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**Presidential Campaign Talk:
Question-Answering in "Neutral Informational Interviews"**

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Biographical Note

Angela Cora Garcia is a professor of Sociology at Bentley University in Waltham, Massachusetts, with a secondary appointment in the Department of Global Studies. Her main areas of research are conversation analytic studies of interaction in mediation sessions, chat rooms, and emergency phone calls to the police. Her textbook on conversation analysis, *An Introduction to Interaction: Understanding Talk in Formal and Informal Settings*, was published by Bloomsbury Press (2013). She also conducts qualitative research using ethnographic and open-ended interview methods on a range of topics including the sociology of leisure, sociology of sports, and animal rescue organizations.

Abstract

This paper is a dual-case analysis of presidential campaign interviews conducted with former President George H. W. Bush when he was campaigning for the Republican presidential nomination in 1980, and former President William J. Clinton when he was campaigning for the presidency in 1991. Both interviews were conducted at high schools in New Hampshire and are publically available on the C-SPAN website. The purpose of this analysis is to investigate how the success or failure of political campaigns may be tied to candidates' interactional competence and pragmatic skills. This will be done through an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the answers each candidate produced in the context of these non-adversarial interviews. This conversation analytic investigation reveals key differences between the two candidates in the successful display of various types of knowledge, interactional competency, sensitivity to audience-design, fluency of speech, and organization of their responses. The results are discussed in terms of the importance of interactional skills for the success of political campaigns and the effectiveness of "Neutral Informational Interviews" for educating the audience.

Keywords

Political Interviews, Presidential Campaigns, Conversation Analysis, Talk in Institutional Settings, Interactional Competence, Interactional Style

Introduction

Communication in a wide range of public settings is an integral part of the role of politicians and is critical not only to the success of their leadership in elected positions but also for the political campaigns through which they are elected to these positions. While there are many components of a successful presidential campaign, a candidate's communicative competence is clearly one of the ways in which they convey their strengths to the electorate. Research into how routine presidential campaign communications are handled in a variety of settings can therefore contribute to greater understanding of the success or failure of these campaigns. While previous research has analyzed political campaigns and the reasons for success of presidential candidates, more research on candidates' successful use of interactional techniques and the pragmatics of interaction needs to be done.

Previous research on political campaigning has addressed factors that contribute to the success or failure of campaigns (e.g., Benoit and Wells, 1996; Friedenberg, 2009; Holloway, 2009; Just et al., 1996; Smith, 2009). While a wide range of factors are explored in this body of research, most do not address the role of the pragmatics of interaction or the interactional techniques and procedures candidates use. For example, Benoit and Wells (1996) studied the use of persuasive attacks and defenses in the 1992 presidential debates, and found that the frequency of these actions plus the effectiveness of how the persuasive actions were constructed contributed to the success or failure of presidential campaigns. Holloway's (2009) comprehensive analysis of the 2008 U.S. presidential campaigns and nominating conventions studies the messages communicated through the speeches given. She shows how important it is for the candidate to have a clear and effective message and to successfully communicate it to the target audience. Smith (2009) analyzed nomination acceptance speeches in the 2008 Presidential

campaign. In order to be effective, these speeches must make it possible for the audience to distill a simple overall message from the speech, and that message must be clear and compelling. Smith (2009) analyzes the facts, ideas and arguments made in political speeches rather than the communicative or pragmatic practices used to produce them. Friedenber (2009) also focuses on the messages themselves rather than on the pragmatics of delivering the message. Just, et al (1996) investigate a wide range of campaign-related communications, including political advertisements and various types of interviews. When audience members' interview questions were compared with those of professional journalists, they found that the audience questions were more focused on the candidates' positions on issues (Just et al., 1996). They also found that journalist's questions tended to be more confrontational, while audience members' questions were more neutral in tone.

Some of the previous research on presidential candidates' communication involves the examination of specific words or behaviors without taking account of the interactional context they occur within. For example, Pennebaker, Slatcher, and Chung (2005) examine a number of 'linguistic markers' such as pronoun use, expression of emotions, articles, and prepositions. They conducted a computerized analysis of frequencies of these and other behaviors, and found differences in communicative practices of three democratic candidates for nomination in televised news interviews. Elliott and Bull (1996) study threats to face in political interview questions using content analysis of transcripts of actual interviews. Proctor and Su (2011) study the pronouns 'we' and 'our' in presidential and vice presidential campaign interviews and debates. While they include the 'sentential' context of the pronoun in their study, they take these sentences out of the interactional context they occur within. Their study of the use of 'we' involves frequency counts of what the candidate is talking about when they use the pronoun.

Šandová's study of 'cognitive verbs' such as 'I think', 'I mean', or 'I believe', looked at both frequency counts and the utterances the words occurred within in order to explore the "distribution and functions of cognitive verbs in political interviews" (2015: 54). Huls and Varwijk (2011) used a qualitative analysis of adversarial questions in political interviews as a basis for a quantitative analysis of their data in which they found political bias (Ekström, Eriksson, Johansson, and Wikström [2013] found no political bias in a similar study when aggressiveness of questioning was used as the main indicator). Dickerson (2001) studied political interviewee resistance to or challenges of interviewer questions.

However, several qualitative analyzes of talk in political interviews have been conducted which do analyze utterances in their interactional context (e.g., Clayman and Whalen, 1998/99; Lauerbach, 2004; Lorda and Miche, 2006; Tenorio, 2002). Bull and Fetzer's (2006) qualitative analysis of pronoun use in their interactional context in British political interviews found that footing shifts were conducted via pronoun shifts used as a form of evasive answering (Clayman, 1992; 1993a; 2001; Goffman, 1981). Piirainen-Marsh and Jauni (2012) used conversation analysis to study how negotiations over assessments in political interviews were an arena for negotiating fact, opinion, and position. Tenorio (2002) compared two political interviews in Spain in terms of grammatical errors, pronoun use, and gender differences in communicative style.

The current paper builds on these prior studies of talk in political interviews by using a conversation analytic approach to compare candidates' answers to interviewer's questions. In this paper I conduct a comparative case study of two presidential campaign interviews, in order to explore how successful interview answers can be constructed. The goal of this comparison is to show how two presidential candidates work to communicate their positions while presenting

positive versions of themselves and their capabilities for office to the audience and to the media. They do this by using a range of interactional techniques and procedures in their answers—with varying success.

Theoretical and Analytical Approach

In this paper I use the conversation analytic method (e.g., Heritage and Clayman, 2010, Sacks, 1992, Schegloff, 2007) which grew out of the ethnomethodological approach to the study of social action and organization (Garfinkel, 1967). Previous conversation analytic research has addressed how the organization of interaction in talk in institutional settings differs from ordinary conversation (e.g., Antaki, 2011; Boden and Zimmerman, 1991; Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Drew and Heritage, 1992; Heritage and Clayman, 2010; Heritage and Maynard, 2006; Sacks, 1992). While the speech exchange system of ordinary conversation provides for maximum flexibility in terms of the organization of turns at talk, types of turns produced by participants, and topics of talk (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974), talk in work place settings is often more highly structured or constrained on these dimensions (e.g., see Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Heritage, 1985). For example, talk in airplane cockpits (Nevile, 2004), medical settings (Heritage and Maynard, 2006), television news interviews (Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Heritage, 2002), and mediation hearings (Garcia, 1991; Greatbatch and Dingwall, 1997) differs from talk in ordinary conversational settings in a variety of ways. The organization of interaction differs in systematic ways in institutional settings in order to accomplish the work of that setting and perform institutional roles (Heritage and Clayman, 2010).

Conversation-analytic research in a range of settings address how questions are answered. For example, in legal settings the contest between interrogating attorneys and witnesses often

involves formulations and reformulations as the two sides battle over the facts of the case (see Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew, 1992; Heritage and Clayman, 2010). A next speaker can reformulate a prior utterance in order to convey different facts or impressions (see Hutchby, 2005). Witnesses in legal proceedings can resist negative implications of attorney's questions by reformulating all or part of the question in their response to it (Lynch and Bogen, 1996).

Previous conversation analytic research on interviews primarily focused on traditional televised news interviews. These interactions are characterized by interviewer efforts to convey a journalistic neutral stance while exploring controversial topics and managing an adversarial relationship with the interviewee (e.g., Clayman, 1988; 1992; 1993b; Clayman and Heritage 2002; Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage, 1985; Rendle-Short, 2011). One way in which adversarial questions can be constructed in political interviews is by use of the 'pop quiz' question (Roth, 2005). These questions are specifically designed to test a candidate's knowledge in order to reveal any critical gaps that might be of interest to the electorate.

In televised news interviews, Clayman (2001) found that interviewees used a range of techniques to avoid answering questions. For example, an interviewee may first answer the question, and then elaborate their answer in a way that redirects the interaction. Reformulating the question before answering it enables the interviewee to answer a more favorable version of the question. Another evasive technique identified was providing either incomplete or hyper-complete responses (Clayman, 2001). One can first answer a question and then take advantage of having the floor to produce the answer, to instead switch the agenda and attack the questioner. This strategy was used by then Vice President George H. W. Bush in a televised news interview with journalist Mr. Dan Rather (Clayman and Whalen, 1988/89).

Recent research on televised news interviews explores variations in types of interviews such as the “accountability interview” (Montgomery, 2007; 2011) or the election campaign interview (Clayman and Romaniuk, 2011). Patrona (2013) describes the election campaign interview as

“a terrain where the journalist’s watchdog role is particularly salient, as journalists are expected to critically scrutinize candidates for public office, particularly those who appear most likely to win (Clayman and Romaniuk, 2011). Thus the journalistic mission in this type of interview is not simply to convey information to the public about the candidates but also to actively vet the frontrunners on behalf of the public.” (Patrona, 2013, p. 18)

Patrona (2013, p. 18) goes on to describe this adversarial type of interview as a “hybrid between a political press conference and an interview.” Hutchby (2011; 2013) analyzes the hybrid political interview (“HPI”) which is based on a speech exchange system in which interviewer questions alternate with interviewee answers, but in which interviewers

“freely move between the speech exchange system of the interview and other speech exchange systems that are more readily associated with disputatious or confrontational talk; such as talk radio discussions or ordinary conversational argument” Hutchby 2011, p. 115-6)

The HPI interview is typically even more confrontational and less neutral than traditional televised news interviews.

Another type of televised news interview is the “citizen interview” (Ekström and Eriksson, 2013; Lorenzo-Dus, 2011; Sabido, 2013), in which members of the public ask questions of political candidates. The questions these citizen-interviewers asked were often quite critical of the candidate and were openly adversarial (Lorenzo-Dus, 2011; Sabido, 2013). These citizen interviewers did not take the steps journalists in traditional televised news interviews typically take to display a neutral stance while raising controversial issues.

In contrast, the interviews I analyze in the current paper appear to be a fourth type of interview, which I am calling the “Neutral Informational Interview” (“NII”). Instead of using adversarial, investigative, probing, or pop quiz questions, these interviewers produce questions designed to obtain information about the candidates’ positions, policy recommendations, and qualifications rather than to challenge them. In other words, these are questions asked ‘without an agenda.’ Since the interview questions in these data are not designed to be adversarial, the answers provided do not have to be evasive. Therefore, more straightforward techniques for answering them can be used than are often used by interviewees in televised news interviews. It should be noted that the types of questions I am describing here are not quite the same as what Lynch and Bogen (1996) describe as a “friendly” interrogation. In their analysis of questions asked during the Iran Contra hearings, they gave examples of friendly-witness questions not just designed to avoid adversarialness, but specifically designed to highlight or bring out positive information or perspectives about the witness. What I am describing here in these “NII” interviews is simply more straightforward questions which provide an opportunity for the candidate to produce useful information and present themselves in a positive light. It may be

that a genuine information-seeking question is more effective and useful in obtaining information about a candidate's positions, policy recommendations and personal characteristics than are the strategically designed adversarial questions asked in the various type of journalistic interviews.

Data

In this paper, findings from conversation analytic research on talk in informal and institutional settings will be used to analyze two presidential campaign interviews. An interview of former president George H. W. Bush during the 1980 Republican primary campaign (in which he was defeated by Ronald Reagan), and an interview with former president William J. Clinton (when he was Governor of Arkansas and successfully ran for president in 1991) are compared in this paper. Former President Clinton was chosen as a subject for this analysis because he is considered by many to be a master communicator. Former President George H. W. Bush, while also having many strengths, is considered by many to be a less effective communicator in public settings than is President Clinton. Taken together, these two interviews provide contrasting examples of strengths and weaknesses in this type of interview setting.

Videotapes of both interviews were obtained from the C-SPAN archives. These presidential campaign interviews were chosen because they are similar in context and format in that both occurred in a school setting and consisted of questions that had been written in advance. Both interviews involved questions that were not produced by professional journalists. In Governor Clinton's interview the questions being asked of the candidate were written and asked by the high school students he was addressing, and in Mr. Bush's interview the questions were produced by a school district employee in the high school setting. While they occurred

during different presidential campaigns, for both candidates it was their first presidential campaign.

Selected excerpts from the videotapes have been transcribed using conversation analytic conventions (Jefferson, 1984; 1985; 2004). Some of the more common symbols and transcribing conventions used in this paper include the use of punctuation to indicate intonation rather than grammatical structure, numbers in parentheses to indicate approximate length of pauses, underlining to indicate a word was stressed, degree signs to indicate reduced volume, and colons to indicate drawn out syllables. Inhalations and exhalations are shown with ‘.h’ and ‘h’ respectively. Throughout the transcript excerpts, William J. Clinton and George H. W. Bush will be referred to by their initials (“WJC” and “GHWB” respectively). In the text of this paper, the two former presidents will be referred to by the titles they held at the time the interviews took place: Mr. Bush and Governor Clinton.

Data Analysis

Excerpts from the two interviews are analyzed below in terms of their use of a range of interactional techniques. This analysis will examine the candidates’ competence in constructing effective answers to questions in the “Neutral Informational Interview” context.

Governor Clinton Interview at a High School in New Hampshire

In this section I analyze a question and answer exchange produced in the context of a campaign appearance at a high school in New Hampshire during then Governor Clinton’s first presidential campaign in 1991 (C-SPAN website, 2016). He gave a speech to students in the school library and then answered questions the students had prepared in advance. At the beginning of the

session, Governor Clinton announced that he would repeat every question to make sure everyone could hear the questions.

Governor Clinton's answer to this question illustrates his skill as a public speaker as well as his skill as a campaigner for the office of the presidency. This analysis will highlight several different types of competencies, including the various types of knowledge displayed, the degree of success in targeting the specific audience he was addressing, and his interactional fluency. One student's ("STU") question and Governor Clinton's (WJC) answer are reproduced in their entirety in Excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1: Governor Clinton Interview, October 8, 1991, lines 339+

C-SPAN website, <http://www.c-span.org/video/?22054-1/bill-clinton-campaign-appearance>; Interview Excerpt starts at 33 minutes, 32 seconds

399 STU: yes what are your views what are your views on thuh situation in
 400 thuh middle east?
 401 (0.3)
 402 WJC: Thuh situation in thuh middle east? (0.4) well- first of all with
 403 regard to Iraq and Saddam Hussein. (0.2) I think we have got to
 404 keep thuh pressure on him (0.2) to honor thee United Nations
 405 resolution that he signed off on. (0.3) to: basically to remove his
 406 capacity?, (0.2) to wage biological, chemical or nuclear war. (0.4)
 407 you remember thuh- President Bush put those airplanes on alert uh
 408 few days ago?, (0.3) becaus:e we have reason to believe that thee
 409 thee international inspection team was not being u:h given full

410 cooperation over °there.° (0.2) we know thuh guy's uh liar, (0.4)
411 tch uh thug, and uh bully!, (0.4) you don't have to be uh genius to
412 know that. (0.3) we can not leave him (0.4) with (0.2) biological,
413 chemical, or nuclear capacity in violation of international law, .h
414 and I support what thuh president did in putting thuh planes on
415 alert. (0.2) .h with regard to thuh situation in Israel?, (0.4) I look
416 forward to thee peace process unfolding (0.2) tch I hope we can
417 have this peace conference. I hope thuh last remaining procedural
418 issues can be resolved?, and I hope we can work out (0.2) uh
419 situation in thuh middle east (0.2) where we (0.2) finally bring
420 peace to that region by giving Israel genuine security (0.2) in
421 returning for resolving as many of thuh differences as we can
422 between thee Israelis, (0.8) thuh native Palestinians and thee other
423 Arab states. (0.2) I do not believe we will ever get there!, (0.2)
424 now that thuh borders have been proved to be: insecure because of
425 missiles like thuh scud missiles raining in there until we have uh
426 plan to demilitarize thuh middle east. (0.2) thee arms race in thuh
427 middle east is still, going on unabated, and is deeply troubling to
428 me. (0.2) other questions?

The beginning of Excerpt 2 shows Governor Clinton first repeating the student's question, as he had promised, so that all in the room could hear it. He uses a questioning intonation, and then pauses briefly to provide an opportunity for the student to repair the question

if necessary (line 402). When no repair of the question is offered, Governor Clinton begins producing his answer.

Excerpt 2: Governor Clinton Interview, October 8, 1991, lines 339+

399 STU: yes what are your views what are your views on thuh situation in
 400 thuh middle east?
 401 (0.3)
 402 WJC: Thuh situation in thuh middle east? (0.4) well- first of all with
 403 regard to Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

While ‘well-prefaced’ turns often signal a dispreferred response to a first pair part (Fetzer, 2008; Heritage, 2015; Pomerantz, 1984; Sai-Kua, 1994), here the well-preface is serving a different purpose. Some studies have found a pattern of using ‘well’ when one is about to discuss something problematic, regardless of whether it is a dispreferred response to a first pair part or not (Morris, White & Iltis, 1994; Schegloff and Lerner, 2009). Heritage (2015) finds that well-prefaces in answers to questions are often used to project answers of longer than one turn. He notes that they can presage “transformative answers” which reframe the question that was asked (see also Stivers and Hayashi, 2010 and Clayman’s [1993a] study of evasive answers in televised news interviews). In Furkó and Abuczki’s (2014) study of political interviews they argue that “well” can be used to presage a topic shift.

Note that Governor Clinton cuts off the “well-” abruptly (line 402), and continues with “first of all” (line 402). This could be interpreted as an error repair format (Jefferson, 1974; see also Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977), in which the first part of the turn is replaced with the

second. The “first of all” (line 402) answer preface is an effective technique for showing that one has more than one thing to say (Jefferson, 1990). Governor Clinton’s statement “with regard to Iraq and Saddam Hussein” (lines 402-3) is therefore set up as an introduction to part of the answer to the question, rather than the entire response. This prefatory work makes it easier for the listener to follow and understand the structure of the response as it unfolds. In the context of an interview in a political campaign, this answer preface provides insurance against an impression that the answer is not fully responsive to the question, which may make it appear that the candidate was attempting to evade the question.

Televised interviews are good opportunities for candidates to display their knowledge. These displays of knowledge provide a key indicator of competence to the viewing public (Clayman and Romaniuk, 2011; Roth, 2005). In TV news interviews, the journalist interviewer may take an adversarial approach and challenge the candidate’s claims to knowledge. This can be done by pop quiz questions (Roth, 2005) or probing questions (Clayman and Romaniuk, 2011). Politicians who cannot successfully answer these types of questions risk displaying a lack of knowledge which may reflect badly on their competence for the office to which they aspire. However, the questions in the interview analyzed here are informational questions designed to elicit information about the candidate’s positions, rather than pop quiz or probing questions designed to reveal their incompetence. In his response, Governor Clinton uses the question as an opportunity to display his knowledge about the topic.

There are several types of knowledge displayed in the opening portion of Governor Clinton’s answer. For example, Governor Clinton effectively displays his geographical knowledge of the middle east. While the question asked about the “middle east”, Governor Clinton frames this part of the answer as “with regard to Iraq and Saddam Hussein.” (lines 402-

403). Elsewhere in the answer (Excerpt 1) Governor Clinton refers to “Israel” (line 415), the “middle east” (line 419), “native Palestinians” (line 422), and “thee other Arab states” (lines 422-3). These references throughout his response display his geographic knowledge of which countries or territories are in the middle east.

Governor Clinton displayed his knowledge of the current political situation in the middle east. The questioner asked about “thuh situation in thuh middle east” (line 399), but did not specifically identify which countries or conflicts he was referring to. Governor Clinton does not talk about all of the countries in the middle east. Instead, he focuses on the two countries or regions where there are problems, thus displaying his knowledge of the current political situation in the middle east.

Governor Clinton also displayed his knowledge of specific facts relevant to the political situation in Iraq. For example, he showed that he knew the name of the leader of Iraq (“Saddam Hussein”; line 403). Wilson’s (2015) pragmatic analysis of former President George W. Bush’s speech patterns referred to occasions when he was unable to recall the names of leaders of major countries in which there were problematic situations (see also Roth, 2005). Note also the media reports of third party presidential candidate Gary Johnson’s inability to recognize the name of the city of Aleppo (see, for example, Rappeport, 2016). This type of knowledge, however mundane it may appear in Governor Clinton’s answer, should therefore not be taken for granted. Displaying knowledge of currently significant countries and their political leaders is one way in which competent presidential campaign talk is done.

In the continuation of his response, Governor Clinton begins his next turn with “I think” (Excerpt 3, line 403).

Excerpt 3: Governor Clinton Interview, October 8, 1991, lines 402+

402 WJC: Thuh situation in thuh middle east? (0.4) well- first of all with
 403 regard to Iraq and Saddam Hussein. (0.2) I think we have got to
 404 keep thuh pressure on him (0.2) to honor thee United Nations
 405 resolution that he signed off on.

While often used as an uncertainty marker or to mitigate a dispreferred response to a question, in this context “I think” serves to frame Governor Clinton’s utterance as responsive to the question that was asked. The question asked for his “views on thuh situation in thuh middle east?” (Excerpt 2; lines 399-400). By beginning with “I think”, Governor Clinton frames his response as providing what was asked for—his views. Pennebaker et al (2005) refer to this type of term as an ‘insight’ word. He follows this opening directly with his view: “we have got to keep thuh pressure on him...” (lines 403-4). This clear, direct, and immediate presentation of his view succinctly answers the student’s question and states a clear position on what needs to be done. Note that his continuation of this turn also displays his knowledge of what has happened in the past (“to honor thee United Nations resolution that he signed off on.”; lines 404-405).

In addition, note the footing shift from “I think” to “we” (line 403; Goffman, 1981; see also Clayman, 1992; Clayman and Heritage, 2002 on footing shifts in political interviews). Bull and Fetzer (2006) found footing shifts involving the use of pronouns in British political interviews. Here Governor Clinton states his individual view with “I think”, but then uses the collective pronoun “we” to convey not just his view but what we (as a nation) should do.

Governor Clinton’s continuation of his response elaborates it in ways which further explain and justify his position (Excerpt 4):

Excerpt 4: Governor Clinton Interview, October 8, 1991, lines 405+

405 (WJC) resolution that he signed off on. (0.3) to: basically to remove his
 406 capacity?, (0.2) to wage biological, chemical or nuclear war. (0.4)
 407 you remember thuh- President Bush put those airplanes on alert uh
 408 few days ago?, (0.3) because we have reason to believe that thee
 409 thee international inspection team was not being u:h given full
 410 cooperation over °there.°

Governor Clinton extends and elaborates his response with an incremental extension (Schegloff, 1996) of his turn (lines 405-406). This extension both displays additional knowledge (of the nature of the resolution referred to), and conveys the importance of the agreement through his reference to “biological, chemical or nuclear war” (line 406).

Governor Clinton then addresses the student audience directly: “you remember thuh- President Bush put those airplanes on alert uh few days ago?,” (lines 407-408). His use of the error repair format (Jefferson, 1974) suggests he started to say “thuh President”, and then repaired it to the more specific “President Bush.” This utterance accomplishes two types of work. First, this utterance displays Governor Clinton’s knowledge about the day-to-day realities of the situation—the current events as well as the general problems. When Governor Clinton reminds his audience about President Bush putting the planes on alert, he displays his knowledge of current events.

Second, this utterance shows how he may adjust his speaking style to the audience he is addressing. He is speaking primarily to high school students, and it may not be reasonable to

assume that all members of this audience keep up with current events and daily news reports to the extent that he does. This question works to ‘remind’ them of this event. By this means he both displays his knowledge and displays his orientation to the possibility of a lack of knowledge on the part of his audience. He does this in a sensitive way by framing it as a reminder rather than an informing, thus saving face for students who might not have already been aware of this event.

Governor Clinton extends this turn with “because we have reason to believe that the international inspection team was not being given full cooperation over ‘there.’” (lines 408-410). This utterance achieves several functions. First, it provides more details and knowledge of the situation and current events. Second, it provides justification for Governor Clinton’s stated position. Third, note that he again uses the term “we” in line 408. This use of ‘we’ could refer to ‘we’ as the United States, in contrast to Iraq, or it could be a subtle way of including himself in the group of people who make decisions about relations between the United States and other countries such as Iraq.

In the continuation of his response, Governor Clinton adds to his justification of his position (Excerpt 5):

Excerpt 5: Governor Clinton Interview, October 8, 1991, lines 410+

410 (WJC) cooperation over ‘there.’ (0.2) we know thuh guy’s uh liar, (0.4)
 411 tch uh thug, and uh bully!, (0.4) you don’t have to be uh genius to
 412 know that. (0.3) we can not leave him (0.4) with (0.2) biological,
 413 chemical, or nuclear capacity in violation of international law, .h
 414 and I support what thuh president did in putting thuh planes on

415 alert.

In this elaboration of his justification for his position, Governor Clinton continues using “we” (lines 410, 412). ‘We’ is wonderfully ambiguous in this context. It serves to convey Governor Clinton’s equality with the current president and those who are actually in charge, thereby claiming a ‘presidential’ role for himself as well. It also serves to create a bond between him and the students he is addressing, by conveying a joint state of knowledge, conviction, and agreement that this is what must be done. Pennebaker, et al. (2005: 198) note that “To the degree that the speaker is referring to a specific group of people, “we” words generally signal the person’s bonds with the group.” He ends with an ‘I’ statement (“and I support what thuh president did in putting thuh planes on alert.”; lines 414-415). This switch from ‘we’ to ‘I’ creates a nice closing by referring indirectly back to the question he was asked. He closes with a clear statement of his views to sum up the answer he has produced, thus again displaying that his answer was responsive to the question that was asked.

Note also that even though this campaign stop is a political event, Governor Clinton does not shy away from supporting the actions of the current president, George H. W. Bush, who he is running against in his bid for the presidency. This is perhaps a sad commentary on how things have changed in the 25 years since this campaign event occurred. It seems that today opponents in political contests feel that everything has to be politicized, and that displaying agreement on even a small thing would be looked down on. For example, note that Bernie Sander’s refusal to engage in criticism of Hilary Clinton’s “damn emails” in a Democratic presidential primary debate in 2015 was considered newsworthy--a candidate refusing to politicize something was treated as breaking news! (see, for example, The Guardian, 2015).

Governor Clinton then begins the second part of his answer, which he had set up by use of the “first of all” preface (Excerpt 1, line 402). In Excerpt 6 he begins to speak about the “situation” in another part of the middle east:

Excerpt 6: Governor Clinton Interview, October 8, 1991, lines 415+

415 (WJC) alert. (0.2) .h with regard to thuh situation in Israel?, (0.4) I look
416 forward to thee peace process unfolding

Governor Clinton uses the same type of opening to begin the second item in his response that he used for the first one, “.h with regard to”... (line 415). This signals the second item on his list and shows that he is shifting topic. His use of format tying in this response (his “thuh situation” (line 415) mirrors the student’s use of “thuh situation” in the original question (Excerpt 1, line 399). This use of format tying (see Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987) displays his responsiveness to the question. Again, the substantive portion of his question begins with an ‘I’ statement, thus framing this part of the answer as an expression of what the question asked for (“your views”; line 399).

The Governor produces four ‘I’ statements in a row. The first, “I look forward to thee peace process unfolding” (lines 415-416) displays his knowledge of the existence of a current conflict and his knowledge of a current peace process, as well as his ‘view’ on this. He looks forward to it, thus his view is that the peace process would be a good thing.

Excerpt 7 shows the next three ‘I’ statements. Here he uses ‘I hope’, thus expressing uncertainty that the peace process can be achieved. These three statements also display more detailed knowledge of current events and the status of the peace process.

Excerpt 7: Governor Clinton Interview, October 8, 1991, lines 416+

416 (WJC) forward to thee peace process unfolding (0.2) tch I hope we can
 417 have this peace conference. I hope thuh last remaining procedural
 418 issues can be reso:lved?, and I hope we can work out (0.2) uh
 419 situation in thuh middle east (0.2) where we (0.2) finally bring
 420 peace to that region by giving Israel genuine security (0.2) in
 421 returning for resolving as many of thuh differences as we can
 422 between thee Israelis, (0.8) thuh native Palestinians and thee other
 423 Arab states.

Again, Governor Clinton displays his geographical knowledge of the middle east in this response, indicating that Israel and the “native Palestinians and thee other Arab states” (lines 422-3) are involved in this peace process. He goes beyond stating his view, and states what he believes the solution should be. Peace can be achieved “by giving Israel genuine security (0.2) in returning for resolving as many of thuh differences as we can between thee Israelis, (0.8) thuh native Palestinians and thee other Arab states.” (lines 420-423). This is a very clear and specific plan or proposal for what is necessary to bring peace to that region of the middle east.

Governor Clinton then displays further knowledge of current events by referring to the recent Scud missile attacks and tying them to his discussion of the prospects for peace (Excerpt 8, lines 423-426). He adds to his proposal by saying there is a need to “demilitarize thuh middle east.” (line 426).

Excerpt 8: Governor Clinton Interview, October 8, 1991, lines 423+

423 (WJC) Arab states. (0.2) I do not believe we will ever get there!, (0.2)
 424 now that thuh borders have been proved to be: insecure because of
 425 missiles like thuh scud missiles raining in there until we have uh
 426 plan to demilitarize thuh middle east. (0.2) thee arms race in thuh
 427 middle east is still, going on unabated, and is deeply troubling to
 428 me. (0.2) other questions?

Governor Clinton's final utterance in this response serves to close down his answer while emphasizing his responsiveness to the question. He expresses his view that "thee arms race in thuh middle east is still, going on unabated, and is deeply troubling to me." (lines 426-428).

Both here and throughout Governor Clinton's answer to the questions posed, his speech is fluent. Notice the relatively infrequent occurrence of mistakes, errors, misspeaking, or filled pauses (Fox, 2010) in Governor Clinton's response. There are two instances of cut offs indicating possible error repair or avoidance ("well- first of all" line 402) and ("thuh- President Bush"; line 407). There is one instance of each of the following: repetition ("thee thee"; lines 408-409), a filled pause ("uh"; line 409), and a grammatical mistake ("returning" instead of "return"; line 421). Other than these instances, Governor Clinton's speech is fluent and coherent. This fluency is in contrast to the speech often produced by other presidents. For example, see Wilson (2015) on former President George W. Bush's frequent grammatical errors, word choice errors, and malapropisms. George H. W. Bush also frequently used filled pauses, hesitations, and cutoffs in his speech (discussed below).

Summary. In sum, in his response to the student's question Governor Clinton displayed a high level of interactional competence. In addition to fluency of speech and relatively few speech errors or mistakes, he also displays knowledge of the subject matter being discussed, organizes his answer in a coherent manner, and designs the answer well to communicate with its primary co-present audience of high school students. We now turn to an analysis of the interview with former President George H. W. Bush while he was engaged in an unsuccessful campaign for the presidency in the 1980 election. While his response also shows many strengths, there are some marked differences in the techniques used when compared to Governor Clinton's interview performance.

George H. W. Bush Interview at a High School in New Hampshire

Former President George H. W. Bush also participated in an interview at a high school in New Hampshire. This interview occurred shortly before he lost the Republican presidential primary to Ronald Reagan in 1980. This interview was conducted by Paul Marashio of the Salem, New Hampshire School District, and was recorded by Salem High School Students (C-SPAN website). It first aired on local public access channels, and was first aired nationally on C-SPAN on January 24, 2016 as part of their "American History TV" series (C-SPAN website, 2016). This analysis will show that while there are many strengths in Mr. Bush's responses to the questions he was asked, there are also some weaknesses and pointed contrasts with Governor Clinton's responses which serve to illustrate some of the differences in their interactional skills. This interview also took place at a high school, but the questions were posed by an interviewer ("IR") rather than directly by the students as in Governor Clinton's interview. One question and

answer were selected from this interview for analysis here. The interviewer's question and Mr. Bush's complete answer are shown in Excerpt 9:

Excerpt 9: George H. W. Bush Interview, 1980 [C-SPAN; Excerpt begins at 3 minutes and 10 seconds, transcript lines 26+] <https://www.c-span.org/video/?403441-1/george-hw-bush-interview-new-hampshire>

26 IR: .h think of those kinds of qualities that you mentioned there, (0.8)

27 what decisions have you made in thuh past which reflect?, (0.5)

28 effectiveness in leadership.

29 (0.3)

30 GHWB: tch .h well I've had tough leadership jo:bs. uh .h thuh two I guess

31 that are thuh most difficult (0.2) .h uh would be heading thuh

32 Republican party (0.2) during thuh last days of thuh Nixon

33 presidency, thuh last two years of Nixon's presidency. .h because

34 as history will show, this was thuh first time that thee interests of

35 thuh party?, .h did not always coinci:de with thee interest of an

36 incumbent president. .h uh that was one. and then I think that my-

37 another most difficult job, maybe thee most difficult, .h was

38 leading thuh Central Intelligence Agency just at uh moment when

39 it was very fashionable to jump all over it, to tear it down, .h uh

40 take uh handful or some abu- abuses from thuh past and make- use

41 those to show there was uh certain immorality to intelligence. .h

42 so both of them were challenging .h leadership assignments, u:h

43 and I: I hope I did them (0.2) with thee integrity of thee institution
 44 I se:rv'd intact?, when I finished thuh job. .h and uh that is not it
 45 is uh tough assessment to assess one's own leadership. .h but I
 46 believe I did that. I believe I .h I had thuh respect of people with
 47 whom I agreed and disagreed!, .h I hope in thuh last one?, thuh
 48 CIA job, I elevated thuh mora:le of thuh people. .h I did not try to
 49 elevate mySELF! into thuh public limelight. in either! of these
 50 jobs. people say well how come you u:h sometimes have lacked
 51 uh name identification?, and I think it's uh sty:le! but- but- I judge
 52 it (0.2) can you lead with respect? Can you have can you
 53 accomplish your objective, .h and then have thuh respe:ct of
 54 people? Not always (that) like you, not always agree with you, but
 55 thuh respect of those .h that you lead, and I think I did that in those
 56 two assignments.

Excerpt 10 begins with the question asked. Note that the interviewer refers back to the leadership qualities Mr. Bush has spoken about in an answer to a previous question in the interview (not shown). He then asks Mr. Bush to discuss “decisions” he has made “which reflect?, (0.5) effectiveness in leadership” (lines 27-28). Mr. Bush’s response to the question begins in line 30:

Excerpt 10: George H. W. Bush Interview, 1980, lines 26+

26 IR: .h think of those qualities that you mentioned there, (0.8) what

- 27 decisions have you made in thuh past which reflect?, (0.5)
 28 effectiveness in leadership.
 29 (0.3)
 30 GHWB: tch .h well I've had tough leadership jo:bs.

Questions such as this one require the interviewee to produce self-complimentary information, which may be inconsistent with preference organization (see Pomerantz, 1978). Consistent with a dispreferred response, Mr. Bush precedes his response with a slight delay (line 29), and then uses a well-preface, as did Governor Clinton in the opening of his answer. Heritage (2015) noted that well-prefaces can set up “transformational answers” which reframe the question. The substantive portion of Mr. Bush’s turn begins with an ‘I’ statement, which is appropriate given that the questioner has asked him to talk about himself. However, Mr. Bush then says “I’ve had tough leadership jo:bs.”, which is not what the question asked him about. Mr. Bush has transformed the topic from “decisions showing effective leadership” to “tough leadership jobs”, two related but not identical things. This shift uses an evasive answering technique (Clayman, 1993a; 1993b; 2001) to avoid talking about one thing and instead talk about something different. Stivers and Hayashi (2010) also use the term “transformative answers” to describe this process; Bush’s answer here transforms both the terms used in the question and to some extent the agenda of the question as well. In Lorda and Miche’s (2006) analysis of two political interviews in France, they argue that reformulating the question can be a sign of political skill. It can also be seen as an evasive technique (Clayman, 2001). This shift enables Mr. Bush to highlight some facts about himself that he may want to get out to the public—the important leadership jobs he

has held and how well he has done them, while avoiding having to directly describe his leadership skills.

Excerpt 11 shows the continuation of this exchange. Mr. Bush uses a filled pause in line 30 (“uh”). Filled pauses can occur for a variety of reasons; in this context it appears to be an error avoidance move (Jefferson, 1974). Mr. Bush uses filled pauses much more frequently than does Governor Clinton. There are six instances of ‘uh’ used as a filled pause in Mr. Bush’s answer (see Excerpt 9, lines 30, 36, 39, 42, 44, and 50). Governor Clinton used ‘uh’ as a filled pause only once in his answer (see line 409 of Excerpt 1 above).

Excerpt 11: George H. W. Bush Interview, 1980, lines 30+

30 GHWB: tch .h well I’ve had tough leadership jo:bs. uh .h thuh two I guess
 31 that are thuh most difficult (0.2) .h uh would be heading thuh
 32 Republican party (0.2) during thuh last days of thuh Nixon
 33 presidency, thuh last two years of Nixon’s presidency. .h because
 34 as history will show, this was thuh first time that thee interests of
 35 thuh party?, .h did not always coinci:de with thee interest of an
 36 incumbent president. .h uh that was one.

Like Governor Clinton, Mr. Bush sets up a two-part answer to the question: “thuh two I guess that are thuh most difficult” (lines 30-31). This portion of his turn is grammatically awkward in relation to the previous utterance. He uses the past tense “had” in line 30, and the present tense “are” in line 31. Grammatically awkward sentences occur fairly often in Mr. Bush’s answer (for example, see “another most difficult job” (line 37). A grammatically

awkward sentence occurred only once in Governor Clinton's answer (see line 421 of Excerpt 1 above).

Note also the use of the uncertainty marker (Schegloff et al., 1977; see also Wooffitt 2005) "I guess" in line 30. This action potentially weakens the impact of his utterance. Mr. Bush uses such utterances as qualifiers or uncertainty markers seven times in this answer (see Excerpt 9, lines 30, 36, 43, 46, 47, 51, and 55).

In his opening statement in Excerpt 11, Mr. Bush says that there were two jobs (line 30), and then makes an awkward transition to a discussion of one job: ("h uh would be heading thuh Republican party (0.2) during thuh last days of thuh Nixon presidency," lines 31-33). He makes a word choice error (days versus years) and repairs it: "thuh last two years of Nixon's presidency." (lines 32-33).

After introducing the topic of this job, Mr. Bush adds an explanation of why it was a "tough" job (lines 33-35). While providing evidence that the job was tough, he does not draw an 'upshot' from this utterance to explain why this job was tough. An upshot is a formulation that summarizes and highlights the point or "gist" or what has been said (see Antaki, Barnes and Leudar, 2005; Bolden, 2010; Heritage and Watson, 1979; Hutchby, 2005). In addition, he does not provide evidence of what the questioner asked for—decisions he made which reflected effectiveness in leadership. Instead, he moves to a summary of his discussion of the first job: ".h uh that was one." (line 36). He thereby displays an orientation to his answer as having two parts, and informs his audience that the first part of his answer is now done. However, in contrast to the types of closings Governor Clinton used in his answer, Mr. Bush's closing does not provide any information other than the fact that the discussion of the first job is over. He misses an opportunity to make a strong statement here.

Excerpt 12 shows the continuation of this exchange. In line 36 Mr. Bush follows his closure of his discussion of the first job by introducing the second job. Again, he uses “I think” in a way that suggests uncertainty, especially when considered in the light of the utterance as a whole: He’s not saying “I think” as in “my opinion is” (see Governor Clinton’s use of “I think” in Excerpt 1, line 403 above). Mr. Bush is using it as an uncertainty marker, which is made even more uncertain by the repair work that follows—first describing it as “another most difficult job” (line 37), and then repairing that grammatically awkward formulation to “maybe thee most difficult,” (line 37).

Excerpt 12: George H. W. Bush Interview, 1980, lines 36+

36 (GHWB) incumbent president. .h uh that was one. and then I think that my-
 37 another most difficult job, maybe thee most difficult, .h was
 38 leading thuh Central Intelligence Agency just at uh moment when
 39 it was very fashionable to jump all over it, to tear it down, .h uh
 40 take uh handful or some abu- abuses from thuh past and make- use
 41 those to show there was uh certain immorality to intelligence. .h

Mr. Bush goes on to describe why leading the CIA was difficult at that point in time (lines 38-41). This explanation contains both error avoidance and error repair (lines 39 and 40). Note the absence of any discussion of decisions he made, examples of his effective leadership, or explanations of how what he has said relates to either of these topics. He again leaves the upshot of this informing to be drawn by the listener.

The continuation of Mr. Bush’s response sums up his discussion of the two jobs (Excerpt 13):

Excerpt 13: George H. W. Bush Interview, 1980, lines 41+

41 (GHWB) those to show there was uh certain immorality to intelligence. .h
 42 so both of them were challenging .h leadership assignments, u:h
 43 and I: I hope I did them (0.2) with thee integrity of thee institution
 44 I se:rved intact?, when I finished thuh job.

Mr. Bush uses the transition marker “so” (line 42) to present this utterance as a summary or upshot of what he has said so far (see Antaki, Barnes, and Leudar, 2005; Bolden, 2006). His summary of his discussion of the two jobs characterizes them both as “challenging .h leadership assignments,” (line 42). This summary follows the theme he has set for himself in his transformed version of the question—instead of decisions he has made which reflect effective leadership, he has discussed tough leadership jobs he has held. The overall structure of his response thus superficially mirrors Governor Clinton’s, but it is an answer that does not directly address what was asked for and which has absent or vague summaries and upshots.

Mr. Bush hesitates briefly (“u:h”; line 42), and then adds to that summary in a way that refers to the quality of he work that he did, thus elliptically referencing the part of the question that had to do with his ‘effectiveness’ as a leader: “u:h and I: I hope I did them (0.2) with thee integrity of thee institution I se:rved intact?, when I finished thuh job.” (lines 42-44). As Pomerantz (1978) notes, agreements with compliments are dispreferred, and complimenting oneself is interactionally problematic, one of Mr. Bush’s problems in responding to this question

may therefore be his personal modesty and humble portrayal of himself. His efforts to not look like he is boasting (see discussion of lines 44-45 below) may inadvertently sabotage his efforts to communicate his accomplishments to the audience. The statement in lines 43-44 is not a strong statement of his effectiveness on the job. He hesitates (“u:h”; line 42), repairs/repeats (“I: I”; line 43), qualifies (“I hope”; line 43), and then finishes by conveying that he did not damage the institution (“with the integrity of thee institution I se:rved intact?, when I finished thuh job.”; lines 43-44) rather than speaking about what he did to improve the institution.

Excerpt 14 shows the continuation of this exchange. Mr. Bush begins by acknowledging that it is hard to talk about one’s own accomplishments: “.h and uh that is not it is uh tough assessment to assess one’s own leadership.” (lines 44-45). While it is quite true that it is difficult for most people to publicly ‘brag’ about their own accomplishments or abilities, it may be an unavoidable aspect of political campaigning. Mr. Bush’s display of his lack of comfort with this, while honest, may not help his presentation of self as a strong political figure. His indirectness and reluctance to directly state his strengths also take up time in this short response which could be used more effectively to showcase his knowledge and abilities (as Governor Clinton does very effectively in his response in Excerpt 1).

The continuation of Mr. Bush’s response suggests that his ability to get the respect of those he led is evidence of his effectiveness as a leader. However, he does not directly make this point in a way that can be easily heard by the listener—it is certainly not a ‘sound bite’ answer. He then apologizes again for his modesty (lines 48-51); arguing that he does not have “name identification” (line 51) because he does not “elevate” himself “into thuh public limelight.” (line 49). While an admirable characteristic for a human being, this essential humility is not likely to be helpful in the political arena. In addition, the theme of ‘respect,’ which he repeats several

times, is approached elliptically and never concisely articulated. The theme of respect is the closest Mr. Bush comes to answering the question about his “effective leadership”, but he never addresses the decisions he made that showed that.

Excerpt 14: George H. W. Bush Interview, 1980, lines 44+

44 (GHWB) I served intact?, when I finished thuh job. .h and uh that is not it
 45 is uh tough assessment to assess one’s own leadership. .h but I
 46 believe I did that. I believe I .h I had thuh respect of people with
 47 whom I agreed and disagreed!, .h I hope in thuh last one?, thuh
 48 CIA job, I elevated thuh mora:le of thuh people. .h I did not try to
 49 elevate mySELF! into thuh public limelight. in either! of these
 50 jobs. people say well how come you u:h sometimes have lacked
 51 uh name identification?, and I think it’s uh sty:le! but- but- I judge
 52 it (0.2) can you lead with respect? Can you have can you
 53 accomplish your objective, .h and then have thuh respe:ct of
 54 people? Not always (that) like you, not always agree with you, but
 55 thuh respect of those .h that you lead, and I think I did that in those
 56 two assignments.

Summary. In sum, there are similarities and differences in the responses given by Governor Clinton and Mr. Bush to questions addressed to them during these two interviews. The overall structure of their responses were similar, with both providing two-part answers to the questions they were asked, and both making claims and providing explanations or evidence to

support their claims. However, there were multiple differences in substance, style and interactional performance which lead to Governor Clinton's answer appearing much more coherent and convincing than Mr. Bush's answer. Mr. Bush left the upshots or implications of his answer largely implicit, whereas Governor Clinton not only produced an explicit answer, he drew upshots which clearly showed what his answer was and how it was responsive to the question asked. In addition, the clarity, organization, and fluid production of Governor Clinton's response made it much more amenable to media sound bites than did Mr. Bush's response. These may be some of the things that lead to a general consensus that Governor Clinton was a more effective public speaker/campaigner than Mr. Bush.

Discussion and Conclusions

What does it mean to be a great communicator? In this paper I have attempted to show, via this dual case comparison, some of the characteristics of a successful answer in the context of a presidential campaign interview. This paper investigated how interview questions are answered, and examined the strengths and weaknesses of the answers each candidate produced. A conversation analytic approach to the analysis of the detailed transcripts revealed differences between the two candidates in the display of various types of knowledge, interactional competency, audience-design, fluency of speech, and structure of the responses. In short, the more effective interviewee (1) took advantage of the question asked to display several types of knowledge, including current events, geographical locations, and key figures relevant to the issues, (2) constructed an answer that avoided evasiveness by using an answer preface that presaged a multi-part answer, initial and recap statements that expressed responsiveness to the question, and specific information which directly addressed the question, (3) tailored their

answer to the audience (of students) they were addressing, for example, by calibrating the complexity of the answer to the level of knowledge the audience could be expected to hold, and (4) displayed interactional competency through the production of a well-organized, grammatically correct and fluently produced answer. The less effective interviewee did not use most of these techniques, and also displayed more speech disfluencies, error avoidance and error repair.

Because both of the interviews analyzed here were campaign events rather than interviews conducted by professional television news journalists, the questions were not designed to be adversarial and therefore did not require the use of evasive answering techniques (Elliott and Bull, 1996; Clayman, 2001). Both candidates had sufficient time and opportunity to put forward persuasive answers in these relatively friendly interactional environments. While differences in the opinions and positions held and level of knowledge about world geography, world leaders, and current events are clearly important to the success of their answers and their campaigns, their interactional competency, fluency, and skill in structuring, formulating, and articulating their answers may also be critical. These types of differences are likely to be important for the success of a political campaign because it is through these actions that candidates communicate their personal qualities, level of knowledge, skills and abilities for the audience and potential voters who might be exposed to media reports about the interview.

The analysis in the current paper is limited to the two interviews discussed above, and hence can not claim any direct relationship between the interactional skills of the two candidates and the response of voters to their campaigns. However, previous research has shown that various aspects of the message and communicative practices engaged in by political candidates in debates and speeches can affect the perceptions of the viewing public and potential voters

(Benoit and Wells, 1996; Holloway, 2009; Smith, 2005). Future studies investigating the relationship between political interviews and the success of candidates should include an analysis of the question-answering techniques covered in this paper. Candidates' use of these interactional techniques could be compared to surveys or opinion polls of audience members' and potential voters' perceptions and attitudes.

The results of the analysis in this paper also suggest that more research into nonadversarial "Neutral Informational Interviews" should be conducted, in order to explore how candidates can take advantage of this non-adversarial questioning environment to present the best possible face as a candidate. One could argue that genuine information-seeking questions are more effective and useful than the strategically designed adversarial questions performed in the various type of journalistic interviews. These NII interview questions may provide just as much information to the public about the positions, qualifications, and personal characteristics of the candidates than do the more adversarial types of television interviews, whether with professional journalist or citizen interviewers.

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