

FINDING THE GAME: A CONVERSATION ANALYSIS OF LAUGHABLES
AND PLAY FRAMES IN COMEDIC IMPROV

by

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(Under the Direction of Ruth Harman)

ABSTRACT

This thesis uses a conversation analytic (CA) approach to analyze the function of laughter in organizing live improv performances, focusing on laughable turns. In particular the study examines the role of play frames in laughter. Play is defined by non-serious sequences signaled by metacommunication or contextualization cues. These cues act in conjunction with projectability strategies used by performers to ‘find’ or co-construct the ‘game of the scene,’ which is defined by repetition of non-serious behavior. The study uses CA methods to analyze transcribed video tape data of performances of a local Athens improv troupe. The study concludes that audience members rely on projectable cues to sequence en-masse turn-taking and performers make heavy use of meta-messages to signal salient patterns to fellow performers. In conjunction, projectability and paralinguistic cues combine to describe how improvisers identify and repeat patterns to play conversational ‘games.’

INDEX WORDS: Improv, Conversation analysis, Play frame, Humor, Audience laughter

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DEDICATION

To the gagsters, the goofballs, and grad students -- and anyone else 'playing the game.'

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Improvisational theater, or improv, is a highly interactive, often very funny performance event. While improv does not necessarily have to be funny (and originally was not), it has come to be heavily associated with comedy and humor. It is possible that there is some quality of the practice itself which lends the experience to laughter, or at least creates the necessary conditions for laughter to emerge. I argue this necessary condition is play. Play is a special form of interaction defined largely by its contrast to other forms of interaction which are presumably more 'serious' and thus subject to the expectations of a serious sequence of interaction. Play meanwhile possesses none of these expectations but instead frames the interaction as an event which defies these normal expectations, creating the conditions for humor (or its measurable counterpart laughter), which depends on unexpectedness and non-seriousness.

This thesis examines the role of these frames of expectation created by play or 'play frames' in improvisational theater in order to better understand the function of laughter in interaction. Play frames are frames of discourse in which participants behave non-seriously and the sequencing of conversation possesses none of the consequences of a normal, serious sequence. They are indicated by metacommunication, which is conveyed usually through contextualization cues, as defined by Gumperz (1992), which include features of language (i.e., elements of linguistic structure such as words and syntax) and those that go along with language (i.e., paralinguistic features such as pitch, tempo, laughter, and nonverbal signals), which are

present in all interaction. At the most basic level, contextualization cues reflect a shift in behavior which indicates a shift from the normal, baseline frame of interaction into one which serves a more specific purpose. For example, a change from casual conversational norms to formal pronunciation and diction is an example of a shift into a more formal frame which may be necessary in a particular situation (e.g. a courtroom, or an interview). The concept of frame which is used here was most elaborated by Goffman (1974) and describes a person's expectation coming into a particular situation. Goffman describes broader frames which can include socio-political structures, or even the physical environment, as well as narrower frames such as a single phrase and the way it is produced. For instance, if asking a friend if they are going to the movie, a participant would require information about the broader frame of what it means to "go to the movie" (i.e. going to a movie theater, presumably with a group of friends with established plans to go). With contextualization cues, the speaker can indicate exactly what they mean by their question. "You're going to the movie?" indicates a question with rising intonation question. If one were to say "You're going to the movie?" the frame established through emphasis of "you" in addition to rising intonation would be disbelief and possibly dispreference for their going. Finally, if one were to say declaratively, with finality "You're going to the movie." there would be no doubt about the perlocutionary effect of the statement: the speaker is commanding the listener to attend the movie.

A play frame, in contrast to a normal or serious frame, establishes a sense of non-seriousness through contextualization cues. The most salient of these cues is laughter, which most often suggests non-seriousness (though there are also many instances of laughter in serious situations). For instance, in the following excerpt from Schegloff's (2001) study on seriousness

and non-seriousness in conversation, Carol is greeted by Sherri and Ruthie. Sherri then observes that Carol didn't get an ice cream sandwich, and then jokes that she didn't get one for her and Ruthie. The non-seriousness of the exchange is indicated by laughter and aspiration, indicated by h's (see appendix for full transcription conventions):

```

4 Sherri You didn' get en icecream sanwich,
5 Carol I kno:w, hh I decided that my body didn't need it,
6 Sherri Yes but our di:d=
7 Sherri =hh heh-heh-heh [heh-heh-heh [.hhih
8 (??) [ehh heh heh [

```

Schegloff, 2001 (p. 1948)

In this case, laughter and aspiration serve as metacommunication; contextualization cues for the play frame bracket the interaction as non-serious. Bateson [1955 (1972)] was the first to describe play frames while observing two monkeys play fighting. It was clear to him (and, he argued, anyone watching) that the fighting was not real. Instead there was some aspect of the behavior which framed the overall behavior, or a metabehavior, that indicated the primary action (fighting) was not serious. While metabehavior is a broad term that can include play frames in animals, this study focuses on metacommunication. Glenn (2003) defines play as “an interactional state created by metacommunicative signals which frame or bracket messages as nonserious” (p. 137). According to this definition, in addition to non-seriousness play requires metacommunication to indicate the non-seriousness. This metacommunication can be described in terms of contextualization cues, and in order to describe these cues I employ the methods of conversation analysis (CA), which allow for a finer gloss of interaction which includes qualities of talk and voice that extend beyond the word.

CA provides the tools to notice and describe meaning beyond the word or clause in interaction by annotating qualities of voice such as intonation, emphasis, aspiration, loudness, and pitch, using an “unmotivated” approach to empirical data which will ultimately reveal the systematic structures of interaction (Glenn, 2003, p. 36-38). CA is primarily concerned with how language functions within social interaction, particularly as a means to accomplish social action. Given this, language must be analyzed within the particular situation in which it occurs, and every interactional situation reveals different social goals and means for achieving these goals through conversation. To describe this the concept of ‘preference structure’ is used to study the means by which a conversation is sequenced according to the goals of its participants. For instance, in the above example, if one speaker asks if his friend is going to the movie (“You’re going to the movie?”) the goal of the speaker is to elicit an appropriate typed response to the question, which in this case would be some sort of an answer consisting of “Yes,” “No,” or possibly “Maybe” along with an explanation. Many turn-taking units can be broken into adjacency pairs which have specific expectations of sequencing and types of response (Schegloff, 2007: 13). The adjacency pair is also a means by which to track the preference structure. If the asker of the question wanted a ride to the movie, or phrased their question more directly such as “You’re going to the movie, right?” it would be clear that the preferred response would be an affirmative “Yes.” On the other hand a dispreferred response would be “No” because it would differ from the first speaker’s expectation and goal within the conversation. Because play is defined as non-serious and is not bound to the same consequences of a serious interchange, preference structure can be useful in explaining the difference between these consequences. Sequences can be described as ‘serious’ (or “normal”) or ‘non-serious,’ and the

shifts between them can be recognized, such as in Schegloff's (2001) example with Carol and Sherri.

Using CA methods, this study hopes to better understand play and humor through empirical data collection and qualitative analysis. In the past fifteen years or so, there has been an increased focus on play frames and humor within conversation analytic discourse models to determine shifts in alignments between participants in fields of application ranging from education (Hillman 2011), to parenting (Gordon 2008), to television programming (Chovanec 2017). There has been uncertainty about what exactly constitutes a play frame, despite its semi-regular use within the literature (Partington 2006), suggesting more studies are needed to describe it, and there has been a call for greater empirical data in conversational laughter to bring to bear in developing theories of humor (Glenn 2003). This study hopes to offer additional data in service of theories pertaining to play frames, humor studies, and improv studies.

Improv is the chosen field in which to study play as it pertains to laughter because it is a spontaneous form of interaction which heavily incorporates both play and laughter. Improv (or improvisational theater) is a theatrical performance in which performers (or 'players') create a scene with no script or rehearsal, and usually from audience suggestions about characters, locations, or conflict. Improv grew out of improvisational methods for theater training, and the byproduct of the methods often turns out to be funny, even though this was not the original use of the practice. Even though over time the practice has become more associated with being funny and is often considered to be a form of comedy, there are still many instances of improv performance which are not humorous but still use the same rules of spontaneous scene-generation. In both cases, most practices of improv are either based on or acknowledge the

importance of ‘games’ within improv. Some improv performances use games to structure a scene -- in which the scene resembles more of an actual game than a dramatic ‘scene.’ Somewhat confusingly, there is also the concept of ‘game of the scene’ which is identified by most improv practitioners (e.g. Halpern, Close, & Johnson, 1994; Hines, 2016; Napier, 2004; Salinsky & Frances-White 2008; Wright, 2007). While game of the scene is not easily and explicitly defined or agreed upon by these different practitioners, most agree that it forms the *je ne sais quoi* of the scene, or what makes it funny. Arguably the game of the scene heavily involves the concept of play and non-seriousness because, even anecdotally, one would expect a game needs to be ‘played.’ Furthermore, because the game of a scene is not necessarily agreed upon or easily defined, it must be actively found (or constructed) within the scene by those playing it. This study examines instances of finding the game of the scene and how play relates to audience laughter. The study’s data comes from the humorous (vs. serious or dramatic) practice of improv found in Improv Athens, a student-run improv group at University of Georgia. Improv Athens is an award-winning improv troupe and is currently one of the top eight college improv troupes in the nation. As such, they are a good resource for quality improv data. They are also very funny, from both personal experience and simply by sheer laughter garnered from their performances. This suggests they might be a good data source for playful, laughable interaction.

This study investigates the role of play frames as they are used in improv as they pattern with laughter, which is highly associated with humor (often thought to be the physiological response to humor), and as such the study hopes to offer some additional data to serve theories of humor. Humor is a folk category which is not easily definable partly because it is a perceptual, subjective experience which differs from person to person. Laughter, on the other hand is

something measurable and readily identifiable. Many theories of humor view laughter a resultant from a humorous event or turn in conversation, and so they may focus on why a particular turn was humorous. This study more closely examines the question the question of how these turns are humorous, or more specifically how they are laughable. This in turn raises some questions about long-standing theories of humor. One of the more recent contributions to the field of humor has been a focus on non-seriousness as a requisite for humorousness (e.g. Chafe, 2007; Morreall, 2009). The condition of non-seriousness is the focus of this study, embodied in the theoretical construct of a play frame, which constitutes meta-messages (or contextualization cues) that signal a non-serious sequence. Because improv is humorous and heavily based on the concept of play, it is an obvious but relatively untouched research area to explore the role of ‘play frames’ in the co-construction of humor between performer and audience. Improv may also hold a greater significance, given its role as a performance which is situated somewhere between theater and conversation, possessing qualities of both interactional conversational style and public performance for an audience.

The employment of ‘frames’ in the theories of Erving Goffman help to explain the hybridity and intertextuality of the form. Goffman focused on the sociological question of performed identity in everyday life, using dramaturgical concepts such as performance, audience, roles and cues to understand the social exchanges of everyday life (Goffman, 1959; Tannen, 2019). The concept of a ‘frame’ requires a form of expectation or a separation from the event from those either witnessing it or performing it: for an object or experience to be framed, there must be a frame around it. A frame therefore embeds experience. In theater, when the proscenium arch was introduced, it formed a literal frame which separated the performance from

the audience both physically and cognitively in terms of embedding the performance space within its own realm of reality (Bennett, 1997). Spectators peered in through the ‘fourth wall’ upon a scene contained unto itself. Framing defined theater as we know it, and Goffman used theater in turn to define our daily interactions dramaturgically, arguing that theater reflects explicitly our implicit literacy of social interaction. Similarly Richard Schechner (1977) proposes that theater is a fundamental human process with tendencies shared across cultures and that there is “a universal dramatic structure parallel to social process: drama is that art whose subject, structure and action is social process” (p. 121). Given the tendencies of interactional analysis and drama to mirror each other, a spontaneous dramatic art form such as improv is a fruitful center of research, providing a nexus between social conversational normativity and the performed awareness of such: in short, improv could itself be viewed as an active, framed discourse analysis of the society at large, or at the very least representing the everyday performative literacy, akin to that employed by those writing conversational scripts for television shows (Stokoe, 2008).

In fact, the goals of David Shepherd, creator of *The Compass*, the first professional improv theater, were nothing short of presenting an awareness of norms through spontaneous drama (Sweet, 1987). He sought to “hold up a mirror to society” and show the bourgeoisie their true selves through the explicit performance of their unconsciously held beliefs and values. (In part, this is what they did; but it also became apparent that the revolutionary, workingman’s theater Shepherd had in mind was a far cry from the affluent, bourgeois University of Chicago students who formed the primary clientele of the theater.) At the very least, we can say there is a dialogicality (as described by Bakhtin, e.g. Bakhtin 1981) between performance and everyday

social interaction, and improv is invariably a recursive medium of expression and reception which makes it both complicated and valuable in understanding both performed identities and identities of performers (Trester, 2008). It is also descriptive of the way in which conversational norms are represented or rebuked. This is both what makes improv valuable societally as well as from a research perspective.

Improvisation in a broader sense has also held interest for those with applications in organizational communication (Arterburn, 2012), language socialization in children (Duranti & Black, 2011), and cognitive models of coordination in artificial intelligence (Magerko et al., 2009; Baumer & Magerko, 2009). Improv performance is also an end unto itself and a social practice engaged in by millions for the sake of expression, spectated by millions more for the sake of entertainment and laughter. This context of improv-as-entertainment, and specifically comedic entertainment, will be the focus of this study, and a brief overview of its history and principles will be discussed in the literature review to better understand the context. Because the context contains an expectation of laughter, it is useful to consider how play and laughter overlap.

Given the assumption that humor depends on non-seriousness, and laughter in turn patterns with humorous sequence, I hypothesize that laughter in improv performance will align with instances of play frames or non-serious sequences. Specifically a few particular kinds of contextualization cues are used to indicate these play frames, such as laughter itself, smile voice, complementary or contrasting pitch and loudness, and repetition of speech patterns or behavior. Because improv is also different from day-to-day interaction, I expect there to be particular cues present that are found in public performance, especially projectable cues, or cues that indicate

(project) when it is the audience's turn to respond (i.e. laugh). These preliminary findings originate from the bottom-up approach of CA, which is data-driven. The investigation was also driven by key research questions which are informed by the literature review, which also structure the sequence of the thesis. Originally I sought to investigate why improv is considered 'humorous,' and whether or not there was something about the form itself that lent itself to laughter, but these broader questions were narrowed down to more specific ones regarding metacommunication between players and the audience and player-to-player:

1. Are laughable moments instances of dispreference in sequence organization? This is suggested by Stokoe (2008).
2. To what degree is audience laughter projected (or guided) by particular contextualization cues from the performers?
3. Are humorous or laughable moments signaled by the presence of a play frame, indicated by contextualization cues? If so, how do improv players engage in play frames to create humorous (non-serious), laughable moments?

Each chapter of analysis (chapters 4-6) focuses on one of these questions. The literature review situates the current study within the background of other research in relevant fields which guides the analysis and discussion of greater relevance outside of improv.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I will begin with a discussion of the history of improv, and its operating principles which inform this study. This provides the context of social practice of the performances I recorded. Within this context, the concept of ‘humor’ is widely operative, be it termed ‘funny’ or ‘comedic’ to describe the style of performance that improv is. For instance, the performers themselves will often preface the show with a suggestion that some of the scenes tend to be very funny. The concept of humor is also closely related to the phenomena of laughter, although the two are not the same, and I will make this clear in through the review of literature. Finally, the analytical categories of frames, footing, keying, and play frames will be discussed in the final section of the literature review. Improv is considered a comedic (or humorous) performance genre in which laughter is expected and part of the dialogue between performer and audience. Play frames are thought to be indicative of non-seriousness, which in turn is considered a precondition for humor. As such, this chapter will end with a review of methodologies related to and describing laughter and play frames, in order to continue this line of research in the analysis chapters.

2.1 Improv & Performance Studies

In theater, improv consists of creating scenes without a script and in real-time. This requires a significant amount of coordination between players (those performing an

improvisation) as well as between the performers and the audience. Most improv performers solicit suggestions from the audience which they then respond to by creating a scene; this is partly to create something unique while offering audience input and partly to prove the performers' bona fides that they did not script the scene. Historically, improv was most often used to rehearse for or write scripted material, and its modern-day form grew out of Renaissance-era commedia dell'arte, which was a traveling form of theater based on set character types who were put into different scenarios. It wasn't until the mid-twentieth century that improv began to be appreciated as an artform on its own, but eventually it gained widespread recognition. There are two distinct schools of thought that gave rise to modern American improv: one American, and one British.

Widely considered the mother of American improv, Viola Spolin used techniques inspired by Neva Boyd's playful group exercises in Chicago's Hull House to teach drama through the Works Progress Administration's Recreational Project in Chicago. Most of her students had no background in theater and so she sought a totally intuitive, non-psychological approach to theater and interaction, which would come to be referred to as improv (Spolin, 1999). Improv was something that anyone could do, hence she used the term 'player,' which maintained the essence of improv as a social practice based on 'game.' Spolin preferred to structure experience around games because she felt they were the means by which players could achieve spontaneity, creativity, and freedom while learning (Spolin, 1999, p. 4-5). Essential to her approach was the principle of non-judgment, or creating a space in which participants could truly play and achieve total personal freedom. This depended on relinquishing the notions of approval and disapproval, which focused one's energies on what others thought of them, rather than paying attention to

their own intuition to achieve full spontaneity. By playing a game, players could divert their attention from approval or disapproval, or even “acting,” and focus on playing, achieving an objective in a collaborative setting.

Keith Johnstone was an extremely influential British improv pioneer whose worldview was very much sympathetic to Spolin’s. Johnstone was originally an educator who switched career paths and began directing theater. From his experience in the classroom, he transferred to theater his notion of non-interference, in which he would allow his students to do anything they wanted, so long as they didn’t hurt themselves (Johnstone, 1979). An environment of non-interference allowed players’ childlike imagination (or intuition) to be unleashed. To harness this energy, he would use tactics similar to Spolin’s games to subvert people’s defenses and unleash the creative power of the subconscious, such as yelling random words to name every object in the room until the room itself began to be perceived differently (Johnstone, 1979, p. 13). Common amongst both of these improv educators was a principle of behavior for generating creativity and child-like spontaneity which depended on the notion of play.

Johnstone also emphasized the importance of ‘status’ in improv and argued that status was something fundamental to human nature. Humans are highly intelligent beings with a great capacity for violence living in close proximity with multitudes of other people, and as such we need rules or a social order to avoid conflict. This social order is most represented by the notion of status, or hierarchy. Johnstone argued that people love watching status conflict and status exchange in drama because it represents something about the natural order of human interaction. Moreover, he argued that two people become friends when they agree to play status games together, allowing the other to be higher status or imposing a higher status upon them, as a form

of solidarity (Johnstone, 1979, p. 35-36). By affecting a higher or lower status, he argues, people acknowledge a shared, mutual status. For Johnstone, status is particularly important in comedy, and he argues that a comedian is simply someone who is paid to raise or lower their own or someone else's status (1979, p. 39).

Both Spolin's and Johnstone's approach to theater through improvisation share many similarities despite Johnstone being unaware of Spolin's work while forming his practice. Both have been hugely influential in the current improv landscape and many of their ideas have become solidified into the cultural practice of improv. The environment of spontaneity, lack of judgment, and non-interference has been encapsulated by the concept of "Yes, and." "Yes, and" is a way of accepting an 'offer,' which is simply a proposal about the reality of the shared, imagined universe in the performance. By saying "yes" one agrees to the reality their fellow player has created, and by saying "and" one adds on to that reality. The 'offer' is a key concept in improv, which is conveniently compatible with the concept of project and preference/dispreference in conversation analysis (CA) (e.g. Schegloff, 2007). In CA conversation is a means for getting social action done, or accomplishing a particular 'project' or goal. Turns in a conversation that 'block' that project or make it harder to achieve represent dispreference, while those that support it or acquiesce to it represent preference. In improv, a 'preferred' preference structure is desirable -- one is to be aware of the project that your fellow player is trying to accomplish and not only allow them to complete it, but to be active in enabling it (to both "yes" and "and" their project). The fact that conversation analytic categories align with the functional (instructional) principles of improv is arguably no mere coincidence. Those participating in the act of improv need to possess a keen awareness of conversational turns,

alignment, and framing. Listening is a key skill in improv, in which one has to be able to see how offers “land” on fellow players, and to make clear when their offers “land” or are recognized (Hines, 2016, p. 19). Players must be naturally attuned to conversational preference structure.

There are now improv performances across the world informed by both Spolin and Johnstone. Spolin’s son Paul Sills, along with David Shepherd, created the first professional improv theater, *The Compass*, in Chicago in 1955, which saw the first professional use of Spolin’s material (Sweet, 1987). Sills later went on to found *Second City*, which gave instruction and a start to a pantheon of popular American comedic personalities such as John Belushi, Bill Murray, Steve Carrell, among many others. The story of improv is interwoven with the story of popular American humor; our notions of humor both inform our enjoyment of improv and are informed by it. There is currently a wide variety of improv performed throughout the world, including short-form games inspired by Spolin, more complex competitions such as *TheatreSports* created by Johnstone, and long-form improv such as the *Harold* created by Del Close (a *Second City* alum)(Halpern, Close, & Johnson, 1994; Leep, 2008). The improv troupe in this study does both short-form and long-form, but for the purposes of this study I focus on short-form for consistency and approachability.

2.2 Humor & Laughter

Although humor is a folk category, this study examines laughter through a lens in which humor is a helpful concept. Because many theories of humor are related to laughter, it is possible that they can be beneficial in describing moments which give rise to laughter. I will begin by looking at traditional theories of humor and move into the conversation analytic approach to

laughter, which treats laughter as a co-constructed social act, rather than a response to a particular stimulus. Not all laughter is presumed to be humorous, and neither is all humor presumed to precipitate laughter, yet there is an overlap in which both occur, which is to say humorous laughter. I argue that this is present in the instances of ‘non-serious’ laughter, or more specifically, that non-serious laughter most closely corresponds to the folk category of humor. But first, I will discuss the role that laughter plays in improv.

Improv is similar to everyday conversation on face-value in that there is interactional turn-taking, but the most notable and significant difference between the two is that there is an audience present. Improv is also different from many audience-based conversations or texts, such as public speaking or stand-up comedy in that there is both interaction between audience and performer and between multiple performers on stage, rather than a single performer interacting with the audience. In this context, improv will be considered a two-fold conversation: a conversation between performers, and a conversation between the performers collectively and the audience. These two conversations are ultimately part of a single moment, but are separated for analytical purposes.

Within the context of improv as a performance, there is an expectation of humorousness. At times it may even be reduced to the characterization of being ‘funny,’ belying other elements of the artform. For instance, Johnstone (1999) argues that good improv scenes include a huge range of emotions, and that performers who follow the laughter are misled and not very useful, whom he terms ‘gagsters.’ Del Close and Charna Halpern argue that to make good improv you simply need to be true, and that once you enact truthful scenes, many of them will inevitably be funny (so there’s no need to try to be funny) (Halpern, Close, & Johnson, 1994). These

cautionary explanations suggest that regardless of the method to achieve it, most performers and audiences associate improv with a humorous, funny, or at least laughable experience. It is possible that this experience is a matter of expectation, rather than method or form. Berger (1987) describes humor a bit tautologically, saying that humor is simply a frame which signals that what is contained therein is humorous. This may very well be applicable to improv: it is humorous because people expect it to be humorous (for whatever reason), and so they laugh. But the audience does not simply come to a performance to watch a sequence of events unfold within a distant or disconnected frame, as though watching a television screen. Instead, the fourth wall is permeable: audience receive input of what is deemed a laughable situation and in turn they supply input through laughter. The audience are active participants forming a dialog with the performers, and this dialog is instrumental in what I will define as ‘humor’ for the purposes of this study. In brief, I will define humor as an interactional game, signaled by non-serious laughter. Whether or not the laughable turn is itself humorous (as traditional theories argue) or the laughter itself creates a humorous frame remains to be seen, but for our purposes humor will be referred to only when there is laughter and a non-serious sequence or ‘play frame.’ While this study focuses on laughter specifically, it is worth briefly discussing the theoretical frameworks which inform our current definition of humor.

Broadly speaking there are three overarching philosophies of humor that form an ideological framework for many of those who study it: Superiority Theory, Relief Theory, and Incongruity Theory (J. Holt, 2008). As Raskin (1985) categorizes these theories, they can be divided into social-behavioral, psychoanalytical, and cognitive-perceptual theories, respectively; but importantly, they are not incompatible with one another. Relief Theory argues that humor

emerges from an emotional and psychological necessity, and laughter is a result of emotional suppression being relieved. This theoretical perspective is largely psychoanalytical, physiological, or biological and pertains to the laughter more so than the initiator of laughter. The proponents of Relief Theory include Freud (1960), Eastman (1936), Morreal (2009) and Chafe (2007), among others. Superiority Theory argues that people find things funny they feel superior to, and they laugh at those who experience misfortune, perhaps as a result of the “sudden glory” they have achieved over them (Hobbes, in J. Holt 2008). According to this theory, humor is by nature anti-social, a form of disparagement, and laughter is a result of superior adaptation (Darwin, 1899). Superiority Theory’s proponents include Aristotle (2012), Hobbes (1996), Rapp (1951), and debatably many contemporary practitioners, specifically stand-up comics.

The philosophical framework most commonly employed in social sciences is Incongruity Theory. Incongruity Theory argues that humor arises as a result of shaken up expectation: two schemas overlap to produce a paradoxical synthesis of the two, or reveal the unseen premises of one. An event is incongruent with one’s frame of expectation. Incongruity Theory originated in an essay by Immanuel Kant in which he said “laughter is an affection arising from sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing” (Kant, 1790, p. 177). This was further developed by Schopenhauer who made explicit the Incongruity Theory: “The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and the laugh itself is just the expression of this incongruity” (Schopenhauer, 1819, p. 76).

In linguistics, arguably the most influential theory of humor is the Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor or SSTH (Raskin 1985), which is based on Incongruity Theory. The SSTH was

expanded with more pragmatic concerns by Attardo (2001) into the General Theory of Verbal Humor or GTVH (Ruiz Gurillo & Alvarado Ortega, 2013). The SSTH argues that for a text to be humorous it must allow for two opposing scripts to be feasible at once, in which there is then a “switch” or “punchline” from the foregrounded script to the background script; in this sense it depends on incongruity between the expectation frame and the event frame.

Following Raskin’s (1985) SSTH the GTVH defines a script generally as “an organized complex of information about some entity” (Attardo, 2001, p. 2.) More specifically, a script contains information which is the prototypical knowledge of the entity being described. Attardo (2001) notes that scripts are often known as ‘frames.’ However, the term ‘frame’ used in this study is different from the concept of script (or frame) used in the GTVH in an important way. The definition of a script or frame is dependent upon the methodology used to describe it. Because the SSTH and GTVH are semantic theories, they rely on semantic constructs to define a script. In the SSTH a script is “equivalent to the lexical meaning of a word” (Attardo, 2001, p. 3). Different scripts are activated by different ‘handles’ or words which activate different lexical meanings within a semantic network. A joke is funny when there is ambiguity in the handles of the text, which activate two or more overlapping scripts which are also ‘opposed’ to one another (Attardo, 2001, p. 18). This forms the basis of the SSTH, which is also included in the GTVH, but the GTVH elaborates the original theory to include more pragmatic aspects which are outlined in terms of ‘knowledge resources’ including narrative strategy, situation, and the target of the joke, among others, which form a hierarchy of resources (with script opposition on top).

Though the GTVH has incorporated other knowledge resources that exist outside of the semantic resource of script opposition (SO), this is most often used in studies that incorporate the

model. The GTVH has been applied widely, to genre-expectations in telephone conversations (Antonopoulou & Sifianou, 2003), mistranslations in business signs (Al-Kharabsheh, 2008), and in-group identity construction (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005). However, it has also been criticized for being too unconstrained. The concept of a 'script' is not clearly defined, and a multitude of scripts can be evoked by any given situation. Moreover, the theory and its usage focuses almost entirely on cognitive information, while humans are interested in more than this while they converse (such as social information) (Partington, 2006, p. 35).

So from this body of research we can assume that for something to be humorous it should be (1) more or less sudden and (2) incongruent with our expectations (be it via script-opposition or not). However, this is not sufficient because there can be instances of sudden incongruent experiences which are not funny at all (e.g. a car accident). In addition to this we need to add the notion of non-seriousness. As Darwin notes, "a child would not laugh at a grave threat -- the stimulus must be light" (Darwin, 1899, p. 199). Numerous scholars build on this notion of non-seriousness to include that it should be a "comfortable" cognitive shift (Morreall 2009), or that the attitude of play is a possible precursor to the feeling of humor (Chafe 2007). At the very least we can acknowledge anecdotally that those scenes in which there is an incongruity with grave consequences, we do not find funny, but if the consequences are hidden from us, they are acceptably humorous (Frail, 2010). Or as John Wright puts it, laughter is a way of giving the "all clear" in an otherwise serious situation; we only find a situation funny if there's "no blood" (Wright, 2007). So we can add a third element to our criteria of humor: (3) non-seriousness or playfulness. It is this third element which is of primary interest to our study, and this element

necessarily requires more than one participant for humor to occur. If a joke is told in the forest and no one is there to laugh at it, is it still humorous? For the purposes of this study, I argue no.

While there are humorous situations which do not invoke laughter (Attardo, 2001), and non-humorous situations which do invoke laughter (E. Holt, 2013), there is a clear subset of humor acts that are indexed by laughter. In this study when 'humor' is used, what it really being referred to is laughter because it is what can be studied; moreover, in the situation studied, the context is largely non-serious. As Glenn (2003) argues, theories of humor should be built inductively from laughter as empirical data. Moreover, we may need to first separate the ideas of laughter and humor before reconsidering their overlap, which has been taken for granted. Specifically, laughter is often assumed to respond to a humorous turn, but it has been shown that laughter can function as a stimulus in its own right in the form of a contextualization cue (Glenn & Holt, 2017; Kotthoff, 2006; Jefferson, 1979). Within a conversation, laughter can function as a means to alleviate face-threat (Chovanec, 2017) or to create intimacy among a group (Coates, 2007). It can even be a means to deal with troubling situations, such as cancer treatment (Beach & Prickett, 2017). In these situations laughter clearly serves an interpersonal function. If laughter were merely a result of receiving a semantically humorous stimulus, the exchange would be largely transactional; instead laughter is clearly interactional (Partington, 2006).

In order to function properly, laughter requires an alignment of and appraisal between the parties involved. To this end, the role of laughter in establishing in-group solidarity has been a common research area of interest, including cross cultural boundaries (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005; Coates, 2007; Murphy, 2017; Sinkeviciute, 2014). But how should we approach humor or laughter that occurs between a speaker and a broader audience, such as in a performance?

Drawing on Atkinson (1984), Heritage (2010) notes that in responding en masse (e.g. to political speeches) via laughter, clapping, cheering, jeering, and booing, an audience reaction can be categorized as a single turn-taking unit:

In these responsive behaviors, audience members cease to behave as individuals and start to act as a collective entity, so that it is possible to think of speaker-audience interaction as akin to two-party interaction in which one party is the speaker and the audience forms a second, collective respondent party. (p. 263)

In determining the audience alignment with the speaker, Heritage considers whether the response is 'affiliative' or 'disaffiliative,' or aligned or dis-aligned with the speaker. Scarpetta & Spagnolli (2009), in analyzing the institutional talk of stand-up comedy, also adopt this categorization for audience alignment. Instead of responding individually and conversationally, as this would breach genre-expectation and considerations of politeness, the audience simply has group affiliative or disaffiliative responses as their contribution to the conversation. In this sense, the audience response acts as an alignment mechanism by which the performer or performers are considered to be in-group or out-group. If the audience receives the performer well and appraises them to be in-group, they may clap, cheer, or laugh. If they do not receive the performer well, they may boo or jeer.

The collective turn of an audience is faced not only with the difficulties of articulation -- limited to affiliative or disaffiliative -- they are also posed with the problem of timing. While there are notable benefits to responding to a performance as an audience member, serving an

expressive function and an instrumental function (by making the recipient appear more popular, or to drown out a counter-appraisal by other audience members), there are also costs. If an audience member begins clapping too soon they may end up clapping alone, risking social isolation. Therefore the goal of audience members is a coordinated response in which all members benefit mutually (Heritage, 2010, p. 265-267). An ideal text to respond to, then, will incorporate considerable cues for audience response or will be ‘projectable’: the audience will be able to anticipate when their turn is coming to act. In the case of applause, audience members require a slight lead time to prepare to clap; accordingly cues for applause should be salient and timed appropriately. Applause requires slightly more movement than laughter (i.e. raising of hands, dropping of any objects they are holding, etc.), so one might expect slightly less lead time required in the projectable cues. Also, given Incongruity Theory’s expectation that a humorous situation should be “sudden,” one might also expect that too much lead time would render a joke unfunny. However, to simply expect something does not necessarily indicate what specifically is coming, and this realization can still be “sudden.” Regardless, one would still expect notable contextualization cues for the audience to respond to in coordination.

2.3 Framing, Footing, & Play Frames

So far I have described improv, humor, and the expectation of humor in improv. Now I will provide a working definition and some examples of how humor is enacted conversationally via ‘play.’ Given the conditions outlined of (1) suddenness (2) unexpectedness and (3) non-seriousness, we focus on the condition for humor to be non-seriousness. In order for a sudden, unexpected event to be received as humorous, a conversational partner needs to convey

that what is being said is not serious and does not have the consequences of ‘serious’ conversation. In other words, they need to get the “all clear.” In order to describe the way this happens, I will use the theoretical construct of discourse ‘frames,’ and specifically frames which indicate non-seriousness, or ‘play frames.’

The first noted use of the construct of ‘frame’ as it is deployed today comes from Bateson [1955 (1972)] who observed monkeys play-fighting in a zoo. As he observed them he realized that it was readily apparent to anyone watching that this was not a “real” fight, and that play itself signaled a frame which said “this is play” or potentially more ambiguously “is this play?” Bateson’s use of frame was referenced for future iterations of frame, including Schank and Abelson’s (1975) cognitive usage of frame, the GTVH’s semantic use of frame, and the discourse analytic use of frame, which includes social, situational, and paralinguistic definitions. I will focus on the paralinguistic definition as it is the most identifiable given the methodology of CA. It is worth noting that Bateson’s precedent description of ‘frame’ was itself a ‘play frame,’ compared to what it is not, which is to say a ‘serious’ frame.

Partington (2006) provides an excellent overview of the term ‘play frame,’ which he says is often used but rarely defined (p. 66). ‘Play’ is a folk category which needs a scientific description. He points to Raskin (1985) as outlining one of the first useable descriptions of play, in his distinction between the bona fide mode and the non-bona fide mode of communication. The bona fide is the “ordinary” information-conveying mode of conversation, but in the non-bona fide mode, participants are not committed to the truth-values of their speech but instead use their speech to achieve a particular effect (Raskin, 1985, p. 101). However, the non-bona fide mode may include ‘play’ but may also include other non-bona fide uses of

language such as lying. In turn, scholars of humor provide better elucidation of the concept of ‘play,’ such as Fry (1963) who describes it as a “behavior which depends on the mutual recognition (through metacommunication, internal or external) that that behavior does not mean the same thing as does that behavior (fighting, etc.) which play represents” (p. 123). This is in line with Bateson’s description of a play frame being signaled by metacommunication which says “this is play.” Partington (2006) also concludes that play is defined as metabeavior.

Because the notion of frame is determined by the methods used to describe it, I will use this part of the chapter to review instances of play frames, especially in the CA literature. For instance, I will delineate a difference between the ‘frame’ (or ‘script’) of the GTVH and my use of frame in that a ‘script’ prioritizes semantic and cognitive knowledge (dependent upon its methodology), while the discourse analytic ‘frame’ prioritizes past experience and social interaction. A discourse frame fundamentally depends on people coming into experiences already with stores of information from past experiences: in short, expectations about what the experience will entail (Tannen, 1993; Goffman, 1974). Specifically, I follow the line of inquiry which says that frames are signaled by metacommunication, which may or may not align with these frames of expectation. If play is defined as non-serious “metabeavior” then we can only know a play frame through its metacommunication, which I will refer to as contextualization cues. Contextualization cues include features of language (i.e., elements of linguistic structure such as words and syntax) and those that go along with language (i.e., paralinguistic features such as pitch, tempo, laughter, and nonverbal signals), which are present in all interaction (Gumperz, 1992). A shift in frame should be signaled by some linguistic or paralinguistic feature which can be shown through a faithful transcription of the interaction. As such conversation

analysis (CA) is an essential tool for describing and analyzing contextualization cues, which in turn indicate shifts from serious frames to non-serious, or vice versa.

For instance, Tannen (2006) analyzes the conversation of a couple over the course of a week, utilizing contextualization cues to describe a shift in frames. In the transcription, Clara wants Neil to take a box to the post office for her if the letter carrier won't pick it up. At first the conversation is in a neutral tone and volume but then Neil says "I'll try but I don't know if I'll have time to take it there" in a louder voice, which suggests a shift in frame (Tannen, 2006, p. 605). The loudness is a paralinguistic contextualization cue, which is dependent on the baseline of Neil's other conversational tone, which was not as loud. While his words literally indicate cooperation and support, the change in voice indicates an opposition to Clara's project (her request). In turn, Clara responds in a higher pitched, emphatic voice and asks why Neil "can't COMMIT to MAILING a box...?" She has picked up from the contextualization cue that the frame is now oppositional. The frame has been 'rekeyed' in Goffman's terms (Goffman, 1974), which refers to a shift in frame type, or more specifically a change in tenor or tone, which is in line with the musical analogy of 'key' (Tannen 2006). In this example, the frame-shift is indicated by paralinguistic contextualization cues, though Tannen notes that through these linguistic features, we can see a broader shift of frame. The frame of expectation (the topic of a box) is expanded to a broader frame to include concerns about whether Neil will support Clara if her employment situation changes in the next several weeks (which is only made evident in part through the longitudinal nature of the study). In Tannen's analysis a shift in voice volume signals disagreement about the topic of the 'box,' and the 'box' represents emotional support. It is only

through the contextualization cue of loudness, which can be described, that the shift of a frame of agreement to the frame of opposition can be shown.

This kind of analysis is in line with the principles of CA, which presumes the following:

1. Interaction is orderly, and participants create and orient to its inherent structure;
2. Ongoing interaction both shapes and renews context, with each turn displaying a sense of what is going on and setting the stage for what happens next;
3. These two properties are evident in the smallest details of talk; thus, no detail can be assumed a priori to be disorganized or irrelevant.

(Heritage, 1984, p. 241-244)

Within this framework, contextualization cues act to both shape and renew context, while also projecting what will happen next. These observable details in language also reveal or indicate social action being accomplished interactionally through the means of conversation, rather than a simple exchange of information.

While Tannen's study examined contextualization cues indicating a shift in frame from agreement to opposition, Schegloff (2001) describes a shift from seriousness to non-seriousness and back to seriousness. His study investigates the use of turn-initial 'no' to indicate the shift from a non-serious sequence to a serious sequence. While he uses the terms 'serious' and 'nonserious' sequences, rather than 'frame,' his data describes a shift from a non-serious 'play frame' to a serious frame. In one transcribed scene, Carol returns to a group of friends and Sherrie notes that she didn't get an ice cream sandwich, and more specifically that Carol didn't get them an ice cream sandwich. When Carol asks for money to go buy some Sherri responds

“I’m kidding, I don’t need it.” (Schegloff, 2001, p. 1948). After a brief pause, Carol rejoins by saying “I WA:N’ O:NE” in a loud, whining voice, sending the meta-message that she has joined in to their play frame by ‘playing’ like a child. As Schegloff describes it she aligns herself with both the ‘kidding’ tenor of exchange and the disappointment in there not being any ice cream. This shift in alignment can be described in Goffman’s term ‘footing’ which is defined as “a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance. A change in footing is another way of talking about a change in our frame of events” (Goffman, 1981, p. 128). This is related to ‘keying,’ which similarly indicates a shift in frames through voice quality, but footing pertains more specifically to the stance we take (Martin, 2003), and even our proposed identities within the production format of a text (Goffman, 1981). Schegloff’s analysis of Carol’s shift in footing represents a shift in alignment: she moves into the in-group and plays along. But soon after this shift in footing, and after some laughter from the others, Carol tells them they were out of Tab: “No, they didn’ even have any Ta:(h)b.” The turn initial “no” does not indicate dispreference but is analyzed as a shift from the play frame (or non-serious sequence) to the bona-fide or serious frame. In this sense, the turn initial ‘no’ also acts as metacommunication signaling a shift in frames, away from a play frame, showing that contextualization cues can also include patterns of speech.

In Schegloff’s (2001) analysis there is a relatively clearly delineated ‘play frame’ and a ‘serious’ frame. However, because a ‘frame’ is simply an analytical tool, there can be an overlap of frames, which aligns with paradoxical nature of play, as described by Bateson: playful meta-messages may say "this is play" or more ambiguously "is this play?" In Gordon’s (2008)

analysis of play frames in parenting, she examines many instances of frame ‘blending.’ She argues that, according to Goffman, participants don’t simply “change frames and footings, but actually embed one within another, or ‘lamine’ experience” (Gordon, 2008, p. 323). Ensink & Sauer (2003) also note the embedded nature of frames, especially those pertaining to play. They suggest that play frames are ‘transformational’ rather than ‘interactional’ and operate by embedding other frames. For instance, you can ‘play fight’ but you cannot ‘fight play’ (Ensink & Sauer, 2003, p. 68). Moreover, they argue that other performative frames are also transformational, suggesting that improv may be a deeply embedded frame in which performers can ‘play theater,’ ‘perform play,’ or even ‘perform play theater.’ This suggests one of the limitations of this kind of analysis, and also some of the more interesting possibilities. Whether it be by blending or embedding, these complex frames or frame-composites are still signaled by meta-messages.

In Gordon’s (2008) analysis of everyday conversations between parents and young children (2 - 4 years old), she examines the discursive use of play frames in reframing and blending, and in the interwoven nature of play and parental work. In one instance of reframing, a daughter (Natalie) is helping her mother (Janet) “paint” olive oil onto some bread, but she is putting too much on. When Janet offers to help, Natalie refuses and an altercation ensues in which the daughter says “No.” and Janet says “Yes.” repeatedly (Gordon, 2008, p. 328). The mother reframes the interaction by spelling out her response “Y E. <whispering> S!>”. The daughter responds “N O, no!” The frame shifts from a fight into a spelling contest in which Janet introduces other words (“What does . B O O spell.”) and ends in both participants laughing. In this way, Janet creates a pattern of speech, which is recognized as a game, which is then played

by Natalie. The game is representative of blending frames (or even embedding them), and it is indicated by a repetition of speech patterns (e.g. spelling out words). In this case, the pattern itself is the meta-message. Improv is built on the idea of games and so repetition will be a highly useful contextualization cue to indicate a play frame.

While frames can sometimes be difficult to separate due to their ability to overlap or laminate, we have to follow the contextualization cues which indicate that they are present. One of the best indicators of a play frame is laughter itself (Partington, 2006, p. 66). While laughter might seem to correspond to humorousness, and thus non-seriousness, this is not necessarily the case. In E. Holt's (2013) chapter in *Studies in Laughter Interaction*, she argues that serious and non-serious framing is frequently inseparable. Moreover, this is partly a result of what Sacks (1992) called an ambiguity of first pair parts (FPPs) within an adjacency pair: one's response to an initiation depends on whether it is interpreted as serious or not, which is not always clear. Adjacency pairs are a collection of two adjacent conversational turns, which are 'typed,' in which the first part dictates the preferred response for the second part. For instance, FPPs can be typed either serious or non-serious, and responded to by a second pair part (SPP) in kind. A non-serious FPP would not require a typical sequential SPP such as acceptance or declination, but instead would require some form of acknowledgement that "this is play" through laughter or some other playful response; in short, a non-serious frame does not necessitate the same consequences as a serious frame, and as such sequencing can help indicate the presence of a play frame. The presence of the non-serious response is closely related to play, and I will argue it is a necessary condition. Aligning with the definition of play established in this study, E. Holt uses Glenn's definition of play as "an interactional state created by metacommunicative signals

which frame or bracket messages as nonserious” (2003, p. 137). To further help disentangle the ambiguity of play, E. Holt emphasizes the difference between a ‘laughable’ and non-seriousness.

Laughables are turns which are responded to with laughter, but non-seriousness can extend across multiple turns. A serious turn can also be responded to with laughter. E. Holt offers an example in which Kevin tells Lesley, a teacher, that he wishes he had taken up teaching. There are no contextualization cues that he is non-serious, and yet Lesley responds with laughter: “eh ↑heh heh heh heh heh↑ .hhhh I don’t think so not these days ↑hheh heh↑ (.) too much stress,” (E. Holt, 2013, p. 113). Others have also noted that laughter can occur in troubles talk or non-humorous situations, and yet still function as a discourse marker to end the current sequence (Norrick (1993, p. 40-41). So laughter must be disentangled from humor. While laughter can result from serious situations, one can assume from humor studies that humorous laughter is a result of non-seriousness (e.g. Chafe, 2007). So for the purposes of this study humor is represented by non-serious laughables, which operate as meta-messages signaling “this is play.”

So far the studies and methods described have examined play frames in private “everyday” interaction. However, improv constitutes an interesting combination between everyday interaction and performance. There is both spontaneous interaction between players on stage and interaction between the performers and the audience as a whole. One possible model for examining a humorous or playful interaction between audience and performers is stand-up comedy. Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009) use a conversation analytic approach to study stand-up comedy performances by African American comedians in predominantly white rooms compared to predominantly black audiences. They conclude that the role of context and framing in humor is essential, and moreover, through the conversation analytic model laughter can be better studied

as a co-construction of the humorous experience, forming part of a conversation or an “intersubjective achievement,” rather than being just a “non-speech sound” (Scarpetta and Spagnolli, 2009, p. 212-213). Instead, the audiences respond via affiliation responses (laughter, cheering, applause, etc.) or disaffiliation responses (jeers, boos, heckling, etc.). In line with Heritage (2010), these responses are cued by the performers using devices such as puzzle-solution formulas, position-taking, catchphrases, disclaimers, and intonation, among others (e.g. contextualization cues). This suggests that in addition to the everyday paralinguistic contextualization cues, there are other projectable contextualization cues that need to be considered for an audience-based interaction. Yet another study looks at a situation in which there is both interaction amongst those on stage and between the performers and the audience.

Stokoe (2008) performs a conversation analysis of the sitcom *Friends*, analyzing the function of audience laughter and the corresponding laughable sequence. She approaches the data from the lens of “breaching experiments,” in which the normal interactional order is disrupted intentionally to reveal the expected structure itself. For instance, when asked how your girlfriend is feeling you may ask to clarify what is meant by “feeling,” even though it is readily understood, simply to see how the questioner will respond to a breach in the conversational norm (Garfinkel, 1967). Similarly, Stokoe argues that laughter in the sitcom *Friends* is occasioned by breaches of social expectancy, including preference organization and turn-taking, and particularly instances in which a dis-preferred response is given “inappropriately.” In one example Rachel has just been stood up for her wedding when Ross tells Rachel that if she doesn’t want to be alone, she can come over and help him, Joey, and Chandler put together some new furniture. Rachel replies “Well actually thanks: but I think I’m jus’ gonna: hang out (0.3)

here tonight.=it's- (.) been a long day.” This SPP receives no audience laughter. Then Joey asks Phoebe, who is also in the room, if she would like to “help” and she responds “↑Oh:: ↑I wish I could but I don't want to.” This SPP receives audience laughter, Stokoe argues, because it represents an “inappropriate” manner of dispreference (2008, p. 269). The sequences are different in that Ross's FPP contained a pre-sequence before the request, which justified his offer in terms of Rachel's well-being, while Joey's was simply asking if she wanted to help, but both SPPs were dispreferred responses. However, Stokoe argues that Phoebe performed a “breach” of the conversational expectation by saying she does not want to help, rather than cannot help, which would be the expected, polite way to respond.

Though Stokoe does not use the term, this sequence and others like it arguably signal a shift into a ‘play frame,’ indicated by contextualization cues. In this adjacency pair, Phoebe's intonation signals that “this is play,” while in other scenes pitch or smiley voice indicate a shift in frame, or a conversational “breach.” In the same sense that an underlying interactional order can be detected by a breach of it, frames are detected by their shift, which is signaled via contextualization cues: play is best described by what it is not. Moreover, audience laughter can be one of, if not the, best indicators of these shifts from a bona-fide, serious mode of speaking to a non-serious play frame. This suggests that laughables themselves (the turn laughed at) may also be representative of some shift into play frame between performers, as indicated by contextualization cues; for an audience to respond to a turn in laughter, and signal it as playful, one would expect there to be an indication occurring before the laughter. The laughter signals the play frame between audience and performers, and this play frame is signaled in turn by a play frame between performers.

As these studies have shown, laughter is not only descriptive for humor, but it can be one of the best contextualization cues signaling a play frame. There are instances of serious laughter, but non-serious laughter most closely corresponds to the folk category of humor. Moreover, frames are defined in part by the methodology used to describe them, and in this study CA will be used to describe contextualization cues corresponding to paralinguistic cues (e.g. intonation, pitch, loudness) which indicate a rekeying of frame, and projectable cues which perform a similar function but are more audience-directed and may include patterns in language (such as word choice or repetition). Moreover, 'play' is a frame of interaction in which normal, 'serious' consequences do not apply to a conversational sequence. Instead of requiring a bona-fide, informational response, a play frame FPP prefers an interactional response, and ideally one that acknowledges the play frame itself (either through rekeying or footing shifts, as in Schegloff, 2001). Taken together, contextualization cues and the sequence consequences (subsequent organization) indicate whether a play frame has been engaged by the participants, and audience members can be equally considered conversational participants who respond via affiliative or disaffiliative responses. These responses contribute both to sequence organization and co-construct a play frame in which audience laughter can be treated akin to an adjacency pair. Given these understandings, one can see how they can be applied to improv performance which is an experience highly co-constructed between performers and audience members and dependent upon laughter as an affiliative response. Thus we can hypothesize that it will be full of contextualization cues to signal a humorous play frame, both in a player-to-player level of paralinguistic cues and a performer-to-audience level for reasons of projectability.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

3.1 Research Context

This study utilizes data from Improv Athens, which is an on-campus improv performance group at the University of Georgia who perform regularly in the Miller Learning Center (MLC). Founded in 2006, Improv Athens is currently one of the top eight college improv troupes in the nation and have competed at Nationals of the College Improv Tournament in 2011 and in 2019. In addition to weekly shows they offer an open improv workshop every Wednesday for those interested in learning more about improv or trying it for themselves. This study is based on the shows they perform, which happen Friday night at 7:30 and 9:00. The performers and audience members alike are college-aged (~18-23), and due to the centrality of the MLC on campus and the convenient time on Friday nights (often right after dinner and/or before students may go downtown to further socialize), the shows generally get a good turnout, between 40 and 100 people on average. The event is totally free to attend.

3.2 Data Collection

Data for this study has come from a selection of video recordings of 6 weeks of Improv Athens shows which I attended, for which I received IRB approval. I videotaped each session using a Sony RX100ii camera, which was set up toward the back of the audience, and I also

recorded separate, additional audio from the front row using a Zoom H4n. The Sony RX100ii only records up to 30 minutes at a time (having to do with importation issues as a camera vs. a camcorder), which hindered some of the data gathering, along with occasional battery issues; though once I realized the issue I set timers to stop and restart the recording between games. However, every show begins with the same game, called Montage, which was included in every recording (before either 30 minutes ran up or the battery may have died). It is also the only game that was played every show, which partly guided my decision to use it as the game of analysis. Each Montage consists of a series of scenes guided by a single word (such as “mixtape”) provided from the audience. The number of scenes varies performance to performance. From the Montage games over the course of six shows, I selected five scenes from three shows to analyze.

3.3 Data Analysis

Because this research explores laughter in interaction, it follows a conversation analytic approach, which assumes an “unmotivated,” qualitative, and inductive study of the data at hand to examine how it functions in interaction. While the data is analyzed from an unmotivated approach, I have guided my research around three primary research questions, following conclusions, holes, or lines of argument found in the literature review. Each chapter of analysis follows one of these questions.

1. Are laughable moments instances of dispreference? This is suggested by Stokoe (2008).
2. To what degree audience laughter is projected (or guided) by particular contextualization cues from the performers?

3. Are humorous or laughable moments signaled by the presence of a play frame, indicated by contextualization cues? If so, how do improv players engage in play frames to create humorous (non-serious), laughable moments?

The principles of CA dictate that data should serve theories, not the other way around (Glenn, 2003, p. 34). In this model, meticulous transcription serves as a means of conveying spoken conversation to readers but it also acts as a method of observation. The first step is to transcribe the data and then look for patterns that emerge, and then compare these to other findings in the field. As such this study is guided foremost by the data, but organized by precedent theoretical frameworks. The data for play frames, laughter, and projectability are most easily described in terms of contextualization cues, including elements of linguistic structure and paralinguistic features (Gumperz, 1992), which are codable and thus describable in the transcription. In classifying and organizing the data, there are some features of improv that make it a “hybrid” form of conversation and, as such, requires a hybrid framework. While improv shares similarities to both conversation in dialogue as well as public address, it is different from both of these in assuming qualities of each. There is both an audience-performer interaction, as well as multiple performers interacting amongst themselves on stage. As such I use two primary frameworks relating to each of these and ultimately combine them in the analysis.

To analyze the interpersonal player-player interaction, I use Schegloff’s (2007) description of sequence organization and preference structure as a primary framework, similar to what Stokoe (2008) had used in her study of *Friends*, which possesses both an live audience as well as performer-performer interaction. In particular, my first research question is inspired by

and challenges Stokoe's (2008) claim that laughter was a result of dispreference, and in particular the manner of dispreference. In Schegloff's model one assumes that the basic unit of conversational organization is a 'turn,' and certain types of turns, adjacency pairs, necessitate an expected or 'preferred' type of response. The First Pair Part (FPP) of a greeting type adjacency pair would prefer a Second Pair Part (SPP) of a greeting as well (e.g. A: "Hello!" B: "Hi!"). However, in a greeting-greeting adjacency pair, there is really only one kind of expected response: greeting. Other types of FPPs have multiple types of possible SPP responses. For example, in improv the basic adjacency pair consists of offer-accept/decline, in which a player can accept or decline an offer. In this case, agreement (acceptance) is generally preferred, but it depends entirely upon the situation at hand; agreement does not correspond with preference, and in improv these two are even more evidently distinct, as will be discussed in the following chapter. In this analysis, adjacency pairs are analyzed as the primary unit of preference structure, given the expected 'project' or goal of the speakers. Given that the conversation occurs in the setting of a performance, part of this goal necessarily involves audience response, which depends more upon projectability and salient contextualization cues.

The other primary framework I use throughout -- and focus on more intently -- is Heritage's (2010) analysis of projectability in public address, following Atkinson (1984), which forms the foundation for the second chapter of analysis. This is guided by my second research question, which investigates the role of contextualization cues from performers as being 'projectable' for the audience. Projectability depends upon the ability for a conversational partner (in this case an audience) to anticipate what is coming next in the sequence. In particular, audience members must be able to coordinate their responses en masse and therefore require

more projectability than one would find in an everyday conversation, especially to indicate turn-taking. Strategies that create more projectability include patterns in speech (e.g. contrasts and lists) as well as paralinguistic cues such as intonation, emphasis, and pitch. In order to analyze sequence-construction between performers and the audience, I have coded these paralinguistic cues in the transcription in order to determine how the audience knows it is their turn to respond, and what cues the performers provide to end their turn.

The transcription conventions used for this research were developed by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984, pp. ix–xvi). Notably, I have made one important change to these conventions regarding laughter. In the Jefferson notation X's indicate applause, but I will be using them to indicate laughter. Since both applause and laughter represent affiliative response, are rarely identifiable with an individual, and require group coordination, this feels appropriate. Using X's allows for a finer gloss of the affiliative response. In some transcriptions laughter is simply noted with "(laughter)," while others spell it out for individual speakers "heh heh heh," but these conventions do not represent the ebb and flow of group laughter which is integral to the timing of turn-taking in performance. Because group laughter possesses a dynamic range, I have encoded this through loud laughter (X), very loud or emphatic laughter (!X), soft laughter (x), or very soft laughter (°x°).

Laughter is an essential component of the analysis, given that it is itself a salient contextualization cue (e.g. Glenn & Holt, 2017). Whether or not laughter corresponds to 'humor' does not totally matter, but what is of importance is how it functions in conversational sequencing. E. Holt (2013) emphasizes that laughter is not necessarily humorous, or non-serious, but for my argument I will be examining laughables as they correspond to non-seriousness or

‘play.’ During transcription I have paid particular attention to paralinguistic information, following Myers and Lampropoulou (2016) who quote E. Holt (2013) who argues that the non-seriousness of a situation “is seen to reside in social action rather than, as has generally been assumed by other approaches, in the message itself or in the perception of the sender or receiver” (E. Holt, 2013, p. 105). As such, the laughable itself serves a key function in the sequencing of conversation (e.g. within the preference structure between audience and performers), and if play frames are functional, the laughter should be accompanied by contextualization cues corresponding with non-seriousness. The third chapter of analysis corresponds to the third research question which investigates the role of ‘play frames’ in laughter and humor. As such, this analysis rests on paralinguistic data (along with projectable strategies) as contextualization cues for the presence of a play frame, which is indicated in interaction by metacommunicative signals which bracket a particular interaction as non-serious or saying “this is play” (Bateson, 1972; Glenn, 2003). This bracketing, in turn, is dependent in part upon the foundation of preference structure as established in the first chapter; in order to determine what is unusual, we need to determine what is expected.

3.4 Show Organization

To offer further context of the data, I will offer a brief description of a typical performance format. Each show at Improv Athens consists of an hour of material, comprised of a series of games (3-5) and a longform scene (which is around 20 minutes). I have constrained this analysis to a single “game” called Montage. Within this game, there are a series of scenes that are loosely related by a single term, which is gathered from the audience. Montage is called a

“game,” but it lacks many of the formal features of other games they play; for instance, some games call for particular characters to be played within particular relationships and/or locations, and even with certain objectives. I chose Montage precisely because it is a fairly loose structure, lacking a conscious game-like structure and instead more resembling a scene. Instead, it requires participants to organize the sequence spontaneously and create or find their own game within the umbrella of a single word. Improv Athens also opens every show they do with Montage, so this allowed replicability. For the study I transcribed five scenes from three different nights, which had suggestions for “mixtape,” “skeleton,” and “submarine.”

To offer further context for these scenes, the order of events in any given Improv Athens show flows roughly as follows:

Orientation: The audience settles in their seats and the two leaders of the improv troupe come out to introduce themselves and set expectations. They explain what “improv” is, tell the audience they need audience suggestions to create their scenes, and ask for some sample suggestions, just to practice. They will often also note that the scenes can be funny, or that they will be “good.”

Audience Warmup: Then they tell the audience how they can help each game begin: the improvisers will start a countdown from 5, and then the audience joins in the count, and when entire room gets down to 1 the game begins. Then they let it be known they have a donation bucket, and then finally ask the room to help them in calling in the rest of the players. This is done, they explain, by the first

player gesturing to the left side of the audience, who are to shout “Improv” and then the second player points to the right side of the audience who shouts “Athens.” This is done a couple of times until the crowd is properly warmed up and the other performers enter.

Game 1: The first game is introduced, which is always Montage. The rules are explained and they ask for an audience suggestion for a single word. After the countdown (5, 4, 3, 2, 1!) the first scene begins by at least one player clapping and walking out into the center stage. The rest of the players stand in the back of the stage (the backline) waiting to jump into a scene if needed.

Game 1: Scene X: Each scene can follow a different flow of events, but there is generally an arc of (1) establishing character relationships and identity (2) creating and/or complicating a problem complicating that problem (3) resolving that problem. The scene is ended by a player on the backline clapping their hands once, which simultaneously begins the next scene which the clapper begins by walking onto center stage, while the players from the first scene exit to the backline. This can go on indefinitely.

Game X: The end of a game is generally marked by the backline clapping in applause, which then instigates the entire audience to applaud. Then the players

will describe the next game to be played, get suggestions, start the countdown, and the whole process repeats itself.

CHAPTER 4

“YES, AND” PREFERENCE STRUCTURE

In this chapter I examine the relationship between laughable turns and instances of dispreference in conversation sequencing. Stokoe's (2008) findings suggest that moments of dispreference occasion laughter in a sitcom and specifically the manner in which dispreference is given, especially if it is a breach of convention. For instance, it is not the act of declining an offer (e.g. to put together furniture) that is funny, but it is the way in which it is done. Stokoe's (2008) study analyzed particular wording of these instances of dispreference (e.g. a declination of an offer) compared to the conventional manner of doing so (e.g. “polite” ways to say no). In the first section of this chapter I consider the usefulness of analyzing preference structure in improv, and in the second section I examine the manner of dispreference in terms of paralinguistic cues (such as intonation, pitch, emphasis) that indicate the presence of a play frame, or a non-serious sequence. Because the organization of improv performance shares similarities with Stokoe's study (both the sitcom and improv were performed in front of a live audience) Stokoe's theory is used as a model which I adapt, concluding that dispreference is important but does not appear to be satisfactorily explanatory for laughable moments; instead manner or framing appears to be more promising.

First, in order to test the question of dispreference and its relation to humor or laughable moments, dispreference needs to be defined. Preference structure can be mapped out according to adjacency pairs and the preferred responses given any first pair part (FPP). For instance, an FPP of “Hello” will prefer a second pair part (SPP) that is another greeting. Similarly an offer

will usually prefer an acceptance, but it depends on the context. Preferred responses are usually contiguous and minimal (or brief), while dispreferred responses are usually discontinuous and expanded (Schegloff, 2007, p. 67), which also indicate that a participant's expectation or frame has been upset (Tannen, 1993, p. 41). In this analysis, preference structure depends on and is defined by the difference between an FPP and its counterpart SPP. However, FPPs can be ambiguous in terms of what is preferred or dispreferred, including being ambiguous regarding whether or not an FPP prefers a non-serious response (E. Holt, 2013, p. 106). Preference structure is also largely situationally dependent, and means more than agreeing: one would not want to agree with a friend's self-deprecating statement ("I'm so dumb, aren't I?"). Therefore 'alignment' of participants is more important than agreement; and disagreement with an FPP like "I'm so dumb, aren't I?" is an act of alignment (Schegloff, 2007, p. 59-60). However, this study highlights how dispreference in the sequential structure itself is not sufficiently explanatory for audience laughter, but in some cases, such as the scene analyzed in the 'Pimping' section of this chapter, dispreference is a helpful analytical tool to help explain the necessary condition of the play frame and the sequencing associated with it. There are also two kinds of dispreference of interest to improv performance: character-character dispreference and player-player dispreference. Each occur on different levels, depending on who is presumed to be trying to accomplish a project or conversational goal: the player or their character. The transcript in the first section examines character-character dispreference, and the scene in the final section examines player-player dispreference.

4.1 Alignment: Character-Character Preference Structure

The first scene under investigation is an excerpt from a Montage sequence with the audience suggestion of “mixtape.” Player 1 (P1) opens the scene by looking through a pile of mixtapes, then complains to player 2 (P2) that he has mixed them up. P3 and P4 follow suit in reprimanding P2 and aligning themselves oppositionally. Additional notations are included in the transcripts to indicate the first FPP (F1), the first SPP (S1), pre sequences (F_{pre}), base pair part (F_b) which can be expanded, and counters (F_{cnt}) in which participants reverse the turn order.

```

1 P1 Fpre ((crouches, mimes looking through a pile of tapes))
2      Hey DONNY?
3 P2 Spre ((turns and addresses P1))
4      (.)What? [=wha-]
5 P1 F1->      [What ]the fu:ck is the deal man↓ you mixed up all my
6      ↓tape[s.]
7 AUD      [X ]X[XX]xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
8 P2 S1->      [yeah] [((scratches head))=
9 P1      [((kicks stack of tapes))]
10P2      =I listened to a:ll of em then I wz (.) way too
11      [high ]to remember which [(.) cas:e they went [back=in↓]

```

In the first adjacency pair, P1 accuses P2 of mixing up his tapes, creating word play with the suggestion of “mixtape.” This base FPP is preceded by a pre-sequence in which P1 angrily calls for Donny, who responds in a state of confusion, which he maintains through his response. Given that the FPP is a complaint, the preferred response would be some sort of remedy, rather than an acknowledgement of the news (Schegloff, 2007, p. 74-75). Instead, P2’s SPP simply acknowledges the news and elaborates on how this came to be, rather than offering some form of apology. In this sense the SPP is a dispreferred response, which should make it a candidate for a

In this sequence the SPP does receive a turn of laughter, arguably not because it is a dispreferred response, but possibly because of the manner of response and repetition. Stokoe (2008) argues that it is not so much the dispreference but the manner of dispreference that makes particular sequences funny. Dispreference itself is not humorous, but breaching the conventional, polite ways of doing so is. The SPP in this case shows no signs of a breach of conversational convention, but instead is arguably funny because of its deviation from the pattern created by the previous two responses in which his actions were justified because he was “too high” or “really high.” Meanwhile the FPP is the laughable once again, which does not indicate not an instance of dispreference even though does indicate a negative alignment between characters. Alignment is defined by the relationship between people, but dispreference is defined by a response within a sequence, and in this case it is the offer (FPP) which elicits laughter, rather than the response, so sequential dispreference cannot be explanatory for the laughter. More specifically, it is the manner and repetition in which this alignment is laid out which is laughable: the complaints are repeated in the same fashion and play on the idea of “mixing up” something. This case represents not only a repetition of the pattern but an escalation of charges against Donny; it was not tapes or cereal that Donny has mixed up but P4’s night pills with his day pills.

Following this third adjacency pair and its expansions, P2 offers a preferred response and finally acknowledges that he is sorry:

35 P2 [Yeah, I- that one
 36 I’m sorry about [((gestures out to P4))
 37 P4 [((exits))
 38 P3 ((exits))
 39 P2 (1.0) ((addresses and gestures open hand to P1))
 40 THIS one I’m sorry about too:!
 41 AUD =xxxxxxxx°xxx°

Given that the character ultimately does apologize, which I would argue is the preferred response, this scene appears to indicate that dispreference is not explanatory for audience laughter. However, P2 uses emphasis (line 40) to enunciate the manner in which he apologizes, which is arguably the laughable element. By holding out his hand and emphasizing the beginning and end of his statement, the audience can anticipate the end of his turn, and the beginning of their turn. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 5, but for now the data suggests that dispreference is not a necessary condition for the laughable moments. Furthermore, the data examined so far suggests that alignment between characters is wholly different than the preference structure of players. It is possible that the character alignment, or specifically character appraisal, may be explanatory for laughter, as this can be conveyed from the FPP which was most often the laughable turn. This interpretation would not require a dispreferred SPP. I would also speculate that in most cases in improv alignment is significant for characters while preference structure might be more useful for analyzing player interaction, and navigating the distinction between these is largely what the challenge is in the ‘game’ of improv: creating an agreed-upon sequence of sometimes conflicting events. The next section examines preference structure of players to see how they are able to sequence mutually agreed upon opposition.

4.2 “Yes, and”: Player-Player Preference Structure

In most cases of everyday talk, alignment and preference are one and the same -- even though agreement and alignment may be different; agreement to an offer may indicate dis-alignment and represent a dispreferred response (e.g. A: "I am so dumb" B: "I agree."). But due to the production format of improv, there is a difference between character alignment and player alignment. To avoid confusion I will refer these as character alignment and player

preference structure, since the character alignment pertains more to appraisal and stance, while the player preference structure is concerned more with the sequence and flow of interaction.

To distinguish between character alignment and player preference, I re-analyze the Mix Up scene. If the necessary components for laughter are dispreference and manner, we would expect to see no laughter in scenes in which characters are in agreement (which are not uncommon), but this is not the case. Alternatively Stokoe's focus on manner of dispreference might provide some insight into laughables. However, it should be noted that Stokoe's use of manner refers to a breach of societal norms, not paralinguistic cues. Dispreference in itself is not funny, but showing dispreference in an unusual or impolite manner can be funny, Stokoe argues: it is not dispreference in itself but dispreferred dispreference. For the purposes of this study I will be examining the manner in which dispreference occurs, in line with Myers and Lampropoulou's (2016) focus on paralinguistic cues, or Tannen's (2006) use of reframing or rekeying.

In this first scene, here on named Mix Up, while there is character-character dispreference in the first three adjacency pairs, there is simultaneously player-player preference. While the first FPP can be considered a complaint or a claim of negative social sanction against the character of Donny, it is simultaneously an offer for P2. P1 'endows' P2 with a character of negative social sanction, which P2 graciously accepts in line with the 'Yes, and' principle.

```

5 P1 F1           [What ]the fu:ck is the deal man↓ you mixed up all my
6           ↓tape[s.]
7 AUD           [X ]X[XX]xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
8 P2 S1           [yeah] [((scratches head))=
9 P1           [((kicks stack of tapes))]
10 P2           =I listened to a:ll of em then I wz (.) way too
11           [high ]to remember which [(.) cas:e they went [back=in↓]

```

P2 accepts the offer at line 8, and then elaborates or justifies the offer in lines 10 and 11. He both ‘yeses’ and ‘ands.’ This allows the claim of negative social sanction to be justified and built upon by the other players, creating the other laughable moments in the following adjacency pairs. In each of those pairs he continues the same pattern of offer acceptance with a very literal ‘yes’ response, “yeah,” followed by a justification and elaboration of his character and the situation. The ‘yes’ in the ‘Yes, and’ principle does not necessarily have to be the words “yes” or “yeah” but simply represents an agreement with the reality proposed by the initiator; in this case it just so happens to be a more literal ‘yes’ acceptance. It is possible that this agreement marker signals the shift into a non-serious sequence, or a ‘play frame,’ and with each use signals its continuity.

Schegloff (2001) noticed that ‘no’ could signal a shift from a non-serious frame to a serious frame, as to say “no, but really....” In the case of ‘Yes, and’ we see the opposite: ‘yes’ signals an acceptance, while ‘and’ or elaboration signals a continuation of the play frame by supporting and adding to the non-serious reality created by the first participant. Typically most preferred responses are short, requiring little explanation, while most dispreferred responses are characterized by insert sequences, mitigation, or elaboration (Schegloff, 2007, p. 64). However, in improv we find that elaboration in particular is indicative of agreement on a player-player level. To simply say “yes” can be interpreted as a dispreferred response because it offers nothing to the initiator in response, putting all the work on them.

Importantly, in Schegloff’s (2001) analysis in which one friend is being teased by two others, ‘no’ did not indicate dispreference but a shift in sequence types, or ‘frames.’ The teased friend first accepts the teasing and adopts a playful tone, and then says ‘no’ to return to a serious

sequence. The converse, then, might suggest that ‘Yes, and’ both indicates preference and a continuity of a play frame, or a non-serious sequence indicated by meta-messages, has already been initiated. In the case of Mix Up the play frame is signaled by contextualization cues in which players alter their intonation or ‘key’ their speech in the pre-sequences to the FPPs to indicate a not-normal, non-serious frame. P1 begins by loudly and emphatically calling out Donny’s name. P3 then calls his name with emphasis and an upward intonation to express confusion, and finally P4 contrasts, and calls Donny with less emphasis to express resignation.

This repeated sequence within a continued, non-serious frame could be categorized in terms of a ‘game’ being played by the players. Specifically the game being played could be described as akin to put-downs in conversational speech or “takin’ it” (Murphy, 2017). This will be discussed further in chapter 6. For now, I will turn to an instance of player-player dispreference to see if it is explanatory for laughter.

4.3 Pimping: Player-Player Dispreference

In another scene from the same night as Mix Up, within the same “Mixtape” Montage, is an instance of dispreference which appears to elicit laughter. However, this example of dispreference is between two players, more so than it is between their characters. This scene overlaps with laughter from the end of the scene before it, and P1 starts the scene by holding out a mimed cassette tape in his hand. He claims it is his LL Cool J (a famous rapper) mixtape. P2 ‘yes, ands’ P1’s claim and says “It’s like super ra:re, man.” P1 then claims to have listened to the tape for seven days straight, concluding that he is turning into LL Cool J. It is at this point that P3 asks P1 to put in the tape and “sing for us.”

```

7 P1 Fpre °>Ehh- I went to the record store last week↓<°,
8 (1.0) and I haven't stopped listenin to it for like-
9 (0.9) seven days.=
10 AUD =xxxxxxxxxxxxXXXXX°xx°
11 P1 Fb (3.0) I think I'm (0.8) starting to turn into LL Cool [J
12 AUD [xxxxx
13 °xxx[xx°
14 P3 Fcnt [Oh my gosh!, no wa:y?, you know all the words? put it in
15 £si:ng for u[s:£ ((points toward a cassette player))
16 P1 S1 [(Ohh↓)=
17 AUD =xxxxxxxxxxxx!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
18 [XXXXXxxxxxx

```

By line 7, P1 has spent a considerable amount of time in pre-expansion, which is usually done in conversation to hedge against a possible dispreferred response by foreshadowing or ‘projecting’ the FPP, such as a request. In this case, it is more likely that the pre-expansion provides time for P1 to think about what it is that he is actually doing in this scene. Line 11 represents the base part of the FPP because this is the first (and only) real offer P1 makes, which takes him 3.0 seconds to come up with, even after the pre-expansion. This hesitation most likely indicates that he is searching for a “point” to his introduction of the tape; meanwhile the other players are waiting for this point, or to see how it involves them. While it may not seem like an offer, line 11 is an offer in that he endows himself as LL Cool J, which allows the other players to respond accordingly and agree with the reality he has created, even if he does not directly address them.

Because this offer is relatively weak (he does not directly select a next speaker or make an offer to anyone), and has taken so long, P3 takes the liberty to counter his offer by restating the initial offer in slightly different words: “...no wa:y?, you know all the words?” This reverses the order of the adjacency pairs and P1 is left responding, ironically, to his initial FPP offer.

However, P1 clearly does not want to sing, suggested by the drop in intonation and his lack of a real response in Line 16. (And based on other shows I have witnessed with this player, it is evident that the player does not sing.) P3 knows that he doesn't want to sing, which is exactly why she asks him. In improv, when one player puts another player on the spot and asks them to do something outside of their comfort zone, this is called 'pimping' (Hines, 2016). Pimping is generally looked down upon because the continuity of the scene is valued above all else, and if a player is unable to perform the required pimping task, the scene dissolves. It can also be uncomfortable for the player put on the spot but, incidentally, it can be very funny. P3 is clearly enjoying the act of pimping given her smiley voice in line 15. Upon his refusal to sing she asks again, begging him, but he says he is sick, puts away the tape, and tries changing topics (line 24).

19 P3 [↑Plea::se? ((holds hands together, begging))
 20 P1 I'm feelin a little [si:ck
 21 P3 [↑Plea::[se? ((begging))
 22 AUD [xxxxxxxxxxxx°xxxx°
 23 P1 ((puts tape in shirt pocket))
 24 Well- (no)- what'd you: guys-? [>what'd you guys-< (1.2)
 25 AUD [°xxxx°XXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXX
 26 xx°xxxxxxxx[xx°

She asks yet again, and even goes so far as to produce a bowl of soup from behind her back, arguably breaking the scene reality, just to make the point that she will not stop asking until he sings or capitulates. Eventually he capitulates, and is reduced to wordlessness (Line 35). Importantly, with each request for him to sing, P3 smiles, which functions as a contextualization

cue that “this is play,” that she is “messaging with him” or trying to get him “in trouble” as Johnstone would put it (1979).

27 P1 [whatchu
 28 guys been up to:?
 29 P3 [I heard you were sick, so I brought some chicken
 30 noodle soup, ((turns around to pick up a bowl of soup))
 31 ((presents soup to P1))
 32 £now will you si:ng [for us?£]
 33 P1 [(ough)-]
 34 AUD =!XXXXXXXXXXXX
 35 P1 (1.0) (ough-~phe:w~) ↓- £~no::~£
 36 AUD =!XXXXXXXXXXXX [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 37 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 38 BL [((CLAP))

In this scene, dispreference between players does coincide with laughter from the audience, in line with Stokoe’s (2008) study. For instance, P1’s dispreferred responses (e.g. Lines 16, 33, and 35) are laughable turns. However, these turns also possess paralinguistic cues which could be the laughable quality of them, rather than dispreference itself, suggesting maybe there is merit to the second part of Stokoe’s claim, which is that the manner of dispreference is specifically what is laughable. Rather than manner of dispreference, I argue it is simply the manner of interaction which is laughable, be it in an instance of dispreference or not. The laughable turns in the LL Cool J scene are performed in a manner which is unusual. In Line 16, P1’s response is unclear, but is short and possesses a falling tone. Similarly Line 33 is short and unclear, suggesting the player is caught off guard. Finally, the response in Line 35 is the most markedly unusual, and receives the greatest laugh. He continues the pattern of wordless responses, but this time it is longer, contains quaver voice, a pitch shift, and finally smile voice, suggesting he is flabbergasted. Importantly, each of these responses is preceded by contextualization cues from

P3 which indicates a non-serious sequence, or a 'play frame.' Each FPP (Lines 15 and 32) is marked by smile voice, indicated by the pound symbol (£), which is often a precursor to laughter, suggesting the request for P1 to "sing for us" is non-serious or playful (Glenn & Holt, 2013, p. 6, 168). In P1's last response in the scene, when he can finally manage a word ("no") it is with smile voice. The scene ends with both players laughing. So, there is dispreference of the project proposed by P3 to make P1 sing, but this in itself is a slightly aggressive, albeit playful, dispreference to P1's project which is to not sing, which itself results in laughter from both players, even P1 who was the butt of the joke. All of this is to say that it is not totally clear what preference means in a non-serious frame because it does not possess the usual consequences of a serious sequence. As Bateson (1972) noted, play is inherently paradoxical. Sometimes it signals "this is play," and sometimes it signals "is this play?" This makes it hard to classify turns in a play frame, such as in improv performances, in terms of a binary structure of preference vs. dispreference.

Part of the difficulty determining whether dispreference is operative in laughter is that preference structure is dependent upon an alignment of adjacency pair parts, and FPPs are ambiguous, even outside of a play frame. While some adjacency pair types such as greetings prefer a single type of response, others are more open ended in the kinds of responses available. Moreover, It is not always clear whether an FPP is serious, which will determine whether or not it is responded to seriously. Because preference structure is ambiguous and inexact to define, I examine contextualization cues which are readily describable, even if their effects and functions still need to be interpreted. While preference structure is not fine-grained enough to account for laughable moments, it is still useful, and it is possible that these finer-grained contextualization

cues can help to parse out these preference structures by determining whether or not participants have aligned themselves with each other. In audience interaction, the most common contextualization cue for alignment or 'affiliation' in improv is laughter, but it is not entirely clear as how to incorporate it into a preference structure model which depends on adjacency pairs.

In this interpretation provided above for the LL Cool J scene, it seems that the smile voice is more important than any dispreference between characters or players. While P1's dispreferred responses are the laughable turns, this might be a problem of using the adjacency pair model in what is not a dyadic conversation, but includes an audience as well. Between players, adjacency pairs are relatively easy to delineate, and even structure most scenes fairly faithfully. However, once the audience turn is considered, it is hard to classify the turn as an adjacency pair. What constitutes the first pair part to an audience response? Is it a single player's turn, or is it the adjacency pair comprised of two turns between P1 and P3 that is laughable? This is hard to say, and may be worth future investigation. However, for the purposes of this study, it suggests yet another limitation of the preference structure model. Instead, we will use the theoretical construct of a play frame, which indicates a non-serious co-construction of conversational sequence through meta-messages. This co-construction will be discussed in chapter 6 in the form of finding the 'game' of a scene. In improv, one of the most important participants in the interaction is the audience, so the next chapter examines the way in which the audience is signaled by performers that a playful sequence is occurring and that it is their turn to laugh.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECTABILITY & CONTEXTUALIZATION CUES

While preference structure can be useful in accounting for audience laughter in some cases, there appear to be more explanatory traits of a laughable, namely contextualization cues indicating a playful or non-serious sequence (a play frame). Preference structure can also be difficult to define in a systematic way due to the ambiguity of first pair parts, especially when considering the audience as a participant in the interaction, which is fundamental in a performance like improv. Instead, the relationship between contextualization cues and laughter can provide some insight into what makes a turn laughable. It is possible that turns of talk are not laughed at, but instead the entire situation is humorous, and so the audience laughs with the other turns to co-construct and continue the non-serious sequence. In other words, it is possible that because the situation is framed as humorous, laughter is simply the most appropriate means to respond. This suggests a different interpretation of ‘humor’ which is not dependent upon a stimulus to respond to (once suddenly recognized as funny or incongruent), but instead is a social action agreed upon by those involved. There are also moments where laughter is appropriate, but which do not fall in line with the traditional understanding of humor.

What may be deemed ‘humorous’ turns do not always elicit laughter, and conversely why some seemingly unhumorous turns do elicit laughter. E. Holt (2013) argues that it is not the message itself which is laughable but instead laughter acts as a form of social action, including in moments that are quite ‘serious.’ Though their expressive ability may be limited to applause,

laughter, cheers, jeers, or the like, the responses of mass audiences can be analyzed similarly to any other conversational participants in that they have a turn within the conversation, which is selected by the previous turn-taker (Atkinson, 1984). Given that audiences are comprised of many people, the more predictable their turn is, the more likely they are all able to coordinate their efforts successfully. Schegloff (1984) uses the term 'projectable' for turn-taking units that foreshadow or predict what kind of turns might follow later on in the sequence (267). The more people who are involved in a turn, the more projectable their turn should be because it requires greater coordination. Audience response can be considered a "game of pure coordination:" If their turn is not projected well, individuals who act out of sync may risk social isolation (e.g. by laughing when no one else laughs), but done in coordination all members win (Heritage, 2010, p. 265-266). Therefore the goal for an audience would be finding the most salient means of coordination. This is the question I address this chapter: to what degree is audience laughter guided (or projected) by particular contextualization cues or patterns of discourse such as repetition?

There are many contextualization cues or projectable strategies that can aid an audience in knowing when it is their turn to respond. At first it might seem that an audience would not want to know what is coming next, following the understanding of Incongruity Theory which predicts that people find events humorous which are sudden and incongruent. To project what is coming is to take away from the suddenness. However, anticipation is essential in comedy, and it helps if the audience knows when the funny bit is coming, even if they don't know exactly how it will be funny. As Salinsky and Frances-White (2008) put it, anticipation can be present without surprise, but surprise without anticipation is not funny (p. 256). There are numerous strategies

for creating the anticipation for these moments while also cueing the audience that their turn is coming.

Qualities in prosody, stress, and intonation can signal that what is coming up is something important or, in this case, laughable (Atkinson, 1984, p. 399). Gestures can act similar to emphasis or stress in guiding a listener's attention toward something of import and marking the end of a turn (Schegloff, 1984, p. 275). Patterns in language can also indicate that a turn is reaching finality, such as lists and contrasts. Contrasts at their base only require two parts. Heritage (2010) offers an example of a speech from former British Prime Minister James Callaghan: "... in this election I don't intend to make the most promises. I intend that the next Labour government shall keep the most promises" (p. 267). Lists, on the other hand, are defined by the number three, be it three identical words (e.g. "first delivery, second delivery, third delivery"), three different words (e.g. "Veni, vidi, vici"), or three phrases or sentences (e.g. "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people") (Heritage, 2010; 270). Heritage (2010) notes that the rule of three is so ingrained in discourse expectation that listeners will often start to applaud on the third item in a list, even if more remain (p. 269). Both of these examples rely on the use of repetition of patterns of language (e.g. "of the people, by the people, for the people" or "I don't intend... I intend.") In improv, lists can be generated spontaneously by simply repeating a thing said or done previously, which can then be contrasted. By doing X, there is no pattern, but by doing X again, performers create an expectation of X yet again. So if they contrast and do Y, they have achieved both anticipation and surprise, using lists and contrasts (Salinsky & Frances-White, 2008, p. 256). The rule of three is commonly associated with comedy probably in part because it is such an effective projectable strategy, not because there is

anything inherently humorous about the number three. Even beyond the number three, repetition still serves comedy. Stand-up comics will add on “tags” to punchlines to expand a successful joke sequence, which can go on for an undefined length (Scarpetta and Spagnoli, 2009, p. 223). All of these strategies project to listeners what is coming next and also when their turn is arriving to respond.

I will argue that projectability is more important than dispreference (or even the idea of “script opposition”) in creating a humorous, laughable interaction. In improv it is important to “be obvious” as Keith Johnstone urges of his students: don’t try to be “original;” be obvious. Being ‘original’ suggests one does not want to pay attention to the patterns created and can make a scene that is painful to watch and will alienate scene partners. Because improv is unscripted and spontaneous, it is as important to project to your fellow players as to the audience what it is you are planning on doing. In this sense projectability ties in nicely with the idea of a play frame. If play frames are marked by meta-messages and framing that says “this is play” or “this is funny,” then projectable elements in public discourse can be seen as contextualization cues of a play frame which effectively invite the audience to participate in the play through laughter and co-construct the experience. But projectability also pertains to non-humorous, non-playful events, as in political speeches (e.g. Heritage, 2010), which suggests that projectability is simply a component of discourse which also happens to be essential to play frames. If play frames depend on meta-messages or contextualization cues, then contextualization cues can be considered inherently projectable: they foreshadow or frame the following actions.

5.1 Intonation & Repetition

In the Mix Up and LL Cool J scenes we tested for dispreference, but laughter patterns in these scenes in ways that are more salient than in terms of dispreference. In Mix Up there is a pattern of laughter affiliated with the FPPs which accuse P2 of “mixing up” their belongings. There is not only a pattern of behavior (that of a complaint FPP), but there is also a pattern in the manner in which the FPP is delivered. Emphasis is placed on the last word in the sequence, indicating a finality or that what is to come is of greater importance than what has preceded (Atkinson, 1984, p. 400). In the first FPP (Line 5, 6) there is also a downward intonation signaling the end of his turn, while in the other two FPPs (Lines 19, 26) upward intonation signals this, along with lengthening of vowels and loudness (as in BO::X).

5 P1 [What]the fu:ck is the deal man↓ you mixed up all my
 6 ↓tape[s.]
 7 AUD [X]X[XX]xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

19 P3 D' you put all the cereal in the same BO::X?!
 20 AUD [XXX [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 21 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX°xxxx°

26 [Donny? did you mix up my pi:lls?
 27 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]

These three FPPs also follow Atkinson's (1984) observation that most affiliative responses, or audience responses which align with the speaker, are projected by a narrow range of actions, such as terminating declarations (support or opposition for a plan, e.g.), congratulations, criticism of opponents, and self-directed boasts, among others (377). There are

two possible explanations for this. One is that, as Heritage (2010) notes, the instrumental benefit of affiliative response is to make the recipient seem popular (265). The affiliative response is a form of group social appraisal, which is to decide winners and losers, which categorizes the kinds of responses seen most often in Heritage (1984). In his examples the audience uses their affiliative response to give support to or assigning “points” where they deem appropriate: if they agree with a proposed action, they will cheer, and if they do not like an opponent, they will jeer thereby having part in instituting a social order through their response. Another possibility for mass affiliative (or negative, disaffiliative) response is that these kinds of actions are purely expressive, and done for their own sake of participating in a discourse. Because projectable cues are formulaic they simply represents a clear pattern which is easily interpretable so that the audience knows when to clap or laugh, or when it’s their turn -- regardless of what they get out of the turn. Audience response most likely functions as a combination of these two explanations, serving both expressive and instrumental needs, but I will be most concerned with how an audience knows it is their turn to act.

In the excerpts from the Mix Up scene above, when P1, P3, and P4 all accuse Donny of mixing something up, each turn is signaled by a clear end-point through intonation, lengthening, and emphasis. Moreover, each turn’s formula is made clearer by the previous ones; repetition breeds the formulaic nature of these turns, and creates a pattern which is predictable. Similarly, the laughable turns in Scene 3 represent moments of repetition. Granted, the first instance of P3 asking P1 to “sing for us” had no previous formula to follow, but it was essentially a counter to -- or a rewording and reversal of -- the initial FPP which was P1’s claim that he was turning into LL Cool J, making it a repetition of sorts. Regardless, the repetition of “↑Plea::se?” and

“£si:ng for us£” bears mentioning, as these are predictable and ultimately lead to the dissolution of the scene in a very laughable way.

14 P3 [Oh my gosh!, no wa:y?, you know all the words? put it in
 15 **£si:ng for u[s:£** ((points toward a cassette player))
 16 P1 [(Ohh↓)=
 17 AUD =xxxxxxxxxxxx!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 18 [XXXXXXXXxxxxxx
 19 P3 [↑**Plea::se?** ((holds hands together, begging))
 20 P1 I’m feelin a little [si:ck
 21 P3 [↑**Plea::[se?** ((begging))
 22 AUD [xxxxxxxxxxxx°xxxx°
 [...]
 29 P3 [I heard you were sick, so I brought some chicken
 30 noodle soup, ((turns around to pick up a bowl of soup))
 31 ((presents soup to P1))
 32 **£now will you si:ng [for us?£]**
 33 P1 [(ough)-]
 34 AUD =!XXXXXXXXxxxx
 35 P1 (1.0) (ough~phe:w~)↓- £~no::~~£
 36 AUD =!XXXXXXXXXXXX [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 37 XXX

Also present in these scenes are non-verbal cues, such as P3 clasping her hands together to “pray” and beg for P1 to sing (Line 21). In fact, there are so many non-verbal cues that to analyze them properly would constitute a study in its own right, but one scene bears mentioning in the role that gesture plays, alongside other contextualization cues, in service of projectability. Gesture, like intonation and repetition, serves as to signal to the audience when it is their turn; given that the expectation of the genre is ‘humorous’ their turns almost always constitute laughter.

5.2 Gesture

“Mixtape” Montage Scene 2 occurred on the same night as the previous scenes discussed (Mix Up and LL Cool J) and happened between the two. The theme was still “mixtape,” but this time the inspiration led to physical scotch tape, which led to poster-hanging. Two female players are passing back and forth mimed tape and hanging up posters for a boy-girl party that P1 is putting together. P2 thinks it might be a little “risque” because they too young. Another player, a male, enters the scene by knocking on the door (indicated by stomping on the ground and gesturing a knocking motion). He tells them he is there for the boy-girl party, but they inform him that he is early -- hence why they are hanging up the posters. P2 then suggests that they tie up the boy, which they do with the tape they have been using for the posters.

The high significance of gesture in improv is unique to the practice because so much improv is done without props, so gesture must act as a stand-in for the physical reality of the scene. Moreover, if a player introduces an object, they are more or less compelled to use it or make it interesting (Napier, 2004). In this way, the gesture in this scene organizes the entire sequence because it creates the reality. The poster not only organizes P1 and P2’s speech, but it predicates that P3 is early for the party (otherwise why would they be hanging posters for it?); moreover, the poster tape offers a means to tie up the boy. While this level of significance is unique to improv, a closer analysis of gesture acting as a projectable contextualization cue might have wider relevance.

The first laughable comes from the presentation of the premise, that there is going to be a boy-girl party:

5 P1 (1.8) I'm havin' a boy girl party later,
 6 (.5) [if you wanna co:me.]
 7 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXX]

While there is no gesture in this laughables, it is a defining aspect of the following laughable turns. The next two laughables are paired with hand gestures. In the first, P2 puts out her hands as though to keep P1 at bay (line 10), while P1 raises her arms as though out of exasperation (line 14):

10 P2 [°oh:°] ((puts hands out)) That's a
 11 little (.) risque:↑=
 12 AUD =XXXXXXXXXX[xx
 13 P1 [I just figure=you know
 14 (1.0) ((raises arms)) •hh we're eleven no:w [(like=
 15 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 16 xxxxxx]

Within the dialogue this creates a contrast between the two characters, one of whom (P2) is put off by the idea, and one (P1) who does not see any reason not to have a boy-girl party. Both of these gestures not only enhance the characterization and the preference structure established, but they also project to the audience that something is to come following soon after which will be important. The gesture frames the following or concurrent statement. As Schegloff (1984) describes gestures as projectable elements, he likens them to intonation or stress, and they often bear a “temporal relationship” to their “affiliated” talk, creating emphasis (275). These gestures contrast with the ‘iconic’ gestures used to mime props, such as the poster, and are arguably more widely applicable. The second laughable (Lines 10, 11) is projected by both a gesture of putting her hands out, by stress, and a rising intonation. In the case of the third laughable on line 14, P1 uses gesture (raised arms) in conjunction with stress on the number of

their age to establish her point that they are “eleven now.” By endowing their characters as eleven, this makes conscious and explicit what was otherwise hinted at by previous turns: that they are having a boy girl party (line 5) and that that is a “little risqué” (line 11). In this way the “punchline” or laughable is predicted semantically or topically through previous dialogue, whereas it is temporally predicted through contextualization cues such as gesture and intonation. Put another way, being “eleven now” is the most ‘obvious’ conclusion -- both for the players and for the audience. It is not the unexpected or the original which is funny, but the obvious.

5.3 Being Obvious: Gesture, Word Play, and Reincorporation

If predictability is essential for audience laughter, it would certainly behoove players to be obvious. Though of course, the way that Johnstone (1979) speaks of obvious is in terms of whatever is obvious to you as a player, which allows for imaginative freedom: it is after all a concept based upon subjectivity. What is obvious to the player may or may not be obvious to the audience, but I would argue that there is often an overlap, and a beneficial overlap. Further along in Scene 2, or Boy-Girl Party, we find other instances of ‘obviousness,’ through gesture, word play, and recycling or reincorporation. In the following section of the scene P1 stops putting up posters to answer the door for P3, who is here for the party for which they are posterizing.

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27 P3                =Hey, I wz here for the boy girl party?
28 P1      (1.0) That-? oh, you saw the- s:-?
29      (1.0) [did I put the wrong da:te?]
30 P3                [I, uh, (.5)] I brought some ginger ale=
31 AUD                                =xxxxxxxxx
32 P1      It- it's (n)- this Saturda:y↑
33 P3      (0.5) Oh! £my mom just dropped me o:ff£ [((turns around))]
34 AUD                                [!XXXXXXXX!XXXXXXXX]
35      XXX[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX] [xx]xxx
36 P1      [Uh- you can come on in, to the school]=

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By her delay on line 28 it appears that P3 has surprised P1 by his offer, and she tries to justify it by wondering if she put the wrong date. Finally she tells him it is on Saturday. P3 could leave the scene, but that would be in bad faith and would represent a form of player-player dispreference. Instead, he must accept the world in which all realities presented thus far are true: it is on Saturday, but here he is stranded in the scene; therefore his mother just dropped him off. It is also quite possible he had this line of logic already reasoned, seeing as he had time to formulate his entrance to the whole scene. In fact, I would give this reading preference given the smiley voice on Line 33: he appears to have been waiting for that invitation. Either way, the turn elicits the most laughter of any in the scene. This could be in part due to the obvious -- but strange or incongruent -- reality presented, but also arguably related to the fact that he turns around right after he tells P1 that his mom dropped him off. This gesture acts as a projectable cue, which aligns temporally with the audience response. If he had simply said “My mom just dropped me off” and stood staring at P1 there might not have been as large of an audience response because there would be uncertainty as to whether or not P1 would respond: it would appear as though he were selecting her for the next turn. Instead, he turns around which creates a beat in which P1’s immediate response would be dispreferred, and in this way he selects the audience for the next turn, which they graciously accept.

This section of the scene is followed by some examples of playing with the obvious and paradox. P3 asks if he is going to be the only boy coming since it’s not today, but P1 responds that that means he is probably the only boy not coming since it’s not today, yet he is the only one who has come.

39 P3 **F1** (2.5) [So am I] the only boy that's gonna be=
 40 P2 [°(I hate you)° ((to P1))]
 41 P3 **F1** =coming? (.)
 42 since it's (.) not today?=
 43 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[xxxxx
 44 P1 **F_{cnt}** [Well I] think
 45 that would mean (.) you're the only boy not coming 'cause
 46 it's not today↓ [(???)
 47 P3 **F_{cnt}** [Does that mean I can't co:me anymore:?=
 48 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 49 xxx[xxxxxxxx]
 50 P1 **S1** [Oh no- no-,] you can come sti:ll

Despite it not being the official party, he assumes it is by virtue of him being there; there are girls and a boy, so it is now a boy-girl party. The layers are surprisingly many given such a simple and immediate comment. I argue that this is the result of 'word play,' in the sense that "Saturday" is not "today," and how can he "not come anymore" if he is already there? There is ambiguity as to these meanings and which ones are intended, but these paradoxical understandings are present in the language itself, all which is obvious to both the players and the audience. This exemplifies a broader category for analysis: word play is a common resource drawn upon throughout other scenes, some of which will be addressed and some which have already been addressed (i.e. "you mixed up all my tapes").

This word play might be laughable in its own right, but it is given space to be laughed at by its projectable sequencing. P3 emphasizes "not today" with prosodic stress and a slight pause beforehand which indicates a finality and importance (Atkinson, 1984). It is also a question which indicates that it is the end of his turn; whether or not P1 will respond immediately is uncertain, but given the contextualization cues the audience can assume it is their turn. In response P1 counters the F1 FPP by slightly rephrasing the question in a statement form and

repeats “not today” with a lowering intonation. There is no particular stress on “not today,” suggesting this is in fact a counter and not an offer to the audience. In this case the counter acts as a way to avoid answering a silly -- but hard to answer -- question. This response also follows the logic of being obvious in that the paradox of “not coming” and “not today” are the topics at hand, so why not explore them and repeat them? P3 then counters P1’s counter by rephrasing the question once again into “Does that mean I can’t come anymore?” Throughout this sequence there is no desire to resolve the paradox at hand, suggesting this scene is well within a play frame and the game is a language game. Moreover, this section entails a game of paradox, and according to Bateson (1972) paradox is the realm of play. Finally, to move the scene along P1 accepts the offer and responds that P3 can still come to the party.

While it is important to speculate on the ways in which laughables arise, it is equally important to articulate how they are signaled in interaction. Space must be created for the audience to take their turn, just as with any other turn taker. If P3 had not responded immediately in Line 47, Line 46 could have been a potential candidate for a laughable. However, despite the downward intonation in Line 46, P1 does not have a sense of finality and trails off into unintelligible speech, and P3 does respond immediately and overlaps, in which case audience laughter at this point would be a dispreferred response. Instead P3 responds with salient, projectable lengthening and in a question form, indicating the audience has license to laugh.

5.4 Reincorporation

One final example from this scene examines another example of projectability via ‘obviousness.’ Reincorporation is a concept defined by Keith Johnstone which is characterized by using all elements in the beginning of a story in order to complete the story (Johnstone, 1979).

If a story begins “There was Little Red Riding Hood and a big bad wolf,” we expect that the story will end when the two cross paths in some fashion or another, and the beginning elements are ‘reincorporated.’ Johnstone used reincorporation as a generative tool to create unlikely stories out of everyday ingredients. In fact, in line with incongruity theories of humor it could be one possible reason that improv is “funny:” a collection of unrelated items (suggested from the audience) all get put into the same story. For our purposes we will look at reincorporation as a form of repetition and also ‘recycling,’ or reintroducing a closed topic used in previous turns in the conversation, which can be previous either to that day or even that week or year (Tannen 2006).

In the Boy-Girl Party scene the reincorporation is very simple and it is performed by a player who is in the backline who has the luxury of time and space to realize the element that needs to be reincorporated. In this case, it is Kyle’s mother. Any time a character is spoken of in improv, it is safe to assume they might appear; in fact, following Johnstone, it is best that they appear, as this will generate good stories. The following excerpt comes after the two girls (P1 and P2) have tied up Kyle (P3) with tape. P4 knocks on the door to enter the scene.

81 P4 ((knock at door))
 82 P1 Oh, my go:d~
 83 ((walks to door))
 84 P4 KYLE?
 85 P3 Is that another bo:y?=
 86 P4 =[Kyle?
 87 P2 [WE DON’ EVEN HAVE ENOUGH TAPE FOR THIS!=
 88 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXxx
 89 P1 Who is it?
 90 P4 It’s ↑Ky:le’s mother.↑
 91 P3 That’s my mom.=
 92 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXX [XXXXXXXXXXXX!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 93 xxxxxxxxxxxx [°xxxx
 94 BL [((CLAP))

The revelation that it is Kyle's mother is projected by a pre-sequence consisting of three important turns: lines 82, 85, and 87. The pre-sequence establishes the expectation of concern (from P1, Line 82), and that it is a boy (from P3, Line 85), and concern that it is a boy (from P2, Line 87). This creates a sort of list or sequence of high anticipation in which an obvious answer is appropriate because the obvious, reincorporated answer indicates finality. It is possible that P4 could have arrived to the door as a police officer, but this would indicate that the scene would continue on until the action with the new character was then resolved. By reincorporating Kyle's mom, we get an answer which is both obvious and yet surprising because it contrasts with the list expecting a boy. By reincorporating a previous element the turn offers finality, which in itself is a license to laugh.

5.5 License to Laugh

So far this chapter has elaborated on the many different mechanisms by which audience laughter is projectable, and some of the reasons for the need for projection, namely turn-taking norms. Because humor is a co-constructed experience, signaled by laughter, there are also other elements that factor into whether or not the audience can laugh. They need to know if it is their turn, yes, but they also need to know if something is allowably funny, according to social norms. In most cases, this allowability is signaled by a non-serious play frame which says "this is play" or "it is OK to laugh." However, because play can be ambiguous, there are some situations where it is unclear if a situation is serious or not, or appropriately laughable.

To offer an example of this audience uncertainty, the final excerpt in this chapter examines the end sequence of a scene. The scene is a Montage scene from another night with the

suggestion of “skeleton,” and I have given it the moniker “What’s Broken?” It was the second scene that night in the montage sequence. The scene starts with a patient, P1, acting like he is very hurt and is convinced that something is broken in his body. The doctor, P2, acts very macho and unconcerned. The excerpt below comes at the end of the scene after some back and forth between the two characters, when the doctor finally tells him to “suck it up.”

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25 P2      SUCK IT UP! ((mimes spitting on P1 and walks away))=
26 AUD                                          =XXXXXX
27      XXXXX[xxx
28 P1      [You said this last week when I got cancer, too!]=
29 AUD     =[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
30 P2      =[YEAH! AND YOU'RE STILL HE:RE!=
31 AUD                                          =XXXXXXXXXXXX[xxxx ]
32 P1                                          [I CAN'T]
33      ↑SUCK UP↑ CANCER!=
34 AUD                                          =°XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXXXXXX°]
35 BL                                          [ ((CLAP)) ]=
36 AUD     =!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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The audience laughs in line 29 when P1 says “You said this last week when I got cancer, too!” But when the topic of cancer is recycled in line 33, phrased in terms of not being able to “suck up” cancer, the audience response is laughter, but it is decidedly muted. There is uncertainty as to whether or not this is acceptably funny. It is likely that nearly every person in the room has known someone affected by cancer, and know the grim realities of it -- that no, one cannot “suck up cancer.” It is on the line of “blood” and “no blood” in John Wright’s (2007) terms: if there are real consequences implicated, it is not funny. Play frames are non-serious, and should possess non-serious consequences, but this scene introduces what may be serious consequences. Moreover, while this instance might be funny to individuals, there is the uncertainty about whether or not it is acceptably funny for the very reason that an audience

member does not know with whom they share company -- it is possible that someone who was recently and deeply affected by cancer is sitting beside them. In short, it is a delicate moment for coordinating laughter, indicated by two full seconds of hushed, sparse laughter. Once the backline clap-edits to end the scene the audience erupts into full-blown laughter. The end-scene clap acts as a projectable contextualization cue that the scene is over, and therefore laughter is acceptable. Not only does it offer a projectable cue in terms of timing their turn laughing, it offers the audience social sanction to do so.

Projectability is closely interwoven with a play frame in that both frame events that are to follow. Play frames are indicated by meta-messages or contextualization cues that say “this is play” or “is this play?” while projectable meta-messages offer information about what is to come, and more specifically when the audience is able to act, both in terms of timing and social sanction (which could be construed as the same thing, if turn-taking is a matter of social sanction). In the next chapter I will examine how projectable cues and play-related cues combine to create a net effect of ‘play’ or more specifically, a ‘game.’

CHAPTER 6

FINDING THE GAME: KEYING AND REPETITION

In this final chapter of analysis, I attempt to answer the question “how do improv players engage in play frames to create humorous, laughable moments?” From the previous chapters we can conclude that projectability is a necessary element for laughable moments, and while dispreference itself is not criterial, the manner in which it occurs could be. Specifically, I will examine finer-grained paralinguistic contextualization cues in conjunction with the coarser-grained projectable cues. I will argue that these work in unison and combine in service of an analytical concept called the ‘game of the scene’ or the ‘game’ for short, which is created through a repetition of behavior, which creates the structure in which an improv scene can occur and arguably aid in the humorousness of such a scene.

Improv was built on games. Viola Spolin built her improv exercises from games she learned at the Hull House through Neva Boyd, and most improv exercises including the ones performed in this study are considered games. However, there is a semantic ambiguity in reference to improv, which refers to two kinds of games. The game of Montage is a form or a structure for generating a scene, and it is not the same as the ‘game of the scene,’ which is generated or found within the scene and emerges spontaneously through repetition. Put another way, improvisers do not simply play the game; first they must ‘find the game’ (Salinsky & Frances-White, 2008, p. 257). The game of the scene lacks a clear definition amongst improvisers, but it is often considered necessary for a good scene (Halpern, Close, & Johnson,

1994), or can simply (though vaguely) be considered the “unusual thing” in a scene (Hines, 2016, p. 10). There are also different means of initiating the game of a scene, including making an offer of a game, or simply finding a game through repetition (Salinsky & France-White, 2008, p. 257).

I will use this latter definition of game since it is slightly broader and assumes a more emergent property rather than something pre-planned. A ‘game’ for my definition will simply be creating a non-serious pattern of behavior through repetition. It must be non-serious, however, to be a game because there can be serious instances of repetition. It is also possible that repetition in itself can signal a game structure, which can shift a serious frame into a play frame. In Gordon’s (2008) analysis a mother is trying to help her daughter put olive oil on bread. The daughter refuses and an argument ensues, in which each party repeats their opposition to one another: “No.” “Yes.” “No.” “Yes.” Eventually the mother contrasts this list and starts spelling out her response “Y-E-S. Yes.” This pattern is then repeated by the daughter who says “N-O. No.” The pattern of spelling is then expanded into other words such as “B-O-O,” playing on the daughter’s spelling practice. Ultimately the altercation ends in laughter and the frame is shifted from the serious to the non-serious. I argue that play frames are closely related to the concept of a game in that it is a necessary characteristic of a game. Whether it precedes the game, or emerges after the game is found, the play frame signals non-seriousness, which is a necessary component of the game, which itself depends on repetition to be described.

Repetition acts as a projectable strategy. If audience affiliative responses are dependent upon a ‘game of pure coordination,’ maybe this need for coordination also extends into the interaction between players. After all, if players do not agree and coordinate, the scene will fail

and they will all suffer; meanwhile, if they all coordinate successfully, everybody wins. The means of coordination player-to-player are contextualization cues including changes in vocal intonation or pitch, i.e. keying (Tannen, 2006), changes in alignment, i.e. footing (Chovanec, 2017), and repetition (Coates, 2007). These coordination cues can signal both a play frame and a game. Paralinguistic cues such as smile voice, intonation, pitch, and emphasis can indicate that a non-serious sequence or a play frame has been initiated. If repeated enough times, these cues, along with other behavior can form a game; for this the golden number for lists is three, following Heritage (2010) as well as Salinsky and France-White (2008).

While projectability is essential to give an audience space or license to laugh at a ‘humorous’ turn, one of the pre-conditions for any turn to be laughable is for it to be playful. One would not laugh at just any projectable moment (e.g. “All rise for the national anthem.”) Within the subset of ‘play’ there are many possibilities for laughable material or messages (including dispreference structures, e.g.). In fact, there is nearly an infinite number of possibilities, which makes it futile to create a typology. Play is dependent largely upon what it is not, which is to say it is not a ‘serious’ frame, or a ‘bona-fide’ mode of behaving, or simply the expected frame of ‘normal’ discourse. In Partington’s (2006) examples of press conference laughter, the expected frame is transactional: the press corps ask questions and get responses. When the frame is shifted, through rekeying or a shift in footing, in a non-serious manner, then it is playful.

Repetition can also be quite playful and practical for sequence organization. We know that listing and repetition is a common strategy to create projectable turns (e.g. Heritage, 2010) because it creates an identifiable pattern. It is also used heavily in humor to expand already successful jokes (Scarpetta and Spagnolli, 2009). In spontaneous conversation, repetition

becomes a tool for formulaicity, which allows structure to emerge from an otherwise structureless discourse; this formulaicity is also characteristic and indispensable in children's socialization and learning (Tannen, 2009b). In order for an improv player to be effective at contributing to a scene, they need to be effective listeners (Hines, 2016). To repeat to the pattern, you need to need to be able to recognize it. To play the game, you need to be able to find the game. If the game is necessarily non-serious, then indicators of a non-serious sequence, or a play frame, might indicate that (a) a game is being played or (b) the necessary condition of non-seriousness is present for a game to be played.

6.1 Smile Voice: "This is Play"

The first section of this chapter examines paralinguistic contextualization cues, which signal that a frame is shifted, and in this case that a play frame is indicated; this could be through rekeying (pitch, intonation) or a shift in footing (alignment, preference structure). Stokoe's (2008) argument is that it is not the dispreference itself but the manner of dispreference which is appealing. She focuses on the manner of dispreference in terms of impoliteness or social breach, but I focus instead on the manner of delivery. This paralinguistic information is also present in her data, but not the focus of her study. In particular, smile voice (or smiley voice) is present in a number of laughable sequences in her study (e.g. "£We're- we're really sorry we fogged you." Stokoe, 2009, p. 301), indicating the presence of a play frame. Smile voice is one of the best indications that a speaker is about to laugh or that they are treating the situation non-seriously (Glenn & Holt, 2013, p. 6, 168). If laughter is the best indicator of a play frame, smile voice which acts as its precursor should also be a prime indicator of a play frame, sending the

meta-message that whatever occurs within that frame is non-serious. In the LL Cool J pimping scene, we find a consistent use of smile voice, indicated by £ brackets.

```

11 P1      (3.0) I think I'm (0.8) starting to turn into LL Cool [J
12 AUD                                           [xxxxxx
13      °xxx[xx°
14 P3      [Oh my gosh!, no wa:y?, you know all the words? put it in
15      £si:ng for u[s:£ ((points toward a cassette player))
16 P1      [(Ohh!)=
17 AUD      =xxxxxxxxxxx!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

29 P3      [I heard you were sick, so I brought some chicken
30      noodle soup, ((turns around to pick up a bowl of soup))
31      ((presents soup to P1))
32      £now will you si:ng [for us?£]

```

Because P3 knows that P1 will not sing, this is an opportunity to play, which is signaled via meta-messages. By using smile voice P3 is saying both “sing for us” and “don’t sing for us.” This is paired with a repeated use of a begging gesture as a projectable contextualization cue that “this is the game:” I really want you to sing. At least, that is the surface-level projection, on the character-character preference structure. But player-player the interactional game is ultimately ‘pimping,’ which says, “I am going to put you on the spot, making you possibly uncomfortable, but it will be funny.” P1 is put on the spot and tries to wiggle his way out of it by trying to change the topic, but he is unable to. It would seem that pimping would be an aggressive, unenjoyable game, but there is smile voice in his reaction, suggesting he is OK with being the butt of the joke. While the pimping efforts represent a dispreference of the player’s project, it is not a dispreference of the player himself.

When P1 says that “everyone’s gonna wanna come out,” P2 tries to take a turn, but is on the verge of cracking up, indicated by the smile voice on line 18. When P1 continues the offer, adding that her mom is getting pizzas, P2 finally cracks and laughs to herself on Line 20, and has to delay her turn once again, until she can finally say “I’m sorry but-” and even this is punctuated by heavy aspiration. The smiley voice in this case does not project a laughable moment but instead is arguably the result of the laughable on Line 14, which itself is signaled by a projectable gesture and a paralinguistic aspiration before the semantic core of the laughable “we’re eleven now.” The contextualization cues that indicate a play frame may align with laughables, but the play frame extends beyond a single turn, or even an adjacency pair. It creates a undefined boundary within the sequence that gives license non-serious behavior, including laughter. In other words it is not that every meta-message signaling a play frame corresponds to a laughable -- as we have seen from last chapter projectability plays a large role in that -- but instead that the play frame is a necessary condition, that of non-seriousness, for a turn to be a potential candidate for a laughable. Through the contextualization cues we merely find evidence, or symptoms, of the non-serious play frame.

Later on in the scene, we do see an instance of smile voice corresponding to a laughable. As discussed in chapter 5, at this point in the scene, P3 has just arrived to the scene and explains that he is here for the boy-girl party. It remains unclear if he intended for the laughable moment or if it was unintended (though my suspicion is that it was intentional) but it is a moot point because either way his paralinguistic cue of smile voice is signaling that this is a non-serious moment.

32 P1 It- it's (n)- this Saturda:y↑
 33 P3 (0.5) Oh! £my mom just dropped me o:fff£ [((turns around))]
 34 AUD [!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]
 35 XXX[XX] [xx]xxx
 36 P1 [Uh- you can come on in, to the school]=

By combining a number of contextualization cues with projectability the audience finds this to be a laughable moment. Noted in chapter 5 is the projected contextualization cue of turning around to look for his mom, which signals that he is “selecting” the audience for the next turn. He also begins his turn with a pause and then “Oh!”, framing what is to follow as noteworthy. What follows is signaled by smile voice, available to both fellow players and audience alike, that he finds this situation to be non-serious. Arguably he finds it to be funny himself, expressed by the precursor to laughter, smile voice.

Smile voice is a salient means by which players can signal to one another that they are engaging in play. In the case of the pimping scene, P3 signals to P1 that she is going to put him on the spot. If she did not know that he would not sing, she might have framed this interaction differently; but because she does know, her smile voice indicates to P1 that her footing has shifted from a “transactional” mode into an “interactional” mode: namely messing with P1 or trying to “get him into trouble” as Johnstone would put it (1979, p. 93). Similarly, in the boy-girl party scene, P3 complicates the scene by arriving well before the date of the party. In everyday life, if a boy were stranded by his mom it might be deemed problematic, or a slightly serious moment that requires action to correct. Instead, because it is an act of play, there are none of the normal consequences of everyday life (Huizinga, 1976, p. 51), and as such, P3 can relish in the complication. In short, the player are having fun, and this fun is translated into funny. By uptaking the cues given by their fellow players, improvisers are able to enter into a mutual realm

of non-seriousness. They do this naturally, in a single, smooth, social act. Yet by examining the act in detail we can see that paralinguistic cues both indicate this playfulness, and act as a meta-message which allows players to project to one another a mutual expectation, so they can be “in-tune” (Coates, 2007; Chovanec, 2017). This “in-tune-ness” will be examined in the next section, in which players uptake contextualization cues and reply in kind.

6.2 Harmonization: Intonation & Voice as Offer

While smile voice is probably the most salient and categorically ‘playful’ indicator, second only to laughter itself, there are other paralinguistic features that indicate playfulness, most notably intonation and changes in voice. When a player uses a paralinguistic cue, a fellow player has the option to acknowledge it and build on it by either aligning with the cue or dis-aligning with it. Both alignment and disalignment, complement and contrast, are considered instances of player-player preference, because they represent a recognition of a pattern in the sequence and a contribution to it. The focus of this section is ‘rekeying’ in which players shift their frame via changes in vocal qualities (following Goffman, 1974, and Tannen, 2006). Following the musical metaphor, this alignment through rekeying can be glossed as harmonization or “in-tune-ness” (following Coates, 2007). Some changes in voice quality are hard to describe given the tools of conversation transcription, so some explanation will accompany the transcripts.

In the “What’s Broken?” scene, P1 opens with a rising intonation and quaver voice, taking a pause between segments to build drama, indicating that he is a pathetic character. Meanwhile, P2 contrasts this voice with a steady intonation, quick response, and finality, indicating he is an indifferent character.

out a high pitched whine, which prompts P2 to return and actively mock P1's whining noises, harmonizing in couplet fashion the paralinguistic cues initiated by P1:

16 AUD =XXXXXXXXXX
 17 P1 †EEEEEE=((whining noise))
 18 P2 =Oh you c:ryin' [now? You cryin'?=
 19 AUD [XXXXXXXXXX
 20 P1 =Oh no- oh- I got a little †expo:sed bo:ine†
 21 ((mockingly, while he wiggles P1's arm))
 22 P1 [AAAGH!
 23 P2 [WAAaaa! WAAaaa!
 24 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX=

Finally P2 upkeys his callous characterization further by yelling at P1 and miming spitting on him, creating even further contrast. P1 at first responds in his pathetic, lengthened voice, but then harmonizes and aligns with P2's loudness (line 32), suggesting that these paralinguistic cues offer a roadmap for agreement and a covert means for extending and accepting offers:

25 P2 SUCK IT UP! ((mimes spitting on P1 and walks away))=
 26 AUD =XXXXXX
 27 XXXXX[xxx
 28 P1 [You sai:d thi:s la:st wee:k when I got cancer, too:!=
 29 AUD =[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 30 P2 =[YEAH! AND YOU'RE STILL HE:RE!=
 31 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXX[xxxx]
 32 P1 [I CAN'T]
 33 †SUCK UP† CANCER!=
 34 AUD =°XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXXXXXX°]
 35 BL [((CLAP))]=
 36 AUD =!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Throughout the scene the paralinguistic contextualization cues of loudness, pitch, and intonation serve to create both character-character dispreference and allow player-player preference or “in-tune-ness.” This can prove to be a laughable situation in its own right, but more importantly I argue that this is indicative of a play frame in which both players actively rekey according to what their partner has done paralinguistically.

Intonation can be an offer in itself. It can also be a form of offer acceptance. In the next scene to be examined the audience suggestion was “submarine.” The scene selected was the eighth scene in the montage. Notably, this was one player’s first improv performance ever, and it was his very first scene. P1 clap edits to start the scene and selects P2, the first time player, to join him in the scene. P2 is guided along throughout the scene by P2 and P3 who enters later. What will be of note for the purposes of this section are P2’s paralinguistic choices. In particular, he plays with his voice to create a character, and this is mostly what he does throughout the scene, making few offers of his own. P1 endows P2 as a professor, and offers the topic to be discussed: a leaking ship in a harbor.

```

1  P1 F1 So professor, you mean to tell me,=after they bombed the
2      harbor the ship still leaks diesel to this da:y?
3  P2 Fcnt (0.5) S:ti~ll to this:- da:y the sh:ip leaks die~sel.=
4      ((head bobbing, different voice, slight stutter))
5  AUD                                     =XXXXXXXX [XXXXXXXX
6      XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
7  P1 S1                                     [Wow,
8      (1.5) That's insa:ne
9  P2 S1?And it: (.) p:ollutes the O:cean

```

In the beginning of the scene, P1 offers a FPP to P2 about a ship being bombed and leaking diesel. P2 nominally responds to it, but only by repeating it, which for the purposes of

improv I will consider a counter because it does not add any new information and in turn reverses the direction, causing P1 to respond in Line 7 to a form of his own FPP in Line 1. In other words he “yeses” but does not “and.” In Line 9, he finally “ands” by adding more information to the initial offer. However, this is co-indexed with P1’s response in Line 7, adding to the response to create a jointly-constructed SPP akin to the jointly constructed FPP in the first 4 lines. This will be discussed further in the final section about repetition, but for our present purposes it should be noted that P2 is not moving the scene along very effectively because he does not add much new information or make any tangible offers to the other players (e.g. about their character, about the action of the scene, etc.). To his credit, it is a very difficult task to create a fictional scene from scratch in the presence of an eager audience, and this is his very first time performing improv publicly. All of that said, the one thing that P2 does do well, that he does quite naturally, is that he keys accordingly through paralinguistic cues.

P1 endows P2 as a professor, and to embody the professor he alters his voice. While he alters his voice he also moves his head in an erratic circular, bobbing motion. The transcription is difficult to align perfectly with the quality of voice, but we see in Line 3 he draws out his consonants, imitating a slightly stutter, including a very slight quaver in his voice. His prosody and emphasis is affiliated to his head motions, which act as a temporally-referent (as opposed to iconic) gesture (Schegloff, 1984), adding stress to his speech. The head motions stop at the moment that he stops speaking. The net effect is a laughable turn, signaled by a projectable stress pattern and finality of intonation aided by his head bob. It is also a notably playful voice in that it is much different from what his normal voice is, indicating this is his “professor” character. Later in the scene the same pattern is followed, in which P2 responds to a FPP with a repeating of the

question (Line 17), in an unusual voice. In this case, the repetition acts as the “yes” and the voice acts as the “and.” The voice is the offer:

```

14 P1                                     =Are you talkin'
15     about the mo:nsters of the dee:p?
16 P3     ((enters))
17 P2     The m:onsters OF: the dee~:p!
18 P3     This is good stuff, [=the professor talkin' about monsters=
19 P1                                     [yeah-
20 P3     =of the deep ag[ain?
21 AUD                                     [xxxxxx

```

Even if the new player is not pushing the scene along, he is at least agreeing with the general offer of play, indicated by his unusual intonation, lengthening, and quaver in his voice. These resources are adequate to get him through the scene and garner a couple of laughable turns, suggesting these paralinguistic cues are not only incidental to improv performance but indeed functional. This particular scene will be returned to in the final section, as it is of particular interest because it is a rare moment in which a first-time player is discovering the mechanisms for improv sequencing and agreement. For now, I conclude that the paralinguistic contextualization cues (such as voice) act in conjunction with broader, projectable contextualization cues (such as patterns of speech) to create a play frame in which players can play. What game it is exactly that they play depends on the situation, and will be the subject of the next section.

6.3 Finding the Game: Repetition

A play frame is a precondition for humorousness or laughable turns because it signals non-seriousness. In the case of improv this is indicated primarily via paralinguistic

contextualization cues signaled by player to player, which are also visible to the audience to witness, even if these meta-messages may not be designed for them in particular. Instead, as discussed in chapter 5, the term I use to describe cues salient to the audience is ‘projectable’ contextualization cues. There is an overlap of these cues, however, because both are receivable by both players and audience members, and the two kinds of cues inform each other, working in unison.

To unify these conceptually in terms of their function, I will use the term ‘game.’ This term is in use among nearly every improv practitioner or teacher (Hines, 2016; Johnstone, 1979; Napier, 2004; Spolin, 1999; among others), as well as the improv group being studied. In improv the ‘game’ can be defined loosely as what the scene is about, or what its “deal” is (Napier, 2004), though specifically the game is found within a scene as an emergent pattern, which usually happens to coincide with “the funny part” of the scene (Hines, 2016, p. 10). For my purposes I argue that the game is composed of any combination of projectable elements and play frame elements which are repeated in an identifiable pattern. Play is defined by metabehavior, and specifically meta-messages (e.g. paralinguistic contextualization cues). The game is repetition of a non-serious behavior. Play and game usually coincide and it is not clear which precedes the other. For instance, as Gordon (2008) noted, sometimes a game can be used to defuse a serious situation and transition into a non-serious play frame.

Often, the broader strokes of projectable cues form the “what” of the game, and represent the pattern of behavior observable by the audience and repeatable by the players. This might include a list of similar talk (e.g. “DONNY?” “Donny!” and “Donny?”) or getting on one’s knee and begging over and over. The finer-grained paralinguistic contextualization cues usually signal

30 AUD [!XXXXXX
31 XXXXX [xxxxxx

Finally, on the third response, because the pattern had been established, he creates a contrast in the list, usurping the expectation in a perfectly projectable moment, yielding audience laughter. To simplify the analysis for discussion's sake, in this scene the game could be called "givin' it" and "takin' it," following Murphy (2017): the players agree to a play a game in which P1 is ridiculed, while P2 gets to accept it and justify, creating a pattern of repetition and harmony. However, for the purposes of this study, the game itself is simply the repetition, which happens to correspond to and indicate a broader discursive, social game. In the second "mixtape" Montage scene, Boy-Girl Party, the game could be simplified and called "show up at the wrong time." The following sequence of counters is guided by this game, indicated by a repeated mention of the time: "it's (n)- this Saturday," "since it's (.) not today?," "cause it's not today↓".

32 P1 It- it's (n)- this Saturda:y↑
33 P3 (0.5) Oh! £my mom just dropped me o:ff£ [((turns around))]
34 AUD [!XXXXXXXX!XXXXXXXX]
35 XXX[XX] [xx]xxx
36 P1 [Uh- you can come on in, to the school]=
37 P3 =[Thanks]
38 ((walks in))
39 (2.5) [So am I] the only boy that's gonna be=
40 P2 [°(I hate you)° ((to P1))]
41 P3 =coming? (.)
42 since it's (.) not today?=
43 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[xxxx
44 P1 [Well I] think
45 that would mean (.) you're the only boy not coming 'cause
46 it's not today↓ [((???)
47 P3 [Does that mean I can't co:me anymore:?=
48 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
49 xxx[xxxxxxxx]
50 P1 [Oh no- no-,] you can come sti:ll

This particular game was initiated by P3 who arrives while they are putting up posters. P1 smartly does not accept him into the party, because this would break the reality (that it is on some future date, hence the posters), and so has to tell him it is Saturday (line 32), which operates as the base FPP for this sequence, which is expanded via additional FPPs on Lines 39, 44, and 47 until it is resolved on Line 50 with P1 telling him that he can still come to the party.

In the third scene in the “mixtape” montage, LL Cool J, the game is ‘pimping,’ or trying to make P1 do something that he doesn’t want to do, i.e. sing. Most games in improv have no bearing on face, or how a player is perceived in public, because of the embeddedness of the frames: players are usually represented as characters, and not themselves. Any shortcomings are chalked up entirely to the character. But in the case of pimping, face becomes relevant because the decision is more clearly that of the player. In this case, there is no good reason why the character becoming LL Cool J couldn’t sing his songs; instead, any reason has to do with the player’s inability or lack of courage to do so. So the game is both trying to get P1 to do something, but also trying to expose P1’s face and force him to justify not singing. In this case the game is enacted in a blended frame between character and player preference structures. And as in any game, it is identified through its repetition.

```

14 P3          [Oh my gosh!, no wa:y?, you know all the words? put it in
15          £si:ng for u[s:£ ((points toward a cassette player))
16 P1          [(Ohh↓)=

19 P3          [↑Plea::se? ((holds hands together, begging))
20 P1          I'm feelin a little [si:ck
21 P3          [↑Plea::[se? ((begging))
22 AUD          [xxxxxxxxxxxx°xxxx°
23 P1          ((puts tape in shirt pocket))

29 P3          [I heard you were sick, so I brought some chicken

```

30 noodle soup, ((turns around to pick up a bowl of soup))
 31 ((presents soup to P1))
 32 £now will you si:ng [for us?£]
 33 P1 [(ough)-]

In these examples P3 repeats “plea::se,” “sing for us,” and a begging gesture, which are all different ways of asking the same thing. This repetition creates a projectable and predictable pattern to make her intentions clear and identify the game. In turn, P1 responds with a denial to sing, and puts the tape away. As noted earlier, this seems like a one-sided game, which in a way is its nature -- yet P1 is not put off by being the butt of the joke because ultimately it is predicted by his own repetition of LL Cool J. As though invoking a spell with two repetitions, P1 is setting himself up for the actualization of his claims, finalizing the list of three, and singing like LL

Cool J:

1 P1 [You guys see
 2 this? ((holds a cassette tape out in front of him))
 3 P2 Whoa↓
 4 P1 This is my LL Cool J mixtape
 ...
 11 P1 (3.0) I think I’m (0.8) starting to turn into LL Cool [J
 12 AUD [xxxxx

It is important to note that the concept of a game is not an explanation for the entirety of the sequences in improv. Again, there is a distinction between an improv game which formulates a scene type and the game of the scene, which emerges through patterns in interaction. For instance Montage is considered a ‘game’ because it is organized around the repeated use of a single word to inspire scenes. However, within the scenes, there is repetition which emerges as functional to the sequence of the scene: this is the game of the scene. For instance the LL Cool J

The repetition of gesture (e.g. picking up P1’s arm, Line 7) is harmonized by a reciprocal vocal response, namely a cry of pain (“AGHHH!”). The paralinguistic cues harmonize with the coarser-grained projectable cues such as gesture, and combined they form the game which both players and audience can clearly follow and participate in. Ultimately collective participation or co-construction is the goal of a game, which is aided by meta-messaging described by the play frame. As articulated by Spolin, the point of a game is to create the conditions necessary for group participation and therefore group expression (1999, p. 10-11). This is then the value of improv: to practice this group participation. In the final scene examined I return to the “submarine” Montage scene in which P2 is having his very first improv performance. He has been called on stage by P1 to join him and he is not terribly successful at ‘yes, anding’ P1 to move the scene forward. He makes no real offer, and the discourse remains within the “transactional” realm of news-giving rather than the “interactional” realm of relationship building. That said, P1 and later P3 help P2 co-construct the sequence, using repetition as a projectable “formula” that P2 can follow. I will outline the scene beat by beat. This starts with the first offer and P2’s response:

```

1  P1      So professor, you mean to tell me,=after they bombed the
2          harbor the ship still leaks diesel to this da:y?
3  P2      (0.5) S:ti~ll to this:- da:y the sh:ip leaks die~sel.=
4          ((head bobbing, different voice, slight stutter))
5  AUD                                =XXXXXXXX[XXXXXX
6          xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

```

P1 “proffers a topic,” which P2 agrees with minimally, not expanding the sequence (Schegloff, 2007, p. 171). As noted earlier, he responds in a strange voice, embodying the persona of a professor, but he simply repeats the initial offer “Still to this day the ship leaks

diesel.” P2 finally adds to his ‘yes’ by adding that it pollutes the ocean, which is a statement that P1 expands into a question to yield a more descriptive response.

7 P1 [Wow,
8 (1.5) That’s insa:ne
9 P2 And it: (.) p:ollutes the Q:cean
10 P1 >So what are the ramifications to the e:cosystem?<
11 P2 Well there’s an enti:re spring of li:fe (.) that’s sprung u:p
12 around the spring of li:fe=
13 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX=

Here P2 draws on word play for a laughable effect, in particular through repetition to create a list: a “spring of life” “sprung up” around the “spring of life.” This is still a minimal response to the question, especially given the response is a part of a performance -- it should be interactional, not simply transactional. The repetition is both unhelpful, since it is not expanding the offer, but also helpful in that it is entertaining, and laughable. “Repetition” itself is arguably the name of the game played in this scene by P2. It guides nearly every one of his responses, either through repeating a topic another player has said, or reduplicating his speech to humorous effect.

To aid P2, P1 proffers another topic:

14 P1 =Are you talkin’
15 about the mo:nsters of the dee:p?
16 P3 ((enters))
17 P2 The m:onsters OF: the dee~:p!
18 P3 This is good stuff, [=the professor talkin’ about monsters=
19 P1 [yeah-
20 P3 =of the deep ag[ain?
21 AUD [xxxxx
22 P1 [yeah=

In this excerpt repetition is utilized by P2, but it is also utilized by P3. “Monsters of the deep” is said a total of three times in three turns (Lines 15, 17, 20). By the second repetition, the list of three is completed, and the topic is validated, which allows P2 to continue on with this slightly more interesting topic:

23 P2 =Yeah! they're monsters=they have four
 24 fi:ns an' three mouths=
 25 AUD =xxxxx[xxx
 26 P1 [(but) Godzilla beat the first
 27 one, ri:ght?

P2 expands slightly, but still makes no offer. The situational game becomes “storytelling,” which is named by P3 in line 18: “the professor talkin’ about monsters of the deep again?” Naming the game can be a useful strategy in establishing a play frame and helps to make conscious what otherwise might be unconscious patterns (Gordon, 2008). To help P2 even more, P1 proffers yet another topic for P2, which is now framed within the game of “storytelling.” This formulates the remainder of the scene, which is replete with repetition:

28 P2 That was wave one!=
 29 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx [xxxxxxx
 30 P2 [Wave TWO(.)
 31 was (.) Godzilla-zilla=
 32 AUD =XXXXXxxxx [xxx
 33 P1 [God[zilla
 34 P3 [yeah, OK, [sure
 35 P1 [(shit's
 36 weird)
 37 P2 (1.0) >Tho:se are the only two waves<=
 38 ((shakes head))
 39 P3 [=There's just two-
 40 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXX [XXXXXXXXXXXX
 41 xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 42 BL [((CLAP))

The repetition itself forms a game within the game, or a pattern which is projected throughout the scene. “Godzilla-zilla” (Line 31) ushers in a laugh arguably because of the play with this pattern, and the lack of a third wave (as expected in lists), is yet another laughable moment (Line 37). The scene ends on Line 42, which is a projectable moment in which the pattern of repetition is broken, which was, after all, the unifying element. A couple scenes later, still within the Montage game, a player makes a reference to Godzilla-zilla, which then is responded to by “Oh no! Mothra-mothra!” This form of recycling across scenes is another instance of repetition as a way to both engage with the audience’s expectations while validating the efforts of the newcomer in the first scene he generated.

In every scene repetition proved to be functional in sequence organization and defined what the ‘game’ was in each scene. Repetition and alternation (or lists and contrasts) form the basis of these games because this creates projectable moments and invites participation. To play the game one has to find the game, and once a player notices the pattern, he or she can add to it. Once the audience notices the pattern they can time their affiliative response accordingly. In this sense repetition becomes a form of naming or creating the game (Salinsky & Frances-White, 2008), and the game can be defined largely in terms of what is repeated. In the Godzilla-zilla scene we can see that repetition is highly functional for a novice improviser and is implemented by fellow players in socialization (learning the game) and co-construction of scenes, which is arguably the whole point of improv to begin with: group expression.

The idea of a game is dependent upon play. After all, one cannot really ‘fight a game’ or ‘drive a game,’ but instead it is most natural to ‘play a game.’ Games are used in improv to create an atmosphere of non-judgment. There are no serious consequences, only playful ones. If

there were a pattern of serious repetition, this would not be indicative of a game; the game requires non-seriousness or play. However, as Gordon (2008) showed, serious sequences can be shifted into a non-serious play frame through the use of repetition as a discourse strategy. Once the repetition is acknowledged and co-constructed, the game is 'found,' and thus the play frame is engaged, signaled by smile voice, laughter, or other paralinguistic meta-behavior indicating a non-serious sequence. The playfulness may precede a game and indicate one's willingness to participate in the game, but it is always a result, or at least an indicator that it is indeed a game because it is non-serious.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study examined five scenes of improv, analyzing the preference structure, the projectability, and the contextualization cues which indicate a play frame. These can be examined separately for simplicity of analysis, but they work in concert, within a flow of time, making it hard to ascertain which, if any, is of more primary importance. To describe this concerted nature of contextualization cues and preference structure (especially within the paradigm of ‘yes, and’), I have used the construct of ‘game’ to organize the sequences of player-player interaction and audience laughter, arguing it is identifiable by patterns of repetition. The notion of ‘game,’ while an analytic category, corresponds nicely to the folk category of ‘game’ as it is used in improv practice, suggesting it is not simply descriptive but functionally operative in sequence construction.

In the final section of this thesis I review a summary of the key findings in the research, expand these findings into a broader discussion, identify the limitations of the study, and finally suggest possible avenues for future research on the subject.

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

In the first chapter of analysis I have shown that, unlike Stokoe’s (2008) claim that laughables follow a second-pair part (SPP) of dispreference, the laughable structure in improv more closely follows the second part of her claim, which focuses on the manner of dispreference.

Preference structure in improv is not easy to identify because there are (at least) two levels of preference structure, including player-player and character-character preference structure, which are often at odds with each other or ambiguous. Both of these structures are perceivable to the audience, as indicated in the LL Cool J ‘pimping’ scene, and both structures can be attributed for laughable moments. Further, because preference structure is hard to define unequivocally, there are other measures that can be described empirically, such as contextualization cues indicating either projection or play.

The second and third chapters of analysis focus on the manner in which players aligned themselves, either preferred or dispreferred, to other players or their respective characters played. The most empirically describable moments are those which are projectable, in part because they often correspond to laughables. Because the audience must act in coordination, they require cues from the performers to let them know it is their turn, which is supplied most often in the form of affiliative response, particularly laughter. Because improv depends on projectability for laughter, improv performers are advised (e.g. Johnstone, 1979) to be ‘obvious.’ The obvious not only is easy to follow for the audience, but also for players to co-construct a scene together. This obviousness, as described in improv literature, usually pertains to choices made in-character, but also include paralinguistic devices such as intonation and gesture, or patterns in speech. Moreover, because laughter is social — not strictly semantic or cognitive — projectable cues offer the audience social license to laugh at moments they may not laugh at individually, as shown at the end of the “What’s Broken?” scene, in which the topic of cancer appears to have split the audience in terms of whether or not it was deemed laughable. Only when the performers signal the end of the scene does the audience laugh much more, suggesting that latently the

desire was there to laugh, but the signal was not totally clear that they should or could in a socially acceptable manner.

While the audience requires projectable cues to know when it is their turn to interact, players signal to each other their intentions and levels of seriousness through paralinguistic contextualization cues such as intonation, smile voice, loudness, and pitch to ‘upkey’ into a play frame, or a non-serious sequence. Much of the improv performance in this study was characterized by these meta-messages, and more noticeably, the retrieval and response of appropriate meta-messages in kind. Players harmonized with one another’s choice in these paralinguistic cues, either creating complements or contrasts to the established key. This meta-messaging is arguably the sign of a non-serious ‘play frame,’ which was closely associated with laughter. These paralinguistic inter-player cues also worked in concert with projectable cues for the audience, to create an effect that was greater than its analytical parts. In fact, the difference between these cues is hard to differentiate, given that both audience and player are able to receive them, and it is hard to say who in fact is the intended audience. (There are, I would argue, moments in which the audience is cued for their turn, however.) The two concepts of projectability and play frame slightly conflate, in that a play frame consisting of meta-messages is inherently projectable of the idea that “this is play” or “what is to come next has no serious consequence.” To suture this false division, I used the analytical category of ‘game’ to describe the ways in which players created, identified, and reacted to patterns of speech and action to generate laughable moments. The game requires both projectability (to know what is coming next) and playful cues (to know the consequences are not serious), both of which are sometimes one and the same. Laughable structure followed indications of these games

which were defined by patterns of repetition, be it in lists or lists and contrasts. Repetition was borne out as the single most common trait of laughables throughout all of the scenes, indicating that it is critical to the concept of ‘game,’ or possibly even ‘play,’ though for this study I have reserved ‘play’ to refer specifically to meta-behavior signaling non-seriousness, rather than the repetition of non-serious behavior, which is definitive of a game.

7.2 Discussion

Projectability is essential for any public performance, given that the audience needs to be able to coordinate their responses, but it is also clear that it has a role to play in humorous or playful discourse in general. The concept of a game, which is spontaneously created and adhered to is essential to improv as a social practice. The primary method by which the game is recognizable is through repetition. Repetition is arguably necessary for the creation of formulaic patterns in other spontaneous conversation (Tannen, 2009b), suggesting a broader term for ‘game’ may be formulaicity, which could also describe serious repetition. However, within a formulaic sequence, the game is distinguished by non-seriousness, or playfulness. The concept of game as used in improv likely has counterparts in other kinds of non-serious, formulaic conversation. Given the history of improv, whose modern roots originated in educational settings, this seems quite likely. Keith Johnstone, the father of modern improv was a teacher before leading the first professional improv troupe in Europe. Meanwhile, Viola Spolin, the mother of modern improv designed her improv practice around educational games found in the Hull House.

Hopefully by studying the spontaneous and conscious use of formulaic games in improv, greater data is added to the phenomenon of ‘playing games’ as a conversational social practice. This engagement in humorous interaction appears to be highly dependent on the situation itself and the patterns found therein. This is most clearly seen in the Godzilla-zilla scene, in which a new improviser simply repeats what has come before, to a moderately successful effect (eliciting laughter). Repetition is then one of the most salient projectable strategies, which allows fellow players and audience members to co-construct the humorousness of the moments.

If co-construction is a necessary component for humor, then humor-in-interaction (rather than those with an absent audience) should provide the most insight into humor as a social phenomenon. This interpretation also casts doubt on many superiority theories of humor, or at least those that suggest humor is a result of antisociality. This research suggests that humor is highly social, and even in cases of dispreference between players, there was still tacit agreement from the butt of the joke to play along. This follows the complicated nature of play, which is paradoxical, as Bateson (1972) noted. While dispreference may be present in play or humor (e.g. some superiority theories of humor), it does not appear to be criterial. Instead, as Stokoe (2008) noted, it is the manner in which the dispreference occurred. The metacommunication signals a play frame, which says “this is play,” and indicates a frame of non-seriousness, whether this be discussed in terms of a ‘play frame’ (Bateson, 1972; Berger, 1987; Coates, 2007; Glenn, 2003; Gordon, 2008) a ‘non-serious sequence’ (Schegloff, 2001) or even a ‘non-bona-fide mode’ (Raskin, 1985). Non-seriousness aligns with modern theories of humor (e.g. Chafe, 2007) and the concept of ‘play’ which is highly operative in improv. While laughter can result from serious

situations and does not necessarily have to be ‘humorous’ (e.g. E. Holt, 2013), non-seriousness laughter corresponds more closely to the folk category of ‘humor.’

7.3 Limitations

This study has some notable limitations. Given the scope of the study, no interviews were completed, which could have corroborated or disproven some of my researcher intuitions in the analysis. Ethnographic information may have shed greater light into other aspects of play that were not seen, such as the role of intertextuality. In the ‘pimping’ scene, one cannot say definitively what P3’s intention was without asking; she may have been carrying on a long-running in-joke, or her request to hear P1 sing may have been a moment’s thought that she simply doubled down on.

There is also a notable limitation in terms of the transcription, and the focus on the verbal elements of transcription. A multi-modal transcription may introduce insights not seen in the current model. It is quite likely that there is a greater importance of body language than what was able to be discussed in this study, given that improv is a fully embodied practice. It may also be that the body language corresponds to the paralinguistic cues described in this study.

Another limitation of the study has to do with terminology. Following previous literature which ascribed high importance to projection in public address (e.g. Atkinson, 1984; Heritage, 2010), projectable cues were interpreted as primarily for audience’s benefit, while other contextualization cues were interpreted as serving player-player interaction. This is a tenuous division, and the categories are not mutually exclusive. It remains to be seen whether the contextualization cues associated with play frames should be analyzed as a recognition of

projectable cues or as projectable in and of themselves. Likely it is a dialogic relationship, and consists of a little of both.

7.4 Future Directions

Given that both projectable and playful contextualization cues have a relationship which is related, but not in clearly articulated ways, this relationship could be a fruitful subject of future study. My suspicion is that all contextualization cues are inherently projectable, but this may not be borne out. Projectability itself could provide a useful approach for other studies on humor-in-talk, in conjunction with other contextualization cues.

This study sought to offer some data points for the study of humor, and even more empirical data is needed to draw meaningful conclusions. Rather than approaching humor from traditional theories of superiority, incongruity, or relief, there may be some value in approaching humor from the a participatory framework, in which those involved reap mutual benefit from coordinating in a playful manner and achieving ‘in-tune-ness’ (Coates, 2007). The importance of meta-messaging, contextualization cues, or collateral signals, which has been studied by many (e.g. Gordon, 2008; Heritage, 2010; E. Holt, 2013; Kotthoff, 2006), continues to be a useful line of investigation.

Future studies may also benefit from approaching humor as a social practice, or a social action to achieve a particular desired effect, perhaps akin to a conversational ‘project,’ even if this simply entails the appearance of such effect as in reality television (Chovanec, 2017). The creation of play frames may also be explanatory in establishing in-group solidarity (e.g. Murphy, 2017), or in creating a community in classroom (e.g. Hillman, 2011), and can be examined

further to investigate group dynamics. Because play is associated with the concept of ‘game,’ which depends on pattern recognition and repetition, this may be useful in other educational contexts or language socialization (e.g. Duranti & Black, 2011). If play is useful in creating in-group solidarity or pattern-recognition, it feels worthwhile to be able to describe and note the presence of play.

Given that improv is a performance in which player and character are separate, Goffman’s (1981) production format may be a useful analytical framework for further distinguishing animator, author, and principal. The social practices in improv are arguably not totally unique to the performance setting. Instead, performativity is something inherently social, which appears in the improv setting. The distinction between different aspects of production format within a single actor’s actions highly complicates traditional notions of preference structure.

Finally, practitioners and teachers of improv may find some use in either the methods or findings of this study. While performing improv, one wants to be in the moment and not ‘in your head,’ but in studying the patterns of linguistic interaction, one may better understand and explain why certain scenes work or do not work in an empirically descriptive method. Maybe, for some, it can offer a means to a little laughter.

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TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

(From the system developed by Gail Jefferson; see Heritage and Atkinson, 1984, pp. ix–xvi.)

[]	brackets indicate overlapping utterances, as aligned on the page.
=	equal marks indicate contiguous utterances, or continuation of the same utterance to the next line.
(.)	period within parentheses indicates micropause.
(2.0)	indicates timed pause in approximate seconds.
ye:s	colon indicates stretching of sound it follows.
yes.	period indicates falling intonation.
yes,	comma indicates relatively constant intonation.
yes?	question mark indicates upward intonation.
yes!	exclamation indicates animated tone.
yes-	single dash indicates abrupt sound cutoff.
<u>yes</u>	underlining indicates emphasis.
YES	capital letters indicate increased volume.
°yes°	degree marks indicate decreased volume of materials between.
hhh	h's indicate audible aspiration, possibly laughter.
•hhh	superscript period indicates inbreath audible aspiration, possibly laughter. ye(hh)s h's within parentheses indicate within-speech aspiration, possibly laughter.
((cough))	items within double parentheses indicate some sound or feature of talk which is not easily transcribable, e.g., “((in falsetto)).”
(yes)	parentheses indicate transcriber doubt about hearing of passage.
↓yes	arrow indicates marked change in intonation.
£yes£	pound signs indicate “smile voice” delivery of materials in between.
X	audience laughter (.1 second)
x	softer laughter (.1 second)
!X	emphatic laughter
°x°	sotto laughter
><	inward arrows indicate compressed, quickened speech
<>	outward arrows indicate stretched-out speech
#	hashtag indicates creaky voice
~	tilda indicates quavers in voice

APPENDIX OF TRANSCRIPTIONS

"MIXTAPE" MONTAGE SCENE 1: Mix Up

1 P1 ((crouches, mimes looking through a pile of tapes))
2 Hey DONNY?
3 P2 ((turns and addresses P1))
4 (.)What? [=wha-]
5 P1 [What]the fu:ck is the deal man↓ you mixed up all my
6 ↓tape[s.]
7 AUD [X]X[XX]xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
8 P2 [yeah] [((scratches head))=
9 P1 [((kicks stack of tapes))]
10 P2 =I listened to a:ll of em then I wz (.) way too
11 [high]to remember which [(.) cas:e they went [back=in↓]
12 P1 [(WHh)]
13 P3 [((enters))]
14 P1 [How did you
15 like] them
16 P3 ((mimes a box of cereal in one hand, turns toward P2))
17 Donny↑
18 P2 Ye:ah! ((turns around to P3))
19 P3 D'you put all the cereal in the same BO:[:X?]
20 AUD [XXX[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
21 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX°xxxx°
22 P2 [Yeah, I was
23 eating all of it then I got re:ally high and I- forgotten
24 which [box they went [in↓
25 P4 [((enters)) ((both hands mime pill bottles))
26 [Donny? did you mix up my pi:lls?
27 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx]
28 P2 [Yeah! (1.0) I- I- that wz]=that wz when I was sober=[sorry
29 P4 [OK-
30 AUD [!XXXXX
31 XXXXX[xxxxx
32 P2 [yeah I was just fee:lin like fi:dgetin with so:meting↓
33 P4 OK I think I took my night pills for- OK[.
34 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXX
35 P2 [Yeah, I- that one
36 I'm sorry about [((gestures out to P4))
37 P4 [((exits))]

38 P3 ((exits))

39 P2 (1.0) ((addresses and gestures open hand to P1))

40 THIS one I'm sorry about too!

41 AUD =xxxxxxxx°xxx°

42 P1 ((hands on hips)) How'd you like the mix tape?

43 P2 UMM::

44 P1 >You [mixed up all my] mix tapes, [which one] did you like?<

45 P2 [(the ones you)] [yeah!]

46 P2 Uh- yeah, the- a- I noticed that a lot of em=you added your

47 own voic:e? (.) [to the songs?

48 AUD [xxxxxxxx°xx[xx°

49 P1 [=Yeah, singing

50 P2 ((hands rubbing sides of legs))

51 Umm (1.0) those ones were ba:d

52 AUD =XXXx[xxxxx°xxxxxxxxxxxx°

53 P1 [Right. (1.0) OK you know

54 that's a constructive criticism

55 P2 ((Crosses arms)) Like ↑pretty bad

56 P1 Sure. (.7) [Like-]like[-

57 P2 [Those ones are go:ne]

58 AUD [°xxxxx°xxx[XX

59 P1 (1.8) [Whatchu do:

60 with them?

61 P2 I br:oke them[.

62 AUD [xxxxxxxx[xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx°xxxx°

63 BL [((CLAP))

"MIXTAPE" MONTAGE SCENE 2: Boy-Girl Party

1 P1 Hey Samantha, can you help me (.) hang up these posters
2 ((reaches down to grab posters))
3 P2 Alright (alright) ((reaches down, starts hanging up poster))
4 P1 (1.0) ((hanging posters)) °Umm- um- oh yeah,=OK I'll jus'°
5 (1.8) I'm havin' a boy girl party later,
6 (.5) [if you wanna co:me.]
7 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXX]
8 P1 Yeah- co-ed↑, jus'- we cn y'know=mix n' mingl:e
9 [amongst-] amongst- ourselves
10 P2 [°oh:°] ((puts hands out)) That's a
11 little (.) risque:↑=
12 AUD =XXXXXXXX[xx
13 P1 [I just figure=you know
14 (1.0) ((raises arms)) •hh we're eleven no:w [(like=
15 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
16 xxxxx]
17 P1 =everybody's gonna wanna come] ou:t=
18 P2 =fListenf-
19 P1 My- [my mo:m is [getting sm (.) pi:zzas:. [n' I'll- I'll put
20 P2 [•hh ((laughs silently)) [•hhh
21 P1 on like, >a movie in the backgrou:nd or something?<
22 P2 ((requests poster tape)) (2.0) I'm sorry [but- •Hhh (.5)•HHH=
23 P3 [((knock at door))
24 P1 =I'm sorry, our school doors are locked, it's after hours.
25 [((opens door))
26 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX=
27 P3 =Hey, I wz here for the boy girl party?
28 P1 (1.0) That-? oh, you saw the- s:-?
29 (1.0) [did I put the wrong da:te?]
30 P3 [I, uh, (.5)] I brought some ginger ale=
31 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXX
32 P1 It- it's (n)- this Saturda:y↑
33 P3 (0.5) Oh! fmy mom just dropped me o:fff£ [((turns around))]
34 AUD [!XXXXXXXX!XXXXXXXX]
35 XXX[XX][xx]xxx
36 P1 [Uh- you can come on in, to the school]=
37 P3 =[Thanks]
38 ((walks in))
39 (2.5) [So am I] the only boy that's gonna be=
40 P2 [°(I hate you)° ((to P1))]
41 P3 =coming? (.)

42 since it's (.) not today?=
43 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[xxxx
44 P1 [Well I] think
45 that would mean (.) you're the only boy not coming 'cause
46 it's not today! [(???)
47 P3 [Does that mean I can't come anymore:?=
48 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
49 xxx[xxxxxxx]
50 P1 [Oh no- no-,] you can come sti:ll
51 ((to P2)) °we're (???)ing°
52 P2 (°can I talk to you for a second°)
53 P1 ((to P3)) Sorry, we have to sidebar= [(P1 & P2 cross stage))
54 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
55 P2 °I sa:y we tie him u:p°=
56 AUD =XXXXxxxx
57 P1 Oh my god? (1.0) Y eah!=[((turns back to boy)) Hey!]=
58 AUD =[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx]
59 P1 =what
60 was your na:me again?
61 P3 I'm Ky:le, [hey.]
62 P1 [Hey Kyle.] would you (.) hold this(.) po:ster up?
63 P3 Yeah- yeah. ((takes poster, holding hands up in air))
64 P2 I'm just gonna- don't (.) be †alarmed, [I'm just gonna
65 ((steps behind Kyle with tape in hands))
66 P1 [She's just gonna
67 tape it up†
68 P2 [(tape noises, both girls tape around kyle's torso))
69 P3 [Alright, just lemme know when you wan' me to put it do:wn.↓=
70 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx[xxxxxxx
71 P3 [Alright, just lemme know when to put
72 it do:wn.=
73 AUD =XXXXxx
74 P2 •hh((wipes forehead))(°whoo°)
75 P3 (2.0) Can I put it do:wn now?
76 P1 Yeah, you can let go
77 P3 Hup!=[
78 ((drops poster onto ground, hands still stuck in air))
79 AUD =XXXXxxxx
80 P2 °Whoa, that was a close one°
81 P4 ((knock at door))
82 P1 Oh, my go:d~
83 ((walks to door))
84 P4 KYLE?

85 P3 Is that another bo:y?=
86 P4 =[Kyle?
87 P2 [WE DON' EVEN HAVE ENOUGH TAPE FOR THIS!=
88 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXxx
89 P1 Who is it?
90 P4 It's ↑Ky:le's mother.↑
91 P3 That's my mom.=
92 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXX [XXXXXXXXXXXX!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
93 xxxxxxxxxxxx [°xxxx
94 BL [((CLAP))

"SKELETON" MONTAGE SCENE 2: What's Broken?

1 P1 †Doc!, (0.5) tell me, (0.5) what's †bro:~ken?

2 P2 (Cody-) >you're fuckin' fine.<=

3 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[xxxx

4 P1 [Umm- no!, there

5 surely must be something broken, I can't †mo:ve

6 P2 Nah, it dun't look like it.

7 [(picks up and drops P1's arm)]

8 P1 [AGHHH!=

9 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XX

10 P2 =[(pats [him on the shoulder))

11 P1 [AAGHHH!=

12 P2 [=Ah >y'old tough gu:y!<=

13 ((playfully boxing P1's arm))

14 I got other patients to see= ((walks away from P1))

15 =You suck it up, alright?, I'll see you aroun'=
 16 AUD =XXXXXXXXxxx

17 P1 †EEEEEE=((whining noise))

18 P2 =Oh you c:ryin' [now? You cryin'?=

19 AUD [XXXXXXXX

20 P1 =Oh no- oh- I got a little †expo:sed bo:ne†

21 ((mockingly, while he wiggles P1's arm))

22 P1 [AAAGH!

23 P2 [WAAaaa! WAAaaa!

24 AUD [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX=

25 P2 SUCK IT UP! ((mimes spitting on P1 and walks away))=

26 AUD =XXXXXX

27 XXXXX[xxx

28 P1 [You sai:d thi:s la:st wee:k when I got cancer, too:!=

29 AUD =[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

30 P2 =[YEAH! AND YOU'RE STILL HE:RE!=

31 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXX[xxxx]

32 P1 [I CAN'T]

33 †SUCK UP† CANCER!=

34 AUD =°XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXXXXXX°]

35 BL [((CLAP))]=

36 AUD =!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

"SUBMARINE" MONTAGE SCENE 8: Godzilla-zilla

1 P1 So professor, you mean to tell me,=after they bombed the
 2 harbor the ship still leaks diesel to this da:y?
 3 P2 (0.5) S:ti~ll to this:- da:y the sh:ip leaks die~sel.=
 4 ((head bobbing, different voice, slight stutter))
 5 AUD =XXXXXX[XXXXXX
 6 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 7 P1 [Wow,
 8 (1.5) That's insa:ne
 9 P2 And it: (.) p:ollutes the O:cean
 10 P1 >So what are the ramifications to the e:cosystem?<
 11 P2 Well there's an enti:re spring of li:fe (.) that's sprung u:p
 12 around the spring of li:fe=
 13 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX=
 14 P1 =Are you talkin'
 15 about the mo:nsters of the dee:p?
 16 P3 ((enters))
 17 P2 The m:onsters OF: the dee~:p!
 18 P3 This is good stuff, [=the professor talkin' about monsters=
 19 P1 [yeah-
 20 P3 =of the deep ag[ain?
 21 AUD [xxxxx
 22 P1 [yeah=
 23 P2 =Yeah! they're monsters=they have four
 24 fi:ns an' three mou:ths=
 25 AUD =xxxxx[xxx
 26 P1 [(but) Godzilla beat the first
 27 one, ri:ght?
 28 P2 That was wave one!=
 29 AUD =XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXX
 30 P2 [Wave TWO(.)
 31 was (.) Godzilla-zilla=
 32 AUD =XXXXXxxxx[xxx
 33 P1 [God[zilla
 34 P3 [yeah, OK, [sure
 35 P1 [(shit's
 36 weird)
 37 P2 (1.0) >Tho:se are the only two waves<=
 38 ((shakes head))

39 P3

[=There's just two-

40 AUD

[XXXXXXXXXX [XXXXXXXXXX

41 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

42 BL

[((CLAP))