



## Booing: The Anatomy of a Disaffiliative Response

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## BOOING: THE ANATOMY OF A DISAFFILIATIVE RESPONSE\*

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*Audience booing is a form of collective behavior that emerges within and has consequences for interactions between speaker and audience. Prior research on applause serves as a comparative reference point for an analysis of booing. The principal finding is that applause and booing are coordinated by different mechanics of collective behavior. Applause usually begins promptly and its onset is coordinated primarily by audience members acting independently in response to prominent junctures in a speech. Booing is usually delayed and is coordinated primarily by audience members monitoring each other's conduct so as to respond together. This asymmetry between applause and booing is explained in terms of general structures of interaction as documented in previous research on affiliative and disaffiliative responses in ordinary conversation. Thus, the sequential structure of interaction embodies a robust framework within which particular activities, including collective activities like applause and booing, are managed.*

Beginning with Atkinson's (1984a, 1984b, 1985, 1986) pioneering work on applause, researchers have explored a range of rhetorical, intonational, and gestural practices through which speakers elicit concerted clapping from audiences (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986; see also Brodine 1986; Grady and Potter 1985). However, unfavorable audience responses have not received comparable attention. I examine what is perhaps the quintessential display of disapproval in the public speaking context: booing.

Audience responses are fundamentally sociological phenomena. When audiences clap, boo, or laugh in response to a public speech, they engage in an activity that is socially organized on at least two levels. Responding to a speech is, first and foremost, *an elementary form of social action* that engages the audience in interaction with a public speaker. Such actions are frequently *evaluative* in character and are reactions to specific assertions by the speaker. For instance, clapping and booing are responsive displays of approval and disapproval respectively, and they enable audience members to affiliate with or disaffiliate from the viewpoint expressed just pre-

viously and from individuals (e.g., the speaker) associated with that viewpoint. While clapping and booing occur mainly in public speaking contexts, the social actions they embody — displays of approval/disapproval, affiliation/disaffiliation — form an important part of the repertoire of actions available to societal members across diverse contexts. Such actions are produced within courses of interaction whose organizational properties remain to be elucidated.

Second, clapping and booing are ordinarily done in concert with others and thus constitute *forms of collective behavior*. The occurrence of such simultaneous actions cannot be fully explained in terms of common internalized values or shared definitions of the situation (Berk 1974; Granovetter 1978). Audience responses thus represent instances of collective behavior whose underlying mechanisms of coordination require new modes of analysis.

I describe how episodes of collective booing emerge and how booing affects the subsequent course of a public speech. Prior research on applause serves as a reference point against which the distinctive properties of booing can be more fully appreciated.

### MODE OF ANALYSIS

To understand how booing is interactionally organized and coordinated, I pursue three interrelated lines of analysis. First, I analyze the response initiation problem from a *rational choice/game theoretic perspective* (Berk 1974; Granovetter

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1978; Schelling 1980, chap. 4). Thus, individual decisions to respond are treated as having specific benefits and costs that are contingent on the responses of others in the audience. Given this incentive structure, different mechanisms can enable audience members to coordinate their responses, and these coordinating mechanisms are examined in turn.

Second, I use the methods of *conversation analysis* to examine the placement of actual response episodes. Conversation analysis is a naturalistic approach to the study of interaction that focuses on explicating its turn-by-turn or sequential organization (Heritage 1984, chap. 8; Whalen 1992; Zimmerman 1988). Although originally developed in studies of dyadic and small group interactions, this approach can fruitfully be applied to the organization of speaker-audience interactions. Such analysis reveals how the aforementioned coordinating mechanisms are distributed across audience responses.

A third line of analysis considers applause and booing against a backdrop of more general structures of interaction as documented in previous conversation analytic research. These structures characterize affiliative and disaffiliative actions across many contexts, and they have been analyzed under the rubric of *preference organization* (Pomerantz 1984; Sacks [1973] 1987; see also Heritage 1984, pp. 265–80). In this framework, applause and booing are examined, not as collective actions, but as displays of affiliation and disaffiliation and hence as social actions in the broadest sense.

#### BACKGROUND: RESPONSE INITIATION AND THE ORGANIZATION OF APPLAUSE

Audience responses such as clapping and booing ordinarily involve multiple audience members simultaneously engaged in a single activity. How are such collective actions coordinated?

The response initiation problem can be illuminated if responses are treated as having both benefits and costs for those who undertake them (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986, pp. 111–12).<sup>1</sup> The most prominent benefit is the expressive value derived from conveying one's views. Other instrumental payoffs may also come into play, such as encouraging fellow audience members to join

in the response, or drowning out others who may be responding differently. However, an audience member who attempts to realize these benefits also risks incurring certain costs, most notably social isolation should no one else join in the response. Isolation of this sort is generally undesirable — it has been widely demonstrated that individuals prefer to express opinions that are perceived to be in agreement with others in their environment and to avoid expressing opinions that are perceived to be unpopular (Asch 1951; Noelle-Neumann 1984; cf. Pomerantz, 1984). Correspondingly, episodes of collective applause ordinarily last for about eight seconds, whereas isolated clapping rarely continues beyond the second or third clap, suggesting that audience members seek to avoid being the sole respondent (Atkinson 1984b, pp. 374–75; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986, p. 111, fn). Accordingly, each audience member who contemplates responding to an assertion must weigh the expressive and instrumental benefits of responding against the potential cost of social isolation should this response turn out to be uncommon.

This situation is analogous to what Schelling (1980, p. 54) has termed a game of pure coordination in that (1) the payoff for responding is, for any individual, *contingent on the actions of others*; (2) this payoff generally *increases* as others join in the action (primarily by reducing the cost of isolation);<sup>2</sup> hence (3) certain individuals (i.e., audience members who are in agreement with each other) have a *common interest in coordinating their actions*.

#### *Response Coordination*

In light of these considerations, how do response episodes get started? Two scenarios can facilitate a coordinated response.

*Independent decision-making.* Individual audience members may act independently of one another and yet still manage to coordinate their actions. Schelling (1980) demonstrated that individuals in structurally similar circumstances (e.g., family members who become separated while shopping and must rendezvous without having previously arranged a meeting place) usually deal with the problem by gravitating toward some place “of prominence or conspicuousness” (p.

<sup>1</sup> Although the value of any given incentive presumably differs for each audience member, I treat these values as fixed across audience members.

<sup>2</sup> This decrease in the cost of social isolation should be substantial as the first few audience members join the response, but should level off as more audience members take part.

57) in the environment of action (e.g., the main entrance to the store). Correspondingly, for audience members there are analogous places within an ongoing speech, places that stand out conspicuously from the talk thus far (Atkinson 1984b; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986). For instance, audience members may anticipate the completion of a particularly compelling or objectionable assertion. Insofar as each audience member assumes that others will find the assertion significant, and insofar as all parties can project its completion early enough to gear up for a response, then its completion may serve as a common reference point around which individual response decisions are coordinated.

*Mutual monitoring.* Individual response decisions may also be guided, at least in part, by reference to the behavior of other audience members. Although audience members cannot explicitly inquire into one another's response intentions, clues to that effect may be ascertained by direct observation. Individuals can monitor for behaviors that indicate a predisposition to respond in a given way (e.g., widespread nodding, murmurs of "yeah," or appreciative laughter may be taken as evidence of a willingness to clap), behaviors that are leading up to a particular response (e.g., hands rising prior to clapping), or behaviors that constitute the actual beginning of a response (e.g., the first few claps). Given the typical arrangement of audiences (side by side in rows oriented toward the front stage), visual cues probably do not play a major role in the mutual monitoring process (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986, p. 112), but aural cues can be exchanged regardless of such arrangements. Moreover, most audience responses have an aural form that accommodates the contributions of late starters, consisting of a singular extended sound that others can easily join at any point and still be in unison (Atkinson 1984a, pp. 19–20; 1984b, p. 371).

Once it becomes evident that some in the audience are moving toward a particular response, others may be encouraged to respond because the actual or anticipated responses of even a few significantly alters the expected payoff for others. For instance, the fear of responding in isolation is reduced in direct proportion to the number of others who appear to be gearing up to respond, while nonaction becomes isolating and hence costly in direct proportion to the actions of others. The expressive consequences of a response decision may also be altered by the actions of others: Isolated clapping or booing may lead ob-

servers to infer that audience approval/disapproval is weak, hence, from the audience member's point of view, being the sole respondent may actually be counterproductive. When others seem about to respond, however, audience members may be encouraged by the expectation that their actions will contribute to an audibly "strong" display of approval/disapproval. Moreover, when others are responding, remaining silent becomes an expressive act. Consider that it is not always relevant or appropriate to respond as a speech unfolds. However, when some in the audience move to respond, that moment becomes constituted as a time when some sort of evaluation is called for. In this environment, silence can become noticeable and can be taken as an expressive act in its own right, i.e., to refrain from clapping when others are doing so is to accountably decline to support the speaker and to make the response weaker than it otherwise might have been.<sup>3</sup> In many ways, then, the responses or pre-response actions of some audience members can, through mutual monitoring, create substantial incentives for others, resulting in a chain reaction or "bandwagon" effect as successive audience members are moved to join the response.

These two models have distinct empirical consequences. Responses organized primarily by independent decision-making should begin with a "burst" that quickly builds to maximum intensity as many audience members begin to respond in concert. Mutual monitoring, by contrast, should result in a "staggered" onset as the initial reactions of a few audience members prompt others to respond. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive — a response episode may begin with a "burst" involving many independent starters, which subsequently encourages others to join in. Indeed, an initial "burst" should be most effective in prompting others because it *decisively* es-

<sup>3</sup> Thus, during the 1981 party conferences in England, a journalist interviewing a party official commented that, during a particular speech, "while all your other ministerial colleagues were clapping... you hardly clapped at all" (quoted in Heritage and Greatbatch 1991, p. 126), suggesting divisions within the party. More generally, John Heritage (personal communication) noted that television producers and camera operators frequently pay special attention to nonclapping audience members by juxtaposing reaction shots of them against shots of those who are clapping. This demonstrates that a substantial response establishes the relevance of a response for all audience members and makes silence a noteworthy expressive act.

Extract 1. Bentsen-Quayle Debate, 5 Oct. 1988, 01:0:50

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01 LB: Senator, (1.6) I served with Jack Kennedy (0.5)  
 02 I knew Jack Kennedy (1.1)  
 03 Jack Kennedy was a friend o' mi:ne, (1.3)  
 04 Senator you're no Jack Kennedy.  
 05 (0.2)  
 06 AUD: xxxXX  
 07 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]=  
 08 LB: [W- what has to be done.]  
 09 AUD: =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]=  
 10 LB: [What has to be done.]  
 11 AUD: =XXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]=  
 12 LB: [in a situation like that.]  
 13 AUD: =[XXxxxx]xxxx-x (15.8)  
 14 MOD: [Please]  
 15 LB: in a situation like that....

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establishes the relevance of a response and *decisively* counteracts concerns about isolation.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Organization of Applause*

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that independent decision-making plays a predominant role in coordinating the onset of applause. Most applause episodes begin immediately after or just before the completion of a focal assertion by a speaker (Atkinson 1984a, pp. 31–34; 1984b, p. 377). Heritage and Greatbatch (1986, p. 112) confirmed that most applause is initiated within 0.3 seconds following the precipitating item. Moreover, applause episodes typically begin with a “burst” that reaches maximum intensity in the first second or so (Atkinson 1984a, pp. 23–24; 1984b, pp. 372–74). Furthermore, researchers have identified a range of rhetorical formats, such as three-part lists and contrasts, that receive a disproportionate share of applause

(Atkinson 1984b; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986). These formats facilitate applause by providing emphasis and a clearly projectable completion point around which individual applause decisions can be matched (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986, pp. 116–17).

These properties of applause are readily apparent in Extract 1, a widely-quoted episode from the 1988 vice-presidential debates involving Lloyd Bentsen and Dan Quayle. (A guide to the transcription symbols appears in the Appendix.) Like most applause events, this one begins quickly (within 0.2 seconds following the completion of an assertion), with a “burst” involving a substantial proportion of the audience and reaches maximum intensity in less than one-half second. Moreover, it follows one of the rhetorical formats that have been shown to provide for the coordination of applause. Bentsen has just completed a combination list/contrast format consisting of a list of three similarly structured items (lines 01, 02, and 03) followed by a contrasting fourth item (line 04). The formal and substantive repetition built into this format emphasizes the underlying message while providing audience members with a completion point that may be anticipated well in advance.

Applause can also be prompted by other audience behaviors such as affiliative laughter (Clayman 1992, pp. 45–46), but on purely quantitative grounds they appear to be less important than junctures within the speech itself (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986, pp. 137n, 140). Subtler pre-response behaviors (e.g., shifts in body posture, arm movements) may also play a role, even though they do not appear on audio transcripts. Nevertheless, the patterns detailed above strongly

<sup>4</sup> Conversely, isolated responses should be less successful in generating a sustained collective response. In fact, applause initiated by one or two individuals may prompt a few others to join in for a few seconds, but it rarely instigates a more widespread eight-second response. Most audience members, hearing only one or two initial clappers, infer that the viewpoint is unpopular and thus refrain from joining the response (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986, p. 111n). Thus, individual decisions to participate in an ongoing response may be withheld until a “threshold” of participation by others has been achieved (Granovetter 1978). Correspondingly, responses may require a “critical mass” and hence may not be sustainable without a requisite number of independent starters (Schelling 1978, pp. 91–110).

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 Extract 2. Oprah, 14 Apr. 1991, 0:07:45
 

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R: It's total stupidity:: for a person to think that  
secondary smoke does not harm nonsmokers. (0.3)  
 It [re[ally is:. (0.2) It's to[al stupidity  
 AUD: [x [XX=  
 AUD: [aw::: [b-b-b-bbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb (2.5)  
 AUD: =XX (14.0)

---

suggest that, for the case of applause, a substantial amount of independent decision-making — coordinated via structural features of an ongoing speech — organizes the onset of a collective response, while mutual monitoring plays a less significant role.

Finally, just as there are standard ways in which applause emerges in the course of a speech, there are also certain standard consequences for the subsequent trajectory of a speech. Speakers typically stop talking during applause and remain silent through much of it (Atkinson 1985, p. 162), although during unusually long stretches of applause they may resume speaking after about eight seconds or so, which seems to be treated as the “standard” length of within-speech applause (Atkinson 1984b, pp. 374–75). In the preceding example, after Bentsen delivers the punchline (line 04), he remains silent for about eight seconds of applause before attempting to continue (line 08). The general tendency is thus to withhold speech,<sup>5</sup> and this is perhaps not surprising. It accommodates the applause by allowing it to unfold “in the clear,” thereby maximizing the visibility and duration of a response that, from the speaker’s point of view, is clearly advantageous.

## DATA

Data for the present study were gathered from a wide variety of public speaking environments, including U.S. Presidential debates, Congressional floor debates, television talk shows, and British party conference speeches. The data include formal speeches involving a single orator as well as events involving multiple speakers. Most of the latter are adversarial encounters involving formal or informal debates over controversial issues before a highly partisan audience. I assumed such adversarial settings would be fertile ground for the occurrence of booing and they were selected for that reason. After examining

<sup>5</sup> Exceptions to this pattern are rare but substantively interesting (Atkinson 1984a, pp. 98–111; 1985).

over 40 hours of videotaped material, 33 extracts involving booing were located and transcribed. Although not a large data set, all cases of booing were included, and the findings reported here are based on a comprehensive analysis of these cases.

## TARGETS OF BOOING

Certain types of speech events are more likely than others to receive booing. In these data, the most common target of booing is an unfavorable remark concerning a political adversary. Criticisms, accusations, or derisive characterizations of the opposition precede well over one-half of the booing episodes.<sup>6</sup> Thus, audience members are generally reluctant to initiate the interpersonally hostile action that booing embodies, but they are quite willing to respond in this way to hostilities initiated by a speaker.

Hostile attacks may be launched directly as the primary objective of a statement, or they may be embedded within statements that have a more benign primary objective. In Extract 2, an example of a direct attack, an anti-smoking advocate characterizes the opposing view as “total stupidity,” and this assertion receives booing from the audience (as well as other responses).

Embedded attacks usually take the form of a derisive reference to the opposition inserted within an otherwise inoffensive statement. For example, in the 1988 Presidential debates, Bush is asked how the public should assess his foreign policy accomplishments as Vice President under Reagan. In his response (part of which appears in

<sup>6</sup> Hostile attacks are also the most successful means of generating applause (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986, pp. 119–22). There may be a general principle of negativity in audience behavior deriving from the fact that it is easier for individuals to coordinate actions in relation to what is opposed than what is supported (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986, p. 122). Hostile remarks are even more likely to generate booing, which rarely occurs after nonhostile assertions. This may reflect the fact that booing is a “dispreferred action” (see “Discussion,” p. 124).

## Extract 3. Bush-Dukakis Debate 1, 25 Sept. 1988, 1:11:34

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01 GB: How is our credibility with the GCC countries on  
 02 the western side of the gulf. Is Iran talking to Iraq  
 03 about peace. .hh You judge on the record. .h Are the  
 04 Soviets coming out of Afghanistan. .hh How does it look  
 05 in a f- .hh- pro- gram he called phony er some one o'these  
 06 mar::velous Boston adjectives up there 'n .hh about uh  
 07 AnGO[la. .hh now we have a cha:nce, .hh now-]  
 08 AUD: [b-b-b-b-b-b-b-s-b-s-b-s-b-s-b-s-b-s-b]-s-b-s-b-s  
 09 GB: Several Bostonians don't like it, but the rest o'thuh  
 10 country will understand....

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## Extract 4. Geraldo, 22 Feb. 1991, 0:52:00

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MF: We're getting results because we  
 [care about real (.) [peaceful relation[ships ( )  
 G: [arri- ahright- [righ- righ- [>Hold it hold  
 it [hold it<  
 AUD: [z-z-zzzzzzzzzzzzzzbzbzbbbbbbbbbbbbb-b-b-b-b-b-b (4.6)

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## Extract 5. Bentsen-Quayle Debate, 5 Oct. 1988, 0:04:21 (simplified)

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DQ: ...and if qualifications alo::ne (.) .h are going to  
be: the issue in this campaign. (1.0) George Bush has  
 more qualifications than Michael Dukakis and Lloyd  
 Bentsen combined.  
 (0.6)  
 AUD: x x x-xxXX=XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX=  
 AUD: [b-b-b-b  
 AUD: =XXXX [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX [xxxxxxxxx-x-x-x h x h x x x (8.5)  
 AUD: [bbbbbbBBBBBBBBBB [BBBBBBBBbbb-b-b (2.9)  
 MOD: [Senator Bentsen-

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Extract 3) he asserts that “you judge by the whole record,” and then enumerates (through a series of rhetorical questions) various foreign policy accomplishments of the Reagan-Bush Administration (lines 01–07). In a remark concerning Angola (lines 04–07), he gestures toward Dukakis with his left hand and makes a derisive reference to Dukakis’s Boston origins: “a program he called phony or some one of these marvelous Boston adjectives . . .” (lines 04–06).

Although the phrase “marvelous Boston adjectives” might in some contexts be complimentary, in the context of this policy dispute it is sarcastic. Bush’s delivery enhances the tone of sarcasm. At the word “phony,” his facial expression becomes what Ekman and Friesen (1975) have analyzed as a blend of anger and disgust — he lowers his eyebrows and draws them together while raising his

upper lip slightly. He also shakes his head during the ensuing phrase. Thus, Bush treats Dukakis’s relationship to Boston and Bostonian culture scornfully, but he does so in the course of listing his own accomplishments. Although the audience waits until Bush has almost completed the sentence containing this reference before they begin to boo, Bush’s subsequent talk (lines 09–10) indicates that he hears the booing as a response to the Boston reference.

Audiences sometimes boo in response to “boasts” in which speakers comment favorably about themselves or something with which they are associated. In Extract 4, during a heated argument concerning violence against women, the founder of an antifeminist men’s group praises his group’s success rate in dealing with such violence, after which the audience boos.





Extract 7. Tory Party Conference, 13 Oct. 1981, Mike Truman, 0:03:55 (Simplified)

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MT:      ...If YOU wanta support racist policies then join a party
          that promotes them because YOU'RE NOT conservatives.
1-> As Leopold Amory said to Neville Chamberlain I say to
    you:, .h YOU SAT HERE TOO LONG.=
AUD: 2-> =z-z-[zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]=
MT: 3->    [for ANY GOOD YOU MIGHT'VE BEEN DOING]

AUD: 4-> =zzbzbbbBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBbbb-b-b

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(3) *When booing is not substantially delayed, some other audience behavior usually occurs simultaneously with the speaker's talk before booing begins.* For example, a speaker at the 1981 Tory party conference in Britain strongly criticized the party for promoting "racist policies." As he launches into a quotation to that effect (Extract 7, arrow 1), audience members begin to shout and jeer in an uncoordinated manner (arrow 2). The speaker continues to talk through the shouting (arrow 3), and just after he reaches a grammatical completion point, the shouting dissolves into booing (arrow 4).

Similarly, of the 10 cases in which booing began within one-half second of utterance completion, 9 were preceded by some other audience behavior occurring simultaneously with the speaker's talk. In most instances, the pre-booing behavior is quite extensive.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that booing is generally coordinated by a fundamentally different process than that which organizes applause. The fact that booing is typically preceded by substantial delay or by some other audience behavior, or both of these in combination, suggests that booing is not initiated by audience members reacting independently to projectable rhetorical formats. Instead, mutual monitoring appears to play a predominant role in the genesis of booing, and other audience behaviors may in effect instigate episodes of booing.

#### AUDIENCE RESPONSES PRECEDING BOOING

The audience responses that precede booing fall into two general classes. Some are *disaffiliative*, or at least incipiently disaffiliative, such as heckling and jeering; others are *affiliative*, such as applause and appreciative laughter.<sup>8</sup> Each of these

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<sup>8</sup> Laughter is affiliative when those who are laughing can be characterized as "laughing with" the

initial responses can, through mutual monitoring, encourage audience members to boo.

#### Incipient Disaffiliation

The onset of booing is often preceded by virtual or incipient displays of disaffiliation. Usually these involve audience members engaged in a variety of vocalizations — whispering or talking among themselves, talking, shouting, or jeering at the speaker — simultaneously. Depending on its loudness, the resulting sound can be characterized as a "murmur," "buzz," or "roar" (designated in the transcripts by strings of "zzzzz").

A buzzing response may begin with a few audience members "heckling" the speaker by shouting unfavorable remarks. In Extract 8, a single audience member initiates the heckling (arrow 1), after which several begin to shout in an uncoordinated manner (arrows 2 and 3) before the booing finally begins (arrow 4).

Alternatively, the response may begin with a more widespread murmur, buzz, or roar involving more audience members. Often an extended groaning or jeering sound (something like "aw:::") may be discerned within the buzzing, but that sound typically is combined with other vocalizations (see Extract 9).

When booing eventually begins, it may join the ongoing buzzing so that both responses unfold simultaneously, but in many instances the initial buzzing dissolves into booing. The completion of the booing usually marks the termination of the response episode.

In this type of response, booing represents an escalation in the display of disapproval. The ini-

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speaker, e.g., when the speaker has made a markedly humorous but substantive remark, such as a criticism of a political adversary. In such contexts, laughter displays appreciation of the humor in what was said, and thus shows the audience to be laughing along with the speaker at his or her adversary on a matter of some substance (Clayman 1992).



In support of this argument, in many instances the transition to booing occurs without any noteworthy vocal or nonvocal behavior by the speaker that might account for the response trajectory. The speaker can thus be ruled out as the proximate explanation for the onset of booing, leaving the ongoing buzz as the likely precipitating factor. In other instances, the speaker is actively doing something just before the booing, i.e., completing an objectionable remark (Extracts 7 and 8). Although the booing is directed at the speaker's remark and is clearly geared to the remark's completion, if the preceding argument is correct the ongoing buzz still operates as a precipitating factor.

If an undifferentiated buzz facilitates booing, how do these initial expressions of disapproval come to be voiced in the first place? Some degree of independent decision-making is probably involved, and this occurs in different ways for the various actions that can make up a buzzing response. (1) For the case of audience members whispering or talking to one another, such interpersonal talk is not designed for public consumption (even though it may be more widely audible). "Private" interpersonal comments are not subject to the same concerns about social isolation that constrain public responses like booing or applause. (2) "Aw:::" represents a form of self-talk that Goffman (1981, chap. 2) characterized as a "response cry." Response cries are conventionalized nonlexical utterances (e.g., "oops," "yikes," "phew") that externalize immediate reactions to some passing event, but are addressed to no one in particular (even though they may be widely audible). Like interpersonal comments, response cries are not accountable as public utterances. (3) Heckling is a manifestly public utterance, but it is intrinsically solitary. Because heckling (unlike clapping or booing) comprises complex remarks to which

latecomers cannot easily contribute (e.g., Extract 8, arrow 1), it is by design an individual rather than a collective response — hecklers cannot realistically expect others to join them. In short, many of the behaviors that precede booing are accountably private rather than public utterances, or are intrinsically solitary actions, so it is perhaps not surprising that they may be independently produced and can lead to a collective display of disaffiliation.

### *Affiliation*

Booing follows affiliative responses just as frequently as it follows disaffiliative responses. Applause, for example, often occurs before booing. In Extract 10, when vice-presidential candidate Dan Quayle asserts that Bush is more qualified for the presidency than Dukakis and Bentsen combined, he first receives applause (arrow 1) and then booing (arrow 2).

Affiliative laughter may also precede booing. In Extract 11, when candidate George Bush refers derisively to "that liberal Democrat grain embargo" imposed by former President Carter, he receives appreciative laughter from the audience (arrow 1) and then booing (arrow 2).

In each instance, an initial supportive response is met with booing. Moreover, the transition to booing occurs in the absence of any noteworthy behavior by the speaker that might account for it. In Extract 10, for instance, Quayle is looking straight out at the audience, and he remains expressionless and motionless from the completion of his remark to the onset of booing.

Because favorable responses are often met with booing without any intervening behavior by the speaker, it appears that some audience members are encouraged to boo a remark when others have begun to respond supportively. This may seem puzzling because concerns about social isolation might suggest that an initial supportive response should be a disincentive for potential boosers. However, this disincentive may be offset by various incentives that are also engaged by a supportive response. Consider that an evaluative response like clapping establishes the relevance of an evaluation for all audience members. When the relevance of a response has been established, those who privately disapprove may be moved to go "on record" with an overt response. Furthermore, at that point booing offers a countervailing assessment of what was said and thereby indicates that support for the speaker is not universal. Finally, booing in this environ-

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of ambivalence and uncertainty in the audience and thus move others to express disapproval (Turner and Killian 1987, pp. 59–60, 84–85). One advantage of the game theoretic analysis is that it further explicates how an initial "keynote" can encourage others to take action (Berk 1974). Moreover, emergent norm theory would predict that, within a given speech event, booing should occur more and more promptly over time as its normativity becomes progressively established. Such a trend might be evident in a larger data set, but here the pre-booing delay appears to be stable. I argue that the tendency to delay booing reflects a widespread societal convention governing the placement of disaffiliative responses (see "Discussion," p. 124).

## Extract 10. Bentsen-Quayle Debate, 5 Oct. 1988, 0:04:21 (Simplified)

DQ: ...and if qualifications also:ne (.) .h are going to  
be: the issue in this campaign. (1.0) George Bush has  
more qualifications than Michael Dukakis and Lloyd  
Bentsen combined.  
(0.6)

AUD: 1→ x x x-xxXX=

AUD: 2→ [b-b-b-b]

AUD: =XXXX[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]=xx-x-x-x] h x h x

AUD: 2→ [bbbbBBBBBBBBBB[BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB]=bbbb-b-b]

MOD: [Senator Bentsen-]

## Extract 11. Bush-Dukakis Debate 2, 13 Oct. 1988, 1:03:50

GB: ...And I believe the answer to the agricultural  
economy .hh is not to: .h get the government further  
involved, but to do what I'm suggesting. .hh First  
place never go back to that democratic (0.2) grain  
embargo. .hh That liberal (.) democrat (.) grain  
em[bargo .hh th[at k- kn(h)o(h)cked the markets=

AUD: 1→ [h-h-hhhhhhh[hhhxh-x-x (2.0)

AUD: 2→ [b-b-b-b-b (0.9)

GB: =.h right out from under us `n made Mister Gorbachev  
say to me when he was here, how do I know you're  
reliable suppliers....

ment not only conveys disapproval of what the speaker said, it also drowns out any favorable responses. Thus, an initial affiliative response may encourage booing because it provides additional incentives for engaging in a disapproving response at that juncture.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever its motivation, counteraffiliative booing comes across as distinctly competitive, and this competitiveness is strikingly displayed in Extract 12, lines 12 through 18. Here Bush ridicules Dukakis's income tax enforcement proposal, saying that Dukakis wants to send an "army" of IRS agents "into everybody's kitchen" (lines 04 through 11). The completion of this derisive characterization generates appreciative laughter and applause from part of the audience (line 12) that is joined several seconds later by a

hissing response, presumably from the other side (line 13). These responses continue simultaneously (lines 15 and 16) until the hissing dissolves into booing (line 16). The episodic character of the booing from then on is particularly striking. The booing initially dies out, but when the applause continues unabated for about two seconds (lines 15 and 17) and is supplemented by cheering and whistling (not shown in the transcript), the booing resumes, dies down, and then starts again (line 18). Unlike most collective audience responses, which begin promptly and unfold in a single stretch, the disapproving response here is delayed and repeatedly started, stopped, and restarted while others are expressing support. Those who are booing thus show themselves to be actively competing with others in the audience by offering a countervailing assessment of what was said. Correspondingly, those who are clapping are conducting themselves with equal competitiveness — they sustain and at one point upgrade their approving response so that it continues throughout and eventually supersedes the booing.

In summary, both incipiently disaffiliative and affiliative responses reconfigure the costs and benefits associated with initiating a booing ac-

<sup>11</sup> In some contexts, the physical arrangement of the audience may further encourage counteraffiliative booing. When audience members are ideologically segregated (as they were during the 1988 presidential debates and during some television talk shows), the prospective booper should be encouraged knowing that although a substantial segment of the audience supports the speaker, those nearby oppose the speaker and will be predisposed to join in a counteraffiliative booing response.



## Extract 14. Bush-Dukakis Debate 2, 13 Oct. 1988, 1:06:30

GB: ...I'm not gonna go .hh down there 'n try to  
dump thuh sludge from Massachusetts off thuh  
beaches off of uh New Jersey=

AUD: =bbbb[bbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb]bb-b (2.2)

GB: [I'm not gonna do that .hh eh-]  
(2.2)

GB: → That boo was excessively loud can ya add five  
→ [seconds Bernie]

AUD: [h h-hhhhhhhhhh]hhhh[hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh]hhhhhhhh=  
GB: → [outta fairness come on.]

AUD: =[-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h]-h-x-h=  
GB: → [Gimme f(h)i (h)ve]

AUD: =[-x-h-x-h-x-h-x-h-x-h-x-h-x-h-x-h-x-h-x-h-x-h-x (6.1)]  
GB: [I mean this guy this is too much down there.]  
(0.5)

AUD: x x [x  
GB: [but- but I'm not gonna do that, (0.9) I am an  
environmentalist....

booing. Such argumentative responses often consist of two distinct components, both of which appear in Extract 13. The first component (arrow 1) refers or alludes to the booing and often explicates or interprets the objection it raises, while the second component (beginning at arrow 2) presents a counterposition that defends the speaker's original statement.

This defensive reply has additional features that are advantageous for the speaker. Bush's characterization of the objection (they "don't like it") is chosen from among many possibly correct characterizations (cf., "are offended by it," "are demeaned by it," "are degraded by it,"); Bush's choice depicts the objection as merely a subjective judgment or matter of taste. Moreover, the objection is marginalized by attributing it to a presumably self-interested minority ("several Bostonians"), while the speaker's position is presented as having widespread support ("the rest of the country"). In several ways, then, Bush counters the booing and defends his original choice of terms.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the rhetorical points scored through a defensive reply, such replies may also receive applause from the audience (Extract 13, arrow 3). The two-part contrast form of the response undoubtedly facilitates this process. Con-

trasts often elicit applause because they stand out in a speech and provide a projectable completion point that enables audience members to coordinate displays of support (Atkinson 1984b; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986). Argumentative responses are thus structured in such a way as to enhance the likelihood that an affiliative response from the audience will occur soon after the prior disaffiliation. In the present data, this sequence of events (booing followed by applause) does

## Bentsen-Quayle Debate, 5 Oct. 1988, 0:54:24

DQ: ... Do you realize that today. (1.3) .hh we:  
are producing Hondas. (1.1) and exporting  
Hondas (0.2) to Japan. (2.0) we are the envy  
of thuh world.  
(1.1)

AUD: h-h [-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h] h-h-h-h (2.1)

DQ: [Thuh United States- .hh]  
(0.3)

DQ: 1→ Some of Senator Bentsen's supporters laugh  
at that. (1.1) They laugh at that because they  
don't believe that thuh United States of  
America (0.5) is thee envy (0.3) of thuh  
world.

2→ hh Well I can tell ya .hh thee American  
people. (0.4) think. (0.3) thee United  
States of America (.) is thee  
en [vy (.) of thuh world.  
AUD: [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx (9.5)

<sup>12</sup>A similar response to booing appears in Atkinson (1984a, p. 147). Responses of this sort are also used to counter other disaffiliative responses, such as derisive laughter. For example:

The same two-part structure and related practices are used: A first component (beginning at arrow 1) explicates and marginalizes the laughter as coming from "Senator Bentsen's supporters," followed by a counterposition (arrow 2) attributed to "the American

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 Extract 15. Tory Party Conference, 13 Oct. 1981, Mike Truman, 0:03:55
 

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MT: As Leopold Amory said to Neville Chamberlain  
I s[ay to you:, h YOU SAT HERE TOO LONG.=  
AUD: [z-z-z

AUD: =z-z-[zz]=  
MT: [for ANY GOOD YOU MIGHT'VE BEEN DOING]

AUD: =zzbzbb[bBBB]=  
MT: [BECAU:SE I SAY: (an) LET US HAVE (DONE) WITH YOU]

AUD: =BBBB[BB]BBBbBBBBb-b=  
MT: [IN THUH NAME OF GO:D GO:::]

AUD: =[b-b-b- ((dissolves into murmur))  
MOD: [Thank you Mister Truman.

---

not occur unless the speaker intervenes and does something in between to elicit applause.<sup>13</sup>

Speakers have other ways of explicitly responding to booing besides straightforwardly disputing it. For example, in Extract 14, when Bush is booed for a comment about Dukakis's environmental record, he jokingly complains to the moderator about it (see arrows). By issuing a complaint, Bush "turns the tables" on those who are booing. That is, he ignores the substance of the objection raised by the audience's boo in favor of treating the booing itself as objectionable. By doing so jokingly, he also elicits appreciative laughter from the audience.

Despite the advantages of explicitly responding to booing, such responses were infrequent in

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people." This contrast structure also receives applause and thus transforms audience disaffiliation into affiliation.

<sup>13</sup> Although applause is often followed by booing, I have not found a single instance in my data of audience members clapping in direct response to an initial boo. This may be due in part to general principles governing the relative positioning of these actions. The absence of delayed/competitive clapping may also have to do with the particular sequential environment established by an initial booing response. When audience members boo a remark, two divergent viewpoints are on the interactional table: (1) the speaker's position, and (2) the counterposition expressed by the boosers. In this environment, the meaning of applause may be equivocal: While clapping may appear to compete with the boosers and thus support the speaker, it may also appear to express approval of the boosers and thus oppose the speaker. Hence, audience members may avoid clapping in this environment because the sequential context renders such a response ambiguous (cf. Schegloff 1984).

my data, occurring in only 5 out of 33 instances. In each case, the booing was comparatively forceful or aggressive, either because it began promptly without any prior audience response (as in Extracts 13 and 14), was unusually lengthy, or some combination of these. Thus, explicit responses were not only infrequent; they were employed in a discriminating manner to deal with the more forceful booing episodes.

Why do speakers generally decline to respond explicitly to booing? Although explicit responses may be rhetorically effective, they also appear to have certain drawbacks. An explicit response necessarily calls attention to the fact that booing has occurred. Speakers may choose to avoid this by declining to respond explicitly if the booing was not particularly prominent or noticeable in the first place. Furthermore, an explicit response may require the speaker to momentarily halt the forward trajectory of the speech. For the speaker, this may be an unwelcome digression, and it may hinder resumption of the original course of argument. Finally, insofar as an explicit response treats the audience as a ratified participant in the event, it may encourage future expressions of disapproval.

#### *Implicit Defenses: Talking Through Booing*

Speakers may also defend themselves against booing through less explicit means. For example, they may continue to talk through the booing and any incipiently disaffiliative responses that may precede it. A dramatic instance is shown in Extract 15 (see also Extracts 13 and 14). Continuing to talk is very different from the way speakers deal with applause. Atkinson (1985, p. 162)

Extract 16. Bentsen-Quayle Debate, 5 Oct. 1988, 0:36:25

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01 DQ: Senator Bentsen talks about recapturing thuh foreign  
 02 hh markets. .hh Well I'll tell ya one way that we're  
 03 not gonna recapture thuh foreign markets 'n that is  
 04 if in fact we have another Jimmy Carter grain embargo.  
 05 .hhhhhhh[hh Jimmy-]  
 06 AUD: [x x x-x]xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx[xxxxxxxx-x-x] (3.3)  
 07 AUD: [bbbbbbbBBBBB]= [bbbbbbbBBBBB]=  
 08 =[BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBbbbbb-b-b-b-b-b-b]-b-b (3.2)=  
 09 DQ: [Jimmy Carter- Jimmy Carter grain embargo]  
 10 AUD: =BULL::[:::: ((two persons jeering))  
 11 DQ: [Jimmy Carter grain embargo set the American  
 12 farmer back....

---

reported that talking through applause is “an extremely rare occurrence” and is done by few public figures, undoubtedly because most speakers reap the benefits of applause by remaining silent and thus maximizing its conspicuousness and duration. For booing, however, talking-through is the standard response, and it has the opposite effect. By talking-through, booing is not permitted to unfold in the clear and is thus made less conspicuous and perhaps also less lengthy than it might have been.<sup>14</sup>

There is one prominent exception to this general tendency to compete vocally with booing. When the booing occurs together with applause, speakers generally remain silent throughout both responses, at least as long as the applause is underway. This pattern is evident in Extracts 5, 6, 10, and 12. However, if the clapping dies out and is superseded by booing, speakers often begin talking through the booing, as in Extract 16.

After Quayle attacks the Carter grain embargo (line 04) and takes an inbreath in preparation for further talk (line 05), clapping begins (line 06). This prompts Quayle to abort his next utterance after producing the first word (“Jimmy-”), thus making way for the applause. Quayle avoids talking during the ensuing applause (line 06) and he remains silent even when booing begins to unfold simultaneously with the clapping (line 07). However, just as the applause begins to die out

(at the end of line 06), Quayle resumes his previously aborted utterance (line 09) even though booing is still underway (line 08). Thus, Quayle systematically refrains from talking during the affiliative response and while both responses are unfolding simultaneously, but as soon as booing emerges as the sole response he proceeds to talk through it.

#### DISCUSSION: APPLAUSE, BOOING, AND PREFERENCE ORGANIZATION

Booing differs from applause in the way it emerges in the course of an ongoing speech and in its consequences for the subsequent trajectory of a speech. The differential consequences are plainly a manifestation of speakers' efforts to accommodate favorable responses and oppose unfavorable and potentially damaging responses. It is less clear why these audience responses emerge in such distinctive ways in the first place. Why do clappers usually act promptly and independently, while boosers tend to wait until other audience behaviors are underway?

These patterns may result in part from the immediate sequential environment, especially the remarks that immediately precede each response type. Booed remarks are not always formatted in a way that enables audience members to anticipate their completion. The absence of projectable completion points should inhibit prompt responses and may thus explain the patterns of delay and mutual monitoring in booing. Nonprojectability can thus account for the delayed response to a brief derisive reference embedded in a nonhostile statement (e.g., Extract 3). However, embedded criticisms make up a small proportion (4 out of 33) of the objects booed in my sample. In the vast majority of cases, the focal

<sup>14</sup>The “dampening effect” of talking-through is even more significant when the mass media are present. As long as the speaker is talking, technical staff are less apt to adjust the microphones to raise the volume of the audience response, or to switch cameras for an audience reaction shot. Thus, when media technologies are in use, talking-through helps to ensure that the speaker will remain the primary focus of visual and auditory attention.



remark encompasses a full syntactic unit that seems to be projectable. Indeed, because booing is usually preceded by other audience responses that begin in a timely fashion, there is no general problem with projectability — *it is the booing in particular that remains delayed*. Hence, nonprojectability may account for a few instances, but not the overall pattern.

Another possible explanation involves broader contextual factors such as the institutional and social structural environment at hand, e.g., if the speech takes place before television cameras, or the speaker occupies a position of high social status. Such factors could inhibit audience expressions of disapproval, resulting in a tendency to delay booing. The difficulty with the status explanation is that the pattern of delay seems to hold even during daytime talk shows in which the speakers are often ordinary persons from the studio audience. And the relevance of television cameras, although plausible, does not explain why similar patterns have been documented for related activities in nonformal contexts, such as ordinary conversation.

Many of the sequential properties that distinguish applause and booing are, in fact, remarkably similar to features that distinguish statements of agreement and disagreement in ordinary conversation. Although collectively produced applause/booing and individually produced agreement/disagreement are by no means identical activities, both are responsive displays of affiliation/disaffiliation, so it is not unreasonable to compare them. In conversation, agreements and disagreements exhibit several systematic structural differences that have been analyzed under the rubric of “preference organization” (Pomerantz 1984; Sacks 1987). Agreements tend to be produced promptly, in an unqualified manner, and are treated as requiring no special explanation or account. Disagreements, by contrast, typically are delayed, qualified, and accountable. Similar features distinguish many other affiliative/disaffiliative responses, such as acceptance/rejection of requests, invitations, offers, and proposals (Davidson 1984, 1990; Drew 1984; Wootton 1981), responses to self-deprecations (Pomerantz 1984, pp. 77–95), compliments (Pomerantz 1978), and attempts to guess bad news (Schegloff 1988) (for an overview, see Heritage 1984, pp. 265–80).<sup>15</sup>

The positional asymmetry between affiliative and disaffiliative actions is a robust and strongly conventionalized feature of conversational interactions. The pattern has been found across a wide range of affiliative/disaffiliative activities. The asymmetrical pattern also remains essentially constant across diverse speakers and relational contexts. Thus, even when the disaffiliating party has comparatively high status and power — such as a mother rejecting the request of her four-year-old child — the dominant party usually responds in the standard format, i.e., with a pause or some nondisaffiliative talk before the disaffiliation (Wootton 1981). Perhaps the most compelling evidence that this positional asymmetry is a standardized convention derives from the fact that when a response is relevant, any delay — even a brief silence — may be taken as foreshadowing an as-yet-unspoken disaffiliation (Pomerantz 1984, pp. 76–77; Davidson 1984).

Studies of preference organization thus suggest a third explanation for the present findings, an explanation that involves not the sequential or institutional environment in which applause and booing occur, but rather the intrinsic nature of these activities. Applause and booing are, in the first instance, displays of affiliation and disaffiliation, respectively. Because they lack any lexical content, they are “pure” expressions of affiliation/disaffiliation. Accordingly, some of their organizational features may result from this elementary fact. More specifically, one of the central distinctions between applause and booing — namely, their positioning vis à vis the remarks they are responding to — may be a product of general interactional principles that organize displays of affiliation and disaffiliation across diverse contexts.

Preference organization, because of its institutionalized asymmetries, can also shed light on why different coordination processes tend to give rise to applause and booing. Given that *affiliation* is usually expressed *promptly*, mutual monitoring is ill-suited to affiliative activity because such monitoring is time-consuming and would create a substantial time lag. Hence, an independent decision-making process is the only method of coordination that can generate applause within the temporal constraint posed by its affiliative character. By contrast, given the tendency to *delay disaffiliation*, an independent decision-mak-

<sup>15</sup> Agreements and disagreements, acceptances and rejections, and the like may be characterized, respectively, as “preferred” and “dispreferred” responses.

However, these terms do not refer to the subjective orientations of the coparticipants; they refer to institutionalized ways of enacting these responses.

ing scenario is difficult to implement because as the objectionable item's completion recedes in time, so does the coordination point it provides. This time lag allows mutual monitoring to guide the onset of booing, enabling other responses (murmurs, heckling, applause) to intervene and serve as "triggers."<sup>16</sup>

Finally, both preference organization and incentive structures account for another organizational difference between applause and booing: Although applause ordinarily lasts for about eight seconds (Atkinson 1984b, pp. 374–75), booing rarely continues for more than three seconds. This durational disparity may derive in part from the general tendency, suggested by research on preference organization, for disaffiliative actions to be less forceful, i.e., to be qualified, mitigated, or otherwise "softened" compared to affiliative actions. Moreover, because preference organization also results in delay, mutual monitoring, and a slow start for booing, that response initially sounds weak and hence is likely to attract few subsequent starters, leaving the small number of boopers isolated and likely to drop out relatively quickly.

In summary, various differences between applause and booing, especially with respect to their positioning, can be explained by highly general interactional practices — namely those of preference organization — that condition acts of affiliation and disaffiliation across diverse contexts. This positional asymmetry provides in turn for different coordination processes to guide the onset of these responses. Accordingly, the sequential structure of interaction embodies a robust framework of temporally ordered opportunity spaces within which particular activities, including collective activities like applause and booing, are managed. Given that different processes are available for coordinating these collective activities, the sequential structure of interaction can favor one process over another and hence provide for its selection. Audience responses are thus shaped and conditioned not only by incentive-based coordinating processes, but also by generic interactional structures.

<sup>16</sup> Studies of disaffiliative responses in ordinary conversation have also noted that delay facilitates mutual monitoring among participants. Thus, conversationalists adjust their behavior in light of information gleaned by monitoring their coparticipants in the brief time slot that precedes a disaffiliative response (Davidson 1984; Pomerantz 1984; Heritage 1984, pp. 265–80).

## CONCLUSION

I have dealt with a particular empirical phenomenon: How booing is organized in interactions between public speakers and their audiences. However, because the situation of choice in which booing emerges is by no means unique, the analysis has implications beyond the domain of audience conduct. Just as the prospective booper must decide whether to react independently to prominent junctures within a speech or wait and see what others do (each alternative being a reasonable way of dealing with the risk of isolation associated with responding), there are many other situations in which an actor must choose between alternative courses of action that appear equally workable and advantageous. In such situations, a decision can be made only through some noncalculative process like random selection, force of personal habit, or what is more relevant to the present case, adherence to a social convention or norm (Elster 1990, pp. 45–47). Because the choices made by audience members are not random or idiosyncratic, a conventional or normative explanation seems inevitable, and the practices associated with preference organization provide just such an explanation. Of course, preference organization may originate from distinct incentives associated with affiliative and disaffiliative actions. Indeed, the practices of preference organization enable interactants to maximize bonds of social solidarity while minimizing conflict (Heritage 1984, pp. 265–80). However, preference organization is not merely the aggregate result of an array of calculated decisions by individual interactants; its asymmetries are deeply institutionalized conventions that are recognized, appreciated, and oriented-to by interactants themselves.

Explanations based on social conventions or norms have been criticized as inadequate to account for the details of human conduct. Decision theorists, for example, regard the appeal to norms as "ad hoc and ex post facto" (Elster 1986, p. 24). This criticism stands only when convention is invoked by the analyst without justification exogenous to the case under consideration. When specific conventions have been extensively documented in a range of circumstances that are formally similar to the case under examination, such conventions can serve as rigorous and defensible explanatory resources. Accordingly, additional descriptive research is needed to determine how conduct is patterned and organized within particular situations. A natural extension of the

present study would be to examine applause and booing in other contexts, such as sporting events, to see if the same asymmetries hold there as well.

Finally, my analysis challenges the traditional assumption that collective behavior, particularly in crowds and other public gatherings, is organizationally distinct from the rest of social behavior. Individuals in crowds are often presumed to act irrationally or in defiance of the norms and conventions that usually govern social conduct (Le Bon [1895] 1960; Blumer 1939; Smelser 1962; Turner and Killian 1987). These presumptions have been widely criticized (Couch 1968; Weller and Quarantelli 1973; McPhail 1991), and they have not stood up well in the face of close scrutiny of actual crowd behavior (Berk 1974; McPhail and Wohlstein 1986). The present study indicates that, for behaviors like booing, audience members act methodically and in accordance with broad societal conventions.

Insofar as human action is situated in interaction, at least one locus of commonality between "individual" and "collective" behaviors is the way component actions unfold in sequence. At that level, many commonalities exist between activities that may seem at first glance to be highly dissimilar. Thus, individual expressions of disagreement over the weather and audience booing in presidential debates share underlying sequential properties. Goffman (1964, 1983) anticipated such commonalities in his programmatic writings, and researchers in the conversation analytic tradition (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 1987) have elaborated on the idea that

the interaction order is a species of social institution in its own right, one that predates and is constitutive of most other societal institutions, and possesses its own indigenous organizational properties and conventional practices. Subsequent comparative investigations have documented substantial commonalities in the way interactions proceed in both casual and institutional settings, together with systematic adaptations to specific institutional contingencies (Atkinson and Drew 1979; Atkinson 1982; Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Clayman 1989; Drew and Heritage forthcoming; Garcia 1991; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991; Maynard 1991; Whalen and Zimmerman 1987; Wilson 1991). Such commonalities to the structure of interaction may elude investigators working within traditional subdisciplinary specializations, who need to be reminded that findings initially expressed in highly specific terms (e.g., as findings about "collective behavior") may be derivative of, and subsumable under, more general principles of human conduct.

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#### APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPT NOTATIONAL CONVENTIONS

The speech excerpts in this paper were transcribed with notational conventions adapted from the standard conventions used in conversation analysis, with additional symbols developed for audience responses (see also Atkinson, 1984a, pp. 189-190). The transcripts are designed to capture the details of speech and audience behavior as they naturally occurred, although the excerpts in this paper have been slightly simplified to enhance readability. Below is a guide to the transcription symbols used here; for a more detailed exposition, see Atkinson and Heritage (1984, pp. ix-xvi).

##### *Symbols Denoting Characteristics of Speech Delivery*

S: <u>That's our policy.</u>	<u>Underlined items</u> were markedly stressed.
S: That's our po:policy.	<u>Colon(s)</u> indicate the prior sound was prolonged.
S: THAT'S our policy.	<u>Capital letters</u> mark increased volume.
S: That's our- our policy.	<u>A hyphen</u> denotes a glottal stop or "cut-off" of sound.
S: .hhh That's our policy. So hhhh in conclusion	<u>Strings of "h"</u> mark audible breathing. The longer the string, the longer the breath. A period preceding denotes inbreath; no period denotes outbreath.
S: That's (.) our policy. (1.3)	<u>Numbers in parentheses</u> denote elapsed silence in tenths of seconds; a period denotes a micropause of less than 0.2 seconds.
AUD: xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx	
S: That's our policy.=	<u>Equal signs</u> indicate that one event followed the other with no intervening silence.
AUD: =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx	

S: That's our [policy.]      Brackets mark the onset and termination of simultaneous activities.  
 AUD:                            [xxxxxxxx]xx-x  
 S: That's our (            )      Open parentheses indicate transcriber's uncertainty as to what was  
      So (in conclusion)        said. Words in parentheses represent a best guess as to what was heard.

### *Symbols Denoting Audience Responses*

xxxxxxxxxx	Applause.
bbbbbbbbbb	Booing.
hhhhhhhhhh	Laughter.
ssssssssss	Hissing.
zzzzzzzzzz	A "buzz" consisting of various uncoordinated sounds.
x x	An isolated response; single claps or laugh particles.
h h	
b-b-b-b-b-b	A weak response.
x-x-x-x-x-x	
bbbbbbbbbb	A moderate response.
xxxxxxxxxx	
BBBBBBBBBB	A strong response.
XXXXXXXXXX	
bbBBBBbbbb-b (1.3)	The number of letters roughly corresponds to the length of the response; numbers in parentheses following a response provide a more accurate characterization of response length.
hhHHhh-h (0.9)	
hhhhxhxhxhxhxhxhx	A mixed noncompetitive response: laughter, then laughter and applause simultaneously, then applause only.
xxxx [xxxxxxxx] [bbbbbbbb]bbbb	A mixed competitive response: first applause, then applause and booing simultaneously, then booing only. Brackets mark the onset and termination of competition.

### *Datum and Party Identification*

Donahue, 5 Feb. 1992, 0:08:45

PD: How do you find economic conditions in Europe?

BC: With great difficulty.

AUD: hhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-h

#### *Datum Identification:*

Each datum is identified by the event in which it appeared (here an episode of Donahue), its date of broadcast, and its approximate location within the event (this extract begins 8 minutes and 45 seconds into the program).

#### *Party Identification:*

Most public speakers are identified by their initials. "MOD" denotes moderator, "JRN" denotes journalist, and "AUD" denotes audience.

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