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Displays of Trust/Mistrust in Public Meetings: “I don’t believe you are going to jack us around!”

Abstract

For public meetings in general, and for the North Omaha Development Project Meeting in particular, a Conversation Analysis (CA) approach asks how participants in public meetings involved in decision-making communicate and display their trust and mistrust of one another. From a CA perspective, while it is important to examine ways to cultivate greater trust in the public arena, research is also warranted that looks closely at people’s observable talk and behavior to better understand how the qualities of trust and mistrust are enacted by participants and how others orient to those displays. Power differences are critical, and whether the organizers are controlling the agenda or whether the attendees are attempting to influence the meeting’s procedural mechanisms, these are behaviors that must in the end be performed as the proceedings unfold. Displays of observable behavior are subject to empirical analysis and are the focus of what a CA approach can contribute to the study of public meetings.

Keywords

conversation analysis, embodied actions, improvisation, interaction analysis, language and social interaction, performance, public meetings

Building linkages between group communication and language and social interaction (LSI) approaches to understanding public meetings presents an exciting challenge, particularly when framed by an overall concern with creating sites for connection, civic engagement, and social action. Public meetings, group decision-making, concepts of groupness, and how *trust* and *mistrust* may be displayed by participants all provide robust sites for the exploration of knowledge about communication, methods, and theory. There are many approaches that inform LSI research, including discourse analysis and ethnography of communication. Another LSI approach, conversation analysis (CA), is a unique method for studying social interaction, including grouping processes and public meetings, in very fine detail, moment-to-moment, and its approach is used in the analysis presented here.

The intellectual traditions within which models for public meetings and participatory civic engagement have evolved often invoke social constructionist frames. As communication theorists, sociologists, and philosophers of language have long argued, communication “is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed” (Carey 1989, p. 23; Burke 1965). Yet studies show that citizens are often disaffected by public meeting interactions and processes, and that they often feel their voices will not make a difference. In her study of citizen satisfaction with public meetings, McComas (2003) found that “most respondents harbored low expectations of public meetings, consequently diminishing their satisfaction with public meetings” (177). Furthermore, it is important to note that the *public* – including those participants in the North Omaha Development Project (NODP) Meeting - involves a diversity of people, groups, and organizations whose individual members have their own complex perspectives, motivations, and needs. Thus, in a robust model for encouraging greater participation, the complexity of what is entailed by the *public* must be integrated into any meeting design to avoid both simplistic situations and solutions (Jarmon et al., 2008).

For public meetings in general, and for the NODP Meeting in particular, a CA approach asks *how* participants in public meetings involved in decision-making communicate and display their trust and mistrust of one another and of the process itself. From a CA perspective, while it is important to examine ways to cultivate greater trust in the public arena, research is also warranted that looks closely at people’s observable talk and behavior to better understand *how* the qualities of trust and mistrust are enacted by participants and *how* others orient to those

displays. Power differences are critical, and whether the organizers are controlling the agenda or whether the attendees are attempting to influence the meeting's procedural mechanisms (Guttman, 2007), these are behaviors that must in the end be performed, moment-to-moment, as the proceedings unfold. These displays of observable behavior are subject to empirical analysis and are the focus of what a CA approach can contribute to the study of public meetings.

In this analysis of the Omaha public meeting data set, I focus on *how* trust and mistrust are constructed by the observable behaviors of the participants themselves. First, I discuss how groups are constructed in the Omaha public meeting. I then explain how the participants use an array of communicative resources to manage and negotiate interactively the roles and rights of speakership. Finally, in the conclusion, I suggest how CA findings can contribute to practical applications for cultivating trust in public meetings.

Constructing Groups in the NODP Public Meeting

The participants at the public meeting interactionally form at least three main groups, and then further divide themselves into at least two sub-groups. In this section we examine *how* these groups are constructed (1) literally through their physical and spatial arrangements, and (2) more abstractly but no less importantly through their interaction and talk. Few names are indicated in this analysis if the video-recorded data from the NODP public meeting. For the purposes of this study, some actual names are used (Dick Davis, Bob Peters, Dave Brown, and Charles), while some participants have been designated with name labels: Public Lady, Public Woman.

Generally, taking a CA approach, we ask *how* “groupness” emerges and is negotiated in face-to-face interaction in a particular instance, for example, the Omaha public meeting. That is, we might say, again speaking generally, that at the meeting a group only *exists* (comes into being) when interactants are “doing” “being group members.” These “doings” are empirically observable behaviors and must be so because they are designed and displayed for recipients' orientation to and uptake of them (Sacks, 1984). So the behaviors/performances have to be visually, aurally, and/or tactilely available for detection by co-present others (and by possible conversation analysts after-the-fact). Thus, in CA, using recordings of naturally occurring human interaction, we empirically observe instances of face-to-face interaction, particularly of sequential behaviors, typically at a micro-scale (see Sacks et al., 1974; Hopper et al., 1986; Schegloff 1995). In the Omaha public meeting data, we see group affiliation or alignment being

negotiated in rich displays of behavior that is being made available for (or withheld from) the detection or appreciation of other participants who are co-present in the meeting room.

Face-to-face interaction in meetings, generally, involves an ecology of embodied actions including speech, movement, gaze, touch, and a whole range of multimodal communicative resources and their relationship with one another through time (e.g., Goodwin, 1980; Goodwin, 1986; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Jarmon, 1996b). The questions posed by CA can be very fine, delicate, and complex -- yet ultimately quite orderly (Goffman, 1983; Sacks, 1984; Jefferson, 1983).

At the North Omaha Development Project meeting, two main groups are formed by the participants in the meeting through their sustained physical positions in relation to one another and through their interaction with the meeting room's architectural and seating design. In Figure 1 we see the first main group, the majority of the "audience", contrasted with the second main group, the NODP developers and organizers group, who have selected to sit on the very front row. Importantly, the front row has "reserved" signs placed periodically along the row, thereby displaying a seating (and group) management strategy put into place prior to the meeting. The audience-group participants have selected to sit facing the stage (but not on the front row), and, with some exceptions, actively maintain this position throughout the meeting. In contrast, the developers/organizers group does not maintain a sitting position but alternate between standing, facing the audience-group, sitting again to manage the Question Cards, and are generally far more mobile within the architectural space than are members of the audience-group. Importantly, the developers/organizers group always maintains close proximity to the microphones throughout the meeting. This is a co-performed flow of behavior-in-concert and it creates an interesting tension between onstage and offstage elements that will continue to be negotiated throughout the meeting.



Figure 1: Two main groups formed through their physical and spatial behaviors, and two Reserved signs

A third main group, the media technicians and Helpers, represent diverse others who are participating in the public meeting but who are not part of the first two main groups. However, this group is also constructed through the interaction as they use a number of communication resources and display themselves to be somehow distinct from everyone else at the meeting (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Third group: Sound Engineer and 2 meeting Helpers

The sound engineer is present throughout the meeting but, from the video data, cannot be observed participating in the meeting as part of either of the other two main groups. While he is clearly attending to the on-going interaction to be able to run the sound control board and manage the microphone output on the speaker system, the others do not orient to him as a member of either group. We might think of him as part of the physical setting of the room and its communicative functionality, but he is also actively attending to the proceedings. In a very different way, while closely connected with and clearly seen to be following instructions of the developers/organizers group, the two Helpers display numerous interactions with both main groups. Each can be seen (by all) to be the most mobile people in the room, moving frequently between members of the audience-group, handing out and picking up their Question Cards, literally carrying their communicative messages to the other group. They also move frequently to and from the members of the developers/organizers group, delivering the Question Cards, the symbolic representations of communication from the audience-group. From the video data available, the Helpers and the sound engineer provide on-going maintenance functions for the public meeting, audio volume, and procedural and communicative functionality.

Meanwhile, members of both of the two main groups, through the unfolding interaction, further divide themselves into at least two sub-groups: (1) those who “count” as members of the designated North Omaha target area, and (2) those who comprise the actual core development team, a sub-group of the developers/organizers group. That is, new alignments are negotiated interactionally, and throughout the meeting, the lines between the groups and sub-groups are in flux. They are brought into being through interactional behaviors, and they are maintained,

changed, or dissolved through interactional behaviors. In Figure 3, we can observe LADY making an explicit distinction through her utterances and her embodied actions between those who make up a sub-group of audience members who actually live in the North Omaha target area and those live nearby or elsewhere and thus not in the target area:



Figure 3

[start 40:03 – end 40:14]

40:03 Lady: You're not in this then

40:14 Okay then but I'm talking about the target area
(with finger raised)

Looking closely at the language that interactants utter can reveal how creating a sub-group, in this case, gets accomplished. In Figure 3, LADY employs an important feature of grammar to distinguish between in-group and out-group with her use of pronouns: “You're not in it then.” CA examines the language in utterances not only for informational, semantic, or indexing work it is “getting done” in the flow of the interaction, but also to identify how those same utterances are getting relational work done sequentially throughout the course of a segment. Pronoun usage, as seen in Figure 3, can be a powerful resource.

These language features cannot, of course, be separated from their particular in-the-moment performative features such as prosody, repetition, poetics (Hopper & Glenn 1994); nor can they be analyzed outside of the immediate local context of the particular interactional sequence. In

this instance, while producing her utterance, LADY is also using her arm and hand and is “drawing in the air” the target area. The video data allow us to hear her utterance and to see her embodied action taken together to delineate the sub-group, those residents of the target area, the subject of the public meeting itself.

In addition to pronoun use and gestural actions, other communicative resources can be used by interactants to distinguish among themselves and to establish new alignments. Next we look at the example of Dick Davis and how *proximity*, *footing*, and *direction of body orientation* can be used to negotiate new alignments interactionally. In Figures 4-6, we can contrast several elements of his behavior with those of the core development team as he distinguishes himself from them. First, when regarding groups of people who are co-present with one another in public meetings, an important communicative element to consider is their physical face-to-face proximity to one another, and in Figure 4 we can see an important physical display as Dick Davis has positioned himself about as far away from the rest of the NODP developers/organizers’ group as possible and yet still be occupying a location at the front of the room and sitting on the front row (he is seated at the far left in the white shirt and tie, while the leaders of the NODP group are seated at the far right; but all are seated on the front row) .



Figure 4: Dick Davis sitting at far left front row at great distance from NODP group

Later, in figure 5, we see the members of the core team line up like a wall of people in suits, positioning themselves in quite close proximity to one another, all facing forward towards the audience, and displaying an alignment quite distinct from the audience-group. At this time, Dick Davis remains seated on the front row, far removed from the core NODP team (not shown).



Figure 5: NODP core group forms line in very close proximity and all facing audience

In Figure 5, we observe instances where the basic physical proximity and footing of the NODP development team actually work to create a display of their “groupness” and alignment. So, for example, we can also observe a wall of people in suits, standing (not sitting), side-by-side, facing the audience, managing the Question Cards, controlling the microphones, and possessing the physical territory that comprises the center-stage focus of the auditorium.

We have stated that new alignments are negotiated interactionally, and throughout the Omaha meeting, the lines between the groups and sub-groups are maintained, changed, or dissolved through interactional behaviors. Next we will see Dick Davis use more embodied communicative resources to draw a line more distinctly between himself and the developers. Interactants require some basic access to one another’s communication modalities, and F-formations refer to how they position themselves in relation to one another in order to be able to access and display for one another their communicative actions in the unfolding event (see

Kendon, 1982; Kendon, 1990; Birdwhistell, 1970). But participants can also restrict access and availability to displays, thereby using the physical elements of face-to-face interaction itself as resources for doing communicative work in the group. Possible tensions or conflicts in public meetings can be anticipated. Therefore, CA allows us to examine just how participants use physicality and *situated embodied actions* (Heath, 1984; Jarmon, 1996b) to display their negotiation of conflict or membership displays by using their locally situated improvisations of reified patterns of behavior that are recognizable to the group. Participants in a public meeting can perform “doing” “being a group member.”

Several minutes later in the meeting, the Dick Davis (Figure 6) still maintains his position at the opposite side at the front of the auditorium, and still distancing himself from the core NODP team. He stands, faces the audience, acquires a microphone, and, unlike the members of the developers’ group, he begins to move progressively closer to the audience, and then walks up an aisle (crossing the physical boundary and entering into their physical space). As he moves, we can see that audience participants physically turn in their seats and orient their attention (faces, gaze) to follow him. He continues to move deeply into the “audience space” throughout the meeting until he is literally near the top row where he stops and turns back to face everyone. He stays in this location for quite some time, and in doing so, he has created and is maintaining what might be referred to as his new “home territory,” away from the location of the rest of the NODP team, and aligned physically with the audience-group. At one point, shown here, we observe the close proximity of Dick Davis with the audience, so close that one audience member can reach out and place a hand on his shoulder.



Figure 6: Dick Davis actively displaying alignment shift

The fact of his physical actions is self-evident, and, for example, he is not blocked or driven off by the audience. If the process of building trust can be negotiated at least partially through physical actions and re-alignment displays, then Dick Davis is demonstrating such a process. Finally, he does not participate in the NODP team's quite visible managing and controlling of the Question Cards, a topic to which we will turn our attention shortly.

Visually available or other sensory input that is made available to participants can be oriented to as indexing (rightly or wrongly) membership in various identity groups at a macro-scale, for example gender, age, ethnicity, and so forth. These communicative components can be at play at both the micro- and the macro-levels, presenting an element of *ambiguity* into the interaction (for example, potential profiling). From a feminist perspective, questions have been raised concerning interaction analysts' rigorous reliance on participants' displayed orientations to macro-level identity aspects like gender (Stokoe and Smithson, 2001). However, since analysts cannot read the minds of participants in an interaction, a strong CA approach would argue that, at the very least, at a more subtle but eventually empirically-observable level, some "noticing" or orientation to an input such as gender *must be displayed* by the participants themselves in order for analysts to formulate claims about gender's function or influence in a particular interactional instance (Sacks, 1984). In addition, as Duranti and Goodwin (1992) have noted:

The analysis of *participation within activities* makes it possible to view actors as not simply embedded within context, but actively involved in the process of building context

through intricate collaborative articulation of the events they are engaged in. (149; emphasis in the original)

Finally, ambiguity itself can be very important in negotiation and deliberation (Hopper and Glenn, 1994). Still, the proof is in the data, so to speak.

Managing and Interactively Negotiating the Roles and Rights of Speakership

There are interaction practices that can be seen to enact trust/mistrust in public meetings, and issues concerning who is allowed to participate are critical to our understanding. Next, I discuss how the participants use an array of communicative resources to manage and negotiate interactively the roles and rights of speakership. As Guttman (2007) has noted, “Other concerns are that agendas are invariably imposed by those in positions of power, that the deliberation process is subject to manipulation and unconscious bias, or that it is disconnected from actual decision making” (413). In the Omaha public meeting, in terms of the procedures of this public meeting, active expectations, and some assumptions underlying them, are interactionally brought into play by participants. Specifically, we will examine the *handling of the Question Cards* to control participation, the *control of the microphones* (speakership), and *staking a to speakership by standing* (as opposed to sitting) (Figures 7-10).

Handling of the Question Cards and Control of the Microphones

The introduction of the Question Cards as a procedural mechanism and their handling throughout the public meeting are sites of interest from a CA perspective. A critical aspect of a CA approach would be the examination of an instance’s sequentiality to help identify emergent decision-making “work” and negotiating activity throughout the course of the segment, when and how offerings are “taken up” and when and how they are not. Exploring power relationships in small group decision-making and deliberation by creating a collection of instances of *sequential deletion* of proffered suggestions, ideas, objections, and so forth would be an example of how a conversation analyst might proceed. These are instances where the next speaker continues his/her turn without displaying any orientation whatsoever to the immediate prior speaker’s utterance or turn, in effect “deleting” that contribution to the deliberation. These instances would comprise a collection of what West and Garcia (1988) refer to as *unilateral*

topic changes, and the NODP public meeting has multiple instances that warrant deeper analysis.



Figure 7: Audience member submitting Question Card & Helper approaching Card



Figure 8: Bob Peters (facilitator) with mic reading (controlling) a Question Card

We see in Figure 7 an audience member waving a Question Card at the Helper, who is collecting them from the audience and delivering the card to the NODP team. In Figure 8, we see the facilitator/consultant (Bob Peters) in control of a microphone and reading someone's Question Card out loud; audience members do not have access to microphones (yet). Note that there are several cards in his hand, and not all cards were read. The very fact that some cards are read and others are not creates an *a priori* sequential deletion of the communicative actions of other participants in the public meeting. In this instance, an audience member's submission of the card at this public meeting might be thought of as the first-pair part in a two-part question and answer sequence, and it is delivered to the intended recipients via the Helper. However, there is no second pair part forthcoming if it is never read aloud; it has been in essence sequentially deleted from the discourse of the meeting. Therefore, identifying how and when group members use communicative resources like sequential deletion and control of speakership through management of microphones can contribute to our understanding of how trust and mistrust are interactionally constructed by the participants at public meetings.

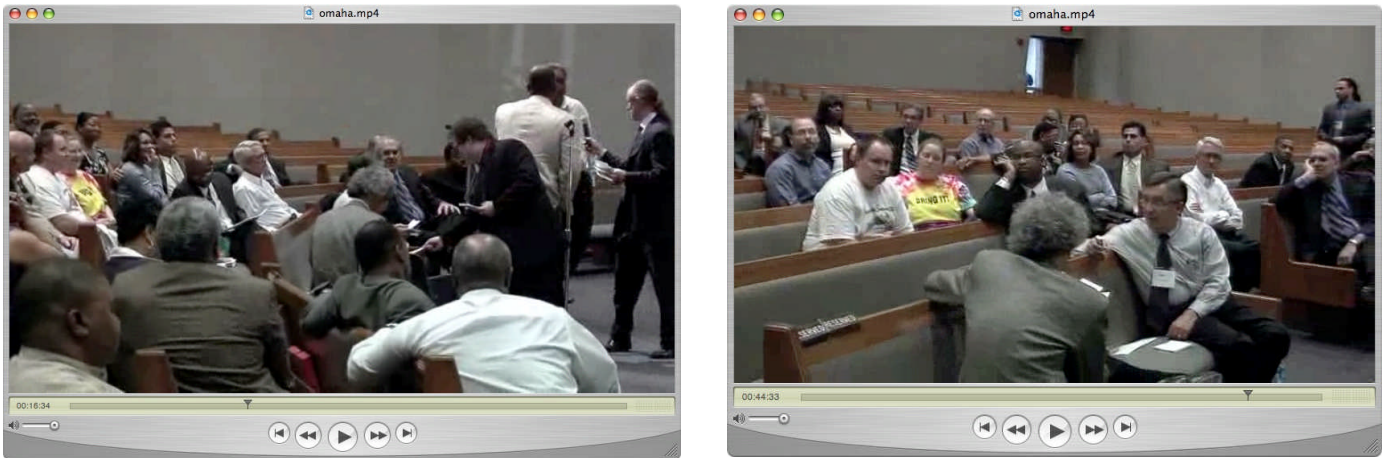


Figure 9: Delivery and visible screening of the Question Cards.

[start 16:25 – end 16:34]

[start 44:33 – end 44:43]

In Figure 9, we can see the Helper delivering the Question Cards to the NDOP group members (left image) and those members going through and screening the cards (in both images). The performance dimensions of onstage/offstage emerge in this instance. The Question Cards literally and figuratively represent the authorized form of speakership for the audience at this point in this meeting, and as such, the handling of the cards holds great interest for them and we can see them watching. On the other hand, we can observe members of the NODP development team examining and discussing the Question Cards as though their actions were not in fact quite publicly visible to almost everyone in the meeting room. Both images show how a number of audience members are indeed watching.

The off-stage behavior of the developers' group - negotiating among themselves over the selection of cards to be read - is being performed on-stage, in full view, in side sequences where there is no interactional work being done to either include the audience in the negotiations or to hide this side sequence from them. In Figure 10, one member of the NODP group (Frank) has the microphone, is addressing the audience, and can be said to be fully onstage in his orientation toward the audience participants. However, we also see behind him, standing at the front of the room, facing the audience members and fully onstage, two members of the developers' group amidst the line-up of the NODP developers' group continuing to examine, discuss, and handling the Question Cards - that is, the audience's access to speakership.



Figure 10: Visible handling of the Question Cards (at the right)
[start 25:27 – end 25:38]

In fact, the NODP group's observable actions (handling the cards in full view of everyone and even hearable to audience members seated nearby) indicate that they are not orienting to the audience's presence at all, nor to the possibility that their actions may be taken as a display of disregard for the audience. From even these few instances already discussed, we can begin to build a case for how CA can help us understand how trust and mistrust can be interactionally constructed and maintained in a public meeting by the behaviors of the participants themselves. Yet there are more instances that shed light on our understanding, and let us turn to a reading of one of the Question Cards.

Participants display trust and mistrust of one another using a variety of interactional resources, which may or may not be taken up or oriented to by other participants in the unfolding interaction of the public meeting. In the NODP public meeting, it could be argued that some of the procedural mechanisms including the use of the facilitator/consultant, the PowerPoint presentation given prior to opening discussion, and most clearly in this instance, the introduction

and control of the Question Cards, were used to enhance the public's participation and competence in that meeting (Guttman, 2007). However, Guttman also suggests how these same procedural tools can become highly problematic and thus present a "paradox":

The more procedures are proffered to enhance competence (i.e., various information resources, simulation activities, consultants), the more occasions there are to frame the issues according to those in power (426).

Data from the Omaha meeting provide us with a concrete example of Guttman's paradox and how there is an on-going tension between the generation of trust and mistrust. We return to the Question Cards, this time looking closely at how a card is being read by the facilitator, Bob Peters, a consultant and member of the NODP group.

In Figure 11, the facilitator reads aloud from a Question Card, and the moment is problematic from the start. First, the comments on the card explicitly raise questions about the trustworthiness of the development project and the public meeting itself, and the facilitator, a NODP group member, is situated in an interactional bind of sorts:



Figure 11: Facilitator Bob Peters reading a Question Card

[start 11:26 – end 12:11]

11:26

Uh it says this.

[now he is reading from the Question Card]:

Watching your PowerPoint presentation you've- you

(0.4)



al- (0.2) already (0.2) have plans laid out.

(0.4)

before this meeting so- (0.2) you::: seem to tell us what you were going to do regardless of what the people think. (0.2) What-

[now he has stopped reading from the Question Card]:

11:45 Uh uh::

(7.0)

11:53 Well- (0.2) I don't know. u:h there's- that *obviously* is- is not what the message was tonight (0.2) we're here to: hear from you (0.2) we have held preconceived (0.2) uh ideas (0.2) We have- we think we've identified (0.2) some (0.2) gaps? (0.2) in services ...

The fact of his reading the card aloud and using, of course, his own voice, creates a performance of the written comment over which he has control. It is heard not through the voice of the original audience member but through the voice of a member of the NODP group. This fact, coupled with the noted dysfunctional production of his reading with re-starts, grammatical difficulties, and some interactionally very long pauses -- all these observable elements work together to produce a particularly difficult moment. CA researchers study the sequence of utterances and instances of repair, alignment, preference structures, and so forth (e.g., Pomerantz, 1984; Ochs, et al., 1996; Lerner, 1991), and as this sequence continues, we can observe in the facilitator's utterance some features that suggest he is having a bit of difficulty proceeding. Thus, when Bob Peters stops reading the card, utters "Uh uh::", and then there is a full seven-second silence during which he says nothing at all, a clear marker of difficulty. We see him directing his gaze at the card, take a few steps to his right and then back again when he finally directs his gaze up and over toward the audience before continuing his utterance.

It is at this delicate moment that the facilitator makes a choice that has import for audience's perceptions of trust and inclusion, and his action at this moment will be brought up again later. The facilitator chooses to judge the comments on the card, to assess the accuracy of those comments; but he has some difficulty formulating his utterance:

11:53 Well- (0.2) I don't know. u:h there's- that *obviously* is- is not what the message was tonight

A CA approach anticipates that some of the language used by interactants in a public meeting would likely exhibit the indexicality of language (e.g., Silverstein et al., 2004). That is, particular utterances and sequences might display sequential references to something like a problem, or might invoke co-interactants' earlier utterances regarding a position or stance regarding alternative possible solutions to that problem. To use Sacks' formulation, earlier utterances can be dragged back onto the conversational floor for revisiting (1992), and participants may maintain a sensitivity to language that indexes something expectantly recognizable by the recipients of such an utterance. The Omaha data offer a number of such instances.

About 15-minutes later in the meeting, this same Question Card sequence is re-visited by a different audience member and is brought back to the interactional floor of the meeting (Figure 12). In a meta-analysis of her own, a woman in the audience proceeds to challenge the manner in which the original comments on that Question Card were handled and oriented to by the facilitator. Her utterance frames his behavior as untrustworthy in that, according to her, he "summarily dismissed" the critique raised on the Question Card, and she cautions them accordingly:



Figure 12: Re-visiting the Question Card sequence: A warning from an audience member
[start 24:34 – end 25:04]

24:35 I want to go back to the very first question that was asked (0.2) a fellow was talking about the perception that there was already a plan in place (0.2) and it was summarily dismissed as being *obviously* not the intent of this meeting (0.1) I would just caution you to say that (0.2) perception is important (0.2) so I think I would take a step back and think about why that perception is there and maybe what you would do to address that particularly if you want all of our input and support in this endeavor (0.2) (tongue smack) just a suggestion

Further, in Figure 12 we see this participant using performance and improvisation when she utters, "... it was summarily dismissed as being *obviously* not the intent of this meeting." She is not only re-performing the word *obviously* that had been uttered earlier by the facilitator, but she is also hearably improvising on his earlier turn in the context of her own communicative actions. These are communicative resources that pervade much face-to-face interaction, in ways that are hearably recognizable to the others (Goffman, 1956; Schechner, 1977; Bateson 1993; Gray & VanOosting, 1996; Jarmon, 1996a). In their discussion of a social construction model, communication scholars Anderson and Meyer invoke this *dramatic metaphor* to describe a relationship that links language, thought, performance, and social action:

Social action ... is not an ad hoc adventure—something to be invented each day. It is organized into *routines* that are the product of cultural and communal forces and are *locally performed* ... *It is within the space of improvisation that innovation occurs* ... *Any performance is a localized reinvention of that social life as an improvisation on the themes of the social action in place.* (1988, p. 308-9)

The interactional performances of group participants, designed and displayed for one another, are improvisations of a particular sort, the sort that builds emergent performances out of conversational structures or patterns, or even "riffs" on pre-existing themes and sets of behaviors. Further close analysis could reveal, for example, what patterns or sets of behaviors emerge as recognizably "doing" "decision-making" and what communication resources interactants use in performing or improvising "meetings" themselves as we begin to understand how they are being interactionally constructed. Recorded instances of such performances are empirically observable and warrant closer study, and CA methods can be useful in identifying in particular public meetings certain language patterns, prosodic riffs, and embodied riffs, for example; and we will discuss another instance from the Omaha data later in the paper.

As indicated earlier, explicit utterances invoking mistrust or lack of trustworthiness also emerge throughout this rich data set, and some of those instances index not only prior utterances (“the target area”) but also the historical context of the meeting, dragging onto the interactional floor, for example, perceptions concerning the past behavior of the chamber of commerce. We see in Figure 13 another audience member, Charles, who had been *standing* for some time in order to get attention of the facilitator, staking a visible claim to access a speakership role by that physical shift of position from sitting to standing. He speaks directly about trust:



Figure 13: Explicit indexing of trust: “Why would I ever trust the Chamber of Commerce?”
[start 30:30 – end 31:30]

- 30:30 Charles: I gotta two part question (0.2) One of ‘em’s just to satisfy my own curiosity (0.2) How many people in this room actually live in the target area? (0.2) We’re talking about Cummings (0.2) to Sorenson (0.2) 52nd street to the River (0.2) Ho- how many people in this room actually live in the target area (3.5) [not clear]
- You know I’ve been living in Omaha all my life (2.0) I’m tryin’ to figure out (0.2) why would I trust (0.2) the chamber of commerce to do this (0.4)
- 31:05 Why would I ever trust the chamber of commerce (0.2) to do this (0.2)

Take anybody who has an answer please give me one (0.5)

31:15 Bob Peters: Why not?

31:16 Charles: Why not? Because you guys have a history (0.2) that history (0.2) of destroying this here community (0.4) the chamber of commerce has participated (0.2) over the years I've been in Omaha (0.2) sixty-three of them (0.2) of destroying this community.

Let us turn now to a final sequence from the North Omaha Development Project public meeting, a small moment of which we visited earlier. As we have begun to see, participants' explicit utterances, situated embodied actions, physical proximity, shared laughter, and the sequential unfolding of these communicative resources at play can shed light on how a sense of trust might be socially co-constructed and how group membership can be delineated interactionally. This final sequence in particular highlights the intricacy of the unfolding negotiation of relationship, respect, and trust. We begin with an extended transcript of this sequence, and three participants are featured: Lady, Dick Davis, and Woman (Figures 14-17).







Figure 14: Final sequence with Lady, Dick Davis, and Woman

[start 39:01 – end 45:05]

- 1 Dick Davis: ... My point i:s (0.2) the fact that we're not gonna be talking about (0.2) u:h (0.2) u:h the issues of (0.4) what is- wha- what the problems were. (0.2) we are here and going to talk about (0.2) the solutions (0.2) and I'm just saying a solution is this proposal
- ➔
- 5 Dick Davis: Yes ma'am (pointing at Lady)
- Lady: Okay (0.1) with all due respect Mr. Davis [and I do respect you

Dick Davis: [Yes
(0.5)

10 Woman: the issue i:s that I've sat in I don't know how many of these
 sa::me (0.2) type of meetings (0.2) and it's always
 [*solution oriented* (0.5)
 [(both hands gesture "quotation marks" and head shaking)
 and what happens to the solution is (0.2) I'd just like to ask one
 question (0.3) All of these committees that have been formed?
 15 How many of those people those committee members (0.2) li::ve
 In North Omaha in the defined areas (0.2) besides possibly Frank
 (0.2) Who else (0.4) who else... [2 seconds passes as people are
 raising hands and looking around at them]
 19 If you're on a committee and you live in North Omaha and up in
 the target area (0.2) hands.
 21 Woman: Ma'am? (0.2) I- I live outside of the target area
 Lady: Okay you're not in this then
 Woman: (not transcribed 40:05 – 40:13)
 24 Lady: [Okay then but I'm talking about the target area
 [(with hand and finger raised)
 26 Dick Davis: Let- let me respond- let me respond to that
 Lady: OK
 Dick Davis: Because I wanna
 29 Lady: Well let me finish
 (0.5)
 Dick Davis: Awright
 Lady: That's the first problem
 Dick Davis: Awright
 Lady: We got what (0.2) fi::ve people maybe (0.2) so this is not the
 35  community input (0.2) the very fact that you had cards rather than
 having people stand up and raise their hands (0.2) so you can
screen

- the- the questions
- Dick Davis: But- [we-
- Lady: [And why: you know to- to the gentleman's point about why
40 we don't tru:st? (0.5) this goes on every year=every year we have a
meeting we have all these people (0.1) and I ask another question
(0.1) were there not really any brains in Omaha that could have
(0.2) worked all this out that you need to go to Chicago New York
or wherever (0.2) and pay them that astronomical amount of
money (0.2) to do: study what we already know to be true?
- 46 Dick Davis: Lemme try lemme try to answer those questions in sequence...
... [portion skipped] ...
- 47 Dick Davis: ... We have to be honest and straightforward with you (0.2) and stop
 jacking you around (0.2) and I'm telling you right now? (0.2) that
is my promise? (0.2) And I'm gonna do the best of my ability to do
so
(0.2)
- 51 Lady: I don't believe [you are going to jack us around
[points forcefully at him
- 53 Participants: (scattered laughter, grows progressively louder)
Woman's voice: Meet you in church Sister

We see in this extended sequence a range of interactional resources being brought to bear on the tension and lack of trust displayed in the unfolding meeting. Lady indexes a number of prior utterances throughout her talk. For example, in Lines 4-5, Dick Davis says, "we are here and going to talk about (0.2) the solutions," and many in the audience orient to his utterance with applause. Then soon after explicitly displaying her respect for the Dick Davis (Line 6), Lady takes up his utterance in her Lines 9-11, saying, "the issue i:s that I've sat in I don't know how many of these sa::me (0.2) type of meetings (0.2) and it's always solution oriented." Lady re-performs "solution oriented", not only repeating his word but improvising an embodied display using both her hands to make a "quotation marks" gesture and accompanying that action with shaking her head in rhythm with the syllables and her gesture's beats. In this way, she explicitly drags back onto the conversational floor prior "objects" for reconsideration, and she adds new

elements; both evidence how participants can use communicative resources interactionally to exercise their will and to negotiate the on-going flow of deliberation.



Figure 15: Dick Davis:

“We have to be honest and straightforward with you (0.2) and stop jacking you around “

In Figure 15, near the end of Dick Davis’s responsive turn at Lines 47-49, he delivers a testimony and a promise in a direct appeal for the audience members’ trust: “We have to be honest and straightforward with you (0.2) and stop jacking you around...”, only to find that the Lady once again takes up his utterance and makes part of it her own in a play of words at Line 51, “I don’t believe you are going to jack us around.” Lady’s utterance is an explicit display of trust marked by her forceful gesture pointing at him as she says “you”, and she draws an invisible but crystal clear line between Dick Davis and the other members of the NODP core group, at least as far as she is concerned. Lady thus makes an unarticulated but clearly conveyed statement that the developers’ group – now shown to be clearly distinct from Dick Davis -- are not to be trusted and may, in effect, “jack them around,” the audience members. What happens next is marked in the whole sequence as well.



Figure 16: LADY: Line 51

“I don’t believe [you are going to jack us around”](points forcefully at him)

Thus far in the NODP meeting there has been little if any shared laughter. However, immediately following Lady’s utterance at Line 51, although she herself does not initiate laughter, laughter from other begins and soon there is a cascade of laughter that continues to grow progressively louder as more people join in. In contrast to most of the interaction in the meeting, at this moment the audience members are orienting to her utterance as a laughable item. Glenn (1989) observed that, “Generally, in multi-party interactions, someone other than current speaker provides the first laugh (134), and we see that is the case here. Shared laughter can demonstrate alignment, affiliative action, and collaboration, although it may not necessarily always do so.

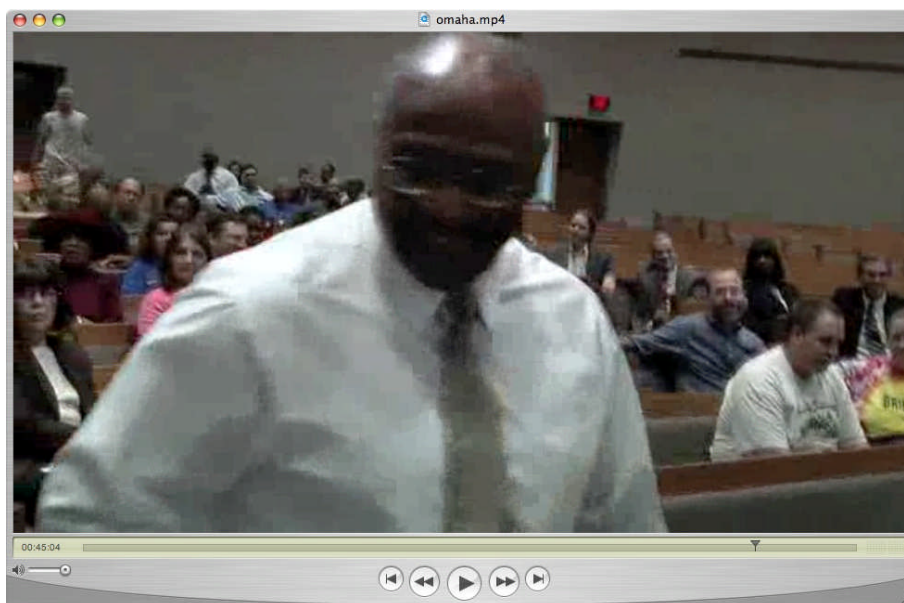


Figure 17: Shared laughter and negotiating trust

In Figure 17, we see that the shared laughter reaches a peak when Dick Davis himself displays a burst of laughter (Line 53), and he turns around effectively hiding (his face is no longer available to the audience) his laughter. His widest smile (teeth just visible) is captured by the camera, and he turns again back toward the audience, and relinquishes the microphone as the laughter continues, constituting what Glenn noted as a clear time-out from the unfolding talk (1989, 130). We also hear a woman's voice call out (Line 54): "Meet you in church Sister," using an important relational term, "Sister," and indexing meeting in church, a possible affiliative invocation with this particular group of participants in North Omaha.

Conclusion and Applications

In this study, I have suggested how CA findings can contribute to practical applications for cultivating trust in public meetings. Recommendations for enhancing group decision-making and deliberation practices could be (and are being) informed by understanding and using some of the conversational and interactional structures identified. In her research on citizen satisfaction, McComas (2003) concluded that "citizens are more satisfied when they believe communication at meetings is inclusive, participatory, informative, and meaningful" (171). We suggest, for

example, that managers and coordinators of public meetings such as the one briefly examined in this study could be coached to review all procedural rules at the start of a meeting and to ask for input, changes, and new suggestions from the larger community body in an effort to address the difficulty of unanticipated expectations and outcomes. Furthermore, to manage any damage control following a meeting ripe with discord and lacking negotiation, much like this meeting, additional time could be allocated at the end of a meeting for a debriefing process that could generate more formal reflection and commentary by participants on the roles of the facilitators, the moderators, the media, and the public (Jarmon et al., 2008).

As could be seen from the Omaha meeting space discussed in this study, the architectural and seating design of public meetings can do much to act in the service (or hindrance) of an arrangement of the participants in physical proximity to one another that is conducive to open participation and more egalitarian access to communication resources. Managers and coordinators of meetings need to be aware that everything they do in the room is potentially observable as “onstage” to the rest of the participants, and their behavior may be judged accordingly.

In contrast to some utterances and behaviors from the Omaha meeting that resulted in generating a sense of exclusion among the public, another useful application, for example, would be to adopt a linguistic script or tool that has been shown to result in creating a sense of inclusion. For example, in some professional development management training programs, managers are encouraged to consciously adopt a short linguistic phrase to create an improvisational orientation to deliberative meetings that would invite greater participation (McGehee, 2007). Rather than potentially shutting down proffered ideas with *Yes, but...* or similar utterances that can be seen to shut down an idea, managers are taught to build on what others offer. The suggestion is to improvise upon others' ideas through the explicit performance of a specific conversational opening of their next turn, replacing *Yes, but...* with *Yes, and...*, thereby building on and including the prior utterance. For example, when the facilitator read from the Question Card and essentially claimed that the writer had *obviously* misunderstood what the message was for the night, he could have instead used this technique, begun with *Yes, and*, and built on that idea, adding to it without making a public judgment of the comment's veracity. Furthermore, improvisation training for managers has included such suggestions as

using intentional repetition or taking up of word(s) phrases from a group member's just completed turn in the manager's own next turn (McGehee, 2007).

Finally, the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (Heierbacher, 2005) has recommended a number of key design questions to address when planning public meetings where decisions are made or influenced, and one question they pose is, "What kinds of materials need to be developed or obtained?" (3). In the NODP public meeting, the Questions Cards were introduced as strategy for managing the question and answer segment of the meeting. However, to address the kind of paradox of co-optation identified by Guttman (2007) and discussed earlier, perhaps it is less the development of new materials and strategies that in how they are used to manage/control the unfolding interaction itself.

In conclusion, generally, CA approaches could usefully contribute to our understanding of how *groupness* emerges in public meetings, how trust and mistrust in public meetings can be brought onto the interactional floor and negotiated interactionally moment-to-moment, and how group decision making and deliberation are negotiated in particular instances of face-to-face interaction. CA research is also warranted that looks closely at people's observable talk and behavior to better understand *how* the participants use their communicative resources to display their positions but also to understand *how* others orient to those displays.

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