anyone who has observed political speech making, and, as Atkinson suggests, the manner in which a message is delivered may strongly complement and reinforce its rhetorical structure (Atkinson 1984*a*, pp. 63–66). In this section, we report on our attempt to assess the extent to which vocal and nonvocal stress on an applaudable message may influence the likelihood of its being applauded.

The vocal and nonvocal signals that can provide additional stress include such prosodic, rhythmic, and nonvocal cues to the “core” or “target” message as increases in the volume of delivery, greater variation in pitch and stress, marked speeding up or slowing down of delivery, and increased use of gesture. Through all these resources, speakers can convey information about the importance or significance that they attach to the message in question and, by thus marking out the statement from a background of other speech material, indicate the relevance of audience response to it.

Our attempt to assess the role of vocal and nonvocal cues in the generation of applause was based on the stratified random sample of rostrum speeches. Each applaudable message formulated with one of the rhetorical devices described above was coded in terms of its degree of stress. Stress was evaluated by taking note of (1) whether the speaker was gazing at the audience at or near the completion point of the message; whether the message was (2) delivered more loudly than surrounding speech passages, or (3) with greater pitch or stress variation, or (4) with marked speeding up, slowing down, or some other rhythmic shift, or (5) accompanied by the use of gestures. In the absence of any of these features, the message was coded “no stress.” One of these features was treated as sufficient for an “intermediate stress” coding, whereas the presence of two or more features resulted in a coding of “full stress.” In an overwhelming number of cases we found that, if the speaker was not gazing at the audience, all the other stress factors were absent as well. Thus, in over 95% of the cases, an intermediate coding means that the speaker was gazing at the audience but failing to produce any other stress cues. In all

TABLE 8
APPLAUDED AND NONAPPLAUDED RHETORICAL FORMAT
STATEMENTS, BY DEGREE OF STRESS

Stress Level	Applauded	Nonapplauded	Total
Full stress	35	25	60
Intermediate	34	95	129
No stress	5	100	105
Total	74	220	294

NOTE.—Data are on rostrum applaudable messages only. $\chi^2 = 57.36$, $P < .001$ ($df = 2$).

the cases of full stress, the speaker was gazing at the audience and producing one or more additional stress cues. In almost all these latter cases, the judgment of the coders was that the speaker was definitely seeking applause. The results of these coding procedures are set out in table 8.²⁷

Table 8 unambiguously demonstrates that performance factors impinge substantially on whether a rhetorically formatted message is in fact applauded. While well over half the fully stressed messages were applauded, only a quarter of the intermediate messages attracted a similar response, and this figure fell to less than 5% in the case of the unstressed messages. In our examination of the nonapplauded messages, we were struck by the repeated failure of many speakers to sustain eye contact with the audience when making significant points. In a majority of cases, this failure was associated with the reading of prepared speeches, and it resulted in a disastrous loss of audience attention and rapport. Loss of attention naturally reduces the level of response. Moreover, those who continued to attend, while they may have been able to recognize that a significant point was being made, were generally reluctant to respond to it in the absence of any additional signal from the speaker that the point was of real importance.

While the general positive correlation between stress and applause held good for all the formats under investigation, the influence of stress on the incidence of applause was more marked for some formats than for others. Table 9 compares the success rates for contrasts and lists under different conditions of stress. The list is considerably more sensitive to stress than the contrast, and, in particular, it is considerably more vulnerable to intermediate stress.²⁸ This relative vulnerability to anything less than full

²⁷ Inter-coder reliability in the judgments of stress levels (two coders) was over 95%. All coder disagreements were reconciled.

²⁸ The relative vulnerability of lists to stress was statistically significant when the intermediate and no-stress categories were consolidated ($\chi^2 = 3.145$; P [one-tailed]

TABLE 9
SUCCESS RATES OF CONTRASTS AND LISTS, BY STRESS (%)

	Full Stress	Intermediate	No Stress
Contrasts	45.4	29.8	5.1
Lists	71.4	10.0	4.0

NOTE.—Data are on rostrum applaudable messages only.

stress may go some way toward accounting both for the comparatively low success rate for lists produced by rostrum speakers and for the fact that, in the hands of capable and experienced public speakers, this success rate rises dramatically (see table 7 above).

Overall, it is clear that performance factors play a substantial role in orchestrating the response of an audience to an inherently applaudable statement. However, while the present discussion has emphasized the ways in which the absence of vocal and nonvocal stress can result in a failure to generate applause, it may also be observed in conclusion that this stress sensitivity can be an important resource with which political speakers can control audience responses. Thus a speaker who wishes to prevent an audience from interrupting the building of a point with premature applause can, by a suitable modulation of stress, build up an argument with the use of a variety of rhetorical devices and simultaneously inhibit audience response until it is desired.

FORM AND CONTENT IN THE GENERATION OF AUDIENCE RESPONSES

Thus far, this paper has focused almost exclusively on the attempt to demonstrate that rhetorical form plays a central role in the generation of audience responses to political speeches. Yet, although the evidence that we have presented gives considerable support to this proposal, the responses of audiences are directed to the content of political messages rather than their rhetorical forms. The skeptic may indeed object that, notwithstanding the evidence, content plays the primary role in determining the character of audience responses.

Such an objection cannot be directly rebutted, for its roots lie in the semantics of applause in which, *ex hypothesi*, an audience reserves its applause for statements with which it agrees. In this context, however, it is useful to distinguish between latent agreement with a political state-

< .5, 1 *df*). The greater effectiveness of lists than of contrasts under conditions of full stress was not significant by Fisher's Exact Test.

ment and the collective expression of that agreement in the form of applause. We take the view that audience agreement may be a necessary condition for the generation of applause, but it is not generally a sufficient one.

This claim may be demonstrated by considering the generation of applause in response to statements about which an unequivocal consensus among conference participants might be expected to exist. In such a context, with audience members in little doubt that others shared their views, statements that articulate consensual views could be expected to be more likely to engender applause regardless of format characteristics. Thus we should expect a higher proportion of miscellaneous successes among popular content categories.

In order to test this hypothesis, we began by considering a special type of context in which a clear consensus arises, namely, political debates characterized by strongly defined majority and minority positions. Two debates were singled out for this investigation: the economic policy debate at the Conservative Party Conference and the defense debate at the Labour Party Conference. Both were unambiguous, with a clear consensus in favor of Thatcherite economic policies in the first debate and an overwhelming sentiment in favor of unilateral nuclear disarmament in the second.

An exhaustive analysis of the two debates shows that five times as many applaudable statements were produced for the majority positions as for the minority positions and that majority positions were applauded nine times as often as minority ones. However, when these debates were examined for the incidence of rhetorical formats among applauded statements, it was found that *both* pro-majority and pro-minority applauded statements contained higher proportions of rhetorical formats (76.3% and 90.0%, respectively) than the data base as a whole (67.6%).²⁹

The very high incidence of rhetorical formats among applauded statements in favor of the minority positions is not surprising. In a context in which individual audience members may have required special exhortation to show their support for the minority position, the more powerful rhetorical formats would be likely to be disproportionately associated with applause.

However, the relatively low proportion of applauded miscellaneous pro-majority statements is more unexpected and gives no support to the

²⁹ The higher proportion of rhetorical formats among pro-majority applauded statements relative to the remainder of applauded statements was significant on a one-tailed test ($\chi^2 = 3.0$; $P < .05$, 1 *df*). The higher proportion of rhetorical formats among anti-majority applauded statements relative to the remainder of applauded statements was not statistically significant.

TABLE 10

SUCCESS RATES OF MISCELLANEOUS AND RHETORICALLY FORMATTED APPLAUDABLE
PRO-MAJORITY STATEMENTS, COMPARED WITH AVERAGES

STATEMENT FORM	SUCCESS RATES (%)	
	Unbalanced Debates (Pro-Majority Statements)	All Debates (All Statements)
Rhetorically formatted	34.5 (<i>N</i> = 206)	21.8 (Estimated <i>N</i> = 2,909)
Miscellaneous	8.0 (<i>N</i> = 275)	6.8 (Estimated <i>N</i> = 4,638)
All statements	19.3 (<i>N</i> = 481)	12.5 (Estimated <i>N</i> = 7,547)

NOTE.—Rostrum speakers only.

proposal that speakers who are voicing strongly held majority sentiments are thereby freed from the necessity to use the arts and artifices of rhetoric. This conclusion is further underlined by comparing the success rates of the applaudable pro-majority statements with the average success rates in the data base as a whole. Table 10 shows a modest improvement in the rate at which miscellaneous statements are applauded when they articulate a strongly held majority view. However, this increase is far outweighed by the improved success rates of the rhetorically formatted statements, which rise from an average success rate of approximately 21.8% to 34.5% when they express the majority view in a one-sided debate. As a result, although the rhetorical formats are normally three times more effective than miscellaneous statements in eliciting applause in the data base as a whole, they are four times more effective when they express the majority view in unbalanced debates.

A second area of consensus among party members might well be expected to center on "external attacks." These, it will be recalled, were overwhelmingly directed at other political parties and "outsiders" and so should be unambiguously applaudable by an "in group" of party conference participants. If content were the dominant influence on the applaudability of a political assertion, it could be expected that rhetorically formatted versions of such attacks would form a smaller proportion of the total incidence of applause in this category. Yet this is not the case. Table 11 shows the aggregate distribution of applause events between rhetorically formatted and miscellaneous statements for the major content categories used in this study. The proportion of miscellaneous statements applauded is actually marginally lower among the highly consensual external attacks than among most other classes of statement. The difference between the two proportions is not statistically significant—a finding that runs counter to the expectation that content per se can strongly influence the likelihood that a statement will be applauded.

TABLE 11
AGGREGATE FORMAT USE IN APPLAUDED EXTERNAL ATTACKS VERSUS OTHER TYPES
OF APPLAUDED STATEMENTS (%)

Statement Type	All Formats	Miscellaneous	Total	N
1. External attacks	71.0	29.0	100	312
2. Approve own party	75.8	24.2	100	252
4. Internal attacks	64.7	32.6	100	429
5. Advocacy	60.0	40.0	100	147
7. Commendations	42.7	57.3	100	89
All categories (1-8)	67.6	32.4	100	1,588

Nonetheless, as we have already seen (table 4 above), the different content categories are far from equivalent in their propensity to stimulate applause, and the relative weightings of form and content in the generation of applause may be briefly explored by reference to the success rates of rhetorically formatted and miscellaneous statements in our major content categories. These rates are set out in table 12.³⁰ The evidence there is unambiguous. Within a generally greater success rate for platform speakers within these four categories amounting to a factor of 1.7, the impact of the rhetorical formats on whether an assertion will be applauded is consistently refracted through the general tendency for audiences to respond to negative attacks (categories 1 and 4) rather than positive assertions

TABLE 12
SUCCESS RATES OF SELECTED CONTENT CATEGORIES, BY SPEAKER
TYPE AND FORMAT USE

	SUCCESS RATES (%)			<i>N</i>
	All Formats	Miscellaneous	Overall	
Rostrum:				
1. External attacks	40.0	12.9	27.3	66
2. Approve own party	18.4	4.2	12.9	62
4. Internal attacks	25.6	14.6	20.0	80
5. Advocacy	24.7	4.6	13.0	223
Platform:				
1. External attacks	51.3	28.9	41.8	268
2. Approve own party	31.8	6.9	20.2	435
4. Internal attacks	47.1	57.1	50.0	24
5. Advocacy	32.3	8.7	18.2	77

³⁰ As in table 4, rostrum figures are based on a random sample and platform figures on a nonrandom sample of 15 "successful" speeches (see n. 13).

(categories 2 and 5). In the case of negative attacks, rhetorical formats are generally about twice as effective as miscellaneous sentences, while in positive assertions format use exerts a greater influence, formats proving to be between three and five times more effective than miscellaneous sentences.³¹

In sum, the evidence at hand is as follows. Table 10 suggests that while a preexisting consensus of support for the content of a speech may increase the likelihood that the speech will be applauded, this effect is predominantly expressed through 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. Tables 11 and 12 suggest that, while rhetorical structuring is a pervasive influence on whether an assertion will be applauded, this influence is particularly great in the context of positive assertions, which are intrinsically less likely to be responded to with applause. The evidence from table 10, together with the finding (data not shown) that rhetorically formatted assertions are particularly strongly clustered in categories 1 and 2, suggests that an audience that is strongly committed to a particular position may require powerfully expressed assertions of that position as a condition of response. Because a nonformatted assertion may appear lukewarm, a speaker may be under a stronger necessity to make use of rhetorical formats than would otherwise be the case.

Although we have sought in this section to treat the form and content of political messages as independent of one another, this treatment is, in part at least, counterfactual. As noted above, position taking is intrinsically suited to critically oriented assertions, and, more significant still, the contrast inherently embodies an element of that negativity that, as we have seen, is a persistent feature influencing audience responses to political messages. This conjunction of the contrast with negativity was not lost on Aristotle, who observes in *The Rhetoric* 3.17.1418b, "Refutative enthymemes are better liked than demonstrative; the refutative process always makes the conclusion more striking, for setting opposites side by side renders their opposition more distinct" (Cooper 1932, p. 235). The present study confirms this observation beyond reasonable doubt.

³¹ The greater success rates for rhetorically formatted statements in comparison with miscellaneous statements is thus particularly marked for positive assertions (all speakers: $\chi^2 = 73.3$, $Q = .74$) and rather less strong for negative attacks (all speakers: $\chi^2 = 19.66$, $Q = .44$). The relationship may be alternatively described by noting that the tendency for negative assertions to be applauded more often than positive ones is particularly marked for miscellaneous statements (all speakers: $\chi^2 = 41.84$, $Q = .683$) and is attenuated for rhetorically formatted statements (all speakers: $\chi^2 = 17.67$, $Q = .333$). These relationships were highly consistent when the data were disaggregated between rostrum and platform speakers.

CONCLUSION

Taken as a whole, the findings reported in this paper strongly support Atkinson's proposal that audience responses to political speeches are influenced by the verbal structuring of the statements that are made. As we have seen, seven basic rhetorical formats were found to be associated with more than two-thirds of all the applause that was generated by some 42 hours of political speeches made in Britain at the party conferences of 1981. This proportion was broadly stable, regardless of the political party or the type of speaker involved and of the overall rate at which the audience responded. Statements that incorporated these formats were between two and eight times as likely to be applauded as those that did not. They were also significantly less likely to be associated with isolated clapping. The effectiveness of the rhetorical formats in generating applause was strongly, though differentially, influenced by performance factors. The impact of the rhetorical formats on audience response was mediated by the general disposition of the conference audiences to respond to negative rather than constructive assertions. The relative effectiveness of the formats was not diminished, but rather enhanced, in contexts where the audience was already strongly committed to the position advocated by the speaker. An audience's agreement with the content of a political speech is thus a necessary condition, but not in general a sufficient one, for the generation of applause.

The conclusions of this paper may be viewed as discomfiting by those who understand political debate as an activity in which speakers seek to persuade, and audiences are influenced, by processes of rational argument. However, the rhetorical devices occur in a variety of other forms of persuasive communication, and their general effectiveness may arise from the fact that, although specialized to the constraints of the speech-making context, they have their roots in ordinary talk, where they occur, most prominently, in contexts of persuasion.

As Atkinson (1983, 1984*a*) has pointed out, the functioning of the rhetorical devices is not confined to political speech making. Several of the devices—in particular, the contrast and the three-part list—are commonplace in advertising slogans, newspaper editorials, and other prose text passages designed to persuade. Mulkay and his colleagues have noted the occurrence of similar devices in scientific texts and even in letters exchanged between research scientists.³² In a rather different study, Dorothy Smith (1978) has observed the extensive use of contrasts in pas-

³² See Mulkay (1984), Potter (1983), and Yearley (1982) for some developments of this argument.

sages of narrative devoted to the description of purportedly factual evidence of mental illness. This pervasive use of the rhetorical formats as persuasive devices in “textual” contexts, we believe, suggests that their use may originate in the most widespread of all contexts of persuasive communication—natural conversational interaction.

In addition to the numerous parallels between the functioning of rhetorical formats and the practices of more mundane conversational conduct already alluded to in this paper, it may be suggestive to consider such passages as the following:

(30) (Watson 1978, p. 106)

- Cl:* I'm going to tell you this, I'm only one in a million
 (H)→ but I'll spread it about,
 (P)→ what the church can do for you it can do nothing,
 (A)→ the Catholics do more every day than what the
 (B)→ Protestants do
 I think it's disgusting I do really and truly.

In this telephone conversation to a crisis-intervention center in the United Kingdom, the caller is developing a complaint about the level of support that she has received from her church. Her talk is strongly emphatic and is hearably designed to persuade. It employs several of the devices that have been isolated in this paper. Her complaint reaches a climax in the following passage:³³

(31) (Watson 1978, p. 106)

- Cl:* ①→ The Jewish people,
 ②→ the Catholic people are all looked after
 better than me,
 ③→ { (P)→ there's only one that isn't
 (S)→ that's the Protestants I can tell you
 ...
 ...
 (A)→ No, charity begins in the church doesn't it,
 (B)→ { (P)→ (that) my church, what they've done for me
 (S)→ I'm very thankful for
 nothing at all

Here again, in this short passage, various devices closely similar to those observable in political speeches are deployed. Similarly, the following passage from a 15-year-old speaker of Nonstandard Negro English

³³ See Watson (1978) for further discussion of these passages.

(NNE) shows strong resemblances with the complex position-taking argument of Margaret Thatcher in extract (22).

(32) (Labov 1972, p. 194)

Leroy: You know, like some people say if you're good

Ⓐ→ an' shit, your spirit goin' t'heaven. . . .

Ⓑ→ 'n' if you bad, your spirit goin' to hell.

Ⓟ→ Well, bullshit! Your spirit goin' to hell anyway,
good or bad.

But if the formats that we have described have their primary home or base environment in persuasive or argumentative conversation, their effectiveness in mobilizing responses in the context of political speeches is not only a product of the fact that they are hearably persuasive. It is also connected with the ways in which they can be adapted to the constraints of public speaking and, in particular, to the dynamics of audience response. For while audience members must respond quickly to speaker statements, they also show a strong disposition to act on a collective basis. Individual members of an audience are most likely to respond to a political speaker when they believe that other audience members will do the same. As we have seen, the collective responses thus generated are most likely to occur when speakers use verbal formats that naturally emphasize the point being made and simultaneously project a clear point at which audience response will become relevant.

The clustering of audience responses around statements formatted in the ways described above thus arises out of the converging interests of speakers and their audiences. Speakers wish to ensure that, as far as possible, audience support for their statements takes the form of an immediate, substantial, and hence hearably enthusiastic burst of applause. Similarly, audience members desire to express their support for certain statements with some degree of security that they will not find themselves clapping alone. The needs of both speakers and audiences are most likely to be satisfied through the use of statements embodying the kinds of structural features reported in this study.

Finally, in contexts such as party conferences in which experienced political speakers address experienced consumers of political speeches, the understandings involved in the coordination of audience responses may become somewhat less tacit than we have so far suggested. For, under these circumstances, the rhetorical devices discussed in this paper may become the objects of a process of conventionalization or ritualization (Goffman 1981, pp. 2–3) through which they become increasingly,

though never perhaps entirely, transparent as overt “invitations to applaud.”

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Transcript Symbols

(0.4)	Numbers in parentheses indicate periods of silence in tenths of seconds.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a period of silence shorter than two-tenths of a second.
<u>word</u>	Underscoring indicates some form of stress via pitch and/or amplitude. A short underscore indicates lighter stress than a long underscore.
wo::rd	Colons indicate a prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The length of the row of colons indicates the length of the prolongation.
↑ word	Vertical arrows indicate shifts into markedly higher or lower pitch.
,?.	Punctuation marks are used to indicate intonation.
WORD	Uppercase indicates especially loud sounds relative to surrounding speech.
><	Right/left carets bracketing an utterance or utterance part indicate speeding up.
<>	Left/right carets bracketing an utterance or utterance part indicate slowing down.
.hhh	A dot-prefixed row of <i>h</i> 's indicates an in-breath. Without the dot the <i>h</i> 's indicate an out-breath.
-	A hyphen indicates a cutoff.
[A single left bracket indicates the point at which applause or other audience behavior overlaps a speaker's utterance.
=	Equal signs, placed at the end of one line and the beginning of the next, indicate that there is no temporal gap between the two lines.

The codes that identify the data extracts indicate (1) the party conference from which the extract was taken, (2) the videotape on which it is located, (3) the debate in which the speaker spoke, (4) the name of the speaker, and (5) the type of transcription (“orthographic” or “simplified”) being used.

These transcript symbols were devised by Gail Jefferson (see Jefferson [1983a] for a more complete listing). A fuller list of transcript symbols, together with an alternative method for transcribing applause, is to be found in Atkinson and Heritage (1984, pp. ix–xvi).

APPENDIX B

Construction of Table 7

Table 7 was constructed by treating the incidence of applaudable messages in the 10% stratified random sample of rostrum speeches as representative of the universe of rostrum speeches. The success rates for the various message formats were computed by taking the actual incidence of applause in the universe of rostrum speeches in relation to the estimated incidence of applaudable messages in each format compiled through an exhaustive coding of the 10% stratified random sample. For the sample of 15 successful platform speeches (see n. 13), success rates were computed by taking the actual incidence of applause events in relation to the complete incidence of applaudable messages in each format. The success rates for the platform speakers thus include Margaret Thatcher's success rates, which are also presented separately (col. 3).

Whether a sentence was applaudable was determined by eliminating the following categories as pragmatically nonapplaudable: (1) "framing" or topic initiating sentences; (2) sentences presenting background information; and (3) subcomponents of two-part rhetorical devices, for example, the puzzle-establishing component of the puzzle-solution format or the headline sentences in the headline-punch line format.

No attempt was made to assess how conference participants might react to statements containing specific substantive political claims. Thus nonapplaudability was assessed solely through a consideration of the pragmatic functioning of sentences and not through any consideration of the likely popularity of the assertions that speakers might make. Any sentence containing a substantive political assertion was thus coded applaudable.

These coding decisions were based on our judgment that numerous miscellaneous sentences were occupied with activities that were intrinsically nonapplaudable, whereas a majority of the rhetorically formatted sentences were occupied with the making of substantive points. We therefore concluded that any attempt at a realistic assessment of the relative efficacy of the various rhetorical devices in comparison with miscellaneous sentences could only proceed after the elimination of the nonapplaudable sentences. This procedure resulted in the elimination of some 45% of the miscellaneous sentences as nonapplaudable. In comparison, only 24% of the rhetorically formatted sentences were eliminated on the same basis. The following passage illustrates the various sentence types that were eliminated as nonapplaudable through this procedure. After each sentence, coding decisions are indicated in parentheses.

(Conservatives: Tape 3: Free Enterprise: Brian Mogford: OT)

Mogford: The real problem is: what is the basic cause for this structural decline. (PUZZLE, TOPIC INTRODUCING, NONAPPLAUDABLE)
 And as far as the West Midlands is concerned, we are dependent on two main industries: car manufacture and engineering. (MISCELLANEOUS, BACKGROUND INFORMATION, NONAPPLAUDABLE)
 What is often referred to colloquially as “metal bashing.” (MISCELLANEOUS, BACKGROUND INFORMATION, NONAPPLAUDABLE)
 And these basic industries have been for some years in structural decline compared with the more modern and growing industries which we also have in this country. (MISCELLANEOUS, BACKGROUND INFORMATION, NONAPPLAUDABLE)
 But the crucial point is: we have them in this country but we do not have them to any great extent in the West Midlands. (CONTRAST, BACKGROUND INFORMATION, NONAPPLAUDABLE)
 Why is this? (PUZZLE, SUBCOMPONENT OF LARGER DEVICE, NONAPPLAUDABLE)
 Why do we not have some of the faster growing, more modern industries in the West Midlands? (PUZZLE, SUBCOMPONENT OF LARGER DEVICE, NONAPPLAUDABLE)
 I can give you a very simple answer to that. (HEADLINE, SUBCOMPONENT OF LARGER DEVICE NONAPPLAUDABLE)
 It is because governments of both complexions over many years have directed industry away from the West Midlands and into the regions. (COMBINATION: SOLUTION/ PUNCH LINE/ CONTRAST, SUBSTANTIVE POLITICAL MESSAGE, APPLAUDABLE)

Audience: Applause

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