8-2016

The Politics of Town Hall Meetings: Analyzing Constituent Relations-in-Interaction

Robert J. Green
Purdue University

Graduate School Form
30 Updated 12/26/2015

PURDUE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
Thesis/Dissertation Acceptance

This is to certify that the thesis/dissertation prepared

By Robert J. Green

Entitled
THE POLITICS OF TOWN HALL MEETINGS: CONSTITUENT RELATIONS-IN-INTERACTION

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Is approved by the final examining committee:

Felicia D. Roberts
Chair

Joshua E. Boyd

Joshua M. Scacco

Thomas J. Rickert

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Approved by Major Professor(s): Felicia D. Roberts

Approved by: Melanie Morgan 7/18/2016

Head of the Departmental Graduate Program Date

THE POLITICS OF TOWN HALL MEETINGS: ANALYZING CONSTITUENT RELATIONS-IN-INTERACTION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Robert J. Green

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2016

Purdue University

West Lafayette, Indiana

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my friends, family, mentors, professors, and colleagues for their support. Without their assistance and guidance, this project would not have been possible. I would to thank my parents, Steve and Vicki Green, and my grandmother, Ruby Whitis, for a lifetime of encouragement offered to me.

I would like to thank my advisory committee—Josh Boyd, Josh Scacco, and Thomas Rickert—for their insight and guidance. I have tried to follow their advice to the extent my abilities allow. I am indebted to my advisor, Felicia Roberts, for her interest in me as a student and as a person. She is the professional I hope one day to become.

I would like to thank Melanie Morgan, the Director of Graduate Studies, and Deanna Bush, the Graduate Secretary, of the Brian Lamb School of Communication for their prompt help and understanding on the administrative side of things.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank Paula Hopeck for her selfless devotion to this project on a personal and professional level. Without her, the document you presently read would not exist.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

[	Left brackets indicate overlapping utterances.
]	Right brackets indicate the point at which two overlapping utterances end.
=	Equal signs indicate contiguous utterances.
(0.4)	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence in tenths of a second.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny gap, probably no more than one-tenth of a second.
<u>word</u>	Underlining indicates emphasis.
:::	Colons indicate prolongation of a sound or syllable. The length of the row of colons indicates the length of the prolongation.
.	A period indicates a stopping fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence.
,	A comma indicates a continuing intonation, not necessarily between clauses of sentences.
?	A question mark indicates rising inflection, not necessarily a question.
!	An exclamation mark indicates an animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation.
-	A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cutoff or self interruption.
WORD	Capital letters, except at the beginnings of lines, indicate an utterance that is louder than the surrounding talk.

°	The degree sign indicates that the utterance is quieter than the surrounding talk.
( )	Empty parentheses indicate the transcriber’s inability to hear what was said.
(word)	Parenthesized words indicate possible hearings.
(( ))	Double parentheses contain author's descriptions rather than transcriptions.
.hhhh hhhh	A row of h's prefixed by a dot indicates an inhalation; without a dot, an aspiration. The length of the row of h's indicates the length of the inhalation or aspiration.
>abcd<	"Greater than" and "less than" carrots indicate that the talk between them is delivered at a pace that is rushed, compressed, or quicker than the surrounding talk.
<abcd>	"Less than" and "greater than" carets indicate that the talk between them is delivered at a pace that is slower than the surrounding talk.
↓ or ↑	The up and down arrows mark sharp rises or falls in pitch or may mark a whole shift or resetting of the pitch.
#	Indicates a rasping or 'creaky' voice quality.
$	Indicates the speaker is smiling while speaking.
xxXXxx	A string of X’s indicate applause. Uppercase (XXX) indicates loud applause, lowercase (xxx) indicates quiet applause.
-x-	-x- indicates an isolated clap. A string (x-x-x) indicates sporadic applause.
zzZZzz	Indicates audience “buzzing.” Uppercase (ZZZ) indicates loud/intense buzzing, lowercase (zzz) indicates soft/weak buzzing.
bbBBbb	Indicates audience booing. Uppercase (BBB) indicates loud/intense booing, lowercase (bbb) indicates soft/weak booing.

xbXBxb	Indicates counteraffiliatve applause/booing
hahahah / heheheh	Indicates laughter.
hah / heh	Indicates an isolated laugh. A string (hah-hah-hah) indicates sporadic laughter.
sh:: SH::	Indicates shushing. The number of colons indicates its duration. Uppercase (SH) indicates loud/intense shushing, lowercase (sh) indicates soft/weak shushing.

Sources: Atkinson and Heritage (1984c); Clayman (1992, 1993a); Jefferson (2004)

ABSTRACT

Green, Robert J. Ph.D., Purdue University, August 2016. The Politics of Town Hall Meetings: Analyzing Constituent Relations-in-Interaction. Major Professor: Felicia Roberts.

The *politics of town meetings* proposes that town hall meetings are institutions of representative democracy that present an opportunity for constituents to hold their elected representatives accountable in a public setting. *Constituent relations-in-interaction* glosses a complex set of interactional practices and procedures through which ensembles of participants bring town hall meetings, as structures of social interaction, into being. This study uses conversation analysis, the study of talk-in-interaction, to show that the politics of town hall meetings orients to three types of accountability: Interactional accountability, political accountability, and public accountability. The articulation of these accountability types provides a sense of overall-structural organization to the structure and activities giving shape to town hall meetings.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Town hall meetings are an institution of representative democracy created through the social interaction of elected representatives and their constituents over some matter of political interest. They often take place during a congressional recess, a time when representatives vacate Capitol Hill and return to their districts to "press the flesh." The format of the meeting allows just that. Elected officials organize them to hold face-to-face conversations with the people who authorize them to represent. These people, in their turn, attend these meetings to hold their representative in government publically accountable. This kind of responsive relationship between the governed and those who govern is arguably at the heart of representative democracy.

The setting sounds pleasant enough, but town hall meetings have earned a notorious reputation as epicenters of anarchy and extremism. They are often understood as places were politicians and their constituents engage in political theatrics rather than meaningful public deliberation. When the distance between the governed and those who govern is compressed into the confines of a shared response space, troubles are bound to occur.

This study proposes that something meaningful can be learned from the close analysis of troubles bound to occur. According Tracy (2010), "talk is regularly celebrated as central to democratic life, but rarely is it examined carefully" (p.5). This study carefully examines talk that is neither celebrated nor regarded as central to democratic life, the talk that occurs at town hall meetings. To be more precise, this study uses conversation analysis to examine the politics of town hall meetings as constituent relations-in-interaction.

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The analysis of constituent relations-in-interaction conducted in this dissertation shows that the politics of town hall meetings orients to three types of accountability: Interactional accountability, political accountability, and public accountability. The articulation of these accountability types provides a sense of overall-structural organization (Sacks, 1995a) to the structures and activities giving shape to town hall meetings.

The Accountability of Town Hall Politics: Analyzing Town Hall Meeting Conversations as Talk-in-Interaction

The analysis of conversation as talk-in-interaction posits that conversation is a primary form of social organizing available to those who partake in coordinated activities. According to Schegloff (1999a) “Talk-in-interaction is composed of various practices by which ensembles of participants bring into being—by which they *co-construct*—an occasion of interaction over its course, in real time” (p. 409).

The term conversation often evokes a sense of superficial optimism, that everything will be better if "we talk it out." According to Schudson (1997), conversation is often lionized in political contexts as the "soul of democracy." Schudson thinks this is a mistake, and he is correct. Conversation is not the soul of democracy. Conversation is incarnate, a method of self-organizing bodies in a shared space and time through the distribution of turns-at-talk. Conversation may not be the soul of democracy, but it is an available method through which democracy is made accountable.

As such, the study of town hall meeting talk-in-interaction is a study of accountability. The literature on accountability is extensive, developing along disciplinary and methodological lines. This study, in line with the CA tradition, examines accountability as it is interactionally accomplished in context (Buttony, 1993). Along these lines, accountability can be broadly understood in two related, though distinct, senses: Accountability as moral responsibility and accountability as intelligibility (Bolden & Robinson, 2011; Heritage, 1988; Robinson, 2016).

The first sense of accountability can be understood in terms of moral responsibility. Along these lines, Scott and Lyman (1968) describe an account as "a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior" (p. 46). Accounts function as either excuses that relieve responsibility for inappropriate conduct or as justifications that assert the necessity of inappropriate conduct given the circumstances.

The second sense of accountability can be understood in terms of intelligibility. This sense, which is a product of ethnomethodological research, references a "taken-for-granted level of reasoning through which a running index of action and interaction is created and sustained" (Heritage, 1988, p. 128). This running index of action and interaction is maintained through intuitive sense-making procedures and practices employed by participants engaged in the production of an activity-in-context. As Garfinkel (1967) explains:

> Any social setting can be viewed as self-organizing with respect to the intelligible character of its own appearances as either representations of or as evidences-of-a-social-order. Any setting organizes its activities to make its properties as an organized environment of practical activities detectable, countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analyzable—in short, *accountable* (p. 33).

The upshot for this passage, according to Packer (2011), is that accounts function as descriptions offering "recommendations or instructions in how to see what is happening" (pp. 197-98)." If accounts populate and repopulate the running index of activity, and if the interpretation of these accounts provides instructions for understanding the activity at hand, then such descriptions are a part of the activity they report. If this is the case, then accounts are constitutive of the activities they report because they are the objects through which such activities are rendered intelligible.

The concept of accountability bridges two central features of coordinated social activity: The organization of social action as well as the social intelligibility of those actions. These two features, respectively, correspond with the normativity of coordinated action and the operation of shared reasoning methods through which such action is interpreted and understood (Heritage, 1988).

Conversation analysis provides a framework for the analysis of accountability of social structures through a process of deconstructive and reconstructive analysis.

“The deconstructive aspect of conversation analysis,” says Clayman (1995), investigates “recurrent structures of talk . . . for how they are oriented to and produced by the interactants themselves via practices which are sensitive to the particulars of the immediate interactional and situational circumstances” (p. 111). Deconstructive analysis is often used to examine instances of social interaction that depart from the norm to understand how participants orient back to the norm—including an analysis of how participants justify their departures.

The reconstructive aspect of conversation analysis, in turn, consists of “findings on the organization of turn taking, activity sequences, and nonvocal activities . . . and on how these phenomena are organized differently across casual, institutional, and cultural contexts” (Clayman, 1995, p. 111). Deconstructive and reconstructive analysis works as one to provide functional descriptions of how recurring structures of social interaction are constructed through contextually sensitive forms of practical activity.

Although town hall meetings function as an arena of public interaction (Clayman, 2006) for constituents and their elected representatives, they have not yet been subjected to the same level of descriptive work that conversation analysts have given to other types of institutional contexts (Heritage & Clayman, 2010), likes news interviews or presidential debates. Such work, when completed, will provide a detailed account of how the structures and components of town hall meetings become intelligible through social interaction.

Literature Review: Constructing an Alternate Account of Town Hall Meetings

The literature on town hall meetings can be organized into two basic themes. (1) Town hall meetings, or at least the encounters styled as such, are ubiquitous. (2) Town hall meetings are mostly used as a resource for research agendas rather than as a topic of investigation.

These themes suggest that the academic literature provides a partial sense of what organizing, attending, or participating in a town hall meeting entails. While this is not a problem in itself, the recurrence of town hall meetings suggests the operation of a describable set of coordinated practical activities through which town hall meetings are recognizably produced. Town hall meetings, using the language of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 2002) are accountable social facts that can be treated as topics for investigation.

The ubiquity of town hall styled meetings and the criteria to account for them. Town hall meetings, or at least the encounters styled as such, are found in a variety of places and are organized for a variety of purposes. Examples of town hall styled events include workplace meetings (Gurman, 2012), presidential town hall debates (McKinney, 2005; Schroeder, 2000), campaign trail meet and greets (M. Williamson, 2012), town hall meeting style news interviews, and finally the town hall meetings studied in this project. Any consultative meeting (Kelshaw & Gastil, 2008), or any type of meeting that involves a brief public address followed by an audience driven question and answer component, could be and has been plausibly called a town hall meeting.

The fact that town hall meetings are apocryphally named after the New England Town Meeting—a thorough account of how and why this happened is provided by Bryan (2003, pp. 36-54)—only adds to the confusion. If any consultative type encounter can be called a town hall meeting, then the term is meaningless. If these events cannot be differentiated by name, then a set of more definitive criteria would assist the ends of research and practice.

This study offers the following criteria. When people engage in town hall styled activities, they orient—or not as the case may be— to three kinds of accountability. (1) *Interactional accountability* is derived from the social structure(s) and components that constitute the encounter. It constrains the forms of social action available to participants. (2) *Political accountability* is derived from the democratic system to which participants orient their talk and action (van Dijk, 1997). (3) *Public accountability* is derived from the extent to which the meeting is open to anyone and everyone.

Using these criteria, encounters colloquially referred to as town hall meetings can be differentiated according to how participants orient to these types of accountability. While the creation of a town hall meeting typology is beyond the scope of the present study, these criteria can be used to speculate a distinction between New England Town Meetings and town hall meetings.

New England Town Meetings are institutions of direct democracy with their own standards of political accountability and interactional accountability. Their purpose is lawmaking by assembled citizens (Zimmerman, 1999), and interaction is organized to achieve that purpose (Townsend, 2009). They elect meeting officers, create budgets, debate policies, and even raise taxes (Mansbridge, 1983; A. Williamson & Fung, 2004). To accomplish this, citizens congregate in a public venue—the town hall—to make the laws that govern their community.

The town hall meetings studied in this dissertation are public encounters where ordinary people acting as constituents hold their elected representatives accountable about some political matter through social structures of public address and questioning-answering exchanges. Town hall meetings are most similar to press conferences, a primary difference being that audience members are not expected to adopt professional journalistic standards, norms, and obligations in their interaction with officials.

Town hall meetings are places where the political work of representative democracy is accomplished. This places town hall meetings in the orbit of ordinary democratic practice with the exception that town hall meetings, unlike city councils or school boards, lack legislative jurisdiction. While town hall meetings may vary in formality and design, participants orient to the *work* of constituent relations-in-interaction. It is the point of this study to describe how this work provides overall structural organization to an activity called town hall meeting.

Treating town hall meetings as topics of investigation: Constructing a town hall meeting activity type. Town hall meetings are mostly used as a resource for research agendas rather than as a topic of investigation. Such research has either focused on the (a) ideologies of activist groups or the (b) incompetencies of representative government. While this is not a problem in itself, taken-for-granted perceptions and conceptions of town hall meetings have precluded researchers from understanding the "types of talk, actions, and processes" (Schwartzman, 1989, pp. 7-8) that distinguish them as distinct types of activity.

The first research agenda centers on the analysis of activist ideologies. The most notable example of this is analysis of the Tea Party. Depending on who you ask, the Tea Party is either a grassroots movement of overtaxed Americans fighting for personal liberty (Armey & Kibbe, 2011; Courser, 2011; Etzioni, 2011) or a pet political project of organized wealth (Berlet, 2011). Sympathizers point to a February 2009 town hall meeting protest in Florida as the birth of the movement (Armey & Kibbe, 2010; D. Montgomery, 2010). Critical accounts cite town hall meeting discourses to illustrate the astroturfed (Fallin, Grana, & Glantz, 2013; Mayer, 2010),“authoritarian (Langman, 2012; Lundskow, 2012), xenophobic (Zeskind, 2012), white supremacist (Pease, 2010), and arguably fascist (Berlet, 2012; Laclau, 1997) qualities of the movement. Research on both sides of the issue has used the talk and texts generated by town hall meeting participants to make arguments about broader political movements and ideologies.

The second research agenda focuses on the incompetencies of representative government. Town hall meetings, like public meetings in general (McComas, 2001; McComas, Besley, & Black, 2010), signify a missed opportunity for genuine deliberation between officials and citizens (Black, Leighter, & Gastil, 2009). Research along these lines use excerpts from town hall meetings to illustrate the symptoms of an ailing civic culture and a offer a prescription to cure it. An exemplar of this approach is Gastil’s (2008) treatment of town hall meetings. “Depending on the topic, timing, and advance publicity,” he writes, town hall meetings “typically become empty meditation chanters or rousing political theater houses” (pp. 188-190).

While both approaches contribute to their respective research agendas, their findings tell us more about their respective research agendas than they do about town hall meetings. While this is not necessarily a problem in itself, analysis unmotivated by ideological concerns or hypothetical-typical frameworks of civic participation would investigate town hall meetings on their own terms. “However rich our imaginations are,” says Sacks (1984), “if we use hypothetical, or hypothetical-typical versions of the world we are constrained by reference to what an audience, an audience of professionals, can accept as reasonable” (p. 25).

Despite the problems encountered in town hall meetings, people still organize, attend, or participate in town hall meetings. What about this can be accepted as reasonable? Finding an answer to this question requires treating town hall meetings as their own topic of investigation.

To facilitate this work, I have found it fruitful to approach town hall meetings as an activity type with a political purpose. Levinson (1992) defines activity type as “a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted events with constraints on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions” (p. 69). Levinson uses a variety of examples to illustrate the concept, from dinner parties and basketball games to courtroom cross-examination and teacher-student interactions. Research has extended the concept to faculty meetings (Nielsen, 2012), business meetings (Angouri & Marra, 2010), and even parliamentary debates (van Eemeren & Garssen, 2009). I would like to extend the concept to town hall meetings.

Within activity type constraints, participants build action projects as a means towards achieving the activity’s goal (Levinson, 2013). In adversarial activities, like courts of law, prosecutors and defense attorneys pursue competing action projects consisting of actions designed to achieve a verdict of guilty or not guilty (Thomas, 2013).

A similar pattern at work can be observed in town hall meetings. Politicians have long used town hall meetings to generate positive publicity for their electoral campaigns and educate constituents about their policy agendas and legislative achievements. Constituents have turned the tables, using town hall meetings to criticize their representative's legislative record in a public forum. This range of activity relies on the more or less cooperative turn-by-turn construction of the town hall context by participants who sometimes have competing agendas and interests displayed through the pursuit of their competing projects.

The concept of activity type helps us study the interplay of interactional, political, and public accountability because it directs us to study closely just "how speakers use language in order to change the situation they find themselves in" (Thomas, 2013, p. 189). Such is particularly worthy in contexts such as these, where participants work within the structure of the activity to produce adversarial, activist effects. "Social context is never independent of actions," write Heritage and Clayman (2010), "to the contrary, persons are continuously creating, maintaining, or altering the social circumstances in which they are placed – regardless of how massively, even oppressively, 'predefined' those situations appear to be—and they do so in and through the actions they perform" (p. 21). With this approach, the phenomena that has been taken for granted—the background, or staging, of a recurring town hall meeting context—is brought into the foreground for analysis.

Data Collection and Case Study Design

In this section, I will review the rationale of, and procedures for, collecting data for conversation analytic research. Following this, I will talk about the case study design for this dissertation.

Conversation analytic procedures for data collection. Conversation analytic studies produce theoretical propositions that take the form of "functional explanations," describing the "procedures and expectations actually employed by participants in producing and understanding conversations" (Levinson, 1983, p. 319). These propositions are derived from unmotivated observations of naturally-occurring data. Naturally-occurring data consists of "interactional phenomena that would have occurred regardless of whether the researcher had come upon the scene" (Psathas, 1995, p. 46). Such phenomena include telephone conversations, news interviews, student-teacher interactions, court proceedings, and town hall meetings.

Naturally-occurring data contrasts with data produced through survey research, field notes produced through participant observation, post-hoc reflections recorded through interview protocols, results produced through social scientific experiments, etc. The use of naturally-occurring data reflects the aim of CA "to discover the natural living order of social activities as they are endogeneously organized in ordinary life, without the exogeneous intervention of researchers imposing topics and tasks or displacing the context of action" (Mondada, 2013, p. 34).

Conversation analytic observations of naturally-occurring phenomena are "unmotivated," meaning they are not driven by theoretical idealizations at their initial point of contact (Schegloff, 1996, p. 172). The rationale for this approach is provided by Sacks (1984), who pioneered the methodology during his groundbreaking studies of suicide prevention hotline conversations:

> We will be using observation as a basis for theorizing. Thus we start with things that are not currently imaginable, by showing that they happened. We can then

> come to see that a base for using close looking at the world for theorizing about it is that from close looking at the world we can find things that we could not, by imagination, assert were there (p. 25).

The observation of naturally occurring data is aided through a process of recording and transcribing. The rational for using recorded data was pioneered by Sacks (1984, p. 26):

> I started to work with tape-recorded conversations. Such materials had a single virtue, that I could replay them. I could transcribe them somewhat and study them extendedly—however long it might take. The tape-recorded materials constituted a "good enough" record of what happened. Other things, to be sure, happened, but at least what was on the tape had happened. It was not from any large interest in language or from some theoretical formulation of what should be studied that I started with tape-recorded conversations, but simply because I could get my hands on it and I could study it again and again, and also, consequentially, because others could look at what I had studied and make of it what they could, if, for example, they wanted to be able to disagree with me. (p. 26)

These recordings are then represented in the form of technical transcriptions. These “serve as a control on the “limitations and fallibilities of intuition and recollection” that occur with the analysis of inherently ephemeral phenomena (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984, p. 4).

Transcripts serve a means to accessibility, rigor, investigation, analysis, verification, and reinvestigation. They are never treated as a perfect substitute for naturally-occurring talk as they are necessarily selective (Ochs, 1979). Analysts select sequences of interaction produced in “close conduction with” corresponding recordings of naturally-occurring talk (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984, pp. 11-12). According to Atkinson and Heritage (p. 4), transcripts are "good enough" when:

1. They serve to empirically-ground unmotivated observations.
2. They provide publishable evidence for third party verification of claims.
3. They allowed for the "repeated and detailed" examination of talk, leading to the possible examination of new phenomena and their reexamination in the light of new findings.

The process of transcription is an end to itself, the production of which serves as a point of immersion in naturally-occurring phenomena. It takes approximately one hour to transcribe one minute of data using conversation analytic methods (Roberts & Robinson, 2004).

Conversation analysts use transcripts as a means to "to identify recurrent and stable details of talk-in-interaction that might be used to generate a search procedure." Given the recursive properties of social interaction, observations often take the form of "I've seen that before" (Sidnell, 2013, p. 88). Based on these observations, analysis then moves towards identifying and collecting more of the phenomena. Search procedures then look for similar instances, variations, and deviations that appear in the data. At that point, analysis turns towards describing the practice, understanding it, and accounting for its operation within action sequences, action projects, institutional constraints, etc.

Case study design. The naturally-occurring data used in this study consist of archived television-broadcasts of town hall meetings. These are publicly-available video recordings housed in the *CSPAN* Archives, supplemented by publicly-available video recordings accessed via YouTube. In total, I have transcribed approximately six hours of town hall meetings using the methods of conversation analysis.

When it became apparent that town hall meetings had become a sphere of public argument in the health care reform debate, media organizations sent crews to cover them. Many of these town hall meetings, but not all of them, were broadcast by *CSPAN* and stored in the *CSPAN* Archives. These professionally produced videos preserve a more or less uneditorialized record of the event, with cameras and microphones positioned to record question and answer exchanges. This setup, while adequate, does not always preserve the contributions of audience byplay and sideplay.

I have selected three town hall meetings. All of these meetings took place during the public debate on health care reform in the summer of 2009.

Town Hall Meeting with U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) August 12, 2009.

This town hall meeting takes place at a Methodist Church in Afton, IA. Sen. Grassley, as a member of the "Gang of Six," played an active role in bipartisan work on health care reform. The *Washington Post* reported that Grassley's participation helped convince him to scale back the scope of reform (L. Montgomery & Bacon Jr., 2009).

Town Hall Meeting with U.S. Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) August 18, 2009.

The Democratic Town Committee of Dartmouth arranged for U.S. Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) to speak to the city's Council on Aging and answer audience questions about the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* (ACA). The meeting was held at the local Senior Citizen’s Center with approximately 300 people in attendance.

Town Hall Meeting with U.S. Representative James Moran (D-MA) and former Vermont Governor Howard Dean August 28, 2009.

This meeting takes place at a large venue, a suburban high school gymnasium in Reston, VA, with several thousand people in attendance. It also features former Governor Howard Dean, a leading advocate for single payer health care reform, as an invited guest speaker.

One possible objection to this dataset is “why these meetings and not others.” I would like to offer the following responses. First, my dataset is constrained by available recordings. While there are clips of other meetings in news reports and on YouTube, I have preferred to use recordings of whole meetings.

Second, it is not the purpose of this study to infer conclusions from a representative sample of town hall meetings. Rather this study is designed as a case study of town hall meetings. According to Yin (2009) case study findings “are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (p. 15). Thus, this study is designed as a Type 1 case study with one unit of analysis analyzed in context. In this case, this study will yield theoretical propositions about town hall meetings interactions, the primary unit of analysis, within the broader context of the health care reform debates of 2009. Given the small analytical literature on town hall meetings, the case study will serve to describe the social structure of town hall meeting activity types and how they play out in particular contexts. The results of this analysis will, in turn, contribute to future observations of town hall meeting data.

Third, the selection of these data are not arbitrary as much as they are unmotivated by pre-analytical concerns. My review of the literature suggests that published accounts of town hall meetings are motivated by ideological and academic agendas. While this is not necessarily a problem in itself, maintaining an "ethnomethodological indifference" (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970, p. 345) to published accounts should allow analysis to uncover the recurring features of town hall meetings as an institution generated through talk. If the selection and collection of data is motivated by anything, it is motivated by Sacks's (1984) conclusion that "there is order at all points. . . no matter how or where we looked" (pp. 22-23).

At a minimum, this dataset includes a diversity of venue size, audience size, and political affiliations. Participants identify themselves as coming from all walks of life: Rich, poor, politicians, nurses, teachers, doctors, grandmothers, and radical activists. Even these features become relevant for analysis insofar as they become relevant for participants. And if the latter is true, then these features—and others—will be accountable in participant orientations and available for analysis (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997; Schegloff, 1997, 1999b).

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides an overview of conversation analysis (CA) and how it will be employed in this study. I will first provide a brief summary of the general aims and procedures of CA. I will then review several key topics of conversation analytic research: Sequential organization, sequence organization, institutional talk, analysis of public address, and the analysis of question/answer sequences. Finally, I will discuss what we can expect to learn about town hall meetings by using conversation analysis.

General Aims and Procedures of Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis, the study of talk-in-interaction, is a rigorously empirical, principally inductive, approach to the analysis of naturally-occurring talk with emphasis "on the interactional and inferential consequences of the choice between alternative utterances" (Levinson, 1983, p. 287). Analysis reconstructs the "practices, actions, and activities" that constitute recurring structures of social interaction (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013, p. 2).

CA is used to describe and explain the intuitive methods of reasoning and action used by speakers engaged in turn-taking as a form of social organizing (Heritage, 1984). Most of what people "do" in conversation is the product of their intuitive analysis of the immediate or local interactional context. Because of this, conversation analysts study *what people do* rather than what they say they do. This basic methodological procedure is described as analyzing “participants’ orientations which are displayed in their own conduct” (Sidnell, 2013, p. 79).

CA is not used to study individual utterances isolated from their context of production. Rather, CA is used to study the sequential organization of speakers, of their turns of talk, of the different types of utterances, and of the varying sequences of action that may be pursued (Schegloff, 2007a). Analysis of such starts with finding in the data answers to the following question: Why that now? “And in response to this question,” write Heritage and Clayman (2010), “CA examines what the action does in relation to the preceding action(s), and what it projects about the succeeding action(s)” (p. 14).

CA is a distinctive qualitative methodological process, working from “from raw data to noticings of patterns using a combination of distributional regularities, commonalities in contexts of use, participant orientations and deviant case analysis” (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013, p. 2). While data collection and transcription techniques were reviewed in Chapter 1, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to explaining key analytical concepts and procedures used to conduct conversation analysis.

Analyzing Sequential Organization

According to Schegloff (2007a) a primary concern of conversation analysis is the examination of sequential organization. Schegloff defines sequential organization as “any kind of organization which concerns the relative positioning of utterances or actions” (p. 2). In this section, I will review several types of sequential organization: Turn-taking, action formation and ascription, overall structural organization, and preface organization.

The next section examines another type of sequential organization, sequence organization.

Turn-taking in conversation. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) is the primary source for understanding the turn-taking system in conversation. It presents an empirically derived model for the realization of conversation as a speaker-exchange system distributing turns-at-talk. Turns-at-talk are valuable resources redeemed by speakers to gain access to the floor. The concept of a speech exchange system identifies the fact these resources are organized and distributed in a variety of ways depending on the kind of conversational activity. Ordinary conversations are defined by a local-allocation of turns--i.e. the distribution of turns-at-talk is managed by the participations themselves. More formalized conversational activities in institutional settings, like court proceedings or debates, are organized via pre-allocation of turns by a judge, moderator, or chairperson (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974).

The basic unit of conversation is the turn-at-talk. This consists of two components: A turn-construction-unit (TCU) and a transition-relevance place (TRP). Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) define TCUs as:

> Unit-types for English include sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions. Instances of the unit-types so usable allow a projection of the unit-type under way, and what, roughly, it will take for an instance of that type to be completed (p. 72).

According to Schegloff (2007a), a TCU has two characteristics. First, it “constitutes a recognizable action in context.” Secondly, it carries with it a normative dimension, given that a “speaker beginning to talk in a turn has the right and the obligation to produce one TCU, which may realize one or more actions.” (p. 4)

The second component of a turn-at-talk is a transition-relevance place (TRP). Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) define a TRP as the following:

> The speaker is initially entitled, in having a turn, to one such unit. The first possible completion of a first such unit constitutes an initial transition-relevance place. Transfer of speakership is coordinated by reference to such transition-relevance places, which any unit-type instance will reach (702-3).

The TRP becomes recognizable to next speakers when the possible completion of a turn becomes imminent. Although transition to next speaker does not necessarily occur at a TRP, the projected completion of a TCU become “possibly relevant” for next speakers looking to make contributions (Schegloff, 2007a, p. 4). Speakers exploit this possible TRP to engage in different kinds of actions, from affiliating and aligning to taking the floor and heckling speakers.

The distribution of turns-at-talk is governed by the following set of context-independent, yet context-sensitive, rules formalized by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). These rules provide for the techniques used to select next-speaker with minimization of overlapping talk and gaps between TCUs, and procedures for repair when overlap occurs. Levinson (1983, p. 298) provides a summary of the rules:

> Rule 1: Applies initially at the first TRP of any TCU:
>
> > (a) Current speaker selects next speaker: If the current speaker selects the next speaker in current turn, then the current speaker must stop speaking,

and the next speaker must speak next. The transition occurs at the first TRP after the next speaker is selected.

(b) Next speaker self-selects: If the current speaker does not select next speaker, then any (other) party may self-select with the first speaker gaining rights to next turn.

(c) No speaker selects: If the current speaker has not selected next speaker, and no other speaker self-selects under option (b), then the current speaker may (but not need) continue. The current speaker claims rights to a further TCU.

Rule 2: Applies at all subsequent TRPs:

When Rule 1(c) has been applied by the current speaker, then at the next TRP, Rules 1(a) - (1c) apply, and recursively at the next TRP, until speaker change is effected.

The rules are ordered so that lower priority rules constrain the use of higher priority rules, even if the lower-priority rule is not invoked. If current speaker wishes to invoke rule 1(a), she must select next speaker prior to the initial TRP of her turn. Otherwise, that leaves next-speaker the option to self-select. Likewise, if next-speaker wishes to invoke 1(b), she must self-select prior to the initial TRP of current-speaker's turn. Otherwise, current speaker has the right to invoke rule 1(c). At that point, Rule 2 goes into operation and the process recurs (Sacks et al., 1974).

Turn-taking provides "generic orders of organization" for activities constituted through talk-in-interaction (Schegloff, 2007a) First, turn-taking provides participants an intrinsic motivation to listen. If a speaker wishes to contribute to a conversation, as either a selected-next speaker or a self-selected speaker, they will listen for a potentially relevant TRP to launch their response (Levinson, 1983).

Second, turn-taking sequences partially control the understanding of, and provide coherence for, utterances. Typical sequences include question-answer, greet-return greeting, offer invitation-accept/decline. When a speaker asks a question, she expects an answer from her addressee in his next turn. The addressee designs his answer, and the first speaker understands his answer, with respect to her question. These sequences are called adjacency pairs, which in turn play a part in the production of context. Both of these key terms will be discussed later.

Third, turn-taking provides a proof-procedure for the analysis of turns, for both first-person participants and for third-person analysts. When an addressee provides an answer to a question, he displayers his understanding of the prior speaker’s question (Sacks et al., 1974). A hearer’s understanding of a speaker’s turn will regularly “be displayed in the recipient's next turn at talk”(Atkinson & Heritage, 1984b, p. 8). Crucially, turn-taking organization provides a locally-organized procedure through which participants may establish and verify their intersubjective understanding of utterances as displayed through the production of the next utterance (Robinson, 2014).

Fourth, turn-taking provides a repair procedure for troubles in speaking, hearing, and understanding. Repair procedures have two phases, repair initiation and repair completion, with reference to the involvement of the trouble-source in the repair process (Schegloff, 2007a). The most common repair procedure is self-initiated self-repair. It occurs when the trouble-source initiates and completes repair of his or her own talk. This is the most common procedure due to matters of politeness and preference. A less common repair procedure is other-initiated other-repair. It occurs when someone other than the trouble-source initiates and completes repair of the trouble. This type of repair most often occurs when the trouble source is corrected.

Action formation and ascription. Sequential organization involves the design, production, and recognition of action. The conversation analytic understanding of action can be broken down into action formation and action ascription. Schegloff (2007a) uses the term action formation to describe "how the resources of the language, body, the environment of the interaction, and the position *in* the interaction fashioned into conformations designed to be, and to be recognized by recipients as, particular actions--actions like requesting, inviting, granting, complaining, agreeing, telling, noticing, rejecting, and so on" (p. xiv).

The counterpart of action formation is the recipient's recognition of what action, or actions, the turn is doing. Levinson (2013) calls this counterpart action ascription, "the assignment of an action to a turn as revealed by the response of a next speaker, which, if uncorrected in the following turn(s), becomes in some sense a joint 'good enough' understanding" (p.104).

Overall structural organization. The overall structural organization of an activity provides a relatively external source of supra-sequential coherence and context so that participants share some sense of how to produce and progress through that activity from start to finish. According to Sacks (1995a), overall structural organization "deals, roughly, with beginnings and endings, and how beginnings work to get from beginnings to something else, and how, from something else, endings are gotten to. And also the relationship—if there is one—between beginnings and endings" (p. 157).).

The overall structural organization of an activity is derived from common sense patterns of understanding (i.e. a documentary method of interpretation). The process of shaping these contextually independent patterns of action to fit the peculiarities of the moment, and of amending these patterns of action to account for these peculiarities in future encounters, is known as a process of *articulation*. A list of particularities subject to articulation include (1) the turn-taking organization of the interaction, (2) compositional features of the interaction, (3) analysis of relative interactional states of the participations (e.g. involvement in other courses of action of competing priority) the (4) placement of the conversation in the course of a history of interaction of the parties, (5) and the placement of the conversation in the interactional occasion on which it occurs (Robinson, 2013; Schegloff, 1999a; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 307).

The articulation of overall structural organization provides a sense of how participants can expect to complete the activity from start to finish. Robinson (2013) has identified three basic participant orientations through completion is accomplished. First, the overall structural organization of an activity provides a source of supra-sequential coherence, a relatively external source of contextualization with which participants produce and understand locally organized patterns of social interaction. Second, overall structural organization provides a relatively external source of progressivity (Schegloff, 2007a), a sense of obligation shared by participants to advance through the structure and components of an activity from start to finish. Third, overall structural organization provides a relatively external source of projectability (Sacks et al., 1974) so that participants have some sense of what should be done next to progress through the structure and components of the activity.

Preference organization. Another phenomena stemming from the sequential organization of turn-taking is preference organization (Pomerantz, 1984).This term does not reference matters of taste or psychological choice. Rather preference organization refers to “conversational events in which alternative, but nonequivalent, courses of action are available to participants.” These events may “arise at the level of lexical selection, utterance design, and action or sequence choice” (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984a, p. 53). Table 2.1 lists a sample of actions and corresponding preferred/non-preferred alternatives.

Table 2.1 Summary of actions and preferred/dispreferred responses

Action	Preferred Format Response	Dispreferred Format Response
Request	Acceptance	Refusal
Offer/Invitation	Acceptance	Refusal
Assessment	Agreement	Disagreement
Self-deprecation	Disagreement	Agreement
Accusation/blaming	Denial	Admission
Collective audience responses	Affiliation	Disaffiliation

Source: (Clayman, 1993a; Heritage, 1984, p. 269).

"The core idea of preference," write Pomerantz and Heritage (2013, pp. 210-211) "is that participants follow principles, often implicit, when they act and react in a variety of interaction situations." Such principles are "culturally shared," and the manner through which participants enact these principles in context is available for analysis. Thus, "preference principles play a part in the selection and interpretation of referring expressions, the production and interpretation of both initiating and responding actions, repair, turn-taking, and the progression through a sequence of actions."

Analyzing Sequence Organization

Another type of sequential organization is sequence organization. Schegloff (2007a) defines sequence organization, as "the organization of courses of action enacted through turns-at-talk—orderly meaningful successions or 'sequences of actions or moves. Sequences are vehicles for getting some activity done" (p. 2). In this section, I will examine two types of sequence organization: Adjacency pairs and epistemics.

Adjacency pairs. A basic type of sequence organization is the adjacency pair. Adjacency pairs are sequences of two utterances that are: (1) adjacent, (2) produced by different speakers, (3) ordered as a first part and a second part, (4) typed, so that a particular first part requires a particular second part or range of second pair parts (Levinson, 1983, pp. 303-4).Typical adjacency pair types include question-answer, greeting-return greeting, offer-accept/decline. Schegloff and Sacks (1973) identify a basic rule governing the operation of adjacency pairs:

> "Given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion its speaker should stop and a next speaker should start and produce a

> second pair part from the pair type of which the first is recognizably a member" (p. 269).

A concept that logically follows from this rule is called conditional relevance.

> When one utterance (A) is conditionally relevant on another (S), then the occurrence of S provides for the relevance of the occurrence of A. If A occurs, it occurs (i.e. is produced and heard) as 'responsive to' S, i.e. in a serial or sequenced relation to it. (Schegloff, 1972, p. 76)

Conditional relevance stems from the fact that "the adjacency pair structure is a normative framework for actions which is accountably implemented" (Heritage, 1984, p. 247) The utterance of a recognizable first-pair part by a speaker obligates the next speaker to produce at some point its corresponding second pair-part (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). An answer, for example, is conditionally relevant to a question. It follows, then, that if an answer does not occur, than the second pair-part is noticeably absent.

The noticeable absence of a second-pair part may lead, inter alia, to the following results. First, the noticeable absence of a second pair-part provides grounds for participants to generate inferences about the next-speaker who failed to supply it (Schegloff, 1972). Second, the noticeable absence of a second-pair part may oblige second speaker to provide an account of her failure to provide it. Third, the noticeable absence of a second-pair part may give rise to "insertion sequences" between the first pair-part and second pair-part.

Epistemics in conversation. Another type of sequence organization involves the management of epistemics in conversation. Heritage (2012a) uses a hydraulic metaphor to describe this type of sequence organization: “Any turn that formulates a [knowledge] imbalance between participants will warrant the production of talk that redresses the imbalance.” (p. 49). Sequences of this type are vehicles for managing the flow of information among parties in conversation, such as in question/answer exchanges and the delivery of news.

Three key concepts have been derived from the analysis of epistemics in conversation (Heritage, 2012a, 2012b). The first concept, epistemic domain, describes “what is known, how is it known, and persons’ rights and responsibilities to know it” (Heritage, 2012b, p. 6). The second concept, epistemic status, describes the degree to which parties in conversation position one another as being more knowledgeable [K+] or less knowledgeable [K-] about some epistemic domain at that time. The third concept, epistemic stance, describes how persons express and manage epistemic status in and through the design of turns at talk.

Although epistemic status and epistemic stance are related, they are not identical. For example, people may disguise their epistemic status through the management of their epistemic stance. Analytic interest lies in how epistemics are managed-in-interaction, not if some piece of information is “true” or “false” unless the truth validity of the claim is relevant to participants.

Epistemic sequences are organized through on the record and off the record expressions of [K+] and [K-] epistemic positions (Heritage, 2012a). On the record expressions tend to initiate sequences, such as a question [K-] initiates a sequence that culminates in an answer from a knowledgeable [K+] respondent. Off the record expressions build sequences in play towards their eventual conclusion.

Analyzing Institutional Talk

Many of the classic CA findings reviewed so far were derived from the observation of ordinary conversations. The turn-taking system of ordinary conversation can be characterized as a locally-managed speech exchange systems. Starting in the late 1970s, researchers started looking at conversational activities with more tightly controlled pre-allocated speech exchange systems. Analyzed activities include classrooms (McHoul, 1978), judicial settings (Atkinson & Drew, 1979), news interviews (Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage, 1985), and political speeches (Atkinson, 1984). One quality shared by these activities, a quality that distinguishes them from ordinary conversational activities, is a display of formality by participants to the work at hand. The formality of a setting is accountable in the mediated distribution of turns, speaker identification and visibility, and utterance design and production (Atkinson, 1982).

These early studies formed the basis for a sub-field of conversation analysis, the study of institutional talk. According to Drew and Heritage (1992), institutional talk refers to “the principal means through which lay persons pursue various practical goals and the central medium through which the daily working activities of many professionals and organizational representatives are conducted.” Talk is formalized as, and oriented to, institutional work insofar as “participants’ institutional or professional identities are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged” (pp. 3-4).

According to Heritage (1997), the analysis of institutional talk helps us understand how the “institutional realities” of the social world are “evoked, manipulated, and even transformed in interaction" (pp. 222-3). This purpose reflects the influence of ethnomethodology on CA. While we can think of institutions as immortal social facts, we can also think of them as doubly-contextual encounters shaped and renewed through talk. When we study how people manage particular social institutions *in* and *through* conversation, Heritage concludes, we study how these institutions are ultimately "talked into being" (p. 290).

The analysis of institutional talk does not start from a full definition of institution or institutional talk per se. "A full definition and conceptualization of institutional talk is probably impossible" say Heritage and Clayman (2010), "because the range of institutions is very varied" and the boundary between ordinary conversation and institutional talk is necessarily "fuzzy" (p. 35). The distinction, though fuzzy, is worth making for the simple fact that people shift between ordinary conversation and institutional talk in their daily lives (Schegloff, 1999a).

The analysis of institutional talk produces functional descriptions of participant orientations to particular activity types (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Levinson, 1992). Observations of institutional talk have generated the following three phenomena that mark institutional contexts as such (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Heritage, 1997):

1. Institutional interaction normally involves the participants in specific goal orientations which are tied to institutional-relevant identities.
2. Institutional interaction involves special constraints on what will be treated as allowable contributions to the business at hand.
3. Institutional talk is associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts.

By addressing how participants orient to and produce these social facts, analysis generates a "fingerprint" of the institution that is made accountable through the participant interaction.

Based on these criteria, Drew & Heritage identify six dimensions of institutional talk.

1. Turn-taking organization: Turn-taking organization identifies the kind of speech exchange systems at work in institutional settings. Town hall meetings typically have some sort of pre-allocation method. Turns-at-talk are mediated by an official, usually an appointed chair or the political representative. Heritage (1997) notes that departures from turn-taking organization is of analytical importance because the explicit sanction of violations tells us how a speech exchange system is "oriented to normatively *in its own right"* (pp.225-6).
2. Overall structural organization the interaction: This dimension "is built from component phases or activities that characteristically emerge in a particular order." E.g., town hall meetings typically have an opening statement given by officials as a prelude to the question and answer section. These sections are often linked to the pursuit of specific goals that orient participant interactions (Heritage, 1997, p. 227; 2004, pp. 120-121).
3. Sequence organization: This dimension studies the "engine room" of interaction, as it is where tasks, institutional roles and identities, as well as broader social institutional identities are established and managed (Heritage, 1997, p. 230). Participants "systematically and strategically" manipulate sequence organization to pursue their goals (Heritage, 2004, p. 124).

4. Turn design: This dimension studies two aspects of participant talk: “(1) The action that the talk is designed to perform and (2) the means that are selected to perform the action” (Heritage, 1997, p. 231).”
5. Lexical choice: This dimension studies the style used by participants in their turn design. “The choice of specific words or phrases by themselves can index an interactant's stance toward a particular circumstance, as well as the interactional context they are in, in very precise ways” (Schegloff, 1972). The use of “I” and “we” versus “us” and “them,” for example, can indicate the presence of political dynamics used in context (Atkinson, 1984).
6. Epistemological and other forms of asymmetry: This dimension studies the play of power dynamics in context. Heritage (1997) identifies four types of asymmetries.
7. Asymmetries of participation: These are ties between “institutional roles and tasks on the one hand and discursive rights and obligations on the other” (p. 237). Types of asymmetry include:
    a. Asymmetries of interactional and institutional knowhow versus singular experience: Participants often have different levels of intuitive knowledge of institutional settings and procedures.
    b. Epistemological caution and asymmetries of knowledge: Officials often use their professional knowledge to augment their authority and credibility.
    c. Rights of access to knowledge: Officials may have insider knowledge of which audience members may not have access.

These seven dimensions are not discrete elements. “Rather like Russian dolls that fit inside one another, each of these elements is a part of the next higher level,” concludes Heritage (1997), “Lexical choice is a part of turn design; turn design is part of sequence organization; sequence organization is a part of overall structural organization” (p. 241). Turn-taking organization, the first dimension, provides the basic form of social organizing for them all (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, p. 241).

Analyzing Public Address Using Conversation Analysis

The analysis of public address studies the turn-taking organization of public speeches. Atkinson (1984) described the social structure of public address as:

> Public speakers and audience members orient to the collaborative production of *one activity at a time*, the available options being either *talk* by a speaker or *response* by the audience. (p.376)

If such a system were not in place, he concludes, overlapping talk by audience members would drown out speakers whose talk would be rendered unhearable. Nevertheless, even in the most formal of contexts, one activity at a time is not guaranteed. Public speakers and audience members alike often depart from—and then revert back to—this structure in the pursuit of their own social and political goals.

This social structure described by Atkinson provides sequential organization to embodied public address encounters featuring a public speaker and an audience. The analysis of public address reconstructs what Clayman (1992) calls the interactional dimension of public speaking:

> In addition to factors resulting from larger social and economic events and from the existence of media analysts and political commentators. . .public speakers are

> also subject to forces operating within the speech event itself. . .The copresent audience has the first opportunity to comment publicly on what is being said, and their collective assessments may be either supportive or damaging. (p. 55)

The analysis of the techniques and procedures used by speakers to manage audiences, as well as the techniques and procedures used by audience members to manage speakers, is at the heart analyzing the interactional dimension of public address.

In this section, I will review research on the kinds of audience responses and the techniques used by speakers to invite and manage them. I will organize my review in terms of responses that are collective displays of affiliation (applause and appreciative laughter), disaffiliation (booing, buzzing, disappreciative laughter, counteraffiliative applause, and indirect displays of disafilliation), and the individual disaffiliative display of heckling.

Collective displays of affiliation. Early research focused on understanding how speakers elicit collective displays of affiliation (applause, cheers, laughter) from audience members. Affiliative responses display: (1) audience members' collective approval of a message, and (2) audience members' collective social solidity with the speaker. Research has focused on the techniques used by speakers to invite two kinds of affiliative responses: applause and laughter.

Applause can be considered the "purest form" of affiliative display accomplished through clapping. The average round of applause lasts approximately eight seconds, reaching maximum intensity soon after onset (i.e. "bursts of applause") and losing intensity towards its termination (i.e. applauses dies, fades away, or subsides). Applause typically begins just prior to or immediately after a speaker's recognizable completion point. Given the ability of applause to drown out talk, speakers orient to the appearance of applause by waiting until its termination to continue their speech (Atkinson, 1984, pp. 372-8).

Analysis shows that applause regularly occurs at possible completion points projected in the public speaker's talk. Atkinson (1984) found that speakers use a range of rhetorical techniques (such as message design, prosody, and non-verbal activity) to elicit positive audience responses these response points. Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) found that these techniques work insofar as: (1) they emphasize a point worthy of a response, and (2) they produce recognizable possible TRPs that project to audience members the available next-turn for their response.

In political speeches, for example, speakers often use "lists" to invite affiliative displays in response to "favorable assessments of 'us,' and unfavorable assessments of 'them'" (Atkinson, 1984, pp. 384-90). Lists emphasize a point through repetition, offering a recognizable completion point at is conclusion. As Jefferson (1991) notes, the "forthcoming completion" of a list "is projectable from the point at which a list is recognizably under way; i.e., given two items so far, a recipient can see that a third will occur, and that upon its occurrence utterance completion can have occurred whereupon it will be his turn to talk" (p. 73). Thus, if a three-part attack on a political opponent builds up to an applaudable point, then speaker's forthcoming completion projects to audience members a recognizable point at which they may initiate their response.

In addition to lists, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) identified seven other techniques used by speakers to invite audience applause. These techniques share in common methods used by speakers to emphasize a point "which is thereby given enhanced prominence as a point at which a collective response might be undertaken" (p. 113).

1. Namings: Namings are used by speakers when they commend, thank, or introduce a person as a preliminary to speaking his or her name. The technique serves to emphasize the qualities of a person. The speaker's utterance of the name provides a clear completion point for audience response.
2. Contrasts: Contrasts emphasize a point through antithesis in word, sense, or both. They typically consist of a first pair-part and a second pair-part, having a positive form that contrast with a negative form. The projected completion of a contrast generates a clear completion point for audience response.
3. Puzzle-Solution: The speaker offers a puzzle/problem and offers a solution. This technique invites the audience to think about the problem in anticipation of the offered solution. The speaker's expression of the solution, often taking the form of a simple declarative statement, offers a clear completion point for audience response.
4. Headline-punchline: The speaker tells the audience that she is going to make a pledge, declaration or announcement (headline) and then supplies it (punchline). The headline provides emphasis for the punchline, which offers a clear completion point for audience response.
5. Combination: Speakers may combine techniques to emphasize their point and elicit applause. Combinations should have clear completion points. Common combinations include list+contrast and puzzle+solution via contrast.

6. Position-taking: The speaker describes an issue on which she is expected to take a stand and offers her evaluation of it. She may use a rhetorical device to emphasize the issue, and her evaluation offers a clear completion point for audience response. Speakers often use this technique to package criticisms.
7. Pursuit: Speakers may pursue applause when audiences fail to recognize their point with applause. They accomplish this through the recompletion of their previous point, by resummarizing their point, and by a "shift in footing" from speaking for themselves to speaking on the behalf of the collective (Atkinson, 1984, pp. 379-98; Heritage and Greatbatch, pp. 123-35).

As I shall discuss later, adversarial audience members can co-opt these techniques to launch disaffiliative responses, such as heckles.

A second type of affiliative response is appreciative laughter. This can be characterized as audience members "laughing with" a speaker's substantive, but humorous, remark leveled against her opponent. Such displays indicate audience member's collective appreciation of the speakers wit (Clayman, 1993a, p. 117). Clayman (1992) also found that audience members typically use affiliative laughter in response to talk that:

- Invokes some reference to the opposition
- Is critical in character, using manifestly humorous exaggerations, incongruities, metaphors, or satirical comments that skewer the opponent
- Is marked as laughable by explicit means (speaker may tell the audience she is about to make a joke) or implicit means (speaker may use "off-record"

techniques to project completion for next-turn audience laughter, such as in-breaths or pauses)

- Creates the relevance of audience applause that, in turn, displays audience support of the speaker. (pp. 43-6)

Clayman is careful to point out that audience members may laugh with the speaker because they appreciate a good joke, not necessarily because they support the speaker.

Taken in total, speakers use a set of rhetorical techniques to invite affiliative responses from audience members willing to respond in kind. These responses indicate audience members support of the speaker as well as their solidarity with the speaker, however fleeting that may be. Given the political nature of these rhetorical environments, excerpts from these settings often find their way to a mass audience, either through traditional or social media. These can be used as evidence in narratives that serve to legitimate speakers and their political platforms. Likewise, they can be used to delegitimate them as well. Displays of audience displays of disaffiliation may function to serve this latter purpose.

Collective displays of disaffiliation. Audience displays of disaffiliation are "those responses (e.g. booing, derisive laughter, and the like) which are unfavorable, which express disapproval or derision, and which are used by audience members to disassociate themselves from speakers and their views" (Clayman, 1992, p. 36). Clayman has identified four types of collective disaffiliative responses: Booing, buzzing laughter, and indirect displays of disaffiliation.

Clayman (1992) describes booing as a "purest form" of disaffiliation. Audience members typically boo in response to talk that references the opposition, talk that is critical in nature, and activity that could be judged as inappropriate. A subset of booing is counteraffiliative booing. This response occurs when respond to collective affiliative displays with booing. This technique serves to countervail expressions of approval, showing that some audience members disapprove of the message and thereby distance themselves from the speaker.

Unlike applause, there tends to be a delay between the speaker's utterance of an objectionable remark and the onset of booing. There are two reasons for this. First, there is a social cost associated with all collective responses. Typically, individuals do not want to be the only one clapping or booing out of fear of social isolation. In the case of applause, a positive expression, individuals quickly decide whether to initiate or abstain from applauding (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). In the case of booing, a negative expression, costs are higher due to heightened fears of isolation. To counter this, audience members engage in mutual monitoring. By monitoring for cues from others, such as buzzing, applause, and heckling, audience members find reassurance for their own contributions (Clayman, 1993a).

The second reason stems from the preference organization of audience response. Collective displays of affiliation and disaffiliation are assessments. Applause, on the one hand, displays collective agreement and solidarity with a speaker. As agreements are preferred, they typically occur with minimal delay. Booing, on the other hand, displays collective disagreement and absence of solidarity. As disagreements are dispreferred, they occur with some delay (Pomerantz, 1984).

Speakers are not helpless when confronted with booing. Clayman (1993a) found that speakers may respond explicitly or implicitly. First, speakers may explicitly respond by sanctioning booers or defending their point with counterarguments. They may also use applause-inviting techniques with recognizable completion points to generate displays of support. Second, speakers may implicitly respond to booing by talking through it. Doing so preserves the speaker's turn-at-talk, thereby denying booers access to a turn and making their disaffiliations less conspicuous and shorter in length.

A second type of disaffiliative display, closely associated with booing, is buzzing. Buzzing is the accountable collective display of audience sideplay. It occurs when audience members engage "in a variety of vocalizations--whispering or talking among themselves, talking, shouting, or jeering at the speaker--simultaneously." Buzzing often gives way to booing, as both are linked together by a process of mutual monitoring. Buzzing indicates to others that "booing may be initiated without fear of social isolation and with some confidence" that others will join in with them (Clayman, 1993a, pp. 117-118).

A fourth type of disaffiliative display is unappreciative laughter. It appears in response to talk that:

- is elicited by speaker self-congratulatory talk. Audience laughter displays audience rejection, disbelief, or derision of the speaker's boasts.
- follows talk that is non-critical and often supportive in character. Laughter displays rejection of these claims
- follows talk that is not marked as laughable
- follows talk that appears unconvincing, evasive, or otherwise inadequate, particularly in the context of prior talk. Audience members may judge talk using their own background knowledge, or information supplied in-context, to

assess the truth, logic, validity, or consistency of claims. Clayman (1992, pp. 46-51)

Moreover, audiences may laugh in response to a speaker's humorous self-deprecations, such as those made by speakers after a mistake or gaff. Such laughter invokes both affiliative and disaffiliative elements. Audience members may display disapproval of the mistake while showing affiliation with speaker's self-deprecation.

Fifth, audience members may collectively display their disaffiliation indirectly. This occurs when audience members disaffiliate from a speaker through a display of affiliation with critical remarks directed at him or her. Clayman (1992) suggests that audiences may have a preference for indirect disaffiliation, given the lack of delay often found with direct disaffiliation.

In total, audiences members have available to them a number of techniques that display collective disaffiliation from the speaker. Such techniques indicate disapproval of speakers and a lack of solidity with their talk. Audience members may also offer "manifestly public," though "intrinsically solitary" displays of disaffiliation (Clayman, 1993a, p. 119). These are called heckles, the subject of the next section.

Individual disaffiliative responses: Heckling. Heckling is a phenomenon found in ordinary conversation and in public speeches. In ordinary conversation, Sacks (1995b) found that hecklers interrupt a speaker's talk to get in their side of the story. Heckles provide an alternative hearing of the speaker's talk, thereby influencing how others make sense of what they have just heard.

In the context of public speeches, McIlvenny (1996) defines a heckle as "an individual, public utterance usually directed at a ratified current speaker, often in response to a particular assertion, utterance, statement, or speech." It is, moreover, "decidedly confrontational, oppositional, disaffiliative, and argumentative." It may consist of laughter, a question, or statement directed at current speaker. Heckles change the participatory framework of public speeches through cross-play, shifting it from a dyadic one of speaker-audience to speaker-heckler-audience. As he further notes, hecklers themselves may be heckled (pp. 32-33).

McIlvenny (1996) describes the operation of heckles in terms of their target, their common forms, and their sequential organization (pp.37-48). Targets are utterances supplied by current speakers perceived by some audience members as objectionable. Typical targets include:

- Messages containing favorable references to "us," or boasts,
- Messages containing unfavorable references to "them," or criticisms
- Contentious statements, assertions, arguments, opinions or proposals

Some common forms of heckles include:

- Accusations: The speaker is accused of something, and often insulted in the process. These typically follow boasts
- Corrections: The heckler corrects a perceived flaw in current speaker's talk
- Topic development: The heckler attempts to change the topic or take the current one in a different direction. This can be accomplished through asking the current speaker a question.

Finally, heckles can be studied in terms of their sequential organization and timing. Heckles can be analyzed in terms of their appearance before the speaker completes her turn and after she completes her turn. These are called, respectively, pre-speaker-completion heckles and post-speaker-completion heckles

- Pre-speaker-completion heckles: These occur when an audience members anticipates the speaker's completion of a point or rhetorical device, providing alternative completion of the speaker's point. These devices serve to efface the rhetorical work of the speaker through a substitution of the speaker's contribution before the speaker gets to utter it.
- Pre-emptive heckles: These are a type pre-speaker-completion heckle "in which the heckler completes or inserts material in an appropriate sequential position set up by the speaker--but before the speaker has finished the turn or unit." Techniques for inviting audience affiliation are particularly prone to this type of heckle. If speakers project recognizable completion points for applause, then hecklers can co-opt these points and complete the point for their own purposes.
- Post-speaker-completion heckles: These occur at or after recognizable completion points in a speech. These points may be TRPs, applause invitation techniques, or at points where the speaker us heard to pause.
- Re-completion heckles. These are a type of post-speaker completion heckles that occur when a heckler modifies or reverses a speaker's argument by adding more information "in a syntactically smooth way." Additionally, hecklers may introduce an alternative sequence built on the materials provided in the prior turn, or they "may build an alternative sequence that recontextualizes the prior turn as a part of that new sequence."

Speakers have available to them a range of techniques to deal with hecklers (McIlvenny, 1996, 49-56). They deal with hecklers either directly in their next turn or over the course of extended sequences. Next-turn strategies used by speakers include:

- Denial: The speaker denies the assertion contained in the heckle.
- Reassertion: The speaker reassert her argument it with little or no modification. Reassertions challenge the relevance of the heckle to the speaker’s point.
- Accusation: In the course of denying a heckle, the speaker may also challenge the competence or knowledge of the heckler
- Ridicule: The speaker makes the heckler the butt of a joke, inviting laughter and support from the audience at the heckler’s expense.
- Dismissal: The speaker treats the heckle as a non-event, either ignoring the heckler or talking over him.

Speakers may also deal with hecklers over the course of several sequences. Such strategies often combine several of the next-turn techniques deployed over the course of extended talk.

- Control of relevance and sequential implicitness: Speakers may pick and choose which aspects of the heckle they wish to engage and when they wish to do so. Reorientation to a hecklers prior utterance allows speakers to deal with the heckler on their own terms.
- Audience approval: Speakers may use a number of techniques to invite affiliative displays from the audience to weaken the heckler’s standing.

- Trapping the heckler: Speakers may also construct a "pre-sequence mechanism" to bate the heckler into a trap that will shame or humiliate him. One strategy involves leading the heckler into a contradictory or inconsistent position. These sequences are often subtle, given that the speaker may dissemble her intentions from the heckler. This sequence has four parts:
    - The speaker asks the heckler a question
    - The heckler provides an answer
    - The speaker accuses the heckler of lacking consistence or validity
    - The heckler may accept or deny the accusation

Speakers may also use a hecklers previous statement to ridicule the heckler's current position. This strategy often employs the puzzle-solution technique to use the heckler's own words against him.

In total, audience members have available to them interactional resources that may use to undermine the force of a speakers talk. Heckles may not only question the validity and legitimacy of a speaker's claims, they may also prepare the ground for like-minded audience members to initiate collective displays of disaffiliation. In response, speakers have available to them techniques that enable them to take on the heckler and elicit response of their supporters.

In either case, McIllveny's (1996) findings suggest that speakers and audience members are not "passive, homogeneous, 'cultural dopes'" clapping hands and counting stones on cue (p. 57). Rather, ongoing research suggests that both parties have an active part in the ongoing contextual organization of public address.

Analyzing Question and Answer Exchanges

Questions have the power to compel a response from a respondent (Goody, 1978). This definition points to a complex set of competencies employed by communicators in their production and analysis of questions and answers. This section provides a review of these competencies by examining: How communicators produce recognizable questions and responses, the production of adversarial questions, dimensions of question/answer analysis, and question design.

Producing recognizable questions and responses. Communicators mobilize a range of interactional resources to produce recognizable questions that mobilize responses (Stivers & Rossano, 2010). These resources can be organized into three categories: action formation, sequence organization, and turn-design.

Communicators ask questions to accomplish a wide variety of social actions. “The protean nature of questions, together with their compelling force to solicit responses,” says (Hayano, 2013),” makes them a versatile resource to implement a wide range of other initiating actions than requesting information” (p. 409). A partial list of actions include information requests, other initiated repairs, confirmation requests, assessments, making suggestions/offers/requests, etc. (Stivers, 2010). Questions can also be used to accomplish more assertive/imperative actions, including presenting unanswerable accusations (Heinemann, 2008), making assertions (Heinemann, 2006; Koshik, 2005), and issuing commands (Sadock, 1974).

The sequence organization of question-answer adjacency pairs establishes normative accountability (Schegloff, 1968) in question and answer exchanges. “Questions invoke a *right* to an answer and place a recipient under an *obligation* to response. Persons *should* answer the questions that are put to them. They are *normatively accountable* for doing so" (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, p. 23). An inadequate response is heard as noticeably absent (Schegloff, 1972), giving questioners the right to pursue an answer. Respondents are expected to offer an account to justify their non-answer response (Heritage, 1984). The failure to provide an answer invites listeners to make inferences about, among other things, the competence, motives, intentions, and trustworthiness of the respondent.

Finally, communicators mobilize a range of interactional resources in their turn design to sharpen the relevance of a response (Stivers & Rossano, 2010). Such resources include interrogative prosody (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985), speaker gaze (Kendon, 1967), interrogative lexico-morphosyntax (Stivers, 2010), and recipient-tilted epistemic stance (Heritage, 2012b).

When communicators provide a response, they shape their response to fit the context and constraints (see next section) established by the question (Lee, 2013). Respondents establish the relevance of their response to the question through incorporating surface features of the question into the answer and through the use of anaphoric indexicals with references tied to the question.

There are three basic response types: answer responses, non-answer responses, and response refusals. A response is recognized as an answer when it response "addresses the agenda of topics and tasks posed by a previous question" (Clayman & Heritage, 2002a, p. 242). Answers have a trajectory. They may take a direct, incremental, or roundabout answer to the question. A non-answer response is one that is heard as evasive by at least one participant. Not surprisingly, respondents employ covert and overt techniques to resist tough questions without appearing evasive (Clayman & Heritage, 2002a).

Response refusals are not taken lightly. Insofar as a question makes an answer conditionally relevant, and insofar as a respondent can be held normatively accountable for failing to answer, the deliberate refusal of a respondent to answer a question constitutes a serious breach of social interaction (Schegloff, 1968, 1972).

Dimensions of questioning and answering: Analytic constraints. Questions establish constraints within which responses are expected to operate. Responses often breach these constraints, an action that is meaningful for analysis lay and professional. This section reviews these constraints, which are summarized in Table 2.2, and how they shape how questions and responses are understood.

Table 2.2 Dimensions of questioning and answering

	Audience member questions	Official responses
1	set agendas (1) topical agendas (2) action agendas	conform/do not conform with agendas (1) topical agendas (2) action agendas
2	embody presuppositions	confirm/disconfirm presuppositions
3	convey epistemic stance	display congruent/incongruent epistemic stance
4	incorporate preferences	align/disalign with preferences

Source: (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, p. 136)

First, questions constrain respondents by setting two agenda types: Topical agendas and action agendas. Topical agendas establish topics of discussion. The action agenda sets out what the speaker is doing with the question and establishes expectations of an appropriate response type.

Respondents through their response can either conform or disconform to one, or both, of these agenda types. Respondents typically adhere to topic and action agendas in varying shades of conformity. Respondents who dismiss question agendas may appear evasive or obstinate, as the breaching of constraints invites listeners to generate inferences or seek accounts from the respondent.

Second, questions embody presuppositions, and responses either confirm of disconfirm them. Presuppositions are “background assumptions against which the main import of the utterance is to be assessed” (Levinson, 1983, p. 180). All questions assert and embody presuppositions (Heritage, 2003) with varying shades of explicitness and embeddedness (Clayman, 1993b). Question prefaces often contain statements called explicit contextualizing presuppositions (Clayman & Heritage, 2002a; Wilson, 1990). These are used to establish background assumptions in addition to those embedded in the question.

While presuppositions are typically shared and left taken for granted, respondents must do interactional work to bring disagreeable presuppositions into the foreground and challenge them (Ehrlich & Sidnell, 2006; Heritage, 2003). This puts respondents into a double bind. If they leave a presupposition unchallenged, then the validity of the presupposition is implicitly accepted. If they challenge the presupposition, depending on the embedded depth of the presupposition, they may give the appearance of being evasive or troublesome.

Third, questions establish a relative epistemic stance between the questioner and the respondent. Responses display a congruent or incongruent epistemic stance. Epistemic stance is conveyed through variations in interrogative lexico-morphosyntax and prosody. These variations orient questioners and respondants as relatively more knowledgeable [K+] or less knowledgeable [K-] about the topic at hand (Hayano, 2013). Recipient-tilted questions position the respondent [K+] as more knowledgeable than the questioner [K-] about a particular topic. Sender-tilted questions position the questioner [K+] as more knowledgeable than the respondent [K-] about a particular topic.

Questions typically convey a recipient-tilted stance. Depending on the context, sender-tilted questions, may function to criticize or challenge respondents. Many types of adversarial questions, such as accusatory questions, imply that the respondent should have known better. Reverse polarity questions are treated like assertions of the opposite polarity because of their strong sender-tilted stance. Thus, they prefer a response that aligns with the assertion (Koshik, 2002).

Fourth, questions can be designed to prefer (Pomerantz, 1984) particular response types, and responses can align with or disalign from those preferences. Typical preference principles incorporated into question answer exchanges include:

- A preference for answer responses over non-answer responses (Schegloff, 1968; Stivers & Robinson, 2006)
- A preference for affirmation and confirmation over disaffirmation and disconfirmation (Heritage, 2010),
- A preference for type-conformity over type-nonconformity (Raymond, 2003)
- A preference for selected speakers to respond over non-selected speakers (Stivers & Robinson, 2006).

Many of these principles are conveyed through variations interrogative lexico-morphosyntax. Questions designed with negative interrogative syntax, for example, are tilted to prefer a yes answer. The strength of this preference leads respondents to treat the question as an assertion to be debated rather than as a request or information. (Heritage, 2002).

Producing adversarial questions. Adversarial questions are used to criticize, trap, debate, or otherwise challenge respondents. Clayman and Heritage (2002b) identify four dimensions of adversarial questioning. The first dimension, initiative, describes the degree to which questioners control the exchange. Questioners seize initiative by designing complex questions, building question cascades, and asking follow-up questions.

The second dimension, directness, describes the degree to which questioners speak bluntly and straightforwardly to respondents (Levinson, 1983). Questioners who employ direct talk show lowered concern for the face needs (Brown & Levinson, 1987) of respondents.

The third dimension, assertiveness, describes the degree to which a question is designed to produce a particular answer from the respondent. Hostile polar questions often employ preface tilt and negatively formulations (Heritage, 2002, 2003) to force respondents to concede damaging claims.

The fourth dimension, hostility, describes the degree to which a question is overtly critical of the respondent. Hostility can be displayed in the preface, in the preface and question, and through the use of accountability questions and accusatory questions (Clayman & Heritage, 2002a). Accountability questions, such as “why could you,” put the respondant in a defensive position by asking him or her why they have chosen a particular course of action. Accusatory questions, such as “how could you,” go beyond accountability questions by asking respondants to provide an account for their actions. Because accounts are typically elicited when a person has acted inappropriately (Heritage, 1988), accusatory formulations intensify the hostility of the question

Question design. Research has identified two basic question designs: Simple question designs and complex question designs. Simple questions consist of one unit of talk, and that unit of talk recognizably does questioning. Simple questions operate within an established context, and they rely on that context to provide the materials needed to make sense of the question.

Because simple question establish no additional information, they rely on an established context to supply the materials needed to make sense of the question. Because they impose fewer constraints and restraints on respondents, respondents have more leeway to answer the question as they choose. Because they put more interactional power into the hands of respondents, they neutralize the intrinsic use of questioning as a tool for keeping respondents accountable

Complex questions, in contrast, provide addition units of talk that cast a new context for the forthcoming question-answer exchange. Question prefaces are units of talk spoken before the question, and they present new information for making sense of the question. Post-position statements are units of talk presented after the question, and they are used “to upgrade the pointedness of the question and to enhance its significance” (Clayman & Heritage, 2002a, p. 135). These additional statements give questioners a resource to restrict the scope of the forthcoming answer.

Complex questions place constraints on respondents, giving questioners a resource to restrict the scope of answer provided. Most adversarial questions employ a complex design, as the additional information established with preface and post-position statements can be used to trap, debate, or otherwise challenge respondents. Complex questions give adversarial questioners additional resources to sharpen their attacks on the respondents.

Further Research

Much of the foundational research on the analysis of public address comes from the analysis of political convention speeches and presidential debates. While these can be adversarial rhetorical environments, they exhibit a formal speaker exchange system with a clear distinction between participants who are "on-stage" and those in the audience. Presidential debates, for example, have strict guidelines spelling out in advance time limits, the moderator, the topics, the composition of journalist panels, etc. In town hall debates, procedures spelled out months in advance select which audience members get to address the candidates as well as the question they get to ask.

Even within these highly constrained settings, research has shown how audience members find ways to insert their contributions into ongoing talk. Even so, Clayman (1992) suggests that analysis of "less formal settings that involve a single speaker and a predominantly oppositional audience might yield substantially different patterns of audience conduct" (p.55).

A small literature on these less formal settings has appeared over the last few years. Llewellyn's (2005) analysis of contentious council meetings provides one touchstone. "It is apparent," he writes, that a key tension for those organizing public meetings is between formal interaction and free and open debate." That is, between the application of pre-allocated turn-taking systems ensuring orderly participation and more flexible systems facilitating "realization of spontaneous public discourse" (pp. 712-13).

In contentious public meetings, participants often deviate from the basic turn-taking procedures described by Atkinson. As Llewelyn's research on contentious public meetings has shown, the deviation from and manipulation of turn-taking procedures may very well constitute the kinds of "order" found in apparently disorderly speech events. Analysis of participant contributions to (dis)order worthy of investigation, he concludes, because they display a "deep 'intuitive' knowledge of various rhetorical formats for political debate" mobilized for political and rhetorical effect" (Llewellyn, 2005, pp. 712-13).

This project aims to take Llewellyn's analysis of contentious public meetings one step further by analyzing participant orientations to political talk-in-interaction in town hall meetings. This involves describing how participants manage turn-at-talk which they recognize as mobilized for political and rhetorical effect. Insofar as these mobilizations are accountable social facts available to participants for analysis, they are available third party observation.

CHAPTER 3. ORGANIZING INCIPIENCE: THE BUSINESS OF TOWN HALL MEETING OPENINGS

Robinson (2013) describes the business of openings as creating “solutions to the problem of how to begin an encounter” (p. 261). Participants accomplish town hall meeting openings by addressing basic organizational issues and establishing foundational meeting social structures. Many of the issues addressed include the development of turn-taking procedures (Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff, 2000), alignment to institutionally relevant participant roles (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Goffman, 1963, 1979, 1981; Goodwin, 1986; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004; Levinson, 1988), topic frameworks (Schegloff, 1986; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), and articulation of the meeting's overall structural organization (Sacks, 1995a). These foundational meeting processes are sequentially organized in town hall meeting openings through the social structure of public address (Atkinson, 1984).

These foundational processes, structures, and procedures are given shape by a sense of expectations instantiated before the meeting is begun. Will this meeting be like-every-other-meeting? Boring? Friendly? Enlightening? Interesting? Newsworthy? Adversarial? Violent? This sense of expectations, and the stakes of their fulfillment, provides an external sense of coherence to town hall meeting openings. I have named this observable and reportable sense-of-expectations-to-be-fulfilled-or-not incipience.

This chapter will examine the articulation of incipience, as well as participant orientation to incipient expectations, through an analysis of how town hall meeting openings are organized. After a brief analysis of what incipience entails, I will then describe the structures and components of the three phases of town hall meeting openings: (1) Bringing the meeting to order, (2) opening business, and (3) closing opening business.

The Accountability of Incipience and the Articulation of its Expectations

Every town hall meeting encounter carries with it a sense of expectations derived from experiences with, and third party accounts of, prior town hall meetings. Incipience indexes the operation of a documentary method of interpretation (Garfinkel, 1967), a pattern of social action built up from a "temporally qualified succession of appearances" (Heritage, 1984, p. 85). Incipient expectations document the accountable operation of practical activity patterns describable as town hall meetings, and that such meetings vary according to the contextual particularities of their instantiation.

Articulation is the process of shaping contextually independent patterns of action to fit the peculiarities of the moment, and of amending these patterns of action to account for these peculiarities of the moment in the future. A list of particularities subject to articulation include (1) the turn-taking organization of the interaction, (2) compositional features of the interaction, (3) analysis of relative interactional states of the participations (such as involvement in other courses of action of competing priority) the (4) placement of the conversation in the course of a history of interaction of the parties, (5) and the placement of the conversation in the interactional occasion on which it occurs (Robinson, 2013; Schegloff, 1999a; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973)

According to Robinson (2013), not much yet is known about this process of articulation. Conversation analysis, with its emphasis on “why that now,” is particularly equipped to understand the articulation of particularities (1)-(3). Understanding the articulation of particularities (4) and (5) extends the scope of “why that now” to moments prior to current interactions and concurrent interactions. Because such an extension is accountable in the lay analysis of participants, it is available for professional analysis.

While this chapter examines how all five of these particularities give shape to town hall meeting openings, an orientation to incipience is the process through which peculiarities (4) and (5) is contextually articulated. As such, *incipience provides a relatively external source of overall structural organization. It provides for an articulation of town hall meeting structures and components with reference to expectations derived from past and future encounters within the encounter-at-hand.*

In a news interview aired on *MSNBC* (Drennen, 2009), David Shuster (IR) talked with U.S. Representative Jim Moran (IE), a senior democrat from Virginia, about his thoughts on the appearance of raucous, borderline violent, town hall meeting protests. He then asked Rep. Moran to describe what he would do if such were to happen in his next meeting.

E3.1 RJM MSNBC interview

```
IR:      But if somebody interrupts you and somebody won't let
         you explain and they keep shouting and screaming,
         how do you react?
IE:      Well, I've been in politics for 30 years
    1->  and I think we can control the microphones.
         I  want to let-
         I want to hear them out and let them speak,
         even if they're shouting at us,
    2->  but they can't control the town hall meeting.
```

Rep. Moran, drawing from his experience in politics (line 4), says that he will let people have their say. Ultimately, control of the meeting will be maintained (arrow 2) because “I think we control the microphones" (arrow 1). Certainly, the officials who organize the event control the microphones. They also select the venue, the scheduling, the ground rules, the time limits, and the security presence. "The microphone," in this instance, glosses the resources used by officials to maintain order in spite of the activity of protestors.

Rep. Moran's equivocation in line 5 ("I think we can. . .") is telling. It displays his awareness that interactional power in public speech events is never absolute. Participants can be expected to find ways to circumvent such asymmetries of power despite the interactional and political authority of officials. Rep. Moran would experience a stark example of such during the opening of his next town hall meeting. A heckler, without the benefit of a microphone, interrupted the Rabbi's invocation less than five minutes into the meeting.

With the benefit of hindsight, it appears that Rep. Moran's interview response conveyed an accurate sense of expectations, and the analysis in this chapter will demonstrate how incipience gives shape to the organization of town hall meeting openings.

Phase 1. Bringing the Meeting to Order

The activity of bringing a meeting to order is made up of a set of actions through which the work of the meeting is put into motion. It begins with a shift in speaker-exchange from informal multi-party pre-meeting talk to the formality of meeting talk (Nielsen, 2012) and is completed through the alignment to participation roles, the organization of topic frameworks, and the assessment of audience expectations. Even at this early stage in the meeting, participants contribute to a sense of how the meeting is expected to progress.

Establishing participation roles. When persons attend a town hall meeting, they appear into a shared response space (Goffman, 1983). However, not all attendees are participants. The distinction between attendance and participation is drawn in the opening moments of the meeting, and it stands as a matter of concern through the meeting until its conclusion.

Participation, which for this study is mostly derived from Goffman's (1979, 1981) work on footing and Levinson's (1988) work on production and reception roles, refers to the actions through which attendees demonstrate involvement within an activity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). Attendees demonstrate their level of participation within an activity through their alignment to it, and alignment is indicated through displays of understanding what just happened. The production of alignment, and the repair of misalignment, provides evidence the analysis of how participation in evolving structures of social interaction is organized (Levinson, 1983).

There are two primary participation roles in town hall meetings: (1) Officials and (2) the audience. Officials run the meeting, and their interactional authority is derived from the right to select next speaker. The audience is a collective of individuals bound together through the ongoing development of an attention structure (Goodwin, 1986). In this study audience member(s) is a general term used for all audience member participants in attendance. While these two categories break down into more specific participant roles, these two will suffice for now.

Excerpt 3.2 provides a straightforward example of how basic participation roles are constituted at the moment the meeting begins. The official displays his alignment to activity as an official through his introduction of the headlining topic for the meeting. Individuals display their alignment to activity as an audience through collective displays. This interaction of officials and audience members constitute the basic social structure of public address.

E3.2 BFTH chair brings meeting to order [00:03:06.15] - [00:00:43.10]

```
AUD:     |----------7.0----------|
         |xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx|
CHR:     This meeting tonight will be about the current health
         care bills hhh down in Washington ↓D.C.
         (1.0)
         These bills consist of many,(.) complicated issues,
         and the most prominent of those ↓issues. (.6)
         being those who cannot afford health insurance.
         This particular subject could have been answered.
         (1.0)
         years ago, if the wages of the middle (.) and lower
         class have not been stagnant (.) for so long.
```

The chairperson (CHR) initiates (lines 3-4) the call to order through an introduction of the headlining topic, health care reform. The contrast offered over lines 6-9 provides a warrant for discussing this topic in terms of the objective, undeniable, and long overdue need to provide accessible health care for middle and lower class Americans. This line of talk produces and projects the topical context of the chair’s forthcoming opening statement, which places health care reform into a socio-political context. Even at this initial stage of the meeting, there is a sense of how external factors—i.e. the legislative process —shape the local organization of topic talk.

Participants, through their contributions, have already made relevant their basic conversational identities. After CHR takes the podium, individuals react with a collective display of affiliation (line 1). Their response to CHR’s activity suggests the development of an attention structure binding individual contributions into the work of an audience. The development of the attention structure is displayed by the activity of CHR, who waits for the audience to complete their turn before the he takes the floor.

Excerpt 3.3, in contrast, provides a more complex example of how participants make the transition from informal pre-meeting talk to formal meeting talk. We can also observe different types of participant roles among *ratified audience member participants*. These are audience members who align their activity to the social structure of public address (one activity at a time, either current speaker talk or audience response) through collective displays of affiliation and disaffiliation at recognizable transition relevance places in the current speaker's talk.

E3.3 CGTH SCG brings meeting to order [00:00:08.08] - [00:00:31.13]

```
 1             ((SCG chats with people at the back of the church
 2 SCG:        [Good to see ya.]
 3 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
 4 SCG:        [Everything (going good?)]
 5 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
 6 AM1:        [[↑<yeah.>]
 7 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzz]
 8 ??1:        [Welcome back.]
 9 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzzzzzz]
10 ??2:        [(           )]
11 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzzzzzz]
12 SCG:        [(           )]
13 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzzzzzz]
14 SCG: 1->    |----------------------7.0------------------------|
15             |((SCG makes his way to the front of the church)) |
16             ((SCG reaches the front, adjusts mic pac on belt))
17 SCG:        uh::,
18 SCG:        [((SCG walks over to someone sitting in front row))]
19 AUD:        [x-x-x-x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxzxxxxxxxxxxx]
```

The excerpt begins with Senator Chuck Grassley (SCG) chatting with audience members in the back of the church. As SCG walks from the back of the church to the front and adjusts his microphone (arrow 1), a progression from pre-meeting activity to meeting talk occurs. The boundary marker "uh" in 17 precipitates a transition from informal conversation among attendees (whose talk is represented in this excerpt with zs) to formal meeting talk. Members display alignment to meeting talk as ratified audience members through collective displays of applause (line 19). Their contributions provide evidence that alignment to SCG provides a sense of attention structure for ratified audience member contributions.

Sensing incipient expectations of meeting progressivity. As the meeting is brought to order, participants orient to an incipient sense of how the meeting can be expected to progress. According to Schegloff (2007a), progressivity provides a sense of obligation shared by participants to advance through the structure and components of an activity from start to finish.

At this point in the meeting, participants are building a sense of what is going to happen. Will the meeting progress smoothly through its structures and components from start to finish, or is there a sense that progress will be qualified by hitches and troubles? The next series of excerpts, all taken from the same strip of interaction, presents how participants orient to an incipient sense of meeting progressivity through shared assessments and the construction of additional participation roles.

Excerpt 3.4 provides an example of how participants derive an incipient sense of meeting progressivity from intense and long-lasting ratified audience member contributions. The key activity occurs at line 5 (arrow 1), where Rep. Jim Moran (RJM) turns to Gov. Howard Dean (GHD) and says “well this is gonna be fun govena.” It is not explicitly stated what “this” is or why it is “gonna be fun.” The meaning of the utterance is contextually grounded. If the appearance of booing and applauding suggests the presence of audience factions, and each audience faction holds an opposing loyalties, then the utterance projects expectations of an intense, if not contentious, meeting.

E3.4 JMTH RJM brings meeting to order 1 [00:00:02.16] - [00:05:39.27]

```
 1 AUD:     |---------53.0---------|
 2          |XBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXB|
 3          |((RJM, GHD, and staff enter the gymnasium)
 4
 5 RJM: 1-> [Well this is gonna be fun govena]
 6 AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
 7
 8 RJM:     [[(1.0) ((Turns to face the audience))]
 9 AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
10
11 RJM:     [Thank You.]
12 AUD:     |XXXXXXXXXX]
13
14 AUD:     |----------3.0---------|
15          |XBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXB|
((27 lines skipped. See excerpt 3.4))
43 RJM:     [We do appreciate your attending this regardless of]
44 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
45 RJM:     how you feel on the issue of h- health care, (.6)
46          [.hhh it's] important that we hear from all sides.
47 AUD:     [bbbbbbbbb]
```

The contextualization of line 5 begins in line 2. As the officials enter the gym and make their way to the stage, the entire place erupts in sign waving, standing, cheering, and booing. Roaring applause suggests the attendance of supportive audience members, while the appearance of booing suggests the presence of opposing audience members wishing to countervail the perception of total audience affiliation with the entering officials (Clayman, 1992).

All of this activity contextualizes the action design of line 5 as an assessment of incipient expectations. The utterance references the forthcoming experiences projected by audience contributions. “Fun” has the implicated meaning of “noisy,” “not dull,” or, perhaps, “contentious.” RJM’s talk in lines 43-46 confirms his recognition of an audience that includes opposing factions, divided according to their views on health care reform. The night is going to be “fun” because people holding opposition perspectives are passionate, and intensity of their participation can be expected to match their levels of passion.

An incipient sense of meeting progressivity can also be derived from the placement and intensity of audience member contributions. Excerpt 3.5 presents examples of two additional audience member participant roles, sideplaying audience member participants and non-ratified audience member participants. Their contributions can precipitate a breakdown in order depending on the extent to which they breach a key norm of public address—one activity, either speaker talk or audience response (Atkinson, 1984). While audience sideplay and non-ratified contributions in this excerpt do not bring the meeting to a halt, they do contribute to the sense of a “fun night.”

E3.5 JMTH RJM brings meeting to order 2 [00:00:02.16] - [00:05:39.27]

```
AUD:     |----------3.0----------|
         |xxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x-x-x-x|
RJM:     [Thank you for coming.]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM:     [Unfortunately <there are still>]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM:     [1.0) uh two very long <lines>.]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM:     at- but it looks like we’re pretty well full here,
         so I think we’re gonna start .hhh right on time.
??1:     WOOwooWOO
??2:     YEAH
RJM:     [Um,]
AUD:     [x-x|-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
??3:         [WE LOVE:: YOU::”]
AUD:     |----------5.0----------|
AUD:     |x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x|
         |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
RJM:     [We do appreciate your attending this regardless of]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM:     how you feel on the issue of h- health care, (.6)
         [.hhh it’s] important that we hear from all sides.
AUD:     [bbbbbbbbb]
```

At various points while RJM is presenting his opening remarks, such as lines 23-30, a number of audience members continue to talk alongside his speech (as represented by zzs). Not only are these audience members talking with one another, but they may also be directing their talk at RJM. This phenomenon is called “buzzing” (Clayman, 1993a), and it often appears when audience members disaffiliate from the speaker. At this point in the meeting, people are still getting settled into the room (lines 29-32). So while their buzzing may not signal disaffiliation from RJM’s speech quite yet, audience sideplay does suggest that size of the growing crowd will have some influence on the progressivity of the meeting.

Finally, excerpt 3.5 presents the appearance of another participant role, the non-ratified audience member. These are individual audience members who, not having been distributed a turn at talk by a meeting official, insert their talk into the conversation. We can observe a sequence of non-ratified audience speakers over lines 33-37. In these instances, non-ratified audience contributors insert their praise into the spaces between RJM’s turns at talk. Specifically, they fill the space between the call to order (line 32) and RJM’s yielding of the floor to the audience in line 39. We also see this at work in line 47, where a single audience member responds to RJM’s statement in lines 24-25 with a short round of booing. This suggests that at least one audience member out of the set of participants is willing to express his or her feelings on health care reform with a sharp, succinct, injecting of booing at the point where RJM pauses to inhale.

Phase 2. Opening Business: Establishing and Resisting the Expectations of Officials

The primary activity of opening business consists of doing interactional work to set up expectations for how the meeting will progress. Analysis conducted for this section examines how officials use storytelling (Sacks, 1995b), membership categorization devices (Sacks, 1972), and interactional threads (Schegloff, 2007a) to organize topic talk, invoke norms of conduct, and establish basic meeting procedures. Officials, having control of the floor, use opening business to bolster their interactional authority and advance their political agenda. Audience members engage in collective and individual displays of disagreement and disaffiliation to resist what would otherwise be the officials' prerogative to shape the direction of the meeting.

The interactional power of officials' storytelling and its resistance. A fundamental interactional resource available to officials is the right to pre-allocate—or withhold the pre-allocation of—a turn-at-talk to the next speaker. This right gives officials control over access to the floor, and officials maintain priority access. Officials take advantage over their control of the floor to present a set of talkables advantages to their interaction goals (maintaining order), political goals, (defending their record and issue positions), and public appearance (appearing authoritative without being dictatorial.) Audience members with conflicting goals, not having been assigned a turn at talk, use the interactional resources available to them—collective displays and heckling—to cut across the power of officials to present their opposition.

Of particular interest is the chairperson's use of metaphorical language in the pursuit of these goals. Insofar as metaphors conceptualize experience (Lakoff & Johnsen, 1980), the chairperson's talk is designed to shape how participants make sense of themselves and interpret the actions of others. Even in the face of a divided audience, participants are expected to channel their partisanship in a productive, progressive manner through realizing their common political identity, ideals, and purpose.

In excerpt 3.6, the chairperson uses his priority access to present a series of explicit contextualizing statements to establish how audience members should make sense of health care reform. He pursues these tasks through the activity of storytelling. Sacks (1995b) describes storytelling as a packaging of facts, opinions, and events that present the storyteller’s account of relevant happenings. Storytelling provides a powerful interactional resource because storytellers have an interactional right to finish their stories. This allows them to advance their perspective through their packaging of details and the lexical choices used to describe those details. They can even preempt possible responses and invalidate alternative packagings. Listeners, not having an interactional right to intervene in the packaging of details, are left to deal with the story after the fact or by heckling while the story is being told.

E3.6 BFTH opening development [00:00:43.10] - [00:03:39.02]

```
CHR:      Over the last thirty years this country has reverted back
          to a disparity of income .hhh that we have not seen since
          the 1920’s. (1.2) This has left many without the funds
          to afford health insurance. We need to bring back that
          economic equality that we saw during the fifties and
          sixties. That economic (.) equality was the result of the
          New Deal created by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. (1.2)
          Just as social [security, (2.0)                         ]
AUD:                     [x-x-x-xx-xx-xx-[xxxxxxxxx-xx-xx-xx-xx-x]
                                         [bbbbbbbb               ]
CHR:      Thank you hhhheh-[heh-heh(.8)
                           [ha-ha-haha-ha
CHR:      Just as social security was the:(.) main staple of FDR’s
          New Deal, health insurance reform (.2) is the main (.)
          staple of president Obama’s new deal.

          |----------4.0----------|
AUD:      |x-x-x-[xxx[xxxxXXXXXXXX|
          |      [bbb|bbbbbBBBBBBB|
          |          [WOO::       |
CHR:      [heh-heh-heh (2.2) Thank you. (1.5) ]
AUD:      [XBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBX[BXBXB]
                                        [WOO::]
CHR: 1->  [>Hold on hold on hold on.< (.6)]
AUD:      [XBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBxbxbxbx]

CHR:      [bring it down bring it down. (1.0)]
AUD:      [xbxbxbxbxbxbxbzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

CHR:      [(Though) we have a consensus,|
AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
```

```
33 CHR:     [we actually don't have a majority of (.)|
34 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
35 CHR:     those who (.) oppose (.) and are pro,
36          (1.0)
37          this is actually a split (.) audience.
((17 lines skipped))
53 CHR:     [This issue concerning health care is not (.)|
54 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
55 CHR:     a new idea our president, (.8) has come up with. This has
56          been around for as long as social security, and has
57          received the support of presidents in both parties (.6)
58          over the last seventy-five years. (1.5)
59          This bill is about covering those who work hard every
60          single day, yet still struggle to obtain insurance for
61          themselves, .hhh and most importantly for their children.
```

Over the course of several minutes, CHR offers a socio-economic account of health care reform since the New Deal (lines 01-15), an appraisal of the political divisiveness of the issue (lines 30-37), an account of bipartisan efforts for reform (lines 53-58) and the obligation to provide health care to working Americans and their children (lines 59-61). These talkables, when added together, offer a packaging of facts, events, opinions, and values designed to present an informational context that can be used to understand health care reform from a positive point of view.

Although CHR has control of the floor, audience members display their rejection of the packaging at several key points of the narrative. At line 10, a burst of booing countervails a display of affiliation. This suggests that a faction of audience members disaffiliate from FDR, from Obama, or both. At line 13 CHR describes health care reform as the "staple of President Obama's new deal." This leads to approximately fifteen seconds of affiliation and counteraffiliation (17-28). At lines 24-27, CHR invokes his right as current speaker to bring the meeting back to order. Nevertheless, the recurrence of buzzing throughout CHR's speech suggests that many audience members disaffiliate from, and disagree with, the main point of his speech.

Of further analytical interest is the chairperson's use of metaphorical language. According to Levinson (1983), metaphor is a form of analogical reasoning comparing "two domains in potentially elaborate parallelisms of indefinite depth" (p. 161). As we shall see in excerpt 3.7, which picks up where excerpt 3.5 left off, CHR uses metaphorical language to shape how participants should makes sense of and navigate the town hall meeting as a shared response space.

E3.7 BFTH opening development [00:00:43.10] - [00:03:39.02]

```
            Right now is also a time we need to look _past,_
           the smokescreen of fear and emotion used by a few
            to distract and obstruct .hhh real cognitive debate.
   AW1:     Here Here=

            |----------3.0----------|
   AUD:     [=x-x-x-[xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx|
            [bbbbbbb[bbbbbbbbbbbbbbb|
                    [WOO::          |

   CHR:     [using,(2.8)((Raps podium three times)) (.8)|
   AUD:     |xbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbxbx-x-x-x|
            [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|

   CHR:     [Keep it down]
   AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzz]

            |----------2.2----------|
   AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|

   CHR:     [Using fear as a] catalyst]
   AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
   CHR:     (1.0)
            .hhh to further your message brings nothing
            to the table of progress.
```

Insofar as metaphor works pragmatically as a trigger to prompt its hearer to search for an implicated meaning, his lexical choice triggers two metaphors to present—in not so many words—a contrasting vision of how the meeting could unfold. The two triggers in this passage are located at line 64 ("smokescreen") and line 87 (table of progress). The first metaphor—a town hall meeting is a battlefield—describes a meeting where opponents use fear and emotion as "smokescreen" to obscure and obstruct an obtainable objective.

The second metaphor—a town hall meeting is a negotiation—describes a meeting where competing parties, having agreed to disagree, reach a shared objective through “real cognitive debate” (line 65) at the “table of progress.”

If, as Levinson suggests, the contextual meaning of a metaphor is derived from the speaker’s breaching the maxim of quality (Grice, 1975), and if delivering the metaphor triggers the audience to infer an implicated meaning from contextual clues, then it can be understood that these contrasting metaphors present an implicated critique of oppositional tactics. By extension, the critique is designed to discourage, or at least shape interpretation of, expected forms of inappropriate opposition.

This interpretation his metaphorical language is supported by the appearance of counteraffiliative booing at line 70 without delay. This suggests the participation of audience members who reject the critique through collective displays that likely fall under the battlefield metaphor. The intensity and duration of booing leads CHR to reassert control and restore order at lines 73-78.

In summary, the story presented by the chair is designed to construct a normative framework for a rational, civil discussion about health care reform. His lexical choice, particularly his use of metaphor, is designed to shape how participants should make sense of health care reform and their conduct. Insofar as CHR has the first crack at topic development, his speech establishes an informational context upon which Rep. Frank will access as a resource for his opening statement and the question and answer session.

Despite the right of the chairperson to control the floor, audience members who oppose the intent and content of the chairperson’s speech engage in displays of disaffiliation. These contributions indicate the participation of oppositional audience factions, which contribute to incipient expectations of an adversarial meeting.

Turn-taking procedures in small meetings with cooperative expectations: The appointment of audience members as meeting officials. Depending on the number of attendees and participants, the expected length of the meeting, and expectations of trouble or hostility, audience member turns-at-talk will be a scarce resource. Because audience members will likely compete for these resources, officials establish turn-taking procedures to distribute opportunities to speak in an accountably fair and efficient manner. Whatever the size of the meeting, though the matter is more pressing in larger meetings or ones with oppositional factions, participants expect troubles over turn distribution. Thus, most town hall meetings take up turn-taking procedures in opening business.

Town hall meetings employ a pre-allocated turn-taking organization of varying formality. This means that turns-at-talk are distributed by an official taking the role of chairperson (see Ch. 5 for an overview). In small meetings with few expectations of troubles or hostility, the chairperson may even be appointed from the audience. To put it another way, the appointment of a chairperson from the audience reflects incipient expectations of a cooperative, agreeable meeting.

Even in small meetings with agreeable expectations, audience members will still jockey for turns-at-talk in the question and answer session. In excerpt 3.8, an audience member agrees to chair the meeting in exchange for the right to ask the first question. Analysis of this quid-pro-quo, which is negotiated at the local organization of invitation and request sequences, provides insight into the overall structural organization of the meeting.

E3.8 CGTH assigning a chair 1 [00:00:31.01 - [00:00:56.03]

```
32 SCG:      [would you? uh::, would you stand here with me and,]
33 AUD:      [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
34
35 SCG:      [and when people raise their hands I'll let]
36 AUD:      [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x-x-x]
37 SCG:      you call on em so [that-
38 CHR: 1->                    [I'd like to be your first question.
39 SCG:      You can do that too.=
40 CHR:      =[okay
41 SCG:       [>and then when<
42           When you call on everybody else?=
43 CHR:      =[okay::::::::::::::?
44 SCG:      [>When they [raise?<=
45           [((SCG raises right hand|))
46 CHR:      =[alright?
47 SCG:      [Their hand?=
48 CHR:      =[yes?
49 SCG:       [You pick em out?
50 SCG: 2->  Now >it's< a tough jo:::b,=
51 CHR:      =I ↑know,[hah-hah-ha-ha-ha-ha]
52 SCG:               [See?, (.2) okay?   ]
53 CHR:      [As long as I can be ↑first. You]=
54 AUD:      [hah-hah-hah-hah-hah-hah-hah-hah]
55 SCG:      =Okay, you can be first.
56           ((SCG walks back to center of room))
```

The excerpt begins with Sen. Grassley (SCG) inviting a man (CHR) in the audience to act as chairperson (lines 32-35). CHR defers the invitation (arrow 1) with a pre-second insert expansion that requests the right to ask the first question. According to Schegloff (2007), pre-second insert expansions "look forward, ostensibly to "establish the resources necessary to implement the second pair part which is pending" (p. 106). CHR puts the invitation acceptance on hold pending his request. CHR leverages the invitation as a resource to secure the right to ask the first question, and SCG grants the request (line 39) and continues with an explanation of duties. SCG's assessment of these duties as "a tough job" at arrow 2, followed by immediate displays of uptake and laughter by CHR at line 51, displays an awareness of the potential for audience sourced troubles (Jefferson, 1984) that the chair could be expected to manage.

While the sense of pre-second insert expansion employed in this analysis occurs at the local level, the disposition of the invitation-request sequence interchange organizes resources for work that is pending later in the meeting. The quid pro quo looks forward to a future point in the meeting where turn-taking organization and time constraints could become a source of trouble. In a crowded room where every person potentially has a question to ask within a defined amount of time, the right to ask the first question presents a valuable resource. The quid-pro-quo enables both parties to accomplish interactional goals later in the meeting. SCG needs someone to handle the hard work of picking next speakers (arrow 2) and the troubles that entails, and CHR needs to secure the chance to ask his question.

The potential for trouble is the primary topic of excerpt 3.9, which picks up a few lines after excerpt 3.8. In this excerpt, SCG reports the results of the quid-pro-quo to the audience. His report displays an orientation to broader matters of interactional accountability, political, and public accountability within the time constraints of the meeting. Because he has appointed a third party to select next speakers, he cannot be blamed for cherry picking questions and taking a stand on soft issues. He also cannot be blamed by prospective questioners for not picking them to ask their questions.

E3.9 CGTH assigning a chair 1 [00:00:56.03 - [00:01:35.15]

```
60 SCG:     uh::, I'm gonna make a few remarks before
61          he asks uh the first question
62          but then he’s going ta:: .hh stand up here because,
63          I don't want anybody to think that (.)
64          I wanna avoid taking questions from anybody, and
65          there's gonna be three times as many people, .hhh raises
66          their hands, as we're gonna have time to answer questions.
67          .hhh so if you get ma::d, cuz you don't get your
```

```
68          question asked get mad at him,
69          [don't get mad at me. [(.5) °heh? (.) hah
70 AUD:     [hahahahahaHAHAHAHAHHA|HAHAH|AHAHAHAHAHAHAH
71                                |xxxxX|xxxxxxxxxxxxxx
72                                      |OO::::::::::::
73 SCG:     [(.2)((clears throat))]
74 AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
75          |x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
76 SCG:     [((winds up for next turn))
77 CHR:     [Well ↑that proposition was made only if only if I got to
78          ask the [first [question.
79 AUD:             [hahaHA|HAHAHAHAHHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAhahazzz]
80 SCG:                    [heh-heh (2.0) yeah. (.4) uh::,  ]
```

SCG begins (lines 60-61) by telling the audience how the meeting can be expected to progress up until CHR cashes in his right to ask the first question. After that, CHR is going to be responsible for who speaks next (line 62). At that point (lines 63-66), SCG describes the potential for trouble. Due to the number of prospective questioners and time constraints (lines 65-66), it is just not possible for everyone to ask their question. SCG explicitly raises and rejects the inference that he will use side constraints to dodge avoidable questions.

It is not clear in this excerpt what constitutes an avoidable question, but what is clear is that audience members not given the time to present avoidable questions constitute a potential source of trouble. And as SCG reports in lines 67-68, those troubles are the troubles of the newly appointed chairperson. CHR accepts these troubles in lines 77-78, and implies that the right to ask the first question is worth it. Two rounds of affiliative laughter (Clayman, 1993a) with SCG (lines 69-70) and with the chairperson (lines 79-80) show appreciation of the speakers' wit and the ingenuity of their quid-pro-quo. The appointment of a third party as chair introduces a degree of impartiality as it serves to direct anger away from the politician. In exchange for the tough, potentially troublesome, job of selecting next audience speakers, CHR may very well be the only person in the room who can be assured of an opportunity to ask a question.

The informal appointment of meeting officials works for this particular meeting. Would Sen. Grassley make the same arrangement in a meeting with thousands of participants? Would he make the same arrangement in a meeting with adversarial expectations? At this point, we cannot answer that question with respect to how Sen. Grassley would handle such a meeting. What we do know, based on the analysis conducted in the next section, is that large meetings with adversarial expectations require complex turn-taking procedures to ensure a fair and orderly distribution of turns.

Turn-taking procedures in large meetings with adversarial expectations: Using membership categorization devices. The data for the next excerpt are derived from a town hall meeting with an audience of several thousand. The solution created by Rep. Moran (RJM) and his staff prioritizes the distribution of terms among his constituents who support, oppose, and are undecided about health care reform. These two collections, [constituent status] and [issue-position] form the basis of a membership categorization device (MCD).

An MCD consists of collections of categories that, according to some rule of application, make relevant generalized stores of knowledge that give meaning to attributes shared by category members (Sacks, 1972). Analysis of MCDs shows how such attributes are "made into—and used as—category terms" in the context of their application (Schegloff, 2007b, p. 479).

In excerpt 3.10, membership categories are used as an interactional resource to ensure that audience members from a variety of issue positions have the chance to have their perspective represented in the question and answer session. Not surprisingly, given the adversarial expectations of the meeting (see excerpts 3.4 and 3.5), RJM orients to expectations of troublesome conduct.

E3.10 JMTH MCD development [00:08:56.05]- [00:10:39.25]

```
RJM: 1-> The Purpose of this town hall meeting, .hhh
         is to get feedback.
     2-> From my constituents primarily,
         .hhh <but from others as well,>
         .hhh uh my constituents in the eighth district
         will get a priority, [.hhh uhm]
AUD:                          [xxxxxxxx]

         |----------3.2----------|
AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx|

RJM:     [but,]
AUD:     [XXXX]

         |----------2.8----------|
AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx|

RJM:     [I also want to] share information,
AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXxxx]
RJM:     as to what the congress has been working on.
         Where there is consensus, what we intend to do,
         certainly <on the house side>, and, I will share
         with you what I intend to vote for. .hhhh um:::
     3-> .We can't do that. If we are constantly interrupting
         one another .hhh so I really do respectfully ask
         that we be as civil and respectful as possible.
     4-> .hhh um we um (.) are going to uhhh draw questions
         from a box that uh >uh uh uh< that contains
         the questions asked by people who are supportive,
         We (will) draw an equal number from those who are
         unsupportive, and from those who are undecided.
```

The topics introduced in excerpt articulate a common store of knowledge linking the general purpose of the meeting (arrow 1) with political roles and obligations (arrow 2) and norms of conduct (arrow 3) with meeting procedures (arrow 4). These topics, considered in total, are designed to sort participants into the following collection of categories.

The MCD categorizes a set of participants [audience members] into two collections: constituent status [constituent/non-constituent] and issue-position [supporter/non-supporter/undecided] on health care reform.

The first collection, [constituent status], distinguishes audience members that live in the 8th congressional district from those who do not. In lines 05-06, RJM tells the audience that “my constituents. . . will get a priority” and receives a collective display of support in lines 9-16. If the purpose of the meeting is to educate and listen to those who authorize him to serve, then that purpose is accomplished through giving priority to that pool of voters. Such an inference can be drawn from the purpose of town hall meetings—constituent relations—-and this sequence shows an orientation to the articulation of this purpose through the MCD being developed.

The second collection, [issue-position], organizes audience members according to their attitudes about health care reform. These categories are self-selected, with participants becoming members of a respective category according to the box into which they submitted their questions. Issue-position categories articulate a set of expectations derived from, and giving shape to, category relevant knowledge. These expectations include:

1. Participants have truthfully self-selected into their respective categories. e.g., supporters of the bill truly support the bill.
2. Members will remain faithful to their self-selected categories in their question design. e.g., Supporters can be expected to ask the sort of questions that supporters would ask.
3. That question design will vary depending on the category. e.g., non-supporters

may ask questions designed to criticize while the undecided may design questions to seek clarification, etc.

4. That the question asked by a category member represents the views of other category members not selected as ratified audience speakers.
5. The views of audience members not electing to submit questions will be represented by those electing to submit questions.

Later in opening business, RJM introduced another aspect of the speaker selection procedure. He will assign next speaker by drawing the card from the box and announcing the speaker's name. That person will then go to a microphone and present his or her question to the audience. This final aspect of the procedure produces another expectation:

6. That the person announced as the submitter will be the one who comes forward to read the question.

These expectations, when fulfilled, are expected to produce a fair representation of participant issue positions in an orderly fashion. RJM's appeal to civility (lines 24-26) displays an orientation to troubles. As we shall see in Ch. 5, the fairness and orderliness of these procedures require a minimum level of trust. A number of unscrupulous audience members exploit this trust to take turns that were not rightfully assigned to them.

Phase 3. Closing Opening Business: Setting the Anchor Point

In ordinary conversation, one technique that communicators use to close openings is setting the anchor point for the interaction. The anchor point is positioned to introduce the "first topic" of conversation, which typically establishes the reason for the interaction (Schegloff, 1986).

Town hall meetings participants already have some general sense as to why they are in attendance, a sense that I have glossed as the pursuit of constituent relations. The anchor point builds on this presumed knowledge to establish the purpose of *this* meeting through a preview of how it can be expected to progress towards the opening statement. I will examine two answer point techniques: (1) An orientation to a reason for attendance, and (2) introduction of the headlining representative.

Anchor point technique 1: Orientation to a reason for attendance. An orientation to a reason for attendance is often derived from broader political and social concerns, such as health care reform or the faltering economy, that have brought people to the meeting. In the talk just prior to the start of excerpt 3.11, Senator Chuck Grassley (SCG) had briefly discussed reasons for the large turnout. “People fear for America,” he said, due to the nationalization of the automobile industry, the bailout of Wall Street banks, and the rising national debt, causing people to show concern for the future of the country. Nevertheless, SCG is mindful of the fact that people may have other reasons for attendance, other topics to raise, and other questions to ask. Such mindfulness acknowledges that the audience, not the politician, should set the topic agenda for the meeting. These interactional moves are designed to foreground the concerns of constituents over those of politicians.

E3.11 CGTH SCG sets meeting anchor point [00:04:59.27]- [00:05:39.27]

```
159 SCG: 1-> So here we are because you're very concerned.
160          so what I would like to  .hhh open up before you ask
161          the first question, .hhh uh:: is uh::
162          just to say a little bit,because, .hh uh:: well
163      2-> first of all we will take questions on any subject.
164          So ya- this does not have to be health care.
165          If you wanna bring up other things bring 'em up
166          .hhh because I'm gonna let you set the agenda.
167          .hhh  But I think we're having these large turnouts
168          because of. .hhh the health care issue.
```

The excerpt begins with a reference to people's fear for America as the reason for attendance. "So here we are," he says at arrow 1, "because you're very concerned." His lexical choice ("*we* are here because *you're* very concerned") implies that SCG and the audience *share* the same reason for attendance. His talk orients to a sense of identification (Burke, 1969), a sense that they share the same concern for America. This description articulates a "reason for attendance."

This common concern for America provides a strong sense of coherence. Insofar as the large turnout is linked to a collective concern for health care reform, participants can expect issue-related topic talk to progress along those lines. SCG weakens these expectations, beginning at arrow 2, by sharing his willingness "to take questions on any subject" (line 163) and letting the audience "set the agenda" (line 166). This delegation of topic development acknowledges a space for those that want to talk about other topics that are relevant to their own concerns.

Anchor point technique 2 : Introducing the headlining politician. Another technique that can be used to close opening business involves an introduction of the headlining politician, the elected representative who is featured as presenting the opening statement and participating in the question and answer session.

According to Atkinson (1984), the introduction of next speaker provides a recognizable completion point for collective audience displays of support and opposition. These displays take on particular salience at this point in the meeting. It is the first time that headlining politician has control of the floor and, by extension the first opportunity for audience members to display their affiliation with, or disaffiliation from the speaker before a single issue-position is stated. Such displays are derived from the record and reputation of the speaker, indicating the relevance of such to the incipient expectations of the meeting.

Excerpt 3.12 provides an example of this technique in practice.

E3.12 BFTH anchor point [00:03:39.02] - [00:04:17.00]

```
 1 CHR:     .hhh Congressman Frank realizes, the importance of hearing
 2          from his constituents. And agreed to meet with us here
 3          tonight.
 4          I am sure he will be able to answer any and all questions
 5          that we may have,
 6          and we thank him for the
 7          time (.8) for taking time out of his schedule,
 8          to attend this meeting here in Dartmouth.
 9          [(1.8)  ]
10 AUD:     [x-x-x-x]
11
12 CHR: 1-> [Now it is my pleasure to introduce to YOU(.4)]
13 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
14
15 CHR:     [Congressman Barney Frank.]
16 AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
17
18 RBF:     [Thank you.]
19 AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
20
21 CHR:     [(Thanks congressman)]
22 AUD:     [XXX[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
23              [BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB]
24 RBF:     [(1.2)  Thank you.(1.2)  Thank you.]
25 AUD:     [XBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXB]
26
27 AUD:     |----------3.8----------|
```

CHR begins the sequence (lines 1-9) by describing Rep. Frank’s purpose for participating in the meeting. CHR makes an explicit reference to constituent relations (lines 1-3) before employing an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) at lines 4-5 to express his confidence in RBF's ability to accomplish that purpose. At arrow 1, CHR introduces RBF (lines 12-15) and hands the floor over time him (lines 18-24). The introduction gives way to a round of applause (line 13) and then counteraffiliation (line 23) as Mr. Frank takes the podium.

While this isn’t the first instance of booing in this particular meeting, speaker transition presents the first opportunity to boo Mr. Frank at the point where he assumes control of the floor from the chairperson. Insofar as disaffiliative and counteraffiliative displays project insolidarity with the current speaker based on what he or she is *expected* to say, or what issue position he or she is *expected* to take, expected to stand for, such displays portend the potential for an adversarial meeting.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

At this early point in the meeting, it is difficult to show how the participant roles, topics, and turn-taking procedures that participants have produced are nothing more than mere suggestions, descriptions, or labels. The argument developed in this chapter suggests that openings are organized according to a sense of supra-sequential coherence that I have called *incipience*. At this stage in the meeting, participants have a sense of expectations yet to be fulfilled. They take steps to ensure that those expectations will be fulfilled. Their hope is that the talkables raised in this phase may become interactional threads (Schegloff, 2007a), weaving a coherent patterns of interactional, political, and public accountability giving shape to how the meeting will progress.

Finally, it is important to note that one participant’s expectations are another participant’s troubles. Officials use their interactional power to impose their sense of incipience, and audience members who oppose these efforts use available interactional resources to articulate their own set of incipient expectations. Contentious town hall meetings are those that are contextualized by a sense of adversarial expectations. The next chapter examines who these expectations, adversarial or not, are pursued in the opening statement.

CHAPTER 4. MANAGING POLITICAL AND INTERACTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN TOWN HALL MEETING OPENING STATEMENTS

This chapter analyzes the structures and activities of town hall meeting opening statements. The opening statement is presented through the social structure of public address. Atkinson (1984) described this structure as “the collaborative production of one activity at a time, the available options being either talk by a speaker or response by the audience” (p. 376). Through this structure, politicians and their invited guests present their thoughts and concerns about proposed legislation, talk about their other legislative work, respond to critics, preempt objections, and defend their record.

While this structure appears simple, even ornamental, at first blush, it constitutes a potentially contentious locus of intense political and rhetorical action. Insofar as town hall meeting participants are engaged in the production of political talk (van Dijk, 1997), the opening statement is primarily composed of argumentation offered in support of or in opposition to proposed courses of action (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012).

Opening statements comprised of political argumentation present a potential source of interactional trouble for politicians and audience members alike. Llewellyn (2005) described the general source of this trouble as the tension between the need for orderly interaction versus the impetuous for open and spontaneous debate. As politicians present their arguments, audience members wanting to oppose those arguments may do so through actions that test the orderliness of the meeting. And yet, despite these conflicts and tensions, the onus of progressivity felt by participants keeps the meeting in motion towards the question and answer session.

To examine how these tensions and troubles are managed within the social structure of public address, this chapter analyzes moments where participant contributions qualify, or alter the understanding of, the progressivity of sequence organization. Depending on the degree of (in)solidarity (Clayman, 2002) displayed at these points of qualified progressivity, the contributions of officials and audience members alike produce accountable transformations in the social structure of the meeting. Analysis of these points provides evidence for how audience members transform, and contest the transformation of, town hall meetings into sites of political protest and activism.

Evidence for this argument is presented over two analysis sections. The first section examines the progressivity of public address sequences that feature second turn collective audience responses. I will introduce two previously unanalyzed audience response actions. The first type of action, which I call *competitive displays*, consists of the appearance of intense affiliative and disaffiliative displays that compete to occupy the same response space. Competitive displays suggest the presence of an audience divided into factions. The second type of action, which I call *shushing*, is used by audience members to sanction other audience members.

The second section examines instances where participants qualify the structure of the opening statement from that of public address to one that more closely resembles refutation. The deviation from structure provides an opportunity to examine the relationship between the “local” organization of talk and the overall structural organization of the “global” activity. Such is displayed through an orientation to time constraints, topic talk, as well as by the sort of political inference-making that occurs when basic interactional and structural norms are breached.

Qualified Sequence Progressivity and (In)Solidarity in Public Address Sequences

According to Schegloff (2007a), sequence progressivity describes the contiguous movement from some element of talk to the next element without intervention. When something intervenes in the progressivity of a sequence—whether that something is an unexpected sound or an extended insertion sequence—that something is said to “qualify” progressivity of the sequence and “will be examined for its import, for what understanding should be accorded to it” (Schegloff, 2007a, p. 15).

Because of the relationship between progressivity at the level of sequence organization and progressivity at the level of overall structural organization (Robinson, 2013; Schegloff, 2011), we can also examine how qualified progressions produce and project expectations for the rest of the meeting. In particular, we are interested in this chapter in examining expectations with reference to political accountability and social solidarity.

The social structure of pubic address provides for the basic sequence organization of participants with respect to their adopted conversational identities. This typically involves a three-turn sequence of (1) speaker talk, (2) an audience response, and (3) the resumption of speaker talk. This section attends to second-turn collective audience responses that qualify progressivity through this basic sequence. Depending on the type of audience response action presented, qualified public address sequences indicate a heightened sense of social solidarity or insolidarity among elected officials and audience members.

Qualified progressivity in collective displays of agreement and heightened social solidarity with issue position statements. Public speakers employ a number of rhetorical devices to contextualize a smooth progression through the opening statement. One device commonly used by politicians to present their issue positions is headline-punch line. According to Heritage and Greatbatch (1986), this device occurs when "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" (p. 129). The structure of the sequence projects a recognizable completion point where audience members may initiate a response to the stated issue position.

Analysis examines how participants coordinate their progression through issue position sequences with reference to minimizing overlap of affiliative collective audience displays and current speaker talk. If affiliative collective audience displays overlap with the current speaker talk, and if the current speaker yields the floor to the audience on account of their affiliative collective displays, then such interaction indicates a heightened sense solidarity and agreement with the issue position. In terms of overall structural organization, this activity creates expectations of a cooperative meeting among more-or-less like-minded individuals.

Excerpt 4.1 presents an example of a headline-punch line sequence with audience members providing applause in their second-turn response.

E4.1 CGTH principles 1 [00:06:06] – [00:06:59]

```
SCG: 1-> But my goal, is to, the principles that I, I go by and I,
         I won't express all the principles in the opening here
         but some of 'em will be expressed in response to your
         uh::, in response to your questions, or my listening to
         your comments, .hhh uh would be uh:, uh::,that  wuh-wuh,
     2-> I'm not going to do anything that's going to nationalize?
         health insurance. Or , >I mean< nationalize health care
         in America. .hhh uh::, I [don't, (.2) I don't wanna,]
AUD: 3->                          [x-x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
AUD:     |----------4.2----------|
         |xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx|
SCG:     [I::, I::,] I don't intend to do anything that'll allow,
AUD:     [x-x-x-x-x]
SCG:     government bureaucrats to get between you::,
         and your uh doctor. .hhh [uh (.2) hhh (.2) hmm,]
AUD: 4->                          [x-x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
AUD:     |----------1.0----------|
         |xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx|
SCG:     [and I'm very-] I'm very concerned that we don't do
AUD:     [xxxxxxxxx-x-x]
SCG:     those things that lead to rationing
```

Arrows 1-3 mark the three components of a headline-punch line device. In the headline (arrow 1), U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley (SCG) pledges to share some of the principles that guide his work on health care reform. In the punch line (arrow 2), SCG declares his rejection of any reform legislation that nationalizes health care. Although it appears that SCG has more to say on the position (line 17), audience members (AUD) at arrow 3 ascribe completion to the punch line and initiate applause.

Their applause not only functions as a display of agreement and affiliation with the offered position, it also services as a next-speaker self-selects technique. It overlaps and abbreviates SCG's next attempted TCU at the end of line 17, leading him to cede the floor at line 20. In lines 22-23, SCG reissues the TCU begun in 17 and speaker-exchange occurs with minimal overlap. A similar sequence occurs in lines 22-32. SCG elaborates on his previous point (lines 22-25), audience members initiate a next-turn response at an ascribable completion point (line 26), SCG cedes the floor (line 25), and then he then reclaims it in line 31 with minimal overlap.

In terms of sequence organization, applause qualifies the progressivity of the sequence by splitting the punch line into two independent, but related, applaudable points. If applause displays solidarity and agreement with the current speaker (Clayman, 2002), and if audience members are willing to transgress constraints to display agreement and solidarity with the current speaker, then qualification of the sequence suggests a considerable level of agreement and solidarity of those audience members with SCG. Given that there is no sense of correction, sanction, repair, or trouble in the sequence, it appears that participants display a “good enough understanding” (Levinson, 2013) of their coordinated activity as one shaped by cooperation and like-mindedness.

In terms of overall structural organization, collective displays of agreement and solidarity portend a smooth progression into the question and answer session. In fact, the headline of this sequence serves to establish expectations for an opening statement with limited scope but maximum utility. If the qualified sequence suggests a higher level of agreement and cooperation, then SCG can focus his efforts on the forthcoming Q&A rather than making a lengthy monologue defending his position on health care reform. This option shortens the opening statement, extends the Q&A, and appears more engaging and responsive to the interactional goals and political concerns of his constituents.

Qualified progressivity in collective displays of disagreement and heightened social insolidarity: Competitive collective displays in issue position sequences. Within the social structure of public address, there is a set of audience response action types that deviate from the norm of "one activity at a time." When audience members wish to display their disaffiliation from the public speakers and the issue position that present, they have at their disposal a set of response action types to display their disagreement as a collective.

This section analyzes two of those response action types with respect to qualification of sequence progressivity. The first type, buzzing (Clayman, 1993a), occurs when audience member talk overlaps the public speaker. The second type of response occurs when audience factions engage in collective displays giving the appearance of competing over the same response space. I call this type of action a *competitive collective display*. It indicates a heightened sense of contention and insolidarity among politicians and accountable audience factions.

In excerpt 4.2, RJM employs a headline-punch line device to present the first of several issue positions declaring the benefits of proposed health care reform legislation. While speakers design their talk to project a next turn for an affiliative response from supporters (Atkinson, 1984), opponents often exploit the recognizable completion points of these devices to launch disaffiliative displays, launch arguments at the speaker, or even argue with other audience members (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986). The appearance of intense long lasting collective disaffiliative displays qualifies the progressivity of the sequence, establishing expectations of disharmony and adversarialness.

E4.2 JMTH keep your insurance [00:16:54] - [17:49]

```
RJM: 1-> Now there are a number of key provisions .hhh uh::
         uh uh eh in [these three bills]
AUD:                 [zzzzzzzz[zzzzzzzz|
???:                          [sh::::::]
         |----------1.0----------|
AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
         |sh:::::::::::::::::::::|
RJM:     But under this proposal, (1.2)
     2-> NO one (.6) will lose their current health coverage
RJM:     [(.) So that means,]
AUD: 3-> [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

         |----------4.0----------|
AUD:     |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX|
         |BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB|

RJM:     [So that ((cough))]
AUD:     |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX|
         [BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB]

         |----------2.0----------|
AUD:     |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX|
         |BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB|

RJM:     [so that means]
AUD:     |XXXXXXXXXXXXX|
         [BBBBBBBBBBBBB]

         |----------6.0----------|
AUD:     |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXzzzzzz|
         |BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBzzzzzz|

RJM:     So that MEANS (.8)
         that regardless of what (.) health insurance plan
         you are now in, you will stay [in that plan.]
AUD:                                   [zzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM:     [And r- roughly that will apply]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM:     [to over 80 percent of the people]in the audience.]
AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
         [x-x-x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]

RJM:     [So, roughly eighty percent of the people who are insured]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJK:     who are satisfied with their insurance plan .hh you just
         keep your insurance plan.

         |----------10.0---------|
AUD:     |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXzzzzzz|
         |BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBzzzzzz|
```

After RJM presents the headline (arrow 1), a collective display of buzzing slows down the progressivity of the sequence. After the buzzing dies down, RJM presents the punch line (arrow 2) declaring a key provision of proposed reform legislation. Buzzing resumes at arrow 3, overlapping the initial TCU of RJM's projected next turn. Buzzing gives way to intense and extended collective display of applause (line 51) and booing (line 52) as supporters and skeptics use the self-select as next speaker technique to launch simultaneous displays of affiliation and disaffiliation.

Given repeated unsuccessful attempts by RJM (lines 54 and 62) to reclaim the floor, RJM waits for audience members to finish their responses before he continues at line 70. Recurring overlapping collective displays of buzzing (line 73) and applause (line 79) suggest that RJM's continued explanation of the provision provides more fodder for side play. RJM completes his turn with a summary of the provision, contextualizing another extended and intense collective display of simultaneous applause and booing.

Analysis shows that participant activity deviates from the typical social structure of public address in terms of the speaker-audience response-speaker talk sequence. Based on this analysis, three further observations can be made.

First, there appears to be a breakdown in the breakdown in the social structure of one activity at a time. When buzzing overlaps RJM's talk (such as that which starts at line 74), there are at least three activities going on at once. Buzzing represents two types of activity intertwined and represented as one. It represents side conversations and arguments that audience members have with one another about the current speaker's talk as well as any arguments or jeers launched by individual audience members at the current speaker (Clayman, 1992, 1993a).

Second, there appears to be deviation from what constitutes a collective audience response. While there are points where the audience engages in collective response (such as at line 50), that audience response appears splintered among different factions. Unlike counteraffiliative displays, where booing appears in measured response to applause, the simultaneous appearance of booing and applauding provides a sense that supporters and skeptics are competing to fill the same response turn. I call this a competitive collective display, and it indicates a heightened degree of contentiousness on a collective level.

Third, audience members appear less than willing to turn the floor back over to the RJM. Their collective displays are intense and long-lasting They are intense insofar as they overwhelm his attempts at continuing his description of the provision. They are also long lasting insofar as competitive displays control the floor for over 12 second (lines 50-68) and then 10 seconds (lines 87-89). While RJM attempts to regain control of the floor, the sheer intensity and duration of competitive collective displays prevent him resuming his talk. We can compare this with what happened in the first excerpt, where speaker exchange occurred with minimal overlap or delay.

These three observations suggests that progression through the sequence devolves into a contentious milieu, meaning that participants are arguing with the current speaker, arguing with one another, combatting boos with applause, combatting applause with booing, and generally competing to obtain or maintain control of the floor. This heightened sense of contention and insolidarity, manifest to participants in and through the qualified progressivity of sequences, indicates the degree to which political argumentation and social structure intertwine.

Shushing: An audience response to inappropriate qualified progressivity. An action that we do not observe from RJM in excerpt 4.2 is any sort of response, other than a minimization of overlap, which calls out or sanctions audience members for speaking out of turn. His lack of response, however, does not prevent audience members from taking matters into their own hands. In lines 41 and 44 of excerpt 4.2, for example, audience members respond to buzzing with another type of action that I call *shushing*. Shushing is a type of response action used by audience members to sanction other audience member for ascribed inappropriate activity.

Excerpt 4.3 presents several instances of shushing for closer analysis.

E4.3 JMTH 8th district bankruptcy [17:49] – [18:32]

```
 94          Now, another thi- important thing that this legislation
 95          does,(1.2)
 96          [bearing in mind that [(.) in the 8th congressional]
 97 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz[zzzzzzzzz]zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
 98 ???: -->                       [sh:::::::]
 99 RJM:     [district, which is a relav- la- uh relatively affluent]
100 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
101
102 RJM:     [district, a uh very high employment rate [relative]
103 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzzzzzz|
104 ???: -->                                           |sh::::::]
105 RJM:     [To the rest of the country,[.hhh]
106 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzz|
107 ???: -->                             |sh::]
108 RJM:     but even in the eighth district, there (.) were over eight
109          hundred families last year that went bankrupt SOLELY
110          because they couldn't pay their medical bills.
111          [(.hhh) And in most ↑cases, in most ↑cases]
112 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
113
114          |----------2.0----------|
115 AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
116
117 RJM:     [the cost (.) of [their]
118 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzzz]
119     -->                   [sh:::]
120          |----------1.0----------|
121 AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
122
123 RJM:     [health care exceeded the insurance.]
124 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

At four points in this excerpt, all marked by arrows, audience members engage in “shushing” (transcribed as sh or SH). Shushing occurs after the onset of buzzing, suggesting that it is directed at audience members rather than current speakers. The occurrence of shushing in sequence suggests that buzzing prevents some audience members, shushers, from participating as listeners, thereby giving them a reason to sanction others for speaking out of turn.

Shushing may be targeted at individuals as well. In excerpt 4.4, an unidentified audience member (line 513) shushes a heckler (line 512) for launching an insult at U.S. Representative Barney Frank (RBF).

E4.4 BFTH RBF is a liar [17:33] – [17:40]

```
508 RBF:     [It's impossible to understand]
509 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
510 RBF:     where we are,
511 RBF:     [without looking at] the context.
512 AMH: --> [your a ↑li:::ar   ]=
513 ???: --> =SH:::
514 RBF:     Whadi What’s the lie sir.
515          Somebody said >I’m a liar<
```

It is not clear which action is being shushed (the act of heckling, insulting, or both), but its placement in sequence suggests that the shusher in 513 recognizes line 512 as worthy of sanction.

Given the analysis in 4.3 and 4.4, shushing can be defined as an action used by audience members to sanction other audience members for breaching the basic social structure of public address. Shushing is an action that is distinct from applauding, laughing, booing, or buzzing. It is a useful action for cultural and phonetic reasons. Culturally, English speakers are likely to understand shushing as a command to quiet down. Phonetically, analysis shows that the sound(/ʃ/) can be heard above the talk of current speakers and collective displays. It appears as a distinctive contribution hearable above the activity of others.

Shushing may be the action of an individual audience member, or it may be the cumulative display of several audience members. In both instances, shushing appears oriented to the talk of audience members rather than current speakers. The appearance of shushing suggests a break down in the social structure of an activity. It indexes audience activity that prevents others from participating in the meeting, even if participation means listening to current speaker.

Challenging Opening Statements through Refutation

Within the social structure of public address, and the additional constraints of the meeting, participants wishing to challenge the talk of the current speaker have three options. First, they can issue disaffiliative displays at recognizable TRPs in the current speaker's talk. While such displays may by socially dispreferred, as analysis in the prior section has shown, they nonetheless operate within the structure of public address. Second, they can operate within meeting constraints and hope they get a chance to ask their question in the Q&A. Finally, they can transgress structure and constraints to challenge the speaker *at that point in the meeting* through collective displays and heckling. Such actions momentarily shift the mode of interactional accountability from those of public address to refutation.

Refutation is an argument sequence typically composed of three turns (Coulter, 1990; Muntigle & Turnbull, 1998):

- Turn 1: Speaker A makes a claim
- Turn 2: Speaker B refutes that claim

- Turn 3: Speaker A disagrees with the claim made by speaker B in Turn 2 by either supporting the original claim or directly contesting the claim made by speaker B

Refutation in public address settings necessitates engagement from the public speaker, meaning that he or she must respond to an argument initiated by the audience. If the speaker does not directly engage the audience's response—whether that response is via collective display or heckling—there is no refutation.

As such, refutation qualifies the sequence of public address from (1) speaker talk (2) audience response (3) resumption of speaker talk to (1r) speaker talk (2r) audience response (3r) speaker rebuttal. There is a sense that refutation sequences restructure, however momentarily, the public address activity.

In the next series of excerpts, we will take a look at a series of argument exchanges that occurred in the meeting headlined by Rep. Barney Frank. In the talk just before the start of excerpt 4.5, RBF discussed the economics of health care reform and the need to pay for it.

Given his party affiliation as a democrat, his work on the regulation of Wall Street, and his prior defense of labor unions in the meeting, it becomes apparent that RBF wishes to advance a defense of his budgetary bona fides. He does this with the use a rhetorical device to raise an imaginary objection and answer it. The rhetorical device, as an action formation, is designed to (1) hold the floor, (2) give voice to critics, (3) answer those critics, and (4) give the audience a good enough reason to find him fiscally responsible. Audience members display their rejection of RBF's claims by launching their own defense of the imagined objection.

E4.5 BFTH A matter of deficits 1 [00:15:14] – [00:15:32]

```
308 RBF: 1-> Now (.8) I am (.2) struck by those who say
309          Well, .hhh you don't care about the deficit
310          .hhh No I do::, .hhh (.8) um [and I do worry]
311 AUD: 2->                             [ha-ha-ha-hahah]
312          |----------1.0----------|
313 AUD:     |HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH|
314
315 RBF:     [uh about the deficit. (.6)   ]
316 AUD:     [HAHAHAHAhahahahahaha-ha-ha-ha]
317 RBF:     That's ↑one of the reasons, not the only one, .hhh that
318      3-> I voted against the <↑single most wasteful expenditure>
319      4-> in the history of America,
```

RBF introduces the rhetorical device at arrow 1. At lines 308-309, he gives voice to his critics and launches his response to them at line 310. Beginning at arrow 2, some audience members recognize the TCU at 310 ("no I do::") as making a claim. Their collective display of disaffiliative laughter (Clayman, 1992) constitutes a next-turn response to RBF's device. Given the location of laughter in sequence, and given that the laughter targets RBF's refutation of imagined critics, the appearance of laughter suggests that these audience members find the claim embedded in the device to be dubious.

While RBF employed the rhetorical device to answer imagined critics, it actually produced a response slot for his in-house critics. Excerpt 4.6 picks up with RBF's response to the display of disaffiliative laughter (line 36), which produces a fresh round of argumentation.

E4.6 BFTH A matter of deficits 2 [00:15:14] – [00:15:32]

```
317 RBF:     That's ↑one of the reasons, not the only one, .hhh that
318      3-> I voted against the <↑single most wasteful expenditure>
319      4-> in the history of America,
320          [(.8)      [the] Iraq War.
321 AM?: 5-> [The bai::l[out]
322 ???:     (yes.)
323 AUD:     |----------1.5----------|
324          |x-x-x-xxX[XXXXXXXXXXXXX|
325          |         [WOO::::::::::|
326
327 RBF:     [The war in Iraq, [(.8)]
328 AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX|XXXX|
329                            [WOO:]
```

```
RBF: 6-> [↑No::, somebody (1.0)]
AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXX|
                         [WOO:::]
RBF:     [>somebody< called out the bailout,]
AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]

???:     [(yeah)]
AUD:     [xxxxxx]

RBF:     [I ass↑ume by the bailout ] you mean the bill
AUD:     [x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]

RBF:     [George Bush insisted that we vote for, (.8) mn]
AUD: 7-> [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzZZZZZZZ]

         |----------3.0----------|
AUD:     |ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ|

RBF: 8-> [>I think< I'll tell you what (.) here's the deal,]
AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RBF:     >here's the deal< [(.6)           ]
AMH:                       [LI:::::AR:::::::]
RBF: 9-> When you're through yelling raise your hand I'll talk.
         |----------1.0----------|
AUD:     |hahahahahahahahahahahah|

RBF:     [Alright (.)]
AUD:     [ha-ha-ha-ha]
```

Beginning at line 317, RBF resumes his talk with a boast offering support for his initial claim ("I do worry about the deficit"). His use of the extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) at arrow 3 ("single most wasteful expenditure in the history of America") shows that RBF is doing description of his record to convince the skeptics or, minimally, to preempt expected claims advancing misconceptions of his fiscal irresponsibility.

In the brief space between the concluding TCU of the extreme case formulation (line 319) and the TCU containing the punch line of his persuasive work (line 320), a non-ratified audience speaker at arrow 5 (line 321) targets RBF's persuasive work by inserting a pre-speaker completion heckle (McIlvenny, 1996). The heckle inserts an alternative conclusion for RBF's talk, and has the effect of constituting the first turn of a three turn argument sequence. Such is shown by a shift in footing, as RBF calls out the heckler (arrow 6), addressing his response to the heckler (“I assume. . . you mean”) at line 339.

In turn 1 of the sequence, the heckle does correction of the extreme case formulation to identify the *bailout* as “the single most wasteful expenditure in the history of America.” The relevance of the argument depends on a presumed store of political knowledge. It presumes that participants know that bailout refers to TARP legislation, and that RBF voted for TARP. The argument also implies that TARP legislation is bad legislation, and that RBF by extension should be held accountable for it. When this knowledge is coupled with RBF’s earlier account of his work on financial legislation, the heckle constitutes a relevant, well-targeted attack that puts RBF in the defensive posture of justifying his record.

In turn 2 of the sequence, beginning at arrow 6, RBF responds to the heckle with a denial followed by a counterclaim. The denial+counterclaim combination suggests that RBF is doing work to repair positive face (Muntigle & Turnbull, 1998) damaged by the heckle. Yet, he defends his record by going on the attack. He introduces in lines 339-342 the core argument that he will pursue over the next several minutes of the meeting, that responsibility for the financial crisis and the legislative response rests with the Bush Administration. The argument constitutes a proposed topic shift, which vocal audience members will strongly oppose in their next turn response.

In turn 3 of the sequence (arrow 7), audience members respond with collective displays of buzzing overlapping RBF’s response. The sequential location of the buzzing suggests that those audience members reject the counterclaim+topic shift. At the end of line 342, RBF attempts to launch a next turn response. The brief pause and the particle suggest that the rising intensity of buzzing has precluded his ability to build the next TCU. At line 345, audience members take control of the floor.

At this point in the opening statement, audience member heckling produced a shift in activity from public address to cross-examination. The willingness of Rep. Frank to engage audience members in refutation, arguably egging on refutation through lexical choice, suggests a minimum level of cooperation at work in this shift despite the contentiousness.

Nevertheless, the work of the meeting has to progress. Excerpt 4.7 examines how RBF attempts to bring the meeting back to order through the use of off-the-record criticism.

E4.7 BFTH A matter of deficits 3 [00:15:14] – [00:15:32]

```
348 RBF: 8-> [>I think< I'll tell you what (.) here's the deal,]
349 AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
350 RBF:     >here's the deal< [(.6)            ]
351 AMH:                       [LI:::::AR:::::::]
352 RBF: 9-> When you're through yelling raise your hand I'll talk.
353          |----------1.0----------|
354 AUD:     |hahahahahahahahahahahah|
355
356 RBF:     [Alright (.)]
357 AUD:     [ha-ha-ha-ha]
```

At arrow 8, RBF begins the work of shifting activity back to that of public address. His off-the-record-criticism of non-ratified audience member responses is launched at arrow 9. The criticism flouts the maxim of quality (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to suggest that (a) “yelling” is an approved form of participation, (b) that current speaker should raise their hand to signal transfer to next speaker , and that (c) audience members wield the institutional power to select the next speaker. Given that these “suggestions” would institutionalize the breach of a primary meeting constraint, that officials have control of the floor until they select next speaker, and given that audience members laugh (line 354) at the suggestion, it is understood by participants that RBF is using humor to bring the meeting back to order.

In excerpt 4.8, which picks up where 3.7 left off, RBF resumes the defense of his record by resuming the argument begun in line 339 of excerpt 4.6 ("I assume. . . you mean"). And just like what happened in excerpt 4.6, audience members interpret his defense as a shirking of political responsibility. These recurring arguments display features of "aggravated dissent" (Kotthoff, 1993), and the conflict over who is responsible, and how that responsibility should be discussed, brings the meeting to a standstill.

E4.8 BFTH GWB bailout sequence [00:15:32] – [00:15:58]

```
358 RBF:     I assume by bailout you mean the seven hundred
359 RBF:     billion dollars George BUSH asked congress to vote
360          [for last year, (.6) um (.2) By the way,]
361 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
362
363 ???:     [(George bush)]
364 AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
365
366          |----------2.0-----------|
367 AUD:     |ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ|
368
369 RBF:     [do you disa↑GREE] with that ↑fact?
370 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
371 RBF:     Or is that[ch-
372 AMH:               [You didn't RE::AD it)
373 ???: 1-> [(Don't blame it on George Bush)]
374 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
375
376 RBF:     [But you say ↑don't blame it on George Bush,]
377 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
378
379          |----------2.0-----------|
380 AUD:     |ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ|
381          |((AUD shout at RBF))    |
382
383 ???:     |You voted for it]
384 AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
385
386          |----------4.0-----------|
387 AUD:     |ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ|
```

```
              |((AUD shout at RBF))    |

    AMH:      |PLEA::SE RETI::RE]
    AUD:      [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]

    CHR: 2->  [((To RBF))  (excuse me congressman)]
    AUD:      [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
              ((RBF and CHR have a side conversation at the podium))
    ???:      |SHHHHHHHHHH]
    AUD:      [ZZZZZZZZZZZ]

    RBF:      [((TO CHR)) (donledm,)]
    AUD:      [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]

              |----------2.0-----------|
    AUD:      |ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ|
```

In line 358, RBF pursues the counterclaim+topic shift initially issued in excerpt 3.6 (“I assume. . . you mean”). The counterclaim+topic shift constitutes the first turn of another three turn argumentation sequence. Audience members fill the second turn of the argument sequence with a collective display of buzzing that RBF responds to in line 369 with a third turn challenge (“Do you disagree with that fact?”). The response does little to placate buzzing audience members.

At every point where RBF tries to push his line of argument, audience members push back. Heckling at arrow 1 gets at the heart of the matter. The claim at arrow 1 functions as an irrelevancy claim, a face-aggravating response that questions the relevance of the argument and the competence of its speaker (Muntigle & Turnbull, 1998). The lexical choice “don’t blame” suggests that RBF’s proposed topic is shift ascribed to be doing the action of shirking accountability.

The irrelevancy claim functions as the first turn of another three-turn argument sequence. In line 376, RBF responds with a contradiction (“but you say don’t”). The continuing intonation of his talk projects a next another TCU to explain why Bush deserves some blame. The rising intensity of buzzing functions as a third turn response that rejects RBF’s contradiction, leading RBF to cede the floor.

Audience members, once again, take control of the floor from an extended period starting in line 379. From line 379 to 391, audience members continue to launch arguments (line 383) and insults (line 390) at RBF. At arrow 2, RBF and CHR meet at the podium and talk. While it is not clear what they are discussing, RBF’s talk at 399 suggests they are discussing ways to bring the meeting back to order.

The product of their conversation, the subject of excerpt 4.9, yields two different responses to bring the stalled meeting back to order. The first response, presented by the chairperson, raises and critiques the interactional accountability of audience responses as wasting time. The second response, presented by Rep. Frank, challenges the political accountability and the soundness of audience responses.

E4.9 BFTH attempting to restore order [00:15:58] – [00:15:06]

```
CHR: 1-> [YO.]
AUD:     [ZZZ]
CHR:     [We won’t get nothing ↑done. [(.6)]
AUD:     [ZZZZZzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzz]
???:                                 [SH::]
CHR:     |We won’t get any questions answered.]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RBF:     [>alright<]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzz]
CHR:     [Keep It down.]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RBF:     >I I< DO:: HAVE this:. I mean I-
     2-> there is an indicator, I hope people understand,
         (1.0)
         when you say things that people cannot refute,
         they try to drown you out. That’s understandable.
         And I understand why people resent the fact that it
         was (.) my mentioning it was >George Bush’s bill.<
     3-> And by the way, when it comes to bailouts,
         [(.4)                   ] as people call them,
ADW:     [(Get off of George Bush]
RBF:     [.hhh whether it's ge-(.)]
```

```
430 ADM:     [(Get off of George Bush ]
432 RBF:     [General <Motors,>]
433 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
434
435          |----------1.2----------|
436 AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
437          |SH:::::::::::::::::::::|
((35 lines removed))
472 RBF: 4-> [>alright,< (1.0)                     we'll stop,]
473 ADW:     |Will you please leave him out of this?           |
474 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
475
476          |----------5.0---------|
477 AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
```

The first response (arrow 1) begins with CHR reclaiming the floor and ends in line 415 with a command to “keep it down.” In lines 407 through 410, CHR provides an account for the command. Intense, overwhelming collective displays of prevent the meeting from progressing (line 407) to the question and answer session (line 410). The account implies that the purpose of the meeting is to hear audience questions, and that audience interjections have taken away from that purpose. Audience members respond accordingly, with some members shushing (line 409) buzzers who go on to cease their sideplay as CHR turns the floor back over to RBF

While CHR’s talk targets the overall structural consequences of stalled progressivity, the assessment offered by RBF at arrow 2 infers from audience activity a set of political motives, affiliations, and fallibilities. He interprets intense buzzing as an inability to refute the facts and, by inference, an action ascribed to Bush supporters unwilling to face those facts. Although RBF tries once again at arrow 3 to resume his account, heckles at 427 and 430 make it difficult for RBF to progress. In the lines deleted from this excerpt (lines 438-472) the same type of activity recurs as RBF and a handful of audience members battle over the progression of topic talk. At arrow 4, RBF sanctioned the audience once again before ceding the floor to the audience at line 477.

RBF would eventually complete the opening statement, but not until the appearance of more stoppages, delays, and contention among the participants. The meeting did not return to any semblance of regular order until the ejection of a particularly bothersome participant. Be that as it may, these matters of responsibility and accountability would continue to operate as a contested topic into the question and answer session.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

The opening statement is used by headlining politicians and their invited guests to provide their thoughts about pending legislation, announce positions, discuss their legislative record, and engage their critics within the social structure of public address. If politicians have reason to believe their issue positions line up with the audience, then they have the luxury of providing a brief opening statement leaving the details to emerge in the question and answer session. If they have reason to believe that the audience is oppositional or divided, then politicians and audience members alike will orient to these differences as they are made accountable through qualified sequence progressivity.

Analysis of qualified sequence progressivity has shown two unique audience response action types: Competitive displays and shushing. Competitive displays provide evidence for the ways in which political perspectives intersect with interactional constraints within the ongoing development of the meeting. Intense, long-lasting, simultaneous displays of affiliation and disaffiliation serve to confirm the presence of factions competing over the same response space. The competition over the next turn response space corresponds with the vigor of supporters and opponents vying for the passage or defeat of health care reform.

A feature of contentious town hall meetings involves the recurrence of buzzing overlapping current speaker's talk. This suggests that audience members are arguing and jeering as the speaker completes his or her argument. While this may not pose problems for officials giving the address, overlapping buzzing may affect the ability of others in the audience to participate. Shushing is an action used by audience members to sanction other audience members for their interfering conduct.

This study has shown how audience responses can temporarily restructure public address to incorporate elements of refutation. In this dataset, changes in structure occurred when audience members attacked the accountability of elected officials.

Finally, analysis shows why town hall meeting have become a site of political protest. Community organizer Saul Alinsky (1971), taught activists to take down impersonal institutions by picking out a concrete representative of that institution to attack. Alinsky codified this advice in his thirteenth tactic: "Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it" (pp. 130-32). In a very real sense, the politicians who attend town hall meetings put themselves into an isolated position as the embodied representatives of political power.

Activists and non-activists alike attend and participate in town hall meetings to pressure legislators, persuade community members in attendance, and even speak to a broader audience of media consumers. Politicians, in the face of a skeptical audience whose contributions qualify the very structure of social interaction, must adapt to evolving expectations or face the consequences.

CHAPTER 5. THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF TOWN HALL MEETING QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS

This chapter describes the social structure of question and answer sessions by analyzing a range of next-speaker selection procedures employed in town hall meetings. These procedures present a predictable point for troubles and exploitations because they separate those who will get to ask a question from those who will not. Although any deviation from this procedure often results in a breakdown in order and a meeting stoppage, the meetings examined here tend to hold together and progress. By analyzing these points of (dis)order the social structure of the typical question and answer session can be described and reconstructed for further analysis (Clayman, 1995).

After providing a basic overview of turn-taking organization procedures, I will describe how these procedures are constituted in the three meetings that make up the dataset. I have organized my analysis from the smallest meeting to the largest: The Chuck Grassley town hall meeting (CGTH), The Barney Frank town hall meeting (BFTH), and finally the Jim Moran town hall meeting (JMTH). I will finish by describing how participants orient to time constraints, an occurrence that is found across the dataset.

Analysis shows that turn-taking organization across these meetings is grounded in a framework of four primary constraints. These include: (1) The size and composition of the audience, (2) time limits, (3) the scarcity of available turns-at-talk, and (4) officials have priority access to the floor to maintain orderly interaction.

These constraints give shape to norms that govern conduct, including: (a) Audience member turns must include at least one question, and (b) audience members may hold the floor through the response to ask a reasonable number of follow-up questions (zero can be a reasonable number depending).

Analyzing Town Hall Meeting Turn-taking Procedures

With respect to the social structure of town hall meeting question and answer sessions, there are two primary problems to which participants orient. The first problem involves organizing the session though establishing a procedure for next speaker selection. The second problem involves orientation to and management of time limits.

Managing participant roles, formality and epistemics in next speaker selection procedures. In the town hall meetings studied in this dataset, participation is organized through a system that distributes opportunities to speak through the pre-allocation of turns-at-talk. This means that officials control the selection of who speaks next (Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Sacks et al., 1974). Depending on the formality (Atkinson, 1982) of the meeting, the next speaker procedure may be tightly or leniently managed. In either case, next speaker selection procedures involve: (1) Shifts in participation roles, and (2) an orientation to epistemic gradients between officials and audience members.

In the question and answer session, the next speaker selection procedure involves a shift in participant role from *prospective audience member interviewer* to *ratified audience member interviewer*. The former role refers to audience members who want to ask a question, and have made their wishes known through some sanctioned procedure. The latter role refers to those prospective audience member interviewers who have been assigned a turn to ask their question. Generally speaking, no audience member has the right to more than one turn as a ratified audience member interviewer (although that norm may not hold in meetings with fewer participants).

This shift in participant roles brings with it a measure of uncertainty. This can be formulated as a question: “who is this person and what sort of question will he or she ask?” This uncertainty indexes an unexplored phenomenon in the sequential organization of next-speakers, an orientation to epistemics— the management of information flows among parties in conversation (Heritage, 2012b).

There appears to be a relationship between the formality of next speaker selection and epistemics. The relationship centers on what officials know about audience members and the questions they plan to ask, and how officials use that knowledge to select next speakers.

In highly formal town hall meetings with tight turn pre-allocation, such as those involving presidential candidates, the personal identity of every audience member and their question is already known. This allows organizers to select carefully which prospective audience member will speak next. Such a meeting is designed to showcase the candidate’s responses, and the informed selection of the next “uncommitted voter” and their question is a means to that carefully staged end.

In less formal town hall meetings with more lenient turn pre-allocation procedures, such as those contained in this study’s dataset, officials know less information about particular audience members or the questions they plan to ask. While officials may have expectations based on what has happened up to that point in the meeting, there remains a sense of “what else could happen with the next question” that is more pronounced in informal meetings.

These observations point to an epistemic gradient at work in the sequential organization of audience members and their questions. As formality increases, officials have at their disposal more information about the identity of audience members and the questions they plan to ask. Because audience members likely have a sense of their own identity and the question they plan to ask, there is an approximation of equilibrium in knowledge states [K+]=[K+]. As formality decreases, officials know less about the identity of audience members or the questions they plan to ask. This produces audience-member tilted asymmetry [K-]—[K+] between officials and audience members respectively.

Audience members can and do exploit this asymmetry for their own purposes. In meetings with cooperative expectations, or small audience sizes, this epistemic asymmetry is less relevant and procedurally consequential. In more competitive settings, or in large meetings, such epistemic asymmetries are a problem to which participants orient, manage, and exploit in the face of turn scarcity constraints. Ultimately, knowledge gaps are bridged by trust. Not surprisingly, in some meetings, trust is in short supply.

Time limits. All town hall meetings have a scheduled start time and ending time. Time limits, without regard to formality or turn-allocation procedure, constrain the number of questions asked and who gets to ask them.

As the meeting reaches its scheduled ending time, officials will often issue "possible pre-closings" (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) in the form of what I call *countdown warnings*. These signal to attendees and participants the imminent conclusion of the meeting in terms of time remaining or questions that will be heard. Because time warnings tell prospective audience member questions that "you are probably not going to ask your question," the issuance of time warnings often involves facework (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Turn-taking Organization in Small Venues: Managing Cooperative Participants

As was already discussed in Chapter 3, the town hall meeting attended by Sen. Chuck Grassley was held in a smaller venue, a church, with an audience consisting of individuals who more or less agree with his position on health care reform. These factors foster expectations of a cooperative, less adversarial, town hall meeting. These expectations become the basis for a less formal mode of turn-taking organization.

The procedure employed for next-speaker selection was based in part on the whims of the appointed chairperson. In many instances, as shown by excerpt 5.1, the chairperson assigns next speaker by simply pointing.

E5.1 CGTH Q13 [00:50:06] - [00:54:43.20]

```
1 CHR:     ((Points to next speaker))
2 Q13:     uh:,
3          I work for the local rural electric cooperative,
4          and, ((gets mic) uh:,
5 Q13:     I work for the rural electric cooperative,
6          ((mic feedback, hands to technician for adjustment))
7          try this again,
```

The venue is small enough, and the crowd is cooperative enough, for this technique to be effective. In a large venue, there may be confusion as to which person the chairperson is pointing. In a less cooperative crowd, people may argue over who gets to speak next. In this meeting, the biggest issue facing next speakers has to do with the public address equipment, such as getting the microphone to the speaker (line 4) or making adjustments (line 6).

In excerpt 5.2, the chairperson selects the next speaker by first name.

E5.2 CGTH CHR Q06 [00:28:19] – [00:28:33]

```
1 CHR:     [Dorothy?
2          [((names next speaker by name))
```

```
3 Q06:     Well I'd like to thank you. uh::, Senator Grassley?
4          For your integrity. And for sticking to the principles
5          of the constitution and the bible in your voting.
```

With his level of familiarity, there are few opportunities for epistemic asymmetries to cause problems in next-speaker selection.

Despite the level of formality or cooperativeness, there is one constraint that remains constant across all three meetings in this dataset. Excerpt 5.3 shows that Sen. Grassley, the headlining official, has priority access to the floor.

E5.3 CGTH 09 [00:39:04] - [00:39:19.15]

```
15 SCG:    °see?°
16         (2.0)
17 CHR:    Phil,
18         (1.9)
19 SCG:    But again, but again I wanta make clear.
20         Ya know, that's: uh that's the::
21         we're, we're talking, and there's no bill read.
```

At line 15, SCG finishes answering the question. After a brief pause, CHR assigns the next speaker. While “Phil” is preparing to ask his question, SCG re-assigns the next turn to himself to clarify his answer.

This system works for this particular meeting, meaning that turn-taking organization does not become procedurally consequential for those who are not called on to ask their question. Such is likely the case because: (1) This meeting is in a smaller venue (a church) with fewer participants, (2) the chairperson knows many of the attendees by their first name, and (3) many in attendance align with Sen. Grassley’s position on health care reform as shown by the dearth of hostility in question design or competition for asking the next question. Such is a luxury not experienced by the other headlining politicians in this dataset.

Turn-taking Organization in Adversarial Venues: Managing Competitive Participants

In the meeting headlined by Rep. Frank, which is a larger meeting, there is more competition among prospective audience member interviewers for a turn to ask their question. Thus, they tend to try to get more value—the meaning of which can change from speaker to speaker—out of their turn. When this is coupled with previously established expectations of a contentious context (see Chapter 4), the speaker-exchange system instantiated in this meeting must be robust enough to maintain order.

Excerpt 5.4 presents the transition from the end of the opening statement (lines 1-2) to the question and answer session. The first issue that must be resolved is the mechanics of turn-taking organization. The issue in this excerpt centers on who gets to ask the first question, the person who starts speaking first (lines 3-5) or the other person standing at the microphone stand (line 6). The confusion leads the chairperson (CHR) to establish a procedure for next speaker selection.

E5.4 BFTH Speaker selection procedures [00:23:51] – [00:24:35]

```
 1 RBF:     Uhm, and now I’ll, uh:: be glad to take some questions.
 2          Yes.
 3 Q01:     ((Unmiked))
 4          President Obama wants to cut costs and he wants
 5          [to give us more choice in health care.
 6 Q02:     [((Miked))[Good Evening congressman Frank.]
 7 AUD:               [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
 8 RBF: --> I’m sorry one p- khhh
 9          [I'm sorry is it hhh]
10 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
11
12 CHR:     [(Hey. Can you give me the mic)]
13 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
14
15 RBF:     [>yes.<]
16 AUD:     [zzzzzz]
17
18 ??1:     [(    )]
19 AUD:     [zzzzzz]
20
```

```
21 ??2:      [(put it down)]
22 AUD:      [SH:::::::::::]
23 ??3:       QUIET=
24 AUD:       =SH:::
25 ??4:      (Shut UP)
26 ??5:      SH:::
27 ??6:      Qu[iet
28 ??7:        [quiet]
29 AUD:        [SH:::]
30 CHR:      [anybody who has a hand ↑ up,]
31 AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
32 CHR:      (.) I will acknowledge them.
33 ???:      (>right here, right here sir<)
34           (1.0)
35 CHR:      Once I acknowledge you please go to the::, center
36           microphone. Just so everybody can hear gets on the
37           tape gets on uh:: t.v, But I will acknowledge
38           you most likely by row? because I'm sure everybody
39           does have a question,
40           So, this lady, (.) this lady right hear, yep, please go
41           ri-right up there, That gentleman in the blue will be next.
42           Thank you. (.5) >thanks congressman.<
```

As both audience member interviewers start talking over each other (lines 5-6), the audience starts buzzing and Rep. Frank interjects. As the chairperson (CHR) makes his way to the podium to announce the speaker-exchange procedure (lines 33-39), the meeting devolves into various participants attempting to restore order (lines 18-29). CHR eventually sorts out the confusion (lines 40-41) by assigning next speaker to the unmiked speaker (Q01) and the subsequent turn to the miked speaker (Q02).

Generally speaking, turns-at-talk are a valuable resource. In town hall meetings, where only a handful of prospective audience member interviewers will have the chance to ask their question, the value is intensified. Therefore, people will attempt to get as much out of their turns as possible. They may ask complex questions with multiple preface statements and post-position statements. Excerpt 5.5 examines an instance where the current speaker holds the floor through the response to ask a follow-up question.

E5.5 BFTH Q02 [00:27:11] - [00:31:50]

```
 75 RBF:     Next,
 76 ADW:     (only one question)
 77 Q02:     (modified medicare)
```

```
 78 CHR:     oh >only one< only one question.
 79 Q02:     [(Oh come on)]
 80 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzz]
 81
 82 CHR:     [Only one,]
 83 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzz]
 84
 85 AUD:     |-----------4.0----------|
 86          |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
 87
 88 CHR:     >Sir, sir,< sir, (1.5)
 89          we’re trying to keep <it to [a::>
 90 RBF: -->                             [Let me (answer)
 91          on medicare I’m for doing it. Where the federal government
 92          controls it I’m for doing what you’re saying.
 93 Q02:     [((Standing aside from the mic))
 94          [The lady ((Q01)) has several questions.
((19 lines skipped))
114 Q02:     [((attempts a further follow-up))]
115 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
116 RBF:     sir:, I:, I think we've,
```

The excerpt begins just after RBF answers the audience member interviewer’s initial question, with RBF calling for the next speaker in line 75. Q02, however, stays put at the microphone stand and launches a followup question (line 77). An audience member (line 76) and then the chairperson (lines 78 and 82) invoke the same norm to sanction Q02 to keep the meeting on track (line 89). RBF overrules the chairperson (line 90) and allows Q02 to ask his follow-up. Q02, having contested the sanction in line 79, offers an account (line 94) to justify his right to ask a follow-up. Since RBF granted the prior speaker a follow-up, he should be granted one too. Nonetheless, there appears to be limits to the flexibility of this meeting’s turn-taking organization. Q02 attempts another follow-up (line 114), which draws a sanction from RBF (line 116) that effects a transition to the next audience member interviewer.

Because turns-at-talk are a valuable resource, participants develop procedures to ensure that turns are not wasted. In the talk just prior to excerpt 5.6, an audience member spoke for more than two minutes without asking a question. The chairperson, in response, invokes the norm that all audience members should ask a question in their turn.

E5.6 BFTH CHR and RBF Sanction Q10 [01:11:03] – [01:11:41]

```
 1 CHR:     Can, can I, can I say something,
 2          If anybody has a political stance.
 3          And not a question.
 4          The microphone, will be cut off.=
 5 ???:     =(right)
 6 CHR:     [We want to get to questions.]
 7 AUD:     [x-x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
 8
 9 CHR:     [So that everybody can be heard. Thank you]
10 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
```

The chairperson (lines 2-4) draws a distinction between a turn that presents a question—a legitimate action—and a turn where no question is asked—an inappropriate action. Those who use their turn to take a “political stance” will forfeit their turn (line 4). The norm, and the corresponding punishment for its violation, is built on maximizing the number of questions that can be asked (lines 6-9) within the time constraints of the meeting.

These excerpts show the instantiation of three meeting constraints: (1) The size and composition of the audience, (2) the scarcity of available turns-at-talk, (3) and that officials have priority access to the floor to repair troubles in understanding and speaker selection. The constraints give shape to norms that govern conduct, including: (a) Audience member turns must include at least one question, and (b) audience members may hold the floor through the response to ask a reasonable number of follow-up questions (zero can be a reasonable number).

Turn-taking in Large Venues: Managing Audience Identities

While the CGTH presents an example of an informal and friendly town hall meeting, and the BFTH presents a more competitive and adversarial context, the JMTH presents an opportunity to study how turn-taking organization functions in meetings with several thousand participants. While the procedure employed in this meeting prevents audience member interviewers from holding the floor and asking follow-up questions, audience members do find ways to exploit the system through the manipulation of epistemic asymmetries.

The procedure employed in the Rep. Moran town hall meeting, fully explained in chapter 3, uses a membership categorization device to distribute speaking resources among prospective audience member interviewers representing different [issue positions], including those who [support], [oppose], or are [undecided] about health care reform. These categories were self-adopted by each person and publically shared through the submission of notecards turned in before the meeting. Each notecard should have contained at least two pieces of information, the [person's name] and the [question]. The card would have been turned into a box containing other cards of the same [issue position]. RJM would then randomly draw a card from a box and announce the person's name on the card. The process would recur, with RJM drawing from a different box of cards to distribute turns equally among speakers holding different [issue positions].

This system relies on audience member interviewers to follow at least two norms: (1) They ask the question they submitted, and (2) that they are truthfully the person who submitted the card. Participant adherence to Norm 1 can be easily verified, as the submitted question is a known quantity. Participant adherence to norm 2 depends on an unknown quantity, as there was no system in place to validate the identity of question submitters and announced audience member interviewers. Adherence to norm 2 requires a degree of trust, which some participants are willing to exploit. The willingness of some participants to steal another person's turn indicates the value of each turn and the degree to which an orderly meeting depends on everyone respecting access to those shared resources.

Adherence to norm 1: Ask the submitted question. Audience member interviewers are expected to ask the same question submitted. If they do not, they must account for their digressions. Depending on time constraints, and the validity of an account if offered, an audience member interviewer may lose his or her right to ask a question.

In excerpt 5.7, which happens towards the end of the meeting, the audience member interviewer asks a different question and loses her turn.

E5.7 JMTH Q15 [1:52. 15] - [01:54:00]

```
 1 Q15:     People took the idea of life liberty and the pursuit
 2          of happiness as part [of
 3 RJM: 1->                      [uh:: that's not the question.
 4          Actually, the question on the card there
 5          [if you would ma’am,]
 6 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
 7 Q15:     [okay,]
 8 AUD:     [zzzzz]
 9 RJM:     [Go ahead]
10 AUD:     [zzzzzzzz]]
11 Q15: Q-> [When does reform itself become more]
12 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
13 Q15:     important than cooperation.
14 RJM:     When does:: what?]
((6 lines skipped))
21 Q15:     When does reform itself become more important
22          than cooperation.
23 RJM:     I don't understand the question. I'm sorry.
((7 lines skipped))
31 RJM:     I: here let's try uh:: ((p.c.)),
32          she's opposed as well?
33          okay. Miss C.?
```

The audience member interviewer begins her turn with a question (lines 1-2) that is contested by RJM (arrow 1) on the basis that it is not the question on the card. Q15 accepts the sanction (line 7) and goes on to present her submitted question (line 11).

It is important to note that Q15 lost her right to ask a question because the original question did not make sense to RJM (line 23), and not necessarily because she asked a different question. Insofar as Q15 was the first questioner after RJM issued a last question countdown warning, it is very likely that RJM put aside further repair work to hear from another opposed audience member (line 31-33) with a potentially better question.

Excerpt 5.8 provides a contrasting example of an audience member interviewer who is allowed to ask a different question.

E5.8 JMTH Q07 [01:22:27] - [01:24:24]

```
 1 Q07:     um: my question was actually answered
 2          when you were going through your um: myths and facts,
 3          but I've come up with a different one, .hhh
 4      Q-> what will the reform of medicare part D look like?
```

Q07 begins her turn with an account (lines 1-3). Because RJM answered her original question in the opening statement, she asks a new one (line 4) without interruption. Unlike the speaker in excerpt 5.8, Q07 provides an account that can be verified. RJM, having access to Q07's original question and knowledge of what he had said earlier, allows her to ask a new question.

Adherence to norm 2: Be the person whose name was announced. The second norm, that the audience member interviewer is truthfully the person who submitted the card, is more difficultly enforced. Since there is no identification check, there is no procedure for checking that the name on the card matches the identity of the speaker. The orderly progression from speaker to speaker requires a degree of trust between RJM and the announced next speaker, but also among audience members waiting for their turn rather than taking someone else's turn.

When this norm is breached, an instance of which will be examined in the next series of excerpts, the meeting quickly falls apart.

E5.9 JMTH Q06 deception [1:21.12] - [01:21:26]

```
 1 RJM:     You're Miss Appleton? (.) Okay.
((5 lines skipped)
 7 Q06:     Yes.
 8          I have a really simple question and it might be something
 9          everyone can agree on,
10      Q-> why don't we take the twenty tree <trillion> dollars,
11          [we put into the  BAILout        ]
12 RJM: 1-> [well >uh< that's NOT the question]
13 Q06:     [<and devote this to health care.>   ]
14 RJM:     |I don't think you are Miss Appleton.|
15 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
16
17          [((RJM looks incredulous. Gesture: Brushes her away))]
18          |with his right hand.))                              |
19 AUD:     |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX|
20          [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
21
22 RJM:     [UH::: [>tha< That's not right?]
23 AUD:     [ZZZZZZ[ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
24          ((The microphone is taken away from Q06.
25          She continues to shout))
26 RJM:     [↑You're ↑NOT miss Apple↓ton.]
27 AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
28
29 RJM:     [↑What are you doing.]
30 AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
31
32 RJM:     [↑You told me you were:, and you're not.]
33 AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
34
35 RJM:     [That's not appropriate.]
36 AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
```

```
Q06:      [(        )]
AUD:      [ZZZZZZZZZ]
```

The exchange begins routinely. RJM announces the name of the next speaker (line 1), who takes a microphone (line 7) and begins her question. RJM notices a discrepancy between the question being asked and the question on the card, talking over Q06 (arrow 1) before adducing the deception. After brushing off the imposter (lines 17-18) and scolding her for acting inappropriately (line 22), he reformulates in line 26 the original noticing of the breach (line 14).

The change in lexical choice, from a tentative formulation (“I don’t think you are Miss Appleton”) to a conclusive formulation (“You’re not miss Appleton”) displays a change in epistemic status. The change in epistemic status precipitates a more direct line of sanctions, which are shown in excerpt 5.10.

E5.10 JMTH Q06 order restored [1:21.26] - [01:21:58]

```
Q06:      [(You didn't answer) the question]
AUD:      [BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB]

RJM:      [You know the, ((RJM is looking at a notecard))]
AUD:      [BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB]

Q06:      [(Twenty trillion dollars)=]
AUD:      [BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB=]
RJM: 2-> =[HEY! (.6)]
Q06:     =|(        )|
AUD:     =[BBBBBBBBB]

RJM:      [Ma’am,    ]
Q06:      |(bailout)|
AUD:      [BBBBBBBBB]

RJM:      [MADAM, PLEASE, PLEASE GO BACK TO YOUR SEAT)]
AUD:      [BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB]
RJM:      [AND (LEAVE ALONE)]
AUD:      [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]

RJM:      [Now Look.           ]
ADW:      |SIT DOWN! SIT DOWN!|
AUD:      [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ]
     3-> ((A police officer appears from the side, following
          several feet behind Q06 as she returns to her seat.))
RJM:      [The <#eh#>, (1.0)]
```

```
71 AUD:      |ZZZZZZZZZZZ]ZZZZZZ]
72 ???:      [SIT DOWN! ]
```

Despite the scolding, despite being told to return to her seat, despite the audience loudly shouting at her and booing her, and despite having the microphone taken from her, Q06 continues to talk. In fact, she holds RJM to account for ignoring the question. RJM scolds her again at arrow 2, taking back control of the floor, and repeats what has now become a command. While his command is phrased politely, he has raised his voice. A number of audience members (lines 66 and 72) have phrased the matter directly. At arrow 3 (line 68) a police officer appears to escort Q06 to her seat and restore order.

All of this is to shows that town hall meetings cannot happen without a minimum of cooperation that requires a minimum level of trust. Without this, the meeting quickly falls apart. And yet, people want to continue so the meeting quickly comes back together. Nevertheless, RJM appears on guard against further rule breakers. This heightened sense of vigilance can also become an issue, as the next two excerpts will demonstrate.

E5.11 JMTH Q11 next speaker confusion [01:32:18] - [01:32:57]

```
 1 RJM:      [Now. R.T.]
 2 AUD:      [XXXXXXXXX]
 3
 4 RJM:      [what. ((looking down to his left)) what?]
 5 AUD:      [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
 6           ((RJM, with a quizzical look, takes a card from the man
 7           standing beside the stage.))
 8 ??1:      (he's an imposter)
 9 ??2:      imposter
10 RJM:      [You're not R.T.?]
11 AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
12
13 RJM:      [Sir, would you ↑please go sit down?]
14 AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
15
16 Q11:      ((off mic)) (        )]
17 AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
18
19 RJM:      [Please go sit down.]
20 AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
((13 lines skipped))
34 RT:       [((off mic)) (here. use this)]
35 AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

AUD: |----------5.0----------|
|ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ|
|((R.T. looks through his wallet,

Q11: [((off mic)) Here. Use that.]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

[((R.T. hands RJM a card from his wallet. RJM accepts it))]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

Q11: [Let me see <u>YOUR</u> ID.]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

Q11: [You're the imposter.]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM: [heh-heh-heh]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM: [Tell your question.]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

At lines 8 and 9 of excerpt 5.11, two unnamed audience members accuse the person at the microphone of impersonating the next-selected speaker. RJM accepts the validity of these accusations at face value, and asks R.T. to return to his seat.

The exchange between RT and RJM (lines 13-20), which occurs off microphone, culminates in RT treating the order to sit down as a request for identification. He produces an identification card from his wallet (lines 34-44), hands it to RJM (line 43). In lines 46-50, RT produces two utterances that respectively attack the negative (line 46) and positive (49) face of RJM. These two utterance together function to scold RJM for making what is now known to be a baseless accusation. RJM accepts this, turning the floor over to RT.

After RT asks his question, which is critical of proposed health care reform legislation, and after Governor Howard Dean provides the answer for it, RJM uses his next turn at talk to issue an apology.

E5.12 JMTH Q11 RJM apologizes [01:36:54] - [01:38:19]

RJM: [Before we go any further,] where is ((R.T.))

```
 2 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
 3 RJM:     Okay uh: ((R.T>)) >#eh#<
 4          because I noticed gestures .hhh and yelling
 5          I >#eh< I suspected you were not who you are,
 6          the fact is that you were.
 7          So I wanna apologize for [doubting that you were,]
 8 AUD:                              [x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
 9 RT:      [I accept your apology]
10 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
11
12 RJM:     [Number one,]
13 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxx]
14
15 RT:      [No problem.]
16 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxx]
17
18 RJM:     [That's number one. Number TWO,]
19 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x-x-x-x-x]
```

Excerpt 5.12 begins (line 1) with RJM bringing the business of asking and answering questions to a brief pause. In lines 3-7 he issues an apology and offers an account to explain his prior accusations. Apologies are inherently face-threatening act, and the account offered by RJM used faulty information—a feisty crowd—to make an improper and incorrect inference. The audience praises RJM for admitting his mistake (lines 8 and 10), RT accepts the apology (line 9) and the meeting progresses (line 18-19).

A brief note on epistemics, turn-taking organization, and membership categorization devices. The analysis of how participants in the JMTH adhere to and exploit the normative framework of their meeting provides insight into the interface of epistemics (Heritage, 2012a, 2012b) and turn-taking organization.

Adherence to norm 1 depends on the maintenance of an epistemic equilibrium between officials and audience members. RJM has access to the audience member interviewer's question [K+] before it is asked. The audience member interviewer, having knowledge of their submitted question, also holds a [K+] status. Because of this relative equilibrium in knowledge status [K+]=[K+], the question answer exchange occurs with minimal delay.

When the question apparently changes, and RJM know longer knows what the question will be, the epistemic gradient becomes audience member tilted [K-]—[K+]. When this occurs, progressivity of the meeting is qualified and an account must be provided to determine whether or not the question change is fair or foul.

In excerpt 5.8, Q07 provides new information in her account giving RJM new information to interpret the appropriateness of a new question. A [K+]=[K+] epistemic gradient is restored and the question continues. Excerpt 5.7 provides a contrasting example. Q15 feigns a different question without account and is sanctioned for tilting the gradient.

Adherence to norm 2, in contrast, depends on the management of epistemic asymmetry. When RJM announces the next speaker, he operates from a [K-] status because there is no guarantee that the personal identity of the person announced match the personal identity of the person who comes forward to ask the question. Because audience member interviewers presumably know their own name, and the name of the announced next speaker, they operate from a K+. The equalization of the gradient depends on trust, and Q06 (excerpt 5.9) exploits this trust to steal a turn.

RJM's treatment of the imposter (excerpts 5.9 and 5.10) provides evidence for the interface of membership categorization devices and epistemics. The economy rule of membership categorization (Sacks, 1972) states that the application of one category is adequate. RJM uses his knowledge of the submitted question, rather than the "actual personal identity" of the imposter, to catch the deception.

In the second set of excerpts 5.11 and 5.12, RJM establishes neither personal identity nor question identity before he sanctions the prospective audience member interviewer. Although he holds a K- status, he displays a K+ stance. This stance, he would later admit, was a mistake. The accusation, an unfounded attack on the prospective audience member interview's face, is recognized by the interviewer [K+] as such. He produces the identification card, thereby equalizing the epistemic gradient, which in turn renders appropriate his rebuke ("you're the imposter") for RJM's unfounded attack. RJM recognizes his mistake through reinstating the interviewer's turn and would later apologize for relying on a poor source of information.

Time limits: A Source of Supra-structural Coherence

A primary constraint for a meeting is its time limits. As we have already seen in E5.6 and elsewhere, officials and audience members often use time limits to discipline unruly participants. The primary way through which time limits are made relevant is through the issuance of *a countdown warning*. A countdown warning, either in amount of time remaining or number of questions that will be heard, signals the forthcoming end of the meeting. There may be a number of countdown warnings presented in a single meeting, and they may function to accomplish a variety of tasks. Most meetings also include a "last question countdown warning," which confirms that imminent termination of the meeting.

Countdown warnings are intertwined with the politeness dynamics of town hall meetings. Although everyone knows that the meeting will end at some point, most countdown warnings will include a justification for closing the meeting. For prospective audience member interviewers, a countdown warning presents a negative face threat. It signals to them that they may not get to ask a question. For the skeptical and disaffiliative, it justifies the issuance of a positive face threat against the headlining representative. It can be inferred from the countdown warning that the politician is ducking out on his or her obligation to be held accountable. For the attendees who want to get on with their lives, it signals that the meeting is almost finished.

Excerpt 5.13 examines how time constraints, through the issuance of countdown warnings, are intertwined with matters of interactional, political, and public accountability. Such issues boil down to norms of availability. How long should the meeting last, and should politicians stay as long as the audience wants them to? While all meetings have to end, this question of when it should indexes the tension between a politician’s obligations to be held political accountability in a public setting versus the amount of that the politician can remain available for further interactional accountability.

E5.13 BFTH countdown warning 1 [02:08:09.22] - [02:08:52]

```
 1 CHR:     I just want to make an announcement,
 2          we're gonna make room for about five more questions
 3          (see the time) it's eight thirty.
 4          The meeting was supposed to adjourn at eight,
 5          we let this go on, Congressman Frank was nice enough
 6          to let us go an extra half hour. An::d,=
 7 RBF:     =another ten minutes.
 8 CHR:     What's that?
 9 RBF:     I said ten minutes. because we started early.
10 CHR:     yeah
11 RBF?:    (Plus ten more minutes)
12 CHR:     plus ten minutes on, on our:: ,on our time,
13          So I'm asking for (.2) five?
14         ((looks over at BF))
15 RBF:     ten more minutes
16 CHR:     ten more minutes
17          [(and then we're gonna adjourn,]
18 AUD:     [ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ|ZZZZZZZ|
19 ??1:                             [SH:::::]
20 CHR:     adjourn the meeting tonight.
21 ??2: Q-> Who pays your Salary?
22 ??3:     Right.
23 ??4:     [Good question,
24 AUD:     [x-x-x-x-x-x-x[-x-x-x-x ]
25 ??5:                  [yeah::::.]
```

```
26 CHR:     next question.
27 ??6: A-> We the People.
28 ??7:     next question
```

The chair issues a countdown warning in lines 1-2. In lines 3-6, he justifies the countdown warning by noting an external resource—the scheduled time for the meeting to end—and acknowledging an internal resource—Mr. Frank's willingness to stay longer than scheduled. But how much longer is Mr. Frank willing to stay? Should he feel obligated to stay longer? The chairman quantifies the amount as about five more questions (line 2) before offering the figure of thirty minutes (line 6). RBF, hearing line 6, initiates repair to clarify. At line 7 RBF quantifies the rest of the meeting as ten minutes. He presents justification ("we started early") at line 9. Although the chairperson, thinking in terms of people he has to select as next speaker, repeats the number five at line 13, RBF insists on the ten more minutes.

The repair-work in the excerpt provides evidence that these meetings can test the stamina of headlining politicians. The prosody of Mr. Frank's talk is flat and expressionless. The meeting has lasted more than two hours, having started before its scheduled start and extended over its scheduled end time. With a high number of adversarial questions, several of which lasted more than ten minutes, five more questions could easily add another hour to the meeting. Although Mr. Frank does not explicitly say that he is ready to leave, the repair establishes the time to leave in firm terms. For the record, the meeting would last twenty more minutes and six more audience member interviewers would be called to speak. This suggests that time limits are rarely as concrete as some would hope.

The chairperson announces fully repaired countdown warning at lines 17-20, making tangible the projected end of the meeting. For most prospective audience member interviewers, they have just been told that they are probably not going to ask their question. The announcement draws a burst of arguing from the audience (line 18), which in turn draws a burst of shushing (line 18) from an audience member.

At line 21, an audience member asks a reverse polarity type (Koshik, 2003, 2005) question voicing a challenge to the countdown warning. The question conveys, as the answer in line 28 supplies, that the people—and by inference audience members—pay his salary. The question implicitly asserts that Mr. Frank should stay to answer questions because that is what audience members are paying him to do. In this sense, the exchange gains its relevance from the purpose of constituent relations, that elected officials must account for their actions by those who might authorize them to serve.

Participants often orient to countdown warnings by shortening their questions. Excerpt 5.14 shows a question asked just after a countdown warning.

E5.14 BFTH Q24 [02:08:52] - [02:09:40]

```
Q24:      How’s it going today sir?
RBF:      Good
???: -->  Shorten the questions and response.
Q24:      [You got it.
          [((turns to face the audience))
          My question is,
          the federal reserve is unconstitutional in my opinion.
          You take an oath to obey the constitution,
      Q-> so, shouldn’t you resign if you’re breaking your oath?
```

In line 3, someone requests that participants should shorten their questions and answers. The request presupposes that shorter exchanges will create time for more exchanges. Q24 (line 4-5) acknowledges and accepts the request, launching a preface statement for his question in line 6. This question and response exchange, which will be analyzed in Chapter 6 (excerpt 6.3), is one of the shortest in the dataset.

After the initial warning countdown, the length of a question and availability of follow-up questioning is subject to more stringent accountability. In the excerpt 5.15, Q27 has held the floor through Rep. Frank’s response to ask follow-up question and is sanctioned.

E5.15 BFTH Q27 countdown warning 4 [02:19:40] - [02:19:49]

```
93 RBF:     Sir?
94          ((Q27 stays at the mic, attempting to follow-up))
95 RBF:     [No I'm sorry ma'am,]
96 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
97
98 RBF:     [you're really not being fair to other people.]
99 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

In line 93, RBF calls for the next audience member interviewer (Q27 has already been addressed as a woman earlier in the exchange). RBF ascribes to Q27’s activity in line 94 as a request to ask a follow-up question. He denies the request (line 95) followed by an account (line 98) citing fairness to others. While this type of request had been allowed earlier in the meeting, the imminent end of the meeting—as signaled by the countdown warning—has rendered the request out of order (line 98).

In one instance, as shown in excerpt 5.16, an orientation to time constraints led to an alternation of social structure from a question and answer session to a listening session. This shift accounts for the fact that audience members perspective take precedence over those of the politician, and that the politician’s action of “providing answers” decreases the available time for audience members to “provide perspectives.”

E5.16 CGTH time constraints changing structure [00:57:14] - [00:57:49]

```
 1  CHR:     There's been a suggestion, that uh::,
 2           instead of an answer to every single
 3           uh::, question >or anything like that,<
 4           that people have probably five to ten minutes,
 5           for people can, just get up
 6           and express their concerns? without an answer?
 7           so::,
 8           why  don't we open it up [for that]
 9 SCG:                               [°yeah.° ]
((10 lines skipped))
20 SCG:     Uh:, eh I think what, what's being thought here by
21          somebody, and rightly so, because I'm guilty of it,
22          I take too long to answer a question.
23          [(.6) So I ] will be glad to just listen.
```

24 AUD: [hahahahaha]

The chairperson makes a request that people should be able to make brief statements without response. SCG grants the request (lines 9 and 23). He infers from the request that he has taken too much time answering question, reducing the amount of time that is available to audience members desiring to speak.

The request sequence functions to qualify the progressivity of the meeting, as it shifts how participants are expected to understand the encounter. This subpart, once a question answer session, has become a listening session. This type of shift makes sense in a smaller meeting with participants who have demonstrated a highly cooperative orientation over the course of the meeting. Such a change would not function as smoothly in a larger, less cooperative, meeting.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

The orderly development of the question and answer session depends on a fair and efficient next speaker selection procedure that maximizes the number of audience member interviewers within time limits. This basic procedure is complicated by a number of factors, from the size of the venue and the familiarity of the participants to the extent to which participants can minimally trust and cooperate with one another. Whatever the case may be, the goal of this procedure is to maximize the number of audience member questions before the meeting ends.

The findings of this chapter show that social interaction is instantiated through the operation of four meeting constraints: (1) The size and composition of the audience has an affect on (2) time limits, (3) the scarcity of available turns-at-talk, (4) and that officials have priority access to the floor to control interaction. These constraints give shape to norms that govern conduct, including: (a) audience member turns must include at least one question, and (b) audience members may hold the floor through the response to ask a reasonable number of follow-up questions (zero can be a reasonable number). Other norms emerge depending on the context.

When the end of the meeting is at hand, participants orient to countdown warnings. Audience members shorten their questions. Officials shorten their responses. Those who speak too long or attempt to ask too many follow-up questions are sanctioned. The point is to squeeze more people within the twilight of the meeting. In these cases, the opportunity to ask a question, or provide a perspective, appears more important than what is said in the question or response.

Because next speaker selection procedure constitutes the “last gate” that distinguishes those audience members who get to ask a question from those who do not, everyone must be wary of cunning participants who exploit asymmetries to take a turn that was not assigned to them. When something like this happens, the meeting may fall out of order and come to a halt. Major disruptions take time to resolve, which decreases the amount of time available for questions. For a handful of people, making disruptions and halting the progressivity of the meeting may be the purpose for their attendance. For these few, officials can call on the power of the police to restore order. Even when chaos ensues and tempers flair, officials and audience members alike adhere to basic politeness norms, however minimal their adherence may be, to help bring the meeting back into motion.

Based on the normative framework reconstructed from a close analysis of talk and embodied action, it appears that most participants—both opponents and supporters, adversarial or affiliative—want questions to be asked and responses to be provided. If order breaks down, then audience members lose out on the opportunity to test the political accountability of elected officials through the interactional accountability that can be accomplished through question and answer exchanges.

CHAPTER 6. QUESTION AND ANSWER DESIGN IN TOWN HALL MEETINGS

In their analysis of professional news interviews, Clayman and Heritage (2002a) claimed that "the *interactional* accountability of answering questions is the fundamental basis for the *public* accountability of public figures" (p. 235). The interactional accountability of questioning is derived from its power to compel a response (Goody, 1978). The public accountability of news interviews is derived from the fact that an overhearing audience can view the question-response exchange. If a respondent fails to answer a question, consequences can be far reaching and long lasting.

Although town hall meetings are not news interviews, the relationship between interactional accountability and public accountability provides a useful starting point for understanding town hall meeting question and answer design. In this chapter, I demonstrate how town hall meeting participants orient to a third type of accountability, political accountability, in question design.

All questions, in varying degrees of embeddedness and adversarialness, presuppose that politicians should account for how the policy, if enacted, would affect the lives of their constituents. From simple yes/no questions to elaborate forms of "tag-team questions," an orientation to political accountability is observable and reportable in participant contributions. This chapter examines the variety of ways in which political accountability is instantiated, focusing primarily on audience question design.

The first section examines examples of political accountability in accountability type questions and non-accountability type questions. The second section examines how audience members pursue political accountability through preface design. I will examine two preface design techniques used by audience member interviewers to obtain the answer they want to hear: personalizing policies and tag-team questions. I will also look at one how officials counter these techniques by contesting preface statements. Finally, I will examine the interface of interactional and political accountability by examining a case where the elected representative refuses to respond to an inappropriate line of questioning

Political Accountability in Question and Answer Design

Presuppositions are “background assumptions against which the main import of the utterance is to be assessed” (Levinson, 1983, p. 180). All questions assert and embody presuppositions (Heritage, 2003) with varying shades of explicitness and embeddedness (Clayman, 1993b).

Presuppositions orient to epistemics in conversation (Heritage, 2012a, 2012b) as question design establishes a relative epistemic stance between the questioner and the respondent. Interrogative lexico-morphosyntax and prosody displays the gradient of this relationship between knowledgeable [K+] and less knowledgeable [K-] interlocutors (Hayano, 2013). Recipient-tilted questions position the respondent [K+] as more knowledgeable than the questioner [K-] about a particular topic. Sender-tilted questions position the questioner as more knowledgeable than the respondent about a particular topic. Recipient-tilted questions presuppose that there is something to learn, while sender-tilted questions presuppose that the answer is already known.

. For example, the two types of accountability questions can be distinguished according to displayed epistemic stance (Clayman & Heritage, 2002a, 2002b; Heritage, 1988). General accountability questions, such as “why did you,” display a recipient tilted epistemic stance because they are designed to learn why the respondent took an action. Accusatory questions, such as “how could you,” display a sender-tilted epistemic stance. They are a more hostile type of accountability question. They imply that the question is unanswerable, presupposing the inadequacy of the forthcoming account.

The argument pursued in this section is that political accountability is presupposed by all questions in varying shades of explicitness, embeddedness, and hostility. The first section examines how political accountability is pursued using accountability type questions. The second section examines how a sense of political accountability is even presupposed in even non-accountability type questions.

Accountability type questions as vehicles for political accountability. An orientation to political accountability is most explicit in accountability and accusatory type questions. Excerpt 6.1 presents an example of an accusatory question presupposing that people will be forced to accept a health care plan they do not want, and they will be forced to pay for it through increased taxation. Ultimately, the questioner and those who affiliate with her do not trust the government—and Mr. Frank is a representative of that government—to manage the health care market according to the rule of law. When this argument is presented, as Mr. Frank noted in his response, no answer will ever be good enough. This presupposition, deeply embedded within the initial question exchange, is brought to the surface as the sequence progresses towards its conclusion.

E6.1 BFTH Q26 [02:14:25] - [02:16:10]

```
 7 Q26:     you said we would be allowed under this plan
 8          to have a public op- option as well as private?
 9      Q-> I want to know how the private option will be able
10          to compete with the public option
11      1-> when you have unlimited resources
12          [as [with government money.]
13 AUD:     [x-x|-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
14 RBF:         [the bill says,
15       A->[Because the bill says, that the public option will get]
16 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
17 RBF:     a two billion dollar upfront appropriation
18          for administrative costs, and thereafter will have
19          to be break even. There will be no subsidy allowed
20          from the treasury.
((11 lines skipped))
32 Q26:     (But that will happen)  ]
((5 lines skipped))
38 Q26: 2-> I think this is what will happen is that
39          people will be forced to take it.
((10 lines skipped))
50 RBF:     Ma'am I will tell you this. You ask me a question
51          I gave you an answer in the bill.
52          You say you don't believe me.
53          And I'm gonna be honest with ya, you came here
54          believing what you wanted to believe. Nothing I say
55          is going to have any influence,
56       Q->so what's the point?
57 RBF:     [(.) I mean I told you what's in the bill.]
58 AUD:     |x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x|
59          [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

```
60
61 RBF:     [You don’t want to believe it, don’t believe it.]
62 AUD:     |xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx|
63 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

A preface statement (lines 7-8) cites an earlier claim from Rep. Frank to establish the topical context for the question. The question (line 9-12) is an accountability type question that probes an apparent contradiction in the claim. The question has two parts. The first part (9-10) of the question displays a recipient-tilted epistemic stance. She asks Mr. Frank to explain how the private insurance industry will compete with government-run insurance. The second part (11-12) displays a sender-tilted epistemic stance. It asserts that that government run-insurance will have unlimited government funding.

Mr. Frank responds in lines 15-20. The law will require the public option to “break even” without any further taxpayer subsidization. In line 32, Q26 rejects the account with a counterclaim. Because she knows the answer to her question—no business could survive against a competitor with unlimited resources—she knows that the public option will receive subsidies at some point because it will be the only option available to the public.

Mr. Frank responds to her counterclaim in 50-63 through an orientation to her [K+] epistemic status. If she already knows what will happen, then there is no point to continue the discussion. His point is crystalized at line 56, where RBF uses a reverse polarity question (Koshik, 2005) to challenge the usefulness of her question and assert the pointlessness of further discussion. As he says in lines 57 and 63, the questioner is entitled to believe what she wants to believe, regardless of how the bill is actually written.

Non-accountability type questions as vehicles for political accountability. An orientation to political accountability is less explicit in non-accountability type questions. Such questions, with reference to their interrogative lexico-morophosyntax, are not phrased to compel the respondent to provide an account of their political issue position. Nevertheless, I will argue that presuppositions of political accountability can be deeply embedded in non-accountability type questions. Evidence for this can be shown in responses to non-accountability type questions that confirm/disconfirm an embedded presupposition of political accountability.

Excerpt 6.2 presents an example of a polar question (yes/no) with a deeply embedded presupposition of political accountability. Although polar questions do not explicitly seek an account for a political position, they nevertheless operate within the context to produce one. The question in 6.2 asks whether or not Rep. Moran has considered an alternative policy. The elaborated response (lines 20-30) provides an account to justify *why* health care co-ops should not be considered. If the health care system is broken and if reform is needed to improve the quality of life for his constituents, and if health-care co-ops lack the viability to work on a national scale, then that is a policy that should not be pursued despite the politics of reform.

E6.2 JMTH Q3 [01:16:12] - [01:17:47]

```
 1 Q03:     Congressman my question is,(.)
 2      Q-> Do you think that a system involving co ↓ops is an
 3            acceptable compromise on health care reform.
 4 RJM: A-> .hhhh well, #uh# I [<personally dont>]
 5 ???:                        [woo:::::::::::::]
 6 RJM:     [and I'll explain why,]
 7 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
 8
 9 AUD:     |----------3.5----------|
10          |xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx|
11
12 RJM:     >#eh#< There's nothing wrong with health care cooperatives.
```

In fact many states allow them, and some states have them.
.hhh uh: but they’re certainly not a substitute for a
public option. [very difficult,]
AUD: [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
|----------1.5----------|
|XBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBXBX|

RJM: [very difficult for enough people to get] together
AUD: [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
RJM: to put it, >#eh eh#< to:: .hhh put it together themselves.
For one thing, you need about five hundred thousand people
to be competitive with the private insurance industry,
.hhh and you need a lot of start up money.
That's why its felt that if the government was able to:
.hhh uh: >uh uh uh< kick start it, >uh. uh< uh::
with money that would be uh: repaid but .hhh uh: >uh< so
that it could eventually pay for itself, but the
government has the expertise having run medicare,

In line 2, Q03 asks a fairly straightforward polar question with a recipient-tilted epistemic stance. The question relies on established contextual information, the unpopularity of proposed health care reform legislation, to learn if Rep. Moran has considered health care co-ops as a politically expedient alternative to controversial proposals. Although this is the first mentioning of health care co-ops in the meeting, she does not explain what they are or what advantages they offer. Thus, the questioner relies on the knowledge of Rep. Moran and the audience to make sense of the question.

RJM provides a succinct answer in line 4 that addresses the action and topic agenda of the question. His extended response (lines 12-30) targets two key presuppositions embedded in the question. In lines 14-15, RJM reaffirms his support for the public option despite its political unpopularity. The second part of his response targets the presupposition that health-care co-ops will achieve the goals of reform. While health care co-ops in themselves are a good idea (line 12), their prohibitive start-up costs in capital and expertise present a comparative disadvantage to private insurance (lines 20-30) and the public option.

While excerpt 6.2 shows how a proposition of political accountability operates in polar questions with recipient-tilted epistemics, the next excerpt examines how political accountability operates in polar questions with sender-tilted polar epistemics. In this particular exchange, the question asserts that Mr. Frank has exceeded the authority granted to him by the people due to his implied support of the Federal Reserve Bank. This question accuses Mr. Frank of abusing his power, calling into question his official legitimacy. Mr. Frank artfully refutes the question to show that he has been operating within the bounds of his accountability to the people.

E6.3 BFTH Q24 [02:09:11] - [02:09:24]

```
Q24:     the federal reserve is unconstitutional
         in my opinion.
         You take an oath to obey the constitution,
     Q-> so, shouldn’t you resign if you’re breaking your oath?
RBF: A-> If I were breaking my oath yes,
         I do not believe that the Federal Reserve is
         unconstitutional, I do plan to put some legislation through
         that will curtail some of its powers,
         but uh no I don’t think it’s unconstitutional,
     1-> no court’s ever held that
```

The preface is made of two premises that establish context for the question. The first premise (line 8-9) asserts the unconstitutionality of the Federal Reserve Bank. The second premise (line 10) reminds RBF, and the audience, of his sworn obligation to defend the constitution. The polar question (line 11) is formulated using negative interrogative syntax, which prefers an affirmative response (Heritage, 2002).

In contrast with excerpt 6.2, where the audience member interviewer presents a K- epistemic stance, the question design in this excerpt displays a K+ stance. Q24 asserts (+) RBF’s infidelity to constitutional government, an adversarial statement because it assumes that RBF has broken his oath. The interviewer’s use of interrogative syntax and preference organization has established tight action agenda constraints for the response, leading RBF to admit that he should resign.

RBF finds a way out of the quandary by framing his response (line 12) as a conditional argument (if *p* then *q*) disproving the question within its constraints. The consequent of the argument ("yes") conforms to the question's action agenda and aligns with its preference organization. RBF spends the rest of his turn disputing the antecedent ("If I were breaking my oath"). The key part of the response appears at arrow 1, and it attacks a presupposition embedded within line 9 of Q24's preface. The courts rule on matters of constitutionality, and Q24's opinions (line 9) are not relevant to that process.

In summary, this section has examined how questions and exchanges, whether they explicit seek an account or not, orient to a presupposition of political accountability. These exchanges display through participant interaction how constituents hold elected representatives, and the government institutions they represent, political accountably in a public forum. This concern for accountability operates across topic agendas, whether participants discuss policies (excerpt 6.2), the legitimacy of the elected representative (excerpt 6.3), or both (excerpt 6.2). The rest of this chapter will reconstruct some of the techniques used by participants to pursue political accountability.

Preface Design and the Pursuit of Political Accountability

In chapter 5, I argued that epistemic asymmetry plays an important part in the next-speaker selection procedure. Depending on the formality of the meeting and the stringency of its turn pre-allocation procedures, there can be substantial uncertainty surrounding the identity of audience member interviewers and the questions they can be expected to ask.

A corollary to this finding is that each new audience member speaker is most likely a “fresh” speaker. Each new speaker brings with them a potentially fresh set of personal experiences, perspectives, and biases that may differ significantly from prior contributors. Complex question designs enable those participants to make their unique experiences relevant to the exchange, thereby altering the manner through which an elected official is held politically accountable.

In this section, I will examine two preface design techniques used by audience member interviewers to obtain the answer they want to hear: personalizing policies and tag-team questions. I will also look at one technique that I call contesting preface statements. Respondents employ this technique as a resource to challenge objectionable preface statements and repair misunderstanding that could hinder the uptake of their forthcoming answer.

Personalizing policies. In town hall meetings, the expertise and competence of the headlining politician is often a known, if skeptically viewed, quantity. The experience and competence of each new audience member interviewer, in contrast, is a relatively unknown quantity. Thus, audience member often include in their prefaces authenticating statements (Thornborrow, 2001) that make their personal experiences and perspectives relevant to other participants. This is accomplished through a technique that I call *personalizing the policy*. Although politicians do not often tailor their response to the personalized policy prefaces, the technique does help participants and overhearing audiences infer how policies relate to their own lives.

Excerpt 6.4 provides a succinct example of this technique in action. The question (line 10) is an information-seeking question, and it is designed to learn from SCG if proposed legislation will provide relief for her family's expensive medical bills. The post-position statement (arrow 4) personalizes the policy further. SCG can only offer a tentative answer (lines 13-15) because the bill has not been finalized (20-22).

E6.4 CGTH 09 [00:38:25] - [00:39:19.15]

```
 1 Q09:     Sir, my, my (children have) a rare, disease?
 2          We (use a    ) drug, my health care costs, on a monthly
 3          basis, for medicate run over nine-hundred thousand dollars.
 4 AUD: 1-> zzzzzzz[zzzzzzzzz]
 5 ???: 2->        [(oh shit)]
 6 Q09:     My out of pocket, having a full time job, requires me
 7          to have a part time job, to put food on the table
 8 SCG: 3-> (see?)
 9 Q09:     So we are looking at,
10      Q-> what are out of pocket caps,
11      4-> so that we can afford to be productive members of society.
12 SCG:     yeah, I think, eh
13          I think our policy somewhere's on the neighborhood of
14          .hhh uh thirteen to fifteen percent.
15          °see?°
((4 lines skipped))
20 SCG:     But again, but again I wanta make clear.
21          Ya know, that's: uh that's the::
22          we're, we're talking, and there's no bill read.
```

Excerpt 6.4 begins with a preface (lines 1-3 and 6-7) containing a series of explicit contextualizing presuppositions through which the audience member interviewer reports how she struggles (line 1) to pay (lines 6-7) for her children's medications (lines 2-3). Her information generates discussion among the audience (arrow 1) and displays of uptake from a particularly loud audience member (arrow 2) and Sen. Grassley (arrow 3). These responses suggest that participants orient to and understand the scope of her family's plight.

Although audience members often talk about their personal circumstances, very rarely do politicians respond to those personal circumstances on a personal level. Other than minimal displays of uptake, SCG makes no direct reference to the audience member interviewer's personal problems.

Excerpt 6.5 provides another example for further analysis of this point. Although the audience member personalizes the policy, and although the question presupposes that solving the problem will help her son, the response provided by SCG foregrounds the politics of the problem without referring to the audience member's particular personal circumstances. The responses provides evidence that SCG, in line with his professional obligations, has designed his response to be relevant to a broader audience.

E6.5 CGTH Q11 [00:46:33] - [00:49:16.18]

```
 6          My son has preexisting conditions he cannot get good
 7          insurance because of that, and I'm curious,
 8      Q-> what your thoughts are about
 9          [(.) ]how to solve that [problem.]
10 SCG:     [yeah]                  [yeah.   ]
((3 lines skipped))
14          it's a: one of the those things that I think
15          there's almost a consensus in warshington, there isn't
16          a republican approach, or a democrat approach
17      --> there's .hhh almost a consensus that, .hhh when we're
18          dealing with uh::, health care, we oughta do away
19          with the discrimination, that comes from uh
20          pre-existing conditions, .hhh and then connected ↑with it.
21          Although you didn't ask about this, .hhh but we've got this
22         <wide range> of premiums from high to low.
23         .hhh and so we ta, we're going to narrow that band down.
24          Closer. uh::, so that uh: that there between the high
25          premium low premium there's not .hh a::,
26          a big difference.
```

Like this previous excerpt, this excerpt begins with a preface statement (lines 6-7) personalizing the policy. Her question (lines 8-9) is designed to elicit from SCG how policymakers can address the problem of pre-existing conditions. His response (14-26) describes the politics of pre-existing conditions. He leads the listener to infer that doing away with pre-existing conditions is politically popular, and that it will help her son find insurance.

There are a number of reasons to suggest why SCG would not tightly tailor his response to the personalized preface. The first reason is question design. The question presupposes that solving the problem will help her son, and SCG's response addresses that embedded presupposition through inference.

The second reason centers on the epistemics of political promise making. It could be the case that SCG does not want to appear to make any promises. Thus, he designs his response to report what he knows (his thoughts on policy proposals) versus what he does not know (the medical history of the questioner's son).

A third reason centers on recipientship (Levinson, 1988). Although the answer is addressed to the audience member, she is not the only recipient. There are likely others in the audience (and overhearing audience) that are harmed by pre-existing conditions. Sen. Grassley, by responding to the personalized question with a broad response, leaves open for other recipients the option to infer their own personal connection to his response. If the response is tailored too well, then other recipients may infer that the response is irrelevant to them.

The broad recipientship of a response points to a presupposition deeply established by most, if not all, questions in this dataset: Politicians should consider how policies affect the livelihood of their constituents. When an audience member interviewer personalizes the policy, it is presupposed that the politician should consider how policies affect the livelihood of the interviewer and those like him or her.

Excerpt 6.6 presents an example of this presupposition in action. This question, like the one asked in excerpt 6.3, instantiates the value of negative liberty to criticize the expansion of government control over health care markets. In this excerpt, the questioner makes a concrete application of these values through her own personal circumstances.

E6.6 BFTH Q13 [01:18:16] - [01:21:08]

```
 4 Q13:     My name is Violet P…, and I’m 89 years old.
 5          And [this has somethin (.6)]
 6 AUD:         [x-x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
 7 Q13:     [has something to do (with me.)]
 8 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
 9
10 AUD:     |----------2.0----------|
11          |x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x|
12
13 Q13:     There are approximately three hundred million people in
14          this country, approximately two hundred fifty of which have
15          health insurance. If we include fifty million more people
16          into the system, without increasing the amount of
17          doctors nurses and facility to treat these patients,
18      Q-> how am I or anybody, (.) worse than me for that matter
19          going to be able (to) find the appointment with a doctor
20          once you add in all these new patients.
21          Could you please explain.
((6 lines skipped))
28 RBF: A1> I know some of those people don’t have health care
29          fisherman in New Bedford.
30          And I’m not comfortable saying to them (.2) tough.
31          (You don’t get health) care and other people do,
32          and I don’t want to make room for you.
((3 lines skipped
36      A2> We have a shortage of nurses here.
37          That’s a great mistake.
38          (We) have dealt with it in part by uh
39          improving by importing nurses. That’s the short term
40          approach. Uhm, I think it’s one of the areas were
41          (we could spend) frankly a little bit more money. (    )
42          I was very pleased when the president announced
43          a great increase in funding for community colleges.
```

The audience member interviewer begins by disclosing her age (line 4) to authenticate the relevance of health care reform to her personal circumstances. Her preface personalizes the policy through inference: Health care reform mostly affects the aged, and she is member of the group mostly likely to be affected. In lines 13-17, she establishes explicit contextualizing presuppositions to shed doubts about the health care system’s ability to absorb fifty million more people with addressing the current shortage of medical staff and facilities.

The question (lines 18-21) ties together personal and systemic circumstances to convey a [K+] negative assertion. When coverage is expanded to include the uninsured, people are going to suffer. The question is hostile to the extent that it is designed to force RBF to defend health care reform and argue why this violation of the interviewer's negative liberty will not be her death sentence.

RBF offers two responses. His first response (lines 28-32) addresses a key presupposition, that politicians should consider how policies affect their constituents' personal circumstances. He resumes an interactional thread begun in the opening statement: New Bedford fishermen are hardworking people who do dangerous work without health care benefits. This thread is used to argue the moral dimension of the question (line 30-32), that there are others who need health care access in addition to the aged. The inference would be that all of his constituents, not just some, should have access to health care.

His second response (lines 36-43) provides a policy response to the topic agenda of the question. If short-term shortages can be solved through the immigration of medical staff, if and long-term shortages can be solved by funding community college training programs, then the interviewer and others like her should experience no changes in their level of care. Thus, a refined distribution of resources would provide a means towards the goal of providing health care for people like the fisherman without sacrificing care for the aged.

Tag-team questions. Audience member interviewers wishing to follow-up on a response must do so by maintaining control of their share of the floor through the respondent's answer. But when they relinquish their turn through their own volition or through the allocation of the floor to the next audience member interviewer, they relinquish the opportunity to pursue a follow-up as a ratified speaker.

Analysis shows that any future audience member questioners may use their turn to continue an interactional thread established by a prior questioner. I call this tactic *tag-team questioning*, and it allows for the pursuit of a line of questioning by two or more audience members. Tag-team questioning is warranted by the interactional accountability of question-answer sequences, and it is a technique used by audience members to get more information from respondents about a matter of political accountability. It may also be the case that officials encourage tag-team questioning when it would be advantageous to their cause.

Although questions asked by different audience member interviewers may often focus on a particular topic, such as health care rationing, they are not necessarily tag-team questions. A tag-team question consists of at least two parts: (1) an explicit reference to prior questions and (2) an assessment of the (in)dequacy of the prior response.

A recurring argument presented against health care reform—one that stretches back at least to the 1940's—is that government interference will lead to socialized medicine, and that government officials in socialized systems will use their political power to hoard scarce health care resources. The next three excerpts (E6.7-E6.9) present an example of how a variation of this argument is pursued using a tag-team questioning device.

Excerpt 6.7 examines the first question-answer exchange of the sequence. The questioner asks if Rep. Moran (RJM) will sign his family up for "the same health plan" (line 3). It is not explicitly clear what the audience member means by that phrase, and RJM takes advantage of that ambiguity to go beyond the scope of the question and argue in support of health care reform proposals

E6.7 JMTH Q04 [01:18:10] - [01:19:34]

```
Q04:      yeah. uh I would like to know
     Q->  are you and your family. (.) willing. (.) to go on
          the same health plan.=
???:      =(yeah)
Q04: Q->  And also. HAVE YOU <ever.> or any of your family members,
          LIVED under social- so called socialized medicine as I call
          it?
          I have. And I've got relatives living on it.
          And trust me. It ain't workin.
AUD:      Yeah
Q04:      [Unless you have private ins-]
AUD:      [x-x-XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
AUD:      |----------21.0----------|
          |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX|
Q04:      [My-=]
AUD:      [XXXX]
RJM:      [=So as the crowd calms down, .hhh uh: I'll (.) respond.]
AUD:      [XXXXXXxxxxxxxxxxx|                                     |
                            [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM: A->  uh: Yes, and no:.
          [(3.0)                                              ]
          |(RJM gives a series of tiny up and down head nods))|
AUD:      [zzzzzz]zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
AUD:      [hahaha]
RJM:      yeah.
Q04:      (Try it.)
RJM:      [(1.0) Of course I'm I'v (prepard) I-[(.8) ]
AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzzz|
AUD:                                           [heheh]
RJM:      [I actually:, I live under >eh eh< we >#eh eh# eh eh<]
AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM:      [I m- >uh< uh: insured under the federal employees]
AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM:      [benefits plan, .hh it's a full family plan so I .hhh]
AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM,      [uh: >#eh< I pay a very substantial uh: amount every,]
AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

RJM, [month several thousands of dollars a year I pay,]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM, [.hhh but its auh: it’s a good plan, I want to]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM: [preserve it for all federal employees and retirees.]
AUD: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

Q04 presents a complex question consisting of two polar questions and a post-position statement. The first question (line 2) asks RJM if he and his family will sign up for the “same health plan” (line 3). The second question (line 5) asks RJM if he has any personal experience with socialized medicine. A post-position statement (lines 7-8) asserts the questioner's personal experience [K+] with “socialized medicine” to warrant an implied criticism of it.

RJM provides a minimal answer to each question (line 21), ignoring the follow-up statement (line 28) before launching an elaborated response (lines 29-50) explaining the details of the insurance plan that he and his family *already* share. This is the same plan available to all federal employees, and he concludes his answer pledging “to preserve it for all federal employees and retirees” (lines 47-50).

Audience member contributions provide evidence for the relevance of this question-answer sequence. The question draws an extended and intense display of affiliation from some audience members (lines 12-14), indicating the significance of the topic to those who agree with its agenda and presuppositions. The appearance of buzzing at line 21, overlapping the bulk of RJM’s answer, suggests that audience members have something to talk and/or argue about amongst themselves. Finally, a brief burst of laughter (line 26) suggests that some find some fault with RJM’s terse response or the nonverbal manner through which he emphasizes it.

An issue for analysis concerns the degree to which RJM is recognized as providing an adequate response. This issue centers on how participants interpret the meaning of "the same health plan" (line 3). To which plan does this phrase refer? The questioner does not specify. The second question, which references the failure of socialized medicine (line 5), implies that the government-run public option is socialized medicine and that it will be doomed to fail. These two questions, taken together, get at whether or not RJM would be willing to subject himself and his family to the purported dangers of government-run health care.

The questioner does not connect the two questions, and RJM does not do the work for her. He takes advantage of the ambiguousness, shifting the topic agenda of the away away from the questioner's intended criticism. His response is built on a literal interpretation of "the same health plan:" He already shares a plan with his family. His response does not address how health care reform will affect his current coverage, nor does he offer a defense of socialized medicine.

This response does not sit well with the next audience member interviewer, who continues the line of questioning in excerpt 6.8 with a tag-team questioning device.

E6.8 JMTH Q05 [01:19:54] - [01:20:12]

```
             Actually, it's the same exact question.
         Q-> Are you willing to take the plan.
         1-> You did not answer it.
         Q-> [WILL or [WON't You.]
    AUD:     [xxxxXXXX|XXXXXXXXXX]

    RJM: 2-> [I did.=]
    AUD:     [XXXXXXX]

    Q05:     [=NO. You did not.=]
    AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]

    RJM: A-> [=Well the answer is YES:]
    AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
```

```
Q05:     [Okay.]
AUD:     [XXXXX]
         [((A staffer reaches for the microphone))]
AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxxxxxxxxXXXX]
RJM: A-> [The answer is yes.]
AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
         ((The staffer takes the microphone from an astonished Q05,
         who raises her hands in surprise))
Q05:     ((Talking into the CSPAN boom microphone))
         [I just had the mic taken away.]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

Q05 begins her turn (line 6) with an explicit reference to the prior question before asking if he will take "the plan" (line 7). At line 8 (arrow 1), she asserts the inadequacy of RJM's prior response. Her turn ends with an alternative question (line 9) demanding from RJM a clear answer.

RJM’s response consists of two parts, a brief argument exchange followed by a response to her questions. The first part (arrow 2) contests the assertion with a second turn contradiction. After a terse third turn rebuttal (line 15) from Q05, RJM explicitly answers the question ("Well the answer is <u>YES</u>") at line 18 and again in line 27 (“the answer is yes.”).

The sequence of exchanges between RJM and Q05 is of analytical interest with respect to its terseness. The question, though complex, relies on the prior question for its context. Other than the assessment of prior talk at arrow 1, the question offers no new information about “the plan.” Thus, the question functions as a follow-up with a tightly constrained action agenda. RJM’s minimal response operates within these constraints, offering no further elaboration. From his point of view, as displayed through the brevity of his answers, the matter requires no further discussion.

From the perspective of some audience members, however, his unelaborated response to a polar question might be heard as evasive (Raymond, 2003). RJM has already been called to account for a purportedly inadequate response, and his terse response (line 12) denies the necessity of a developed account. Q05, who has the microphone taken away from her (line 32), is not allowed to pursue the issue further.

Three questions later, excerpt 6.9, an audience member interviewer raised the matter again and for the last time. The excerpt (line 6) begins with a reference to a prior line of questioning, which presumes the inadequacy of prior responses. The complex question, starting at line 33, crystalizes the issue: Will RJM enroll his family into the public option and suffer like everyone else, or will he use his clout to purchase the best health care money can buy? RJM, in his response, rejects this line of questioning. In fact, there is evidence (line 8, and lines 54-65) to suggest that RJM fostered this line of tag-team questioning on purpose so that he could dispose of it once and for all.

E6.9 JMTH Q08 [01:24:44] - [01:27:20.11]

```
 6 Q08      it’s a similar question that everyone else has asked,
 7 RJM:     yep
 8 Q08:     and you haf and haf exactly
((6 lines skipped))
15 Q08:     or you wouldn't have called my name
((17 lines skipped))
33 Q08:     Knowing full well that somehow, uh: both the congress
34          and the executive as well as the uh: other branches
35          of government will find ways to get themselves OFF this
36          particular government run plan, the question,
37          $I know$ I know were gonna hear all the those
38          ew:::s and ah:::s, BUT, (.8)
39          The question is:, if it's so good for all of us,
40       Q-> can't ya be on it with us? (.2)
41          Please.
42 RJM: A-> [I am,] (1.0) I am,]
43 AUD:     [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
44
45 AUD:     |----------2.2----------|
46          |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX|
((7 lines skipped))
54 RJM:     [ya know, [I >eh.hh< since there have been]
```

```
Q08:     |         [(    )(.) (         )         |
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM:     [a lot of people that have asked this, let me, (.)]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM:     [try to address it once more. Okay? I'm gonna try]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM:     [and address it and thank you for your question sir.]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

AUD:     |----------2.0----------|
         |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|

RJM:     [eighty five percent,] (1.2) of people, ↓approximately,
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RJM:     .hhh are not going to see any change:, in their health
         [insurance coverage. (.6)]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

RJM:     [Now the reason for that,]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

AUD:     |----------2.2----------|
         |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
         |BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB|

RJM:     [the reason]FOR that,]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzz|zzzzzzzzz]
         [BBBBBBBBBB]
RJM:     is that most plans have adequate coverage particularly
         in northern virginia.
```

An explicit contextualizing statement (lines 33-36) brings to the surface two presuppositions deeply embedded in the prior questions. (1) If given the chance, government officials will avoid enrolling on the government run plan because they follow a different set of rules than the rest of the public. This statement itself presupposes (2) that a government-run plan will be awful, the sort of plan that government officials will use their power to avoid (line 39). The preface positions the speaker at a K+ (“knowing full well”) epistemic stance, suggesting that the well-known dishonesty of politicians helps everyone predict how they will respond to a flawed health care plan.

The question itself (line 40) is a negative interrogative asserting that RJM should join the government run plan with everyone else that will be forced into the plan. The post-position statement (line 41) implies that RJM should do the right thing, which implies that RJM would not do the right thing.

The response offered by RJM, which starts at line 42, reaffirms his prior affirmative answers. Starting at line 54, RJM presents an elaborated answer to satisfy those who found his previous answers inadequate. The first part of the answer (lines 70-87) reintroduces information from the opening statement. If people have adequate coverage, then they will get to keep their current health coverage. There will be no reason for anyone to be forced to accept the public option.

While many in the audience dislike the eventual answer, and while his answers fail to offer a defense of the public option, the of tag-team questioning does bring clarity to whether or not people will be forced to adopt this or that plan. Not only were audience members able to pursue a more adequate response from Mr. Moran, the device also allowed him to reprise information about the bill to fend off arguably unwarranted attacks. The audience member interviewer infers from his selection as next speaker (line 15) that Rep. Moran wanted to answer the question. Such would indicate how tag-team questioning could be a useful tool for both audience members and elected officials.

Contesting preface statements. Audience member interviewers design preface statements to shape how their question ought to be understood. In most instances, politicians withhold from responding until the question is completed. If the politician finds a statement objectionable, such as if the interviewer presents erroneous or misattributed information, then the politician may invoke their right to the floor to contest the preface statement.

A contested preface has the structure of a three-turn argument sequence. A preface is becomes a contested preface when the interviewee qualifies the progressivity of the sequence with a statement that functions as the second turn response of an argument sequence. Contesting a preface statement can be used to challenge the information, repair misunderstanding, or both.

Excerpt 6.10 presents a simple example of a contested preface statement, in which RBF contests a quotation attributed to him. Analysis suggests that a contest preface statement has the structure of a three-turn argument sequence that is initiated and resolved before the question is finished and the response is given. Because the typical complex question is presented with minimal interruption, the second turn response qualifies the progressivity of the sequence with a pre-second insert expansion to contest information and repair misunderstanding before it becomes firmly established as common knowledge. As such, a contest preface sequence is designed to establish a corrected informational context, a resource that can be to interpret the forthcoming question and its response.

E6.10 BFTH Q10 [01:07:31] - [01:11:41]

```
Q10:      In the congress. At the cafeteria.
          And you freaked out.
          [(.) Big freak out.]
```

```
AUD:     |ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha |
         [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
Q10:     Because I introduced you to the Homeowners and Bank
         Protection Act. which is the <only> solution.
         to the economic crisis (which we) face in this nation.
         And you went with the bailout.
      T1 (You said) We’ve gotta save °wall street (and london)°
RBF:  T2 No I never said that sir.
Q10:  T3 °Oh Yeah.° (.4)
         You WENT with that.(.4)
         That’s what you went with.
         And Goldman Sacks, and all these other (.) banking
         apparatuses, got, (.) billions of dollars. US taxpayer
         money. Instead of doing what was NECessary for this
         country, number one, bankruptcy for (your) organizations.
         Put the federal reserve into bankruptcy.
```

The excerpt begins with the interviewer (Q10) recounting a prior engagement with RBF (line 6-10). He quotes an earlier encounter, (line 15), using RBF’s own words to establish his subservience to the finance industry. RBF immediately denies having said the quotation. The response offered by Q10 functionally concedes RBF’s denial and presents a counterclaim. In line 18, Q10 reformulates the argument from “you said” this to “you went with.” Though the shift in lexical choice is subtle, it enables Q10 to continue building his underlying point—that RBF used taxpayers’ money to save his friends in the finance industry—without haggling over who said what.

It is important to note that the two actions that constitute a contested preface—a contestation of information and a repair of misunderstanding—can be directed at different targets. RBF challenges the information of presented by Q10, but does not correct his misunderstanding of the issue. Q10 continues along the original trajectory of his preface—that Mr. Frank is subservient to the financial sector—and the correction of the misattributed quote does not alter the Q10’s course.

The repair of misunderstanding, in contrast, is directed at everyone else. It is designed to protect his record, and is grounded in defend his political accountability. Mr.

Frank, a key congressional figure in the oversight of the financial sector, understands the importance of Wall Street and the need to control its excesses through increased regulation. This part of his record, the oversight of the financial sector, has been a recurring interactional thread in this meeting because that was his job at the time. As such, it is in his interest to provide a corrected account that everyone can understand what he has done.

Later, RBF would state in his response that: (1) the Bush Administration designed the bailout and forced Congress to go along with it, (2) Democrats put in restrictions to force the banks to pay back with interest any bailout money, (3) Democrats put in restrictions on executives' compensation, and (4) RBF wants to use the profits earned from the bailout to help ordinary people pay their mortgages.

Excerpt 6.11 examines a more complex type of contested preface. Like excerpt 6.10, the argument hinges on the attempted use of a quotation to establish informational context. Unlike excerpt 6.10, the audience member interviewer (Q07) engages in repair work with Mr. Frank to establish the informational context as originally attempted.

E6.11 BFTH Q07 preface challenge [00:51:37] - [00:52:11]

```
 9 Q07:  T1 [you say that >you know,<]
10 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
11 Q07:     y-you want us to trust you with health care?
12          (.4) uh::
13 RBF:  T2 [>No I didn’t say that sir.<]
14 Q07:     [y-(.)      (cha           ] hhh uh uh
15          sir. [.hhh
16 RBF:          [>I [didn’t say that<
17 Q07:  T3      [jus >let let< me finish my ques[tion please.
18 RBF:                                          [>b:b:< but
19          qu- [(.)quote me correctly.
20 Q07:         [Let me ask you
21 RBF:     I never said I wanted you to trust me.
22 Q07:     ALright.
23 RBF:     I guarantee you [that.
24 Q07:                     [What, What,
25      Q-> you're [you’re you’re part] of the process are you not?
```

```
26 AUD:            [ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha ]
27 Q07: Q-> are you in washington?>
28          [are you gonna (.2)]
29 RBF:     [I will vote yes.  ]
30 Q07: Q-> gonna <vote for the bill?>
31          I hope,=
32 RBF:     =Probably
33 Q07:     Okay? Alright.
34          So let me let me ↑finish my question.
35          Ehuh a few months ago there was an article in the new york
36          times. Hardly a conservative bastion.(.4) Alright, for uh
37          conservative philosophy, where you were quoted back in
38          2003, saying, that lending practices of Fanny Mae and
39          Freddy Mac were fine, and then ba- in te- 2005 you said the
40          same thing, and now you're here blaming Bush for >the th-<
41          [s- sub prime mortgage meltdown.]
42 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
43                        [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
44 AUD:     |----------11.0----------|
45          [x-x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x|
46
47 Q07: Q-> [HOW CAN WE TRUST YOU WITH HEALTH CARE SIR?]
48 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
```

The audience member interviewer introduces an attributed quotation (lines 9-11) that is contested by RBF in line 13. Q07 contests the interruption (lines 15-17), which draws an account from RBF (lines 19, 21, and 23). The account implies RBF has a right to interrupt when the accuracy of his own words are at stake. Q07 accepts the account (line 22). By contesting the preface, RBF protects against charges of hypocrisy or duplicity, because it prevents Q07 from using his own alleged words against him.

The audience member interviewer, however, does not abandon the line of attack. Although he no longer has at his disposal the attributed quotation, he initiates a question cascade to establish a similar informational context using RBF's own freshly spoken words. The first question, a negative interrogative, establishes a K+ epistemic to assert that RBF is "part of the process." The third question (line 30), which is preemptively answered by RBF in line 29, is designed to establish if RBF will vote for health care reform. By answering that he is going to vote for the bill, RBF implies an affirmative answer to the first two questions. This sequence of questions is used by Q07 to establish through inference what he had originally attempted to establish through attribution.

If Rep. Frank is part of the political process, and if he intends to vote for the bill, then the inference to be drawn is that there has to be some level of trust. The inference can be substantiated by what happens when the question is resumed. In lines 35- 40, Q07 cites a *New York Times* article where RBF is quoted as praising Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. In lines 40-41, Q07 uses RBF's own words from earlier in the meeting to trap him. The presupposition is that RBF supported sub-prime mortgages when they worked, and shirked responsibility to others when they brought down the economy. The question sets up an accusatory type question, a hostile question presupposing that RBF cannot be trusted.

Refusing to Respond: The Accountability of Escalated Answer Refusals.

Answer refusals are not taken lightly. Insofar as a question makes an answer conditionally relevant, and insofar as a respondent can be held normatively accountable for failing to answer, the deliberate refusal of a respondent to answer a question constitutes a serious breach of social interaction (Schegloff, 1968, 1972). In the entire dataset transcribed and analyzed for this study, there is only one instance where a headlining politician refuses to answer a question. This section provides an analysis of that particular exchange to understand the interface of interactional and political accountability.

An answer refusal is often accompanied by an account that justifies it. While town hall meetings are by no means identical to news interviews, analysis by Clayman and Heritage (2002a) shows that accounts for answer refusals typically cite external circumstances to “deflect responsibility for the refusal away from the interview” (p. 264). The assumption is that answer refusals are face threatening, potentially damaging to the IR—for asking a refusable question—and the IE—for refusing to respond. In rare circumstances, an answer refusal may occur without justification. This type of refusal is often interpreted as a hostile action, as it appears to attack the appropriateness of the question and the credibility of the IR.

The sequence analyzed in this section describes another type of hostile answer refusal, which I call an *escalating answer refusal*. At the first step, the respondent cites an external resource to justify the answer refusal. If the questioner holds the respondent accountable for an answer, then the respondent escalates the hostility of their answer refusal by citing internal circumstances—such as the appropriateness of the question or the competence of the questioner—to buttress the initial refusal. If the questioner continues to push, then another escalation will ensure in stronger, more adversarial terms.

This particular exchange is somewhat infamous, and it involves Rep. Frank candidly disposing of an offensive, borderline slanderous, question asked by a representative of the LaRouche movement. The young woman, holding a photoshopped image of President Obama with a Hitler mustache, compared proposed health care reform legislation to the Nazi T4 program that legalized the killing of the infirm and mentally handicapped. Given the length of the excerpt, I will examine it in pieces.

E6.12 BFTH Q17 [01:31:31] - [01:34:15.10]

```
Q17:     The economy is collapsing.
         We [have thirty percent real unemployment,]
??1:        [are you with that (    ) group?[       |
??2:                                        [ yeah  ]
Q17:     (.) Forty eight states cannot balance their budgets,
          and they are cutting programs to the bone.
??3:      >yeah.[ ]you're right.<
AUD:            [X]
```

```
13 Q17:      [Th]is is the context under which the Obama administration
14 AUD:      [X ]
15 Q17:      has said we need health care reform.
16 RBF:      [(.)    ]
17 ??4:      [heh-heh]
18 RBF: 1-> Well let [me tell ya.    ]
19 AUD:               [x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x|
20 ??5:               [yeah:::[       |
21 ??6:                       [yeah:: ]
22 RBF:      [Well let [me tell] ya.
23 ??7:                [yeah:::]
24 ??8:      [yeah::]
25 AUD:      |x-x-x-]
26
27 Q17:      [And I'm, I'm not, (1.0)]
28 AUD:      [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x-x]
29
30 Q17:      [I'm not done.]
31 AUD:      [zzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
32
33 ADW:      [let [her] speak?]
34 AUD:      [zzzz[zzz|zzzzz]
35 Q17:           [uh,]
36           The reason why is because they say we need to::, (.) to::,
37           uh:: limit medicare expenditures. In order to do that
38           In order to reduce the deficit.
39 ??9:      hahaha
40 Q17:      That's the th- origin of this policy.
```

The sequence begins with a contested preface. Q17 begins her question (lines 5-9) with a serious of explicit contextualizing statements to establish the collapsing economic as the context for understanding the Obama administration's push for health care reform (lines 13-15). Beginning at arrow 1 (line 18), RBF attempts to contest the preface. His lexical choice suggests a counterclaim or contradiction. His attempted turn is truncated by a combination of audience contributions and Q17's work to maintain control of the floor.

She resumes her preface in line 36. She asserts that the Obama administration will use health care reform to cut Medicare costs and balance the budget (lines 36-8). This implies that the elderly will suffer the most. Her word choice, "the reason why is" in line 36 and "that's the origin" in line 40 display a K+ epistemic stance. This suggests that she is here to reveal the truth rather than learn about the bill. She reveals the truth in line 41, where the next excerpt begins.

E6.13 BFTH Q17 [01:31:31] - [01:34:15.10]

```
41              This IS the T4 policy, of the Hitler, (.2)
42              uh of a Hitler [policy in nineteen thirty [nine.]
43 AUD:                        [zzzzzzzz]zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzzz]
44 ?10:                        [aw::::::]                [aw:::]
45 AUD:        |----------1.0----------|
46             [bbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb|
47             [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
48             [x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x|
49
50 Q17:        [Where he said certain, (.2)]
51 AUD:        |bbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb|bbb|
52             |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzz|
53             [x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
54
55 Q17:        [certain lives (.6) are not worth living.(.8)]
56 AUD:        [bbbbbbbbbbbbbb[BBBBbbbbbbb[bbbbbb[bbbbbbbbbb|
57             |zzzzzzzzzzzzzz|zzzzzzzzzzz|zzzzzz|zzzzzzzzzz|
58 AUD:                       [SH:::      [SH::: |          |
59 ?11:                                          [shut up   ]
60 Q17:        [Certain people we should not spend the money]
61 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
62
63 Q17:        [to keep them alive.]
64 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
66 Q17:        Which is exactly what Ezekiel Emanuel
67             [has said (.8) It's all gonna come down to money]
68 AUD:        [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

In lines 41-42, she makes an explicit contextualizing statement that compares health care reform with the Nazi program designed to murder the infirm and mentally handicapped. The remainder of the preface implies that President Obama, like Hitler, supports the killing of “certain lives. . .not worth living” (line 55) to save money In line 66-7, she cites renowned bioethicist Ezekiel Emanuel—whose misinterpreted writings contributed to the “death panel” scare (Ambinder, 2009)—to back her line of attack.

Audience member displays of disbelief (line 44) along side collective displays of booing and buzzing suggest a significant amount of audience disaffiliation from and disagreement with the question being asked. Nonetheless, there appear to be some supporters providing sporadic displays of counterdisaffiliative applause at lines 48 and 53.

Within this opening sequence, there appear to be several actions contextualizing an adversarial exchange. First, the contested preface is the product of differences over content and turn-taking. In terms of content, there appears to be competing epistemic stances between Q17 and RBF. Q17 speaks in assertive, propositional statements while holding a photo of the President Obama defaced to resemble Hitler. RBF attempts to step in and correct her. In terms of turn-taking organization, there appears to be competition over the floor. RBF attempts to assert his interactional right to claim the floor to contest the preface, and Q17 puts further the initiative to parry the attempt successfully. Third, Q17 appears to have supporters. We know of at least one other member of the LaRouche Movement at the meeting, as he made a "political stance" earlier in the meeting (see excerpt 5.6). Several other attendees, whether they are members of the movement or not, offer displays of affiliation and encouragement throughout this exchange.

The audience member, having established that the Obama administration will fix the economy by cutting health care for senior citizens, finally asks her question.

E6.14 BFTH Q17 [01:31:31] - [01:34:15.10]

```
Q17: Q-> why do you continue to supp↑ort a [nazi policy,]
RBF:                                        [umpf. .hhhhh]

Q17:     [as Obama has expressly supported [this policy.]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzz[zzzzzzzzzzzz]zzzzzzzzzz|zzzzzzzzzzzz|
                   [bbBBBBBBBBBB]          |            |
RBF:                                       [>let me,<   ]
Q17: Q-> [Why are you supporting it?]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RBF:     Let me, uh::
Q17: Q-> Why are you denying actual [(            )]
AUD:                                [zzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
RBF:     [alright I will,]
AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

```
 95 Q17:     [a real solution.]
 96 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

Q17 presents a question cascade consisting of three accountability/accusatory type questions. Each question displays a [K+] stance accusing health care reform advocates of Nazism. The first question (lines 80-81) presupposes that (1) RBF already supports health care reform, (2) that health care reform is a Nazi policy, and implies (3) that RBF is a Nazi for supporting President Obama. Question two (line 86) sharpens the account-seeking action agenda of question one. Question 3 (line 90) asserts that RBF is denying something and seeks an account. Although the transcription of the question is obscured by the appearance of audience buzzing (line 91), its placement in this particular sequence of hostile questions, coupled with the TCU in line 90, suggests that the question asserts RBF's willingness to ignore the "truth" behind health care reform.

Excerpt 6.15 presents RBF's first refusal to answer.

E6.15 BFTH Q17 [01:31:31] - [01:34:15.10]

```
 97 RBF:     When you ask me that question I am going to revert
 98          to my ethnic heritage,
 99 AUD:     [X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X]
100 RBF:     [and answer your question with] a question=
101 Q17:     =Hitler didn't start with the Jews.
102 RBF: R-> On what planet do you spend most of [your time?     ]
103 AUD:                                          [hahahahaha[haha]
104                                                          [xxxx]
105 AUD:     |----------10.0----------|
106          |XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX|
107          |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
108
109 Q17:     [Answer the question]
110 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
111          [x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
112
113 AUD:     |----------2.0----------|
114          |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
115
116 Q17:     [answer the question.]
117 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
118
119 AUD:     |----------2.0----------|
120          |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
121
```

```
122 RBF:     [You want me to answer the question?]
123 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
124
125 Q17:     [Yeah I do.]
126 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzz]
```

RBF begins his response in lines 97-98, where he makes reference to his ethnic identity. This move serves to foreground his personal identity, thereby putting his professional role to the background to handle the exchange on an interpersonal footing. At line 100, he projects that a non-answer response is forthcoming. At this point, RBF has disaligned from the preface organization and action agenda of the question. He presents, in lines 97-98, his “ethnic heritage” as an externally sourced justification for his forthcoming non-answer response.

His personal identity is externally sourced to the extent that it has not been procedurally relevant and consequential up to this point in the meeting. The counterclaim issued by Q17 in line 101, though dubious, indicates that Mr. Frank’s Jewish ethnicity has little relevance to her question.

Her counterclaim presupposes that Mr. Frank will offer a Jewish perspective on the Holocaust. Instead, his non-answer response (line 102) is a bald on record face attack implicating that the questioner is out of touch with reality. In this response, RBF has called the sanity of the woman into question. A display of affiliative laughter (line 103) and applause (lines 104, 106, and 111) suggests that audience members agree with, or at least sanction the appropriateness of, the non-answer response and its content.

Nevertheless, Q17 holds Mr. Frank accountable for an answer response. At lines 109 and 116, Q17 invokes her interactional right as interviewer to a response that contains an answer. At 122, RBF agrees to produce an answer. Excerpt 6.16 picks up a few lines after this point.

E6.16 BFTH Q17 [01:31:31] - [01:34:15.10]

```
127 RBF:     >Yes You< <stand there> with the picture of the
128          president defaced to look like Hitler,
129          [.hhh  and compare:: the:: (1.0)]
130 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
131 RBF:     effort to increase health care to the Nazis.
132 Q17:     (>you're in denial<)
133 RBF:     [My answer to you as I said before,]
134 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
135
136 RBF:     [it is a tribute to the first amendment that this]
137 AUD:     [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
138
139 RBF:     [kind of vile contemptible nonsense is so]
140 AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
141 Q10?:    [what about (         )]
142
143 RBF:     [freely propagated.]
144 AUD:     |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
145          [x-x-x-x-x-x-x-xxxx]
146
147 AUD:     |----------4.0----------|
148          |xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx|
149          |zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz|
150          [ ((Q17 and RBF argue)) ]
151
152 RBF:     [↑MA::AM, TRYING TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOU,]
153 AUD:     [xxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
154
155 RBF:     [WOULD BE LIKE TRYING TO ARGUE with a dining room table.]
156 AUD:     [x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x]
157
158 RBF:      I have [no interest in doing it.]
159 AUD:             |hahahahahahahahahahahaha|
160                  [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]
```

While the first response attack the credibility and competence of the speaker, the second response builds on this attack (lines 127-128) to reject the informational context (lines 129-131) supplied by the preface and presupposed by the question. In lines 133-143, RBF criticizes the appropriateness and rationality of the question by referencing what he had said earlier in the meeting to another member of the LaRouche movement.

Although he uses harsh language (line 139), his criticism operates within the boundaries of politeness. Like his implicated assessment of Q17 (line 102), he begins his criticism of the question (line 136) indirectly by means of praising the political right to propagate “this. . .contemptible nonsense” rather than “your. . .contemptible nonsense.” His criticism presumes that political speech is not always intelligent or appropriate, implicating that her question is neither intelligent nor appropriate.

At this point, RBF has offered two non-answer responses criticizing the credibility, competence, appropriateness, and rationality of the speaker. At no point has he engaged the topic or action agenda question. He has rejected the line of questioning in its entirety. Nevertheless, Q17 holds the floor and continues to argue with RBF. She counters with an assessment (line 132) that (1) ascribes to RBF’s talk a non-answer response and (2) infers from it his continued denial of the “truth.”

The sequence moves towards its conclusion starting at line 147. At some point, likely after line 141, Q17’s microphone had been turned off. Although that in itself is not unusual in this meeting, as it has happened before, it has become apparent that RBF is not going to provide a response that satisfies Q17. Nonetheless, Q17 and RBF continue to argue.

Due to the intensity of audience applause and buzzing, it is not exactly clear what is being said. Regardless, it is clear that RBF is finished talking with her. In lines 152-158, RBF moves to end their interaction with a series of statements just bearing traces of politeness. At line 152, he attacks her negative face needs by terminating an interaction she wants to continue. At lines 155 and 158, he justifies the termination by attacking her positive face. He compares talking to her with talking to a dining room table, using an analogy to imply that such a conversation would be a waste of time.

Even in the face of this display of interactional and epistemic obstinacy, Mr. Frank manages handle the situation by refusing to provide an answer. As she continued to pursue an account, his refusals become more pointed and personal. Nonetheless, his escalating responses maintained a frustrated sense of decorum and politeness. While he attacked her competence, appropriateness, and sanity, the harshest judgments were conveyed through implicature and analogy.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

While none of the audience member interviewers in this dataset identified themselves as trained professional interviewers, it would be a mistake to assume their naivety in this activity. While many questioners lacked the nuance, tact, and neutralism of the professional journalist, many of their questions hit the mark. Many of these questions, adversarial or not, compelled politicians to explain how policies would affect the livelihood of the interviewer and people like them. The accountability/accusatory questions presuppose the contingency of politics, forcing politicians to provide a prescient account of an uncertain future.

While politicians often have the experience and skill to answer adversarial questioning, complex resistance techniques often fail to impress an audience of individuals with few obligations to journalistic standards or little appreciation for technically plausible answers. If their answer does not hold up to scrutiny, future questioners may hold them to account for their evasions. This accounting technique, which I have called tag-team-questioning, is used to pursue an inadequate response over the course of two or more different audience member turns.

Even in moments where audience member interviewers pushed and exceeded the limits of appropriate behavior, politicians responded within the framework of politeness. Political speech, as vulgar and contemptible as it may be, is protected speech. As Mr.

Frank put it in response to a statement made (see excerpt 6.16) by a member of the LaRouche Movement, “it’s an (example) of the strength of the first amendment they have a perfect right to be utterly contemptible.”

This chapter started by noting that the interactional accountability inherent within question and answer exchanges provides a basis through which public figures can be held publically accountable. From this starting point, analysis has reconstructed the relevance of *political accountability* within the context of town hall meeting question and answer sessions. Because an orientation to political accountability is an instantiation of constituent relations, politicians must be prepared to defend the policies they propose to an increasingly skeptical public.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

This study has proposed that the encounters colloquially referred to as "town hall meetings" are a type of political institution of representative democracy. They are distinct from prototypical New England Town Meetings, and other types of consultative meetings, insofar as participants orient to the pursuit of *constituent relations*. The politics of town hall meetings are not so much about legislation or fact finding as they are about managing matters of *authorization* and *accountability*. These two concepts are at the heart of political representation (Dahl, 2006; Pitkin, 1967; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). Although representatives are authorized through popular elections to conduct the business of government, they remain accountable to their constituents for their use of power in office (Manin, 1997). Town hall meetings present an opportunity for constituents to hold their elected representatives accountable in a face-to-face setting.

The study has found that an orientation to the pursuit of constituent relations provides a source of overall structural organization for the town hall meetings analyzed in this dataset. It provides an external source of supra-sequential coherence, progressivity, projectability, and productivity giving shape to a local context of social interaction.

Detailed analysis of naturally occurring encounters between elected representatives and constituents reveals orientation to three types of accountability in their pursuit of constituent relations: Interactional accountability, political accountability, and public accountability. I will briefly summarize the three types here and will offer further developed explanations of each over the course of this chapter.

1. Interactional accountability is derived from the self-organization of bodies into a framework ensuring that the meeting will progress through its various structures and components to its completion. This framework is constructed and maintained by a set of procedures and constraints that I have glossed as *gatekeeping*, a term that is derived from Clayman's (2006) analysis of political events featuring audience participation.
2. Political accountability is derived from the interaction of elected representatives and constituents about some topic of discussion held in common. An orientation to political accountability minimally *presupposes* that elected representatives should consider how the policy, if enacted or not, would affect the future lives of their constituents.
3. The public accountability of town hall meetings stems from the observable and reportable fact that town hall meetings are open to anyone and everyone who takes the time to attend them, participate in them, or even pay attention to them. Public accountability is constituted through the interactional accomplishment of *accountable appearance*.

These three types of accountability are numbered with respect to "orders of granularity" (Schegloff, 1998, p. 413) from smallest to largest. As the social interaction of elected representatives and constituents over some political matter gives shape to a town hall meetings as public event, so does the accountable appearance of participants and attendees into this public sphere provide necessary resources for social interaction to occur and recur. All three types of accountability shape, and are shaped by, *incipient expectations* (see Chapter 3) of the meeting to be fulfilled or not.

Although I will review each type of accountability separately, all three make up an operation that culminates in bringing the structure and components of the typical town hall meeting into being. When one type of accountability is brought into the foreground for analysis, both lay and professional, the others remain in operation in the background. They function together as one, as a gestalt, providing a sense of what it means to participate in the town hall meeting being built at that place and time.

Interactional Accountability and the Constitutive Force of Gatekeeping

This study has found that there is “order at all points” (Sacks, 1984, pp. 22-23) in town hall meetings, even when there appears to be no order at all. This finding cuts across commentators of the popular and academic press who bemoan the absence of a particular *type* of order in these meetings. No matter the quantity or quality of attendees—including audience members and elected officials— order stems from the self-organization of bodies in a shared time and at a shared place.

The ordering, disordering, and reordering of town hall meetings is achieved through an orientation to a constellation of interactional constraints that I have glossed as gatekeeping. Gatekeeping provides an incarnation of progressivity, projectivity, and productivity as participants co-construct the components of the meeting. As I argued in Chapter 3, the rigidity of gatekeeping constraints are shaped by incipient expectations of attendance and adversarialness.

Setting the constraints of interactional accountability: Gatekeeping procedures and processes. This study's use of the term gatekeeping is derived from Clayman's (2006) analysis of political events featuring audience participation. He used the term to disabuse the myth that such events provide for an accurate measurement of public opinion.

> A sequence of gatekeeping processes determine which members of the public come to participate actively in such programs, and these have the potential to introduce nonrandom factors into the selection process. The first level of selection bears on the composition of the audience—only some members of the public actually listen to or watch such programs, and even fewer attend the live event to become part of the studio audience. Among audience members, only some nominate themselves to make a contribution (e,g., by calling in or, in the case of the studio audience, by raising their hands). Finally, among those who bid to contribute, only some are chosen by call screeners or the host. (Clayman, 2006, p. 256)

While the gatekeeping process described by Clayman is an orderly procedure set up by officials to select ratified speakers from an in-studio audience, the procedure is neither accurate nor precise enough to measure public opinion.

This current study has not concerned itself with the scientific measurement of public opinion or the production of a representative sample that such would require. In any case, Clayman's insight—that the organization of audience participation is constituted through " sequence of gatekeeping processes—is worth preserving and exploring. In fact, the analysis conduced in this study describes in detail that it is through an orientation to gatekeeping that the social structure of town hall meetings is co-constructed.

The process of gatekeeping is first and foremost a speech-exchange system, a participant generated procedure for organizing bodies through the distribution of turns-at-talk. The quantity and quality of bodies to be organized depends on a variety of external forces. This study has focused on the forces associated with constituent relations, though there are undoubtedly other forces that will vary from person to person, place to place, and time to time.

The findings of this study indicate that gatekeeping is instantiated through an orientation to at least four key constraints.

1. Public, physical and material constraints.
    1.1. A town hall meeting is, prima facie, a public event with degrees of publicness constituted through the accountable appearance of participants and attendees. The participation of the news media provides an additional, though neither necessary nor sufficient, degree of publicness.
    1.2. Physical and material constraints determine the potential quantity of participants and attendees. A partial list of physical and material constraints includes: The size, type, and location of the venue, ADA accessibility, publicity and advertisement, weather, entry fees, transportation access, scheduled date and time, security concerns.
2. Time constraints: Town hall meetings have a scheduled start time and an expected finish time. Time constraints set limits on how many people get to participate and the manner of their participation.

3. Turn scarcity constraints: Turns-at-talk are a valuable resource, so audience members will attempt to get the most out of their turn within the social structure of that subpart of the activity.
    3.1. Corollary: Participants will employ techniques and tactics to cut across constraints to increase their access to turns-at-talk.
4. Official-imposed constraints: Officials have priority access to the floor to start and conclude the meeting, make statements and stories, answer questions, select next speakers, repair turn-taking violations and errors, dismiss or eject troublemakers, and generally maintain order.
    4.1. Corollary: Audience members will help officials maintain order in alignment with constraints (2) and (3). E.g., the social action of *shushing* (see Chapter 4, excerpts 4.3 and 4.4).
    4.2. Corollary: There is a hierarchy of officials depending on the formality of the meeting. In formal meetings, a chairperson or moderator is invested with the power to maintain order. In less formal meetings, unless otherwise explicitly organized, the headlining elected representative—by virtue of the power endowed by his or her political office—will be in charge of the meeting.

These constraints are ordered so that lower level constraints place restrictions on the development of higher-level constraints. It is important to note that constraints are the product and project of social interaction, so the instantiation of constraints will vary across meetings and even within them. Table 7.1 provides a summary of gatekeeping constraints.

Table 7.1 Gatekeeping constraints

1	Public, physical and material constraints
2	Time constraints
3	Turn Scarcity constraints
4	Official-imposed constraints

The pursuit of interactional accountability within town hall meeting social structures. Each level of gatekeeping sets limits on the form of participation. This is not meant to imply that a higher level of participation is more genuine or meaningful than a lower level of participation. It does suggest that participants pursue interactional accountability through talk and action shaped by gatekeeping constraints, participation levels, and social structures. Table 7.2 provides a summary of town hall meeting subparts with corresponding social structures and ratified forms of audience participation.

Table 7.2 Town hall meeting subparts, social structures, and ratified audience member participant activities

Subpart	Social structure	Ratified audience member participant activity
Opening business	Public address	Collective displays
Opening statement	Public address	Collective displays
Question and answer session	Question and answer with audience participation	Asking questions Collective displays

To review, town hall meetings consist of three subparts. In (1) opening business, participants orient to a participation framework, develop a topic structure, and institute gatekeeping procedures to establish how the meeting can be expected to progress. In (2) the opening statement, officials present a packaging of facts, opinions, and events giving shape to their issue-positions on relevant political topics. In (3) the question and answer session, ratified audience members present questions to be answered by headlining politicians or invited guests.

During opening business and the opening statement, audience members hold elected officials accountable through (1) collective displays of affiliation and disaffiliation, (2) non-ratified individual audience member activities such as heckling, and (3) non-ratified non-participant activities such as protesting. We also frequently find (4) occurrences of audience sideplay, which consist of conversations and arguments that audience members have with one another about the current speaker's talk. Different audience factions sometimes compete over a projected response space through collective displays of heightened intensity and duration. I call these (5) competitive displays, and they provide evidence of contentious issue positions held among different audience factions (see Chapter 4, excerpt 4.2).

During the question and answer session, elected officials are expected to provide responses that answer the questions presented to them. If a response is not recognized as adequate, then ratified audience members will maintain their incumbency through the response to follow-up. When a follow-up is not possible, audience members can even pursue the matter across several speakers through the device of tag-team questioning (see Chapter 6 excerpts 6.7-6.9).

Finally, many of the audience member response options available in the opening statement are also available during the question and answer session. They applaud, boo, buzz, laugh at, and heckle the contributions of officials and ratified audience member questioners.

This study undermines the proposition that questioning is the only genuine and meaningful form of audience participation through which accountability should be pursued. A ratified audience member questioner, as an individual, displays disaffiliation through adversarial questioning. Audience members, as a collective, display disaffiliation through booing and heckling. While the former may be more preferred than the latter in the interactional sense (see Chapter 2 on preference organization), both types of turn design accomplish the same action through different action formations. All participants, from elected representatives to ordinary citizens, are bound together in a web of interactional accountability when they take part in town hall meetings.

Interactional accountability and progressivity: Understanding the orderliness of "anarchy." Interactional accountability is derived from an onus to progress through the structures and components of the meeting. Many of the disciplinary actions found in this dataset are grounded in an obligation to (a) reach the question and answer session, and (b) maximize the number of audience members who get to ask a question. Not surprisingly, we often find that audience members align with officials to keep the meeting on track by shushing disorderly contributions and calling on ratified speakers to finish their questions and responses in a timely manner (See Chapter 5, excerpts 5.13-5.16).

The analysis of progressivity—lay and professional—foregrounds a tension derived from the scarcity of available turns. As the number of disruptions and delays increase, the number of turns available for audience members to ask questions decreases. However, the fact remains that most audience members who want to ask a question will not get the turn to ask it. Therefore, they will seek other ways to participate. These other ways, such as through intense collective displays or heckling, may very well slow down or qualify the progressivity of the meeting thereby decreasing the available number of turns for questions.

Commentators often cite this tension to illustrate the *anarchy* of town hall meetings. There are instances where meetings fall apart, and where order breaks down, because participants depart from normative frameworks instantiated in context. In rare instances, law enforcement can become involved. Despite the belief that what has gone wrong will go wrong, this study cites the tension that is derived from the scarcity of turns to illustrate the *orderliness* of town hall meetings.

Finding the orderliness of town hall meetings does not express or imply any sense of idealism or acceptance of rabble rousing. Despite the interruptions and disagreements, the hitches and sidetracks, these meetings progress due in part to an active alignment to what is happening at that moment in that meeting. Such depends on a degree of reflexivity, and a minimum of cooperation, to take account of what needs to happen next—even if that next action involves calling on the police to restore order. Without this sense of progressivity, there would be no meeting for commentators to criticize.

Political accountability: Managing Contingency-in-Interaction

This study has examined how particular types of political agency are constituted, enabled, and constrained in town hall meetings with respect to structures of public and interactional accountability. At the extent to which a town hall meeting is open to anyone who cares to attend, and at the extent to which social interaction is organized through a series of gatekeeping procedures, participants and attendees will find ways to hold their elected representatives politically accountable.

Contingency and the presupposition of political accountability. In the face of an uncertain future, people participate in the political process to enact their “capacity for agency and deliberation in situations of genuine collective or social choice” (Hay, 2007, p. 66). At the extent to which participants orient to the work of constituent relations—and there is no guarantee that all will do so—their interaction presupposes that politicians should consider how the relevant policy, if enacted or not, would affect the lives of their constituents. This presupposition is grounded in the contingency of politics, positioning elected representatives to account for how policies will address the problems of the present looking forward to the future.

This presupposition operates in varying degrees of embeddedness and hostility. When audience members ask questions with personalized prefaces, or accuse politicians of failing to consider the consequences of their proposal, political accountability is brought into the foreground (see, for example, Chapter 6). Collective audience displays imply an orientation to political accountability as well. When audience members boo a stated position, for example, they display as a collective their disaffiliation from the speaker or disagreement with that position.

Finally, political accountability is derived from an orientation to politically informed topics. Participants and attendees can pursue any topic they deem relevant; nonetheless, there is often a primary topic of talk shared at these meetings. I have called the primary topic of topic the *headlining topic*, and it is the subject of talk that is expected to organize the topic structure of the meeting. It is a topic is popular or controversial, then it will likely increase attendance. If the headlining politician is expected to take an issue position on this topic, and if factions of the audience hold contrasting issue positions, then that establishes expectations of an adversarial meeting.

The composition of participant roles and political identities. Up to this point, this study has focused on a reconstruction of institutionally relevant participant roles, taking the political dimensions of these roles in passing. There are two generic political identities—and numerous variations thereof—to which town hall meeting participants organize their attendance and participation. These two identities are observable and reportable as social facts, giving shape to and being shaped by the town hall meeting context at hand. These two generic roles are (1) headlining politicians and (2) constituents.

The headlining politician is the elected representative who is known to be sponsoring, organizing, or participating in the meeting. He or she has a record and reputation, all of which has an effect on the quantity and quality of participation. A headlining politician draws heat when his or her record, reputation, or issue position clashes with factions of audience members. Rep. Frank, for example, was often accused of representing the interests of Wall Street over the interests of Main Street. As a result, he spent a considerable amount of time defending his record on financial legislation (see Chapter 4, excerpts 4.5-4.9.

A constituent is a member of a constituency, and a constituency consists of a group of people who are eligible to vote for their representatives in an election. The *de jure* constituency of a U.S. Representative consists of the eligible voters who reside within a legally defined district (Rehfeld, 2005). There are also several forms of *de facto* constituencies. A surrogate constituency, for example, consists of people who rely on their adopted representative to pursue their interests (Mansbridge, 2003). It is also important to note that a constituency consists of eligible voters who voted for the losing candidates, eligible voters who did not vote, children, convicted felons, and the undocumented.

Many audience member questioners include their hometown in their question prefaces, which has the effect of establishing constituency status. When audience member questioners are not members of the headlining representative’s constituency, they account for that in their talk. Although officials may install next-speaker selection procedures to prioritize the selection of constituents over non-constituents, there is no instance in this dataset of any person being turned away for residing outside of the headlining representative’s legally defined constituency.

The findings of this study show that constituent status in town hall meetings is not a static identity but an interactional accomplishment. Participants take on the role of constituent when they orient their talk and action to some matter of political accountability *as constituents*, and that matter changes from person to person and meeting to meeting.

Public Accountability and the Accountability of Appearance

The sense of public/private employed in this study—including related concepts such as public opinion, public sphere, and publicity—has been used in a descriptive sense rather than the normative sense. This study has been designed to reconstruct how town hall meetings, as a particular instantiation of a public sphere, function as accountable social facts.

A town hall meeting is a public event to the extent to which it is open to all (Habermas, 1991). All town hall meetings have a degree of publicness, and that degree of publicness is instantiated through forms of interactional and political accountability. The participation of the news media provides an additional, though neither necessary nor sufficient, degree of publicness. If an assemblage of elected officials and audience members occurs in private, then it is something other than a town hall meeting even if it shares similar structures and components.

The public accountability of town hall meetings stems from the observable and reportable fact that town hall meetings are open to anyone and everyone who bothers attending them, participating in them, or even paying attention to them. Public accountability is constituted through the interactional accomplishment of *accountable appearance*. All participants, from audience members and elected representatives to support staff and security personnel, are publicly accountable at the extent to which their actions are recognized as public actions to assembled and overhearing audiences. Accountable appearance, and the particular instantiation of the public sphere it brings into being at that point and place in time, is a contingent accomplishment that conforms to, or departs from, a common sense pattern of action called doing public appearance.

There are two types of public accountability that can be associated with town hall meetings. Each type corresponds respectively with smaller to larger orders of granularity. Each type gives shape to, and is shaped by, the other.

Type 1 describes forms of public accountability pursued *within* town hall meetings. Attendees and participants pursue this type within, through, and sometimes in spite of the structure and components of town hall meetings. Type 2 describes forms of public accountability pursued *outside* of town hall meetings about town hall meetings, including the use of type 1 as a discourse resource within personal, public, and technical spheres of argument (Goodnight, 1982). The products of type 2 public accountability can be used as resources within forthcoming town hall meetings, often in the form of incipient expectations, and the process recurs.

This study has put the analysis of Type 1 public accountability into the foreground. Methodologically, conversation analysis "pays attention to what is internal to the *event* (including the context, close at hand or far away). . .This means that CA (like [ethnomethodology]) is a 'local' analysis in which the local can extend enormous distances (Packer, 2011, p. 263). The description of how participants and attendees pursue constituent relations within these meetings is a description of how a part of the public sphere is instantiated in that instance.

Most people experience town hall meetings as members of the overhearing audience. They may not participate in town hall meetings. They may not even watch them if they are broadcast, but they may read about them, watch news reports about them, or talk about them with their acquaintances. Pundits and commentators, likewise, will use these meetings as a resource for their own narratives and agendas. The existence of type 2 forms of public accountability acknowledges the social fact that town hall meeting talk-in-interaction has the potential to travel long distances.

The Accountable Limits of Town Hall Meeting Politics

Town hall meetings provide an opportunity for constituents to meet their elected representatives and learn about the business of government from the person who is authorized to conduct it. For better and for worse, town hall meetings are a product of representative democracy and they operate within that basic framework. Politics is more partisan than ever, and the consequences wrought by economic calamity and ideological extremisms have contributed to a heightened sense of democratic entropy. Given James Madison's (1787) well-known admonitions about the dangers of democracy run amuck, it may be worth our while to examine how town hall meetings happen to function at all.

Because town hall meetings give attendees and participants more or less direct access to their representatives in government, they are tailor made for activist activity. As this study has shown, orderliness is the product and project of social interaction. Activism can be accomplished within structures of interactional accountability, and it can be accomplished in spite of these constraints. In a very real sense, the politicians who attend town hall meetings put themselves into an isolated position. They must rely on their wits and experience to handle potentially explosive situations without appearing spineless or dictatorial.

While the issue of astroturfed activism did not become procedurally relevant in the meetings included in this dataset, the issue of authenticity is one that is typically raised against town hall meetings. Even the name, town hall meeting, evokes an aura (Benjamin, 1968) of authentic political participation different than what is encountered in them.

Although some audience member participation were likely primed by widely distributed talking points developed by well-funded activist organizations, it is just as likely that the sort of person who would take the time to find talking points would also take the time to write their own question. Coordinated talking points are used to build a national narrative of opposition, but even the success of that strategy relies on the competencies of participants willing to negotiate the social structure of *that* meeting and ask *this* question.

Because town hall meetings are a powerful resource for activism, they are a powerful resource for propaganda. The accountable appearance of participants gives politicians and pundits fuel for their agendas and narratives. As National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Pete Sessions of Texas put it at the time, “The days of you having a town hall meeting where maybe 15 or 20 of your friends show up — they’re over. You’ve now got real people who are showing up—and that’s going to be a factor” (Isenstadt, 2009). His comment is a classic example of constitutive rhetoric (Charland, 1987), as it articulates an narrative of “The People” (McGee, 1975) designed to build conservative opposition to health care reform.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that distortions inherent to the public sphere will likely shape public participation and perceptions. Boundaries between the public and private sphere have historically served to privilege the participation of white economically privileged heterosexual men, if not their associated forms of rationality (Benhabib, 1993; Fraser, 1992; Griffin, 1996; Jamieson, 1990; Pitkin, 1981; Warner, 2005). For overhearing audiences, distortions include issues of mass media agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the dangers of political homophily (Colleoni, Rozza, & Arvidsson, 2014) in the production of social media echo chambers (Sunstein, 2009), and the ongoing refuedalization (Habermas, 2009) of the public sphere.

There is no evidence in this dataset to suggest that these distortions were in any way challenged. The only claim made by this study is that town hall meetings are where participants and attendees accountably appear through their pursuit of constituent relations-in-interaction. This study makes no proposition, express or implicit, that the talk analyzed here is either genuine or authentic. This study makes no promise, express or implicit, for an authentic form of politics. There are no saviors. There are no heroes.

But there is work to be done. “Conversation does not *presume* an equalitarian society,” Schegloff (1999b) reminds us, “it *allows* for one” (p. 564). This study shows that, despite the odds, the pursuit of accountability—in all of its forms for better and for worse— can be found in places where we expect it is not.

Study Limitations and Ideas for Future Research

Prioritizing the analysis of social structure over political discourse. As noted by Sarangi (2000), the analysis of an activity type goes hand in hand with the analysis of its corresponding discourse type. Such analysis would describe the structures, constraints, and language use within the context of that activity. This study was designed to produce a description of a town hall meeting activity, putting the analysis of political discourse aside for now.

The decision was made with good reason. The dearth of unmotivated research on town hall meetings indicated a need to analyze their overall structural organization. We now know that town hall meetings are given supra-sequential coherence by the pursuit of constituent relations. This general conclusion is the product of a careful analysis of participant’s intuitive pursuit of interactional accountability, political accountability, and public accountability.

That being said, there are opportunities to foreground and analyze the political discourse taking shape in town hall meetings. Political discourse operates in context through forms of practical argumentation providing agents with reasons for action

(Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). In this dataset, political discourse is mostly oriented to the proposition that the United States Federal Government should enact health care reform. A reconstruction of political discourse in this dataset would examine arguments presented in support of, or in opposition to, this proposition.

Although this study has focused on the sequence organization of argumentation rather than the content or validity of the arguments organized, I have pointed out in passing several points of relevant political discourse. Health care reform critics often derive their oppositional arguments from discourses that value negative liberty. Critics use these arguments to share an imagined world made worse by health care reform. A more concerted reconstruction of political discourse would provide insight into the type of resources used by participants to co-construct political accountability.

An incomplete account of public accountability: Towards an understanding of accountable appearance. Out of the three types of accountability analyzed in this study, public accountability was given the least attention. As I have already explained, such was the result of a purposeful choice to foreground the analysis of smaller units of interaction produce in context an instantiation of the public sphere. If a public sphere is like a theatre of political participation, as suggested by Fraser (1992), then this study has examined how the structure of such displays are brought into being. In this regard, this study agrees with Warner (2005) that notions of public/private complex notions are rooted in embodiment and intuition with little regard to conceptual debates.

As such, this study has approached the public sphere as a social fact in the ethnomethodological sense. The public sphere, as it is instantiated through town hall meeting talk-in-interaction, is observable, reportable, contextually grounded and constituted through practical forms of activity. There are practical circumstances where some person, or persons, employs the *know-how to recognize and produce* experiences that appear detectably and describably public. This reflexivity points to, or documents, an pattern of thought and action providing for the production and recognition of something being public. The public, as a social fact, and all of its variations, both practical and theoretical, is accomplished through the documentable activity of *accountable appearance*.

Evidence of accountable appearance can be found in departures from, and regressions back to, what is normally public. As Olson and Goodnight (1994) remind us, debates about the appropriateness of controversial social practices depend on the appearance of such practices into the public sphere. The most radical of departures occur when “beings of no ac/count” (Rancière, 1999, p. 24), often noticed but not noticed within a common perceptual field, accountably appear in public despite prevailing normativity. Social and political change occurs when the accountable appearance of unaccountable beings changes our sense of public accountability (Rancière, 2004).

Accountable appearance helps to understand why public participation can be empowering and humiliating, inspiring and depressing. The public as such is thoroughly indexical, created moment by moment, from place to place, from participant to participant, from time to time. Yet, the public as such has recurring qualities and characteristics giving shape to it from context to context.

Future research in the LSI tradition. This study has derived its findings from a relatively small database. This does not necessarily spell doom for a study that utilizes CA methodology. As Schegloff (1993) has noted, one is a number. And one instance, analyzed for its import to those who produced it, provides a sufficient case for detailed analysis.

It has been the purpose of this study to make observations of town hall meeting talk-in-interaction, build collections from those observations, and finally describe the overall structural organization of town hall meetings. Such is line with emic, inductive, and ethnomethodological approaches such as CA.

The goal from this point forward is to make more observations and build better collections by transcribing and analyzing more meetings. I have two projects in mind. One would consist of case study of town hall meetings linked to the health care reform legislation of 2008. Such a project would be modeled after Tracy's (2010) work on Ordinary Democracy in school board meetings.

It is my belief that conversation analysis can contribute to the study of ordinary democratic talk because CA can be used to reconstruct how sites of ordinary democracy are constituted as such. Such an approach would differ from those that foreground the analysis of discourse. As noted by Packer (2011), discourse analysis often presupposes an ontological distinction between subject and object, appearance and reality, local and global, micro and macro, private and public. These gaps are bridged by discourse representations that distort reality, requiring an interpretation to tell the audience what reality really is (Hook, 2001).

Conversation analysis, in contrast, avoids this dualism by analyzing interaction at the level of situated practice. According to Packer (2011), conversation analytic approaches assume that:

> "the order that people recognize as social structure and societal institutions is an ongoing product of their practical activity. . .For CA, discourse constitutes objects (and subjects) not by providing a representation of them that is somehow compelling but. . .as a form of practical activity that establishes a space in which objects and subjects become visible, as *effects* of discourse" (p. 261).

These insights provide the basis for a future study. It is my belief that this dissertation, through its careful analysis of town hall meeting social structures, can form the basis for a grounded practical theory of town hall meeting activism. The key concept is accountable appearance, the constitutive norm of public accountability. Further work can explore how conformity to this norm, and departures from it, has ties to the aesthetics of (un)democratic protest. Such a study would build on the findings reported in this dissertation.

The second study would consider a much broader dataset of a variety of town hall meetings that have occurred over the years. Such a project would be modeled after Clayman and Heritage's work on news interviews, and would require hundreds if not thousands of hours of data to be analyzed. The goal of this project would be a definitive account of town hall meetings using CA methodology.

Such a study could also include comparisons of how politicians manage interviews with professional versus lay interviewees. According to (Clayman, 2006), such research would consider:

> "How do audience members - most of whom are laypersons with no particular expertise in broadcasting or politics - compare to journalists or other media professionals in their conduct toward public figures? Comparative research along these lines remains underdeveloped, and what such research might yield is by no means obvious" (p. 257)

For example, I've noticed that Rep. Barney Frank manages questions from audience members in ways that are similar to how he manages questions from professional journalists. That is, assertively and candidly. Likewise, the notion of deference—which suggests that lay interviewers would defer to the experience and power of politicians—did not seem procedurally relevant in the dataset of this dissertation.

Another CA topic worthy of further investigation is the organization of public address sequences. Prior research, most of which was published in the 80's and early 90's, observed adjacency pairing as the primary form of sequence organization. If public address is a form of "information delivery," then there should be evidence or epistemics as a source of sequence organization, and sequential organization, of public address.

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van Eemeren, F. H., & Garssen, B. (2009). In varietate concordia--united in diversity: European parliamentary debate as an argumentative activity type. In J. Ritola (Ed.), *Argument cultures: proceedings of OSSA '09*. (pp. 1-15). Windsor, ON: Ontario Society for the study of Argumentation.

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Zimmerman, J. F. (1999). *The New England town meeting: Democracy in action*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

VITA

VITA

EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

Higher Education

Ph.D in Communication, Purdue University, August 2016
Major Professor: Felicia Roberts
Committee Members: Josh Boyd, Thomas J. Rickert , and Josh Sccaco

M.A. in Speech Communication, Wake Forest University, May 2006
Major Professor: Margret Zulick
Committee Members: Allan D. Louden, and Michelle Gillespi

B.A. in History (*cum laude)*, University of Louisville, May 2004

Professional and Academic Positions

Instructor, Department of Languages, Cultures, and Communication, Stephen F. Austin State University, 2013-Present.

Doctoral Candidate, Brian Lamb School of Communication, Purdue University, 2013-2016.

Graduate Lecturer, Brian Lamb School of Communication, Purdue University, 2011-2013.

Teaching Assistant, Brian Lamb of Communication, Purdue University, 2010-2011.

Ross Fellow, Purdue University Graduate School, Purdue University, 2009-2010.

Assistant Director of Debate, School of Communication Studies, James Madison University, 2008-2009.

Lecturer of Communication Studies, School of Communication Studies, James Madison University, 2006-2009.

Teaching Assistant, Department of Communication, Wake Forest University, 2005-2006.

Assistant Debate Coach, Department of Communication, Wake Forest University, 2004-2006.

SCHOLARSHIP

Publications and Book Chapters

Clair, R.P., Wilhoit, E., Green, R.J., Palmer, C., Russell, B.T., & Swope, S.A. (In-press). Occlusion, confusion and collusion in the conversion narrative *Religion exemplified in the life of poor Sarah. Journal of Communication and Religion.*

Mitra, R., M. J. Dutta, and R.J. Green (2013). Corporate Reputation in Emerging markets. *Handbook of Communication and Corporate Reputation*. C. Carroll, Wiley-Blackwell.

Ivic, R. K. and R. J. Green (2012). "Developing Charismatic Delivery in a Speaking Activity: Modeling the Presentation Style of Steve Jobs." *Communication Teacher*.

Conference Activities

Green, R.J. (2016). "Political accountability and the transformation of social structures: Analyzing the qualification of sequence progressivity in town hall meeting opening statements. Competitively submitted paper, Language and Social Interaction Division. National Communication Association. Philadelphia, PA.

Green, R.J. (2016). Towards an analysis of the overall structural organization of town hall meetings: Topic talk in the case of closing openings. Competitively submitted paper, Language and Social Interaction Division. Southern States Communication Association. Austin, TX.

Green, R.J. (2015). Politics, Legitimacy and Rhetoric of Media Portrayal of Suffering in Times of Conflict/Crisis. Panel Session. National Communication Association. Las Vegas, NV.

Green, R. J. (2015). Jacques Rancière on the Pragmatics of Equality: Turn-taking and Political Action in Contexts of Ordinary Democratic Practice. Competitively submitted paper. 2nd Biennial Philosophy of Communication Conference. Pittsburgh, PA.

Roy, S. & Green, R. J. (2015). Monetization of race in mediated controversies Competitively submitted paper. International Communication Association. San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Green, R. J. (2013). The Rhetoric of the Heckle: Understanding the Regulation of Appearance and the Politics of Town Hall Meetings. Competitively submitted paper. Eastern Communication Association. Pittsburgh, PA.

Green, R.J. (2012). Working for the Right to Talk: A Conversation Analysis of Town Hall Meetings. Competitively submitted paper. National Communication Association Conference.Tampa, FL.

Mitra, R., M. J. Dutta, and R.J. Green (2012). Corporate Reputation in Emerging markets. Competitively submitted paper. International Communication Association. Phoenix, AZ.

Green, R. J. (2011). Voice, Equality, and Controversy: Rethinking Argumentation through the Politics of Jacques Rancière. Competitively submitted paper. National Communication Association Conference. New Orleans, LA.

Green, R. J. (2011). Voicing Burke’s Inner Adorno: Synecdoche and the Negative Dialectic of Difference. Competitively submitted paper. National Communication Association Conference. New Orleans, LA.

Clair, R. P., R. J. Green, et al. (2011). Religion Exemplified in the Life of Poor Sarah: The Case for Example as Occlusion. National Communication Association Conference. New Orleans, LA.

Green, R. J. (2011). Collective Memory, Historicism, and the Noir Detective. Eastern Communication Association. Alexandria, VA.

Green, R. J. (2011). Synecdoche and the Dialectic of Correspondence. Competitively submitted paper. Eastern Communication Association. Alexandria, VA.

Green, R.J. (2011). New World, New Media: Information technology and the Early American Environment. Panel Respondent, Communication Graduate Student Association, West Lafayette, IN

Green, R. J. (2010). Cross-Pollinating Sub-Fields via Substantial Argumentation: Inter-Paradigmatic Debate through Knowledge Creation and Conversation. National Communication Association Conference. San Fransisco, CA.

Green, R. J. and J. Packer (2006). Theorizing the Effectiveness of Negative Political Ads: Burke, Barthes, and Argumentation in the Veterans for Truth Swift Boat Ads.” National Communication Association Conference. San Antonio, TX.

Green, R. J. (2006). Creating Sites of Action: George W. Bush and the Ethos of God. Competitively submitted paper. National Communication Association Conference. San Antonio, TX.

Green, R. J. (2005). Controversy, Scapegoating, and the Nat Turner Rebellion. National Communication Association Conference. Boston, MA.

TEACHING

Undergraduate

Critical Perspectives on Communication (Purdue University
Fundamentals of Speech Communication (Purdue University)
Interpersonal Communication (Wake Forest University)
Introduction to Communication Theory (Purdue University)
Principles and Practices of Human Communication (James Madison University)
Principles and Practices of Individual Presentation (James Madison University)
Principles and Practices of Group Communication (James Madison University)
Public Speaking (Stephen F. Austin State University)
Rhetoric of The Western World (Purdue University)

Invited Lectures

"Conversation Analysis." Research Methods (Undergraduate Course), SFASU, 2015.

"Controversy Theory." Introduction to Communication Theory (Undergraduate Course), Purdue University, 2012.

"Symbolic Interactionism." Introduction to Communication Theory (Undergraduate Course), Purdue University, 2012.

"Conversation Analysis and the Constitution of Social Institutions." Critical Perspectives on Communication (Undergraduate Course), Purdue University, 2012

"Surviving and Thriving with the Bureaucratic Style." Rhetoric of the Western World (Undergraduate Course), Purdue University, 2011.

"Socio-cultural Approaches to Communication in Everyday Life." Introduction to Communication Theory (Undergraduate Course), Purdue University, 2011.

"The Rhetoric of Advertisements: A Critical Approach." Introduction to Communication Theory (Undergraduate Course), Purdue University, 2011.

“Ciceronian Eloquence and the Ethos of the Good Person Speaking Well.” Rhetoric of the Western World (Undergraduate Course), Purdue University, 2011.

“Debate in Different Contexts: Shifting Cultures, New Media, and New Modes of Argument.” Ben Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Conference. American University in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad, BG. 2006.

SERVICE

University Interscholastic League Regional Debate Tournament Director, 2015; 2016.

Travel Grant Committee, Purdue University Student Government, 2011.

Senator, Purdue University Graduate Student Government, 2010-11.

Executive Board Member, Communication Graduate Student Association, 2010-2011.

Student Awards Committee, James Madison University, 2009-2010

Student Community Committee, James Madison University, 2009-2010

First Year Reading Program, James Madison University, 2008

Mentor, Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship Program, Wake Forest University, 2006-007.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Bruce Kendall Excellence in Teaching Award, Nominee, Brian Lamb School of Communication, 2012

Dissertation Research Grant, Purdue Research Foundation, 2012-2013

Travel Grant, Communication Graduate Student Association, 2011

Ross Fellowship, Purdue University Graduate School, 2009-2010

Dan and Dave Southerland Debate Scholarship, University of Louisville, 2001-2004

Cindy Leiferman Debate Scholarship, University of Louisville, 2000-2001

Memberships

American Forensics Association

Central States Communication Association

Eastern Communication Association

International Communication Association

National Communication Association

Rhetoric Society of America

Southern States Communication Association