Doing "Business as Usual": Dynamics of Voice in Community Organizing Talk

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This article examines discourse in a community change project committed to undoing "business as usual"—attempts to "fix" problems within the community without involvement of residents in the process. We show how, despite commitments to recognizing community "voice," participants' orientation to powerful "centering institutions" (Jan Blommaert 2005) transformed and overrode community residents' critical contributions, thus realizing microinteractionally some recurring broader patterns of the process, and resulting in the unintended reproduction of business as usual. [community change initiative, social context of schooling, discourse analysis, contextualization]

In this article, we examine issues of representation and voice in the Community for the Children of Lakeview (CCL) through interactions taking place in one meeting of a Subcommittee of the CCL's Strategy Team. We show how participants who are working together to accomplish central aims of the CCL process also work together at the same time to undermine those aims. Our specific focus will be on a central and widely shared commitment of participants to undoing what they called "business as usual." Among residents of this community of Lakeview, and among CCL participants more generally, "business as usual" is understood partly in terms of outsiders' attempts to "fix" problems within the community, without recognizing the community's internal strengths and with little attempt to involve residents in any meaningful way in community change or development. Our central claim is that, despite explicit and overt commitments to recognizing the "voice" of the community by ensuring active engagement and leadership by residents in the community planning process, expressions of voice by resident participants were sometimes transformed by prevailing communicative practices within the process. Specifically, we show how a largely implicit orientation of participants toward certain powerful "centering institutions" (Blommaert 2005) in the process of collaboratively producing a Community Plan (Larson et al. this issue) leads the group to apparently misunderstand and ultimately disregard potentially critical but productive contributions by residents. Such processes realize microinteractionally some of the recurring patterns of the CCL process on a larger scale, resulting in the unintended production of "business as usual" (Larson et al. this issue; Quiñones et al. this issue).

Issues of the role of resident voice and community representation in social planning processes have become increasingly prominent in recent educational policy and practice. The CCL, on which this special issue focuses, is just one example of a recent national trend in the United States that sees positive educational outcomes as closely linked to supporting features within the surrounding community, such as early childhood care, neighborhood safety, availability of jobs, access to health care, and the like. That is, there is a growing recognition that understanding educational processes must involve taking account not only of the official educational institutions available in a community—although these of

course remain crucial—but also of institutions, practices, and other environmental features that frame the educational system. Correspondingly, working to improve educational outcomes requires attention to these broader factors as well.

Among the most prominent examples of this trend is the Harlem Children's Zone, Inc. (HCZ), which has been widely celebrated for its role in improving developmental outcomes for children and youth in the Harlem area of New York City, for promoting educational success, reducing poverty, improving resident health, and a number of other successes. The HCZ was the primary model for the Obama administration's Promise Neighborhoods grant program, which aims to fund comprehensive neighborhood reform to improve local educational systems. President Obama, introducing the Promise Neighborhoods program, said: "We need to take an all-hands-on-deck approach to lifting our families and communities out of poverty. . . . Promise Neighborhoods will support a number of different services and educational reforms to help improve the lives of our young people from birth through childhood, from college through a career" (U.S. Department of Education 2010). Obama's Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, stressed the centrality of this program to the administration's objectives: "The Promise Neighborhoods program brings all the Department's strategies together—high-quality early learning programs, high-quality schools, and comprehensive supports to ensure that students are safe, healthy and successful. . . . These services must be comprehensive, and schools must put education at the center" (U.S. Department of Education 2010).

As the Promise Neighborhoods program and other efforts like it become more widespread, it is important for educational researchers to understand how such endeavors play out in the lives of the communities they hope to serve. Our aim here is to contribute to this understanding through the lens offered by the CCL, which, like the Promise Neighborhoods program, was modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone, Inc., and other related programs. Our specific focus will be on a central set of criteria that must be met to obtain funding through the Promise Neighborhood program, that is, the requirement of substantial involvement by participants who are "representative of the geographic area proposed to be served" (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement 2010:24675). The Promise Neighborhood funding guidelines specify that:

> residents of the geographic area proposed to be served have an active role in decision-making and that at least one-third of the eligible entity's governing board or advisory board is made up of: (a) Residents who live in the geographic area proposed to be served; (b) Residents of the city or county in which the neighborhood is located but who live outside the geographic area proposed to be served, and who are low-income . . . ; (c) Public officials . . . who serve the geographic area proposed to be served . . . ; or (d) Some combination of individuals from the three groups listed in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this definition. [U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement 2010:24679]

Despite these explicit requirements for community representation, however, little guidance is offered as to how this might be accomplished in practice. This is no small issue, considering that community residents are likely to have to share decision making with various other "stakeholders" in their community: government, social service, educational, business, and the like. Indeed, such a coordination of multiple interests is precisely at the heart of these comprehensive efforts. Here, the CCL's emphasis on resident involvement in the planning process offers a site through which to consider in depth how resident representation plays out under the specific circumstances that characterize one community change initiative.

Theoretical Perspective: Voice and Community Change

An important feature of grassroots or community-based coalition initiatives (such as the CCL and Promise Neighborhoods grant-funded programs), is their presumed capacity

to allow underrepresented populations to communicate their needs (Camino and Zeldin 2002; Kurland and Zeder 2001). Ostensibly, the democratic ideals of "allowing people to have their say," "giving the people a voice," and "an opportunity to stand up and be counted" (Lummis 1996:19) are realized in community-based meeting discourse. "Voice" would seem to correspond directly with speaking or the opportunity to represent one's self or one's community. Our position coincides with work suggesting that a more complicated reading of voice and representation within coalition work and within meeting discourse is necessary (Chavis 2001; Smock 2004; Tracy and Durfy 2007; Wolff 2001a, 2001b).

Chavis (2001) sees a paradoxical development inherent in coalition initiatives. As he explains, conflict can often arise within coalitions because of the manner in which representatives of various community groups are brought together to exchange ideas that are often contrary to one another despite the assumed and normative ideal of a shared vision. Chavis (2001:310) writes: "The norms to 'get along' dominate many coalitions. These norms, whether intentionally or unintentionally, maintain the status quo by not allowing members to address community conflicts and inequalities." This raises a critical issue for understanding collective decision making: What happens to representativeness and voice when such norms hold sway over meeting discourse?

In the position we take here, voice is neither neutral nor is its expression somehow naturally invested with power. Rather, both power and voice are constituted within and dependent on social contexts with preexisting value systems and hierarchies. Achieving representativeness in ways that reflect equality of power for all participants requires something more than simply "giving voice." If "representativeness" is to represent, then residents' voices need to be received and understood in the ways that they intend or ratify. This reception is constrained by historical and cultural preconditions as well as by the structural and interpersonal practices and values that inform individual and group norms.

Recent sociocultural theories of language and communicative practices offer useful theoretical and analytic resources for understanding such processes, based on careful attention to indexical aspects of language use (e.g., Blommaert 2005; Duranti 1997; Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Gumperz 1982; Hanks 1996; Howard and Lipinoga 2010; O'Connor 2001, 2003; Wortham 2006). In general, a focus on indexicality involves attention to how linguistic forms "point to" aspects of the context of their utterance. It is important to note that "context," as understood here, is never simply given; rather, participants in interaction engage in contextualizing work, where contextualization is "an active process of negotiation in which participants reflexively examine the discourse as it is emerging, embedding assessments of its structure and significance in the speech itself" (Bauman and Briggs 1990:69). That is, participants in interaction talk and act in ways that display to others what they take the context to be, and act into these understood contexts, thus working together to constitute the interaction as being of a certain sort, involving people who are positioned in particular ways. Although contextualization takes place in local interactions, it is never a strictly locally phenomenon; contextualizing practices on any occasion are always shaped by broader social practices, and considerable work has been devoted to specifying how local contexts are constituted in relation to broader societal contexts.

We draw here on such an approach as articulated by Blommaert (2005), who describes what he calls the "centering function" of language. Centering involves participants' orientation toward particular norms and values that characterize, often tacitly, the various "centering institutions" that people act within—for example, families, peer groups, churches, and for present purposes, community organizing coalitions, funding agencies, communities of residence, and the like. The centering function, as Blommaert (2005:75) argues, "generates indexicalities to which others have to orient in order to be 'social,' i.e., to produce meanings that 'belong' somewhere." That is, for a participant in interaction to

be recognizable as "belonging," as having voice on a particular occasion, he or she must engage in certain forms of contextualization that are privileged in that interaction, and these privileged forms of contextualization are guided by more or less powerful institutions.

Here, we are primarily concerned with this process as it relates to voice. Blommaert (2005) has conceptualized voice as the capacity to accomplish communicative functions, a fundamentally social process that is not only a matter of reaching understanding in immediate circumstances but also of controlling the meaning of communicative acts as they are taken up in subsequent discourse. In this sense, voice requires the ability to make language forms durably interpretable in a certain way. According to Blommaert, "what people do with words . . . is to produce conditions for uptake, conditions for voice, but as soon as these conditions are produced, uptake is a social process, full of power and inequality" (2005:45). In other words, voice is not neutral, nor is its expression somehow naturally invested with power. Rather, the relationship between power and voice are interdependent within social contexts that are already informed by the value systems and hierarchies of power represented within and among centering institutions. "Appropriate" orientation toward these sets of norms is required to accomplish voice, because, as Blommaert claims, "whenever the resources people possess do not match the functions they are supposed to accomplish, they risk being attributed *other* functions than the ones projected, intended, or necessary. Their resources fail to fulfil the required functions; speakers lose voice" (2005:77).

In the analysis to follow, we take up Blommaert's (2005:68) contention that "it is the capacity to accomplish desired functions through language . . . to create favourable conditions for a desired uptake" that constitute equality of voice. We consider the ways in which privileged forms of indexicality and contextualization, examined at the microinteractional level of discourse, constrain the possibilities for validation of (some) voices and hence the senses of community and democracy believed to undergird the CCL initiative.

Research Setting

The CCL

We address these issues of voice through an examination of talk that took place during a working "retreat" of the planning Subcommittee of the CCL. The aims and structure of the CCL are presented in detail in the introduction to this special issue (Larson et al. this issue); here we provide details that are useful in understanding our analysis.

In 2006, the Lakeview City School District (LCSD) initiated a major community development program, with support from community residents, local government, and business and social service organizations, to address the complex problems and challenges of a particular area of the city. The initiative was explicitly modeled in important ways after other comprehensive change initiatives, including the Harlem Children's Zone, Inc., that focused on the creation of high quality, comprehensive programs that transformed whole neighborhoods and improved educational outcomes for the children in those neighborhoods.

As the planning process for the CCL began in early 2006, day-to-day control of the initiative was moved from a board of directors chaired by the LCSD superintendent to an LCSD officer whom we call Julie. Resident control had not been an explicit goal at the program's conceptualization, but Julie took steps to form a community coalition to carry out the planning work, including bringing more community residents into the process. Julie formed a CCL Design Team, comprised of about 15 people, including area residents, social service providers, government staff, and LCSD personnel. The official role of the

Design Team was to support the work of a much larger Strategy Team of about 120 people, also drawn from different stakeholder groups. The Strategy Team met monthly to develop the CCL Community Plan, a document that aimed to set out objectives for the implementation phase of the CCL, as well as strategies for reaching these objectives. Besides the Strategy Team and the Design Team (later renamed the Strategy Team Subcommittee to reflect its official subordinate position to the Strategy Team; hereafter, this group will be referred to as "the Subcommittee"), two additional groups were relevant in this phase of the process. Eight Work Teams concentrated on the focus areas that the Strategy Team identified as critical to the initiative; these Work Teams were made up of members of the Strategy Team and the Design Team (later renamed the Subcommittee), as well as CCL community residents, service providers, and residents of the broader Lakeview community. Finally, Julie, with input from the Design Team, also enlisted a community organizing consulting firm from another city to guide and facilitate the planning process. Between January 2006 and February 2007, this consulting organization provided meeting facilitation, community planning and capacity-building expertise, and participant training in planning processes. These various efforts were made with the intention of maximizing local involvement and a grassroots ethos, to counter what was perceived by the community as "business as usual," in which decisions were made by distant bureaucrats with economic and political power but little local involvement.

From its start, members of the Strategy Team expressed a strong commitment to recruiting and supporting participation by residents of the CCL's area of focus, to maximize resident control of the initiative. This became formalized in late 2006 in an agreement that at least 51 percent of Strategy Team members and 33 percent of Work Team members would be residents of the CCL area.

Tensions in the CCL

As other contributions to this special issue show, a number of tensions characterized and pervaded much of the CCL work. To a large extent, these tensions reflected what Chavis (2001) identifies as a common structural paradox in community coalitions: On the one hand, coalitions gain strength from including and recognizing a diversity of voices. On the other hand, the existence of the coalition is dependent on a shared vision, which is particularly important for garnering funds and maintaining public support. In the CCL, this tension was salient in several ways that are relevant for the analysis to follow. First, there was a general tension between, on the one hand, a commitment to substantial resident leadership and control of the CCL process, and, on the other hand, the need to speak to interests outside the resident community, such as funders and government and business representatives. One specific manifestation of this that is relevant for our purposes was a tension between the overt, explicit commitment on the part of the CCL to recognize and name the effects of racism in the community and in the CCL process, versus efforts to downplay racism as a dominant theme when speaking to and writing for entrenched systems of power (Larson et al. this issue; Quiñones et al. this issue). Second, there was a general tension between, on the one hand, the fragmentation and disunity that might come from recognition of diversity and difference among CCL participants, and, on the other hand, a sense of always "moving forward together" as a group (Hanny et al. 2010; Quiñones et al. this issue; cf. Larson et al. this issue). A specific manifestation of this tension was in the belief of some participants that distinctions among community residents, and notably between African American and Latino/a residents, should be backgrounded. Other participants, especially those from the Latino/a community, strongly felt that failure to recognize important differences between specific interests of African Ameri-

cans and Latino/as, for example around language, was effectively to allow the CCL to be dominated by African American interests (Quiñones et al. this issue).

The CCL Subcommittee Retreat

In early February 2007, a two-day retreat was held for members of the CCL Subcommittee. The retreat came at what was, for several reasons, viewed by participants as a critical juncture in the CCL planning process. Two of these are of primary concern for us here. First, the retreat was viewed by the facilitation consultants and by Subcommittee leaders such as Julie as urgently needed to conduct intensive work on the formal CCL Community Plan, which was scheduled to be made public in several weeks. The items on the agenda for the two days included revision of the CCL Vision Statement, a brief document to be included in the Community Plan, which would contain an outline of commitments for what a future CCL would look like; discussion of "background," "history," and "themes" of the CCL, a discussion that was to be used for development of the Plan narrative by Julie in collaboration with a professional writer; prioritization of "multiyear objectives" and "cross-cutting objectives," which would build on the work of the Work Teams charged with planning for eight focal areas of change. Thus, a major goal of the retreat was to produce text that would be crafted into the Community Plan (see Larson et al. this issue).

Second, the makeup of the Subcommittee had recently changed. As part of the effort to increase resident engagement, participation, and leadership in the CCL process more generally, residents of the CCL geographic area had been asked to apply for positions on the Subcommittee. At the time of the retreat, three new resident members, all of whom had been members of the Strategy Team, and all of whom had long been active in local community organizations, had just been added following this application and interviewing process. They were Jesús, a Latino man; Terrence, an African American man; and Sharese, an African American woman. These additions doubled resident representation on the Subcommittee to six members, or 33 percent of the membership. This increased representation was expected to strengthen the legitimacy of the Subcommittee in the eyes of the Strategy Team and the broader community, largely by enabling the voices of residents of different segments of the community to play a greater role in the shaping of the Plan. The increased resident voice in Subcommittee decision making was an identifiable and symbolic testimony to the commitment not to do business as usual.

Analysis

Our analysis focused on this retreat as a site in which to observe how overt attempts to increase community representation and voice are realized in practice. We examined interactions in the retreat, attending in particular to instances in which residents express some form of dissent or raise apparently contentious issues (Hanny et al. 2010; Tracy and Durfy 2007), as these were expected to be revealing of how uptake or appropriation of residents' contributions resulted in their gaining or losing voice. Here, we present four segments of interaction that represent aspects of the dynamics of voice that we found in our analysis.

On Friday, the first day of the retreat, Subcommittee members gathered for a scheduled 9:30 AM start in the Subcommittee's usual meeting place—a portable building at an elementary school within the geographic area of the CCL. Roughly midway through the day, the group began a scheduled discussion of CCL history and themes, to generate ideas to be used in a draft of the Community Plan, on which Julie, with the help of a professional writer, would be working over the coming days.

In Segment 1, participants are discussing themes of the process, led by Anika, one of the two facilitators from the consulting organization.

Segment 1

1	Anika:	What else (.) what else (.) is a theme?
	Helena:	Unwavering (.) commitment (.) to=
	Terrence:	=urban renewal=
	Helena:	=seeing this through.
5	Jesús:	{((to Terrence)) No no. Don't say that word.} [i.e. "urban renewal"]
	Anika:	Unwavering commitment to seeing this through.
	Terrence:	Decolonization.
	Julie:	({(to Dennis) Decolonization.}
	Anika:	What's that? Terrence? Can-
10		((laughter))
	Terrence:	Seriously.
	Anika:	Say that again?
	Alicia:	He said coloniza-
	Julie:	Decolonization.
15	Jesús:	O:h
	Anika:	Decolonization.
	Terrence:	Exactly.
	Jesús:	Okay.
	Anika:	All right. Say- say what you mean by that.
20	Terrence:	That's- that's (.) ((our)) declaration of interdependence, correct?
		Decolonization.
	Anika:	Yes, but- s: We need to break down these words.
		(.)
		What do you mean by that?
25	Terrence:	What I mean is (.) it's allowing the community (.) as you stated (.) As many have
		stated (.) to take back what is theirs. (.) (An-) It's kind of like (.) Americans did
		years ago (.) with the British. (.) They want (.) to have (.) their own (.) and (.) in
		order to (.) > in order to create that independence, what does the declaration
30		allow?< It allows you to overthrow that government to create a new governing
		body.
		((laughter, overlapping talk, whistling))
	Terrence:	(hands up, shrugs) That's what- that's what it does.
	Julie:	{(lo, accented) Them's fightin' words, boy.}
35		((loud laughter, overlapping talk))
	Terrence:	But I'm just sayin'
	Julie:	That's what it means.
	William:	That was a history moment.
	Jesús:	History by Terrence.
[12	lines omitted, all continuing the joking response to Terrence's theme]	
	Anika:	Okay, what themes come up?

[See Appendix for transcript conventions]

In response to Anika's request for "themes," Terrence, one of the three new resident Subcommittee members, offers "Decolonization" in line 7. After laughter in line 10 from a Subcommittee member, Terrence replies, forcefully, "Seriously." After some confusion and subsequent clarification as to what Terrence had said, Anika asks Terrence in line 19 to "say what you mean by that." Terrence attempts to clarify in lines 20–21. Referring to another phrase that he had offered earlier in the meeting, he says, "that's (.) (our) declaration of interdependence, correct? Decolonization." At this point, Anika in lines 22–24 asks Terrence to clarify still further: "Yes, but- s: We need to break down these words. What do you mean by that?" In lines 25–31, Terrence draws an analogy to American colonists' bid for freedom from the British government, implying in lines 30–31 that decolonization "allows you to overthrow that government to create a new governing body." At this point, there is an immediate response of laughter and joking by many in the

group. Julie, affecting a stereotypical "Southern male" accent, says, "Them's fightin' words, boy," and William and Jesús mock Terrence's account of "history."

Several points are central to our analysis here. First, after Terrence offers his theme, several participants attempt to make sure that his talk and its meaning are accurately recorded. Julie repeats Terrence's theme to Dennis, who is taking notes for the "group memory," a type of meeting "minutes." Anika, the facilitator, asks Terrence to repeat what he'd said, after which Alicia and Julie respond with attempts to clarify. Once Terrence's theme has been accurately restated, Anika twice asks Terrence to clarify what he means by "decolonization." There is thus a concerted effort to put Terrence's theme on the record, to record it accurately, and to ensure that Terrence has had an opportunity to make clear what he means. That is, Anika and others make sure that Terrence has an opportunity to make his voice heard. Indeed, this was a common structure of interaction throughout this entire segment, and in fact of Subcommittee meetings more generally: one speaker was typically recognized at a time, that speaker held the floor, and others were expected to listen. Related to this point, interaction in the early part of this segment is structured in such a way that the interpretation of a theme's meaning is largely determined by speaker; that is, Terrence's theme is not open for discussion or for dispute, at least not "serious" dispute. He is, initially, placed in control of the interpretation of his words.[1]

However, when his words seem to move from an intellectual or academic explanation toward what might seem to be the rhetoric of revolution, insurrection, or faction, the group's attentive listening appears to move toward discomfort, demonstrated by shifting body positions and finally outbursts of jokes. These outbursts and jokes are friendly in tone. However, despite the good-natured style, the response nevertheless serves to recontextualize Terrence's contribution, neutralizing its potentially radical implications with respect to racial and class oppression, two of the key themes of the CCL. In fact, a reasonable case might be made that it is just this friendly and unified culture among the members that allows Julie to ironically take on the voice of a hostile oppressor: "Them's fightin' words, boy!" The comment points to several essential elements that affect what is going on at this meeting. First, by marking this comment as a clear joke, Julie aligns herself with the group in attendance and their shared focus on community interests. At the same time, her comment is a reminder that outside interests do exist and that the work being done at this meeting will ultimately have to be approved and funded by these interests, whose representatives are likely to see talk of decolonization and revolution as threatening. Her utterance orients toward and functions in the interest of these centering institutions—the stakeholders, district bureaucrats, and funders to whom she, perhaps more than any of the others, must answer (see Larson et al. this issue). There is a way in which her joke, along with others', reins in Terrence's speech, serving as a tacit reminder that there are limits to what can be voiced in this meeting.

This discussion of themes continued for several more minutes, after which participants take a break. They had just returned from the break, and Anika suggests that the "theme" talk be continued in a different way, now shifting to a focus on "challenges." In response, Julie makes a reference to the difficulties she has faced as the representative to the school district, the institutional entity that initiated the CCL and that still serves as its institutional base.

Segment 2
1   Anika: So let me just ask you this, the flip side of or another way to look at this question
             of themes? And um is- So what are some of the <u>chall</u>enges that you think we have
             faced along the wa:y, um in terms of this process. What are things
5   we're <u>learn</u>ing is is <u>chall</u>enging about this work?
     Jesús: [This work?=
     Anika: [What are some of the things [we're learning?

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         Julie:     [=Sustaining it.
         Jesús:     {(to Terrence: raising and lowering his glasses two times,
10                  then placing them on the table) [So many ((inaud))}
         Anika:     [Ok, so sus- [sustainability~ [(Can you say more what you mean by that?=
         Julie:     [I think- [Yes, sustainability
                    =Well I mean sustainability in the sense that um- it's
15                  almost like sustainability and patience. Coupled with patience. You know that
                    there's, um, there's a low tolerance fo:r things that take ti:me [or that re- the the aw-
                    (I'm gonna me see if I c-)=
         Anika:     [Time
20       Julie:     =The awareness and the understanding among people who aren't really engaged
                    in this process, about why it's taking so long, is not the:re. And it's also because
                    they don't have an appreciation a- for and an understanding of (.) w- of why it's
                    important to do this and and to open the
25                  dialogue and to continue the dialogue.
         Jesús:     (Can y-)
         Julie:     Jih get all that Dennis? (laughs)
         Jesús:     What was the ques[tion again?
                    [(laughter)
30       Dennis:    The awareness [(and understanding)
         Anika:     [(moving towards and pointing to Julie) Very well said. One more [time.}=
         Jesús:     [((is that what)) ((inaud))
         Julie:     =okay
35       Dennis:    [The awareness and ((understanding)) of people not directly engaged in the
                    pro:ce:ss=
         Jesús:     [((inaud))
         Julie:     =I think there's a limited awareness and therefore there's an impatience:=
40       Dennis:    =Yes:
         Julie:     of um fo:r the process which is predicated on an o- not just an opening of dialogue
                    but a continuation of dialogue,
         ?:         ((inaud))
         Julie:     which leads to a different way of working.
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Anika begins with two successive questions: "What are some of the challenges that you think we have faced along the way?" and "What are things that we're learning is challenging about this work?" It is worth noting that these questions are answerable in different ways. For example, it might be possible to respond by telling stories or giving personal, perhaps even emotional accounts that elaborate on specific events, people, or processes. It would also be possible to respond by listing items that classify specific event types. Subsequent talk suggests that the latter were the desired form of response.

We will focus in particular on Julie's representation of a "challenge" to the process. The challenge, as she comes to express it, concerns a central commitment of the CCL, that is, that residents be directly and centrally involved in all aspects of the process. In line 8, Julie offers the first response, "Sustaining it." In line 11, Anika immediately restates this, shifting to a nominalized form, "sustainability." This use of a nominalization suggests that Anika does not expect elaborated accounts, but list items—"things," as she puts it. She then requests in line 11 that Julie elaborate on "sustainability."

This resembles the earlier exchange about "themes" initiated by Terrence. But where Terrence's attempt at elaboration was curtailed, Julie's explanation of a "challenge" is allowed to be carried through. In her elaboration, Julie uses mostly nominalizations and abstract nouns until line 42. Only a few of the nouns in her talk—for example, "people" in line 20, and the anaphoric "they" in line 22—name actual people or objects, and even in these instances the precise identity of these "people" is so ambiguous as to be unrecoverable at this point in the talk. Other nouns function either as discourse markers (e.g., "*you*

know"), dummy pronouns ("*it*'s almost like sustainability and patience"), or a pronoun of address (the 2nd personal singular in "jih get all that, Dennis?").

As functional linguists note, the "grammatical metaphor" of nominalization (Halliday 1978) allows for activities, like "sustaining," "tolerating," and the like, and abstractions, like "process," and to be treated grammatically as things. Nominalization has served a variety of functions in the development of scientific, technological, and bureaucratic discourses (Halliday and Martin 1993; Hodge and Kress 1993). For our purposes it is most relevant that they background the agency behind actions and processes, thus directing attention toward what are then grammatically construed as depersonalized, distanced things. In other words, Julie's "challenge" points to a distanced institutional entity that holds sway over the local and immediate action in subtle ways. This is significant at two levels: on the macro level, outside the meeting space, it implies that despite the priority of maximizing resident participation, powerful bureaucratic stakeholders are still tacitly present in the decision making here, and these stakeholders are impatient for a "Plan"— that is, a textual document outlining a shared vision. At the microlevel, within the meeting space, Julie employs a form of talk consistent with bureaucratic power even as she indicates the challenge bureaucratic stakeholders pose.

Nominalizations allow complex relations among entities and processes to be treated grammatically as single entities (Hodge and Kress 1993). For example, the agents who "dialogue" or who "tolerate" need not be specified; nor must there be any specification of complex relations involved in the constitution of a "process." In addition, once nominalizations grammatically realize complex entities and processes as entities in their own right, they can function as participants in new constructions. Thus, "impatience" can be related to "process" in the nominal group, "impatience for the process." This is significant for our purposes in that, once Julie has elided the agency behind the processes and activities that she is constructing as challenges, she goes on to develop increasingly precise relationships among these terms, culminating in the causal and quasi-logical relationships ("therefore there's an impatience"; "leads to a different way of working") in lines 36–42.[2] Julie expresses a challenge, then, that refrains from being confrontational or destabilizing to any extant power structure. It is not unreasonable to suggest that her challenge is allowed full explication, then, because it not only refrains from directly challenging the powers on which the coalition depends for approval and funding but also because in its very discursive form, it speaks to—rather than against—such power. It speaks the language of power, rather than challenges it.

If this "safe" mode of speaking is an unstated norm within the meeting, and reflective of centering institutions of power in the political environment outside the meeting, what does this suggest about the priority of maximizing resident voice and initiating change at the grassroots level? What are the real possibilities for subverting or circumventing business as usual in such an environment?

Before making any broad claims, it is worth taking a close look at the ways in which two priorities influence the interaction at this meeting: the production of a text—a unified "vision" to go into a "Plan"—and the establishment of group cohesion. The first priority is fairly straightforward; the second, less so, as this group exemplifies the sort of paradox Chavis (2001) indicates.

Julie's talk is oriented primarily to the production of a text—specifically, the list of challenges that will be entered into the minutes and that will serve as a partial basis for writing, with the help of a hired professional, the first draft of the Community Plan. We've noted above that there is both an apparent preference for "list items" and that Julie's talk is heavily nominalized. These features index an orientation toward the production of a text—the text to be submitted to an audience of stakeholders—powerful centering institutions.

Julie makes two discursive moves that indicate an attention to a future audience. In both her self-correction, beginning in line 18, and her reformulation, in lines 37–44 of Dennis's restatement (lns. 30–36) of her turn, she indicates what seems to be an orientation toward an audience for whom precise relationships among items under discussion must be specified. Further orientation to text is indexed in line 27, when Julie jokingly says, "jih get all that Dennis?" Here, "get all that" serves as a reminder that, however spontaneous, her words are to be officially recorded in the minutes, or "group memory."

Demonstrating a sort of attention to meeting norms, Julie's laughter after line 27 suggests that she is aware that she has taken a longer than normal turn. "Jih get all that" demonstrates her capacity to joke at her own expense. Note here that Jesús, immediately afterward, jokes in line 28, asking "What was the question again?"

These two jokes are interesting in their orientation to slightly different norms. Both recognize Julie's long turn as a breach, but they do so in different ways. Julie treats her turn as making it impossible for the note taker to accurately record her words—a monologic orientation, in Bakhtin's terms—a breach of the requirement to be concise, clear, or unified. Jesús's joke, in contrast, is oriented toward the dialogic process of discussion. Jesús's having lost track of the question (jokingly or not) as a result of Julie's answer suggests that he takes the dialogic nature of talk to have been disrupted. This joke then echoes the ethos of the laughing responses to Terrence, a response that served to reinstitute in-group cohesion. Julie's joke maintains attention to textual production, the centering institution that will receive the text, and the overall priority of a unified shared vision. Jesús's joke might be read as a playfully stated reminder that the participants at this meeting represent various voices that do not necessarily speak according to the same logic or with orientation to the same concerns.

Julie later reframes her challenge, making use of a markedly different form of speech. Immediately following Segment 2, Julie continues her turn:

Segment 3

45	Julie:	So it's kinda- it's kinda like, "ok you did that community thing. No:w let's move on." You know and and- I-I-I- {((hits table with hand 5 times)) "Ok"} You know. "Give- give us the Plan, {((hits table)) we'll} get the Plan and we'll {((waves hand forward)) go}." And and {{(waves
50		hands in crossing motion) {(hi) jeet jeet} You- you know it's like "No no no~}} you- that's- that's not at all what this is." So.
	Jesús:	Ooh I li:ke that. ((inaud))
	Julie:	What, "no no no"?
55	Jesús:	No. That community-
	Anika:	So Jesús you had your hand up.
	Jesús:	Yeah. Se me olvido lo que iba a decir.
		[I forgot what I was going to say]
		(laughter)
60	Jesús:	I was so entrenched in what she was saying that *se me olvido to' lo que iba a decir*.
		[I forgot everything I was going to say]
	Norma:	"I forgot what I was going to say"

We will make two sets of claims regarding this interaction. The first is that Julie shifts registers from the deagentified form of the prior talk to an enacted dramatic conversation, and represents the challenge as involving two distinct and opposing positions: on one side are community outsiders who want to conduct business as usual; on the other side are community members and their supporters, represented by Julie herself, who defends the process against business as usual.

Here, Julie shifts registers to enact the challenge she developed in Segment 2 through a reported dialogue (lns. 45–51). Her enactment represents two opposing positions on

what "the process" should be. First, she enacts the talk and gestures of those people (referenced in lns. 20 and 22) who don't fully understand or appreciate the process. Waving her hands in the air, she says, "ok you did that community thing. No:w let's move on" (lns. 45–46). Dramatizing this hurried, dismissive stance, Julie discloses something about the identity of these "people." That is, "that community thing" is unlikely to be uttered by a resident; it would not represent a particularly plausible point of view from within the community. As such, it becomes clear that these people are not community members, but outsiders of some kind. At the same time, it constructs these outsiders as having a stake in the Plan, and in fact as impatient to receive it, as suggested by Julie's "give us the Plan," accompanied by repeatedly hitting the table in lines 47–49. Thus, Julie here is enacting the voice of recipients of the textual "deliverable" of the process—the Plan—making them recognizable as funders, service providers, or political stakeholders.

Within the enactment, Julie is positioned by these outsiders as part of an opposed group through the use of a WE:YOU pronominal opposition (O'Connor 2001, 2003; Wortham 1994, 2006). The outsiders' voice refers to themselves in the first person plural and to Julie in the second person.[3] For example, they refer to Julie as "you" and themselves as "us" in "you did that community thing. No:w let's move on," and oppose an implicit "you" to "we/us" in the imperative "give us the Plan {(hits table) we'll} get the Plan and we'll {(waves hand forward) go}."[4]

In line 50, Julie enacts her own response to these outsiders, presenting an alternative version of what the process is or should be. Here, she waves her hand horizontally, with "jeet jeet" and the emphatic, "no, no, no," positioning herself in opposition to these outsiders. In doing so, she portrays herself as at once both in conversation with them but also in a defensive and protective position within these conversations. What is she protecting and defending? The very "community thing," that, according to their version of the process, is now finished, dismissible in favor of quick action. Julie's "no, no, no . . . that's not at all what this is" (ln. 51) positions her as a defender of a version of the process in which the process is intrinsically connected to community and to understanding, and that is capable of engendering sustained dialogue as action proceeds—in other words, not business as usual.

Julie's comments may be a suggestion that her position as a school district representative is always in tension with her primary alliance with the interest of the community as she defines it. She enters into meeting discourse with the dual role of articulating the outside interests of funders and of defending the CCL process against these interests insofar as they preclude new ways of working.

Whereas Julie's language in segment 1 relies heavily on deagentified and disembodied processes, in segment 2 she not only includes agents but also incorporates them, speaking for them and gesturing with her own body to emphasize important points. This is a significantly heightened affective stance (Ochs 1996), and holds at least the potential of connecting her to others at the present meeting in ways that her previous bureaucratic speech could not.

And indeed, Jesús responds using affectively charged language of his own, when he says in line 52, "Ooh I li:ke that." It is impossible to be sure whether Jesús is being serious or ironic with this utterance, but with regard to his role as representative of specific resident interests, it may not matter one way or the other. If he is being ironic, he expresses this sarcasm in an invested, engaged way. If he is not being ironic, then he is indexing affinity with what Julie has just said (as is suggested by his response, "No. That community-" [ln. 55]) or by her manner of delivery—affective, nonbureaucratic, perhaps "really engaged." If, as suggested above, Jesús's earlier interjection-objection was because of Julie's breach of the dialogicality of the conversation, this later interaction may suggest that Jesús is responding positively to

a shift toward dialogicality, to Julie's apparently increased engagement, as opposed to an adherence to meeting protocol or official discourse.

Briefly, then, Julie reverses her earlier bureaucratic, distanced, disembodied stance and initiates a new trajectory toward enactment, demonstrating through gesture and conversational talk the struggle she engages in to defend the community or process. It should be noted, further, that the move itself mirrors to some degree the very process she discusses. That is, in her framework, those who are "not directly involved" are distanced from and do not understand the process. Therefore they cannot understand "community." Through her enactment, Julie moves away from textually oriented speech and toward dependence on sound and gesture—a heightened affective stance—and in so doing, establishes what seems to be a stronger connection with the group. Her enactment then not only serves to tell a story but also serves as a means of reinforcing her position as one of the group (albeit a member of the group in a singular position between the community and powerful outsiders), dedicated to the community and to the process as she understands them. In this second segment, then, her role as bureaucrat is backgrounded as she highlights her role as defender of the community, doing so in affective, gestural, "engaged" language.

It is worth considering the ways in which Julie, then, effectually represents the sort of dual priorities or paradoxes that fuel coalition work, in Chavis's (2001) terms: attention to the diversity of voices in a grassroots coalition, as well as recognition that a unified vision is expected.

Following this, Anika redirects the attention of the group back to the agenda of identifying challenges. She "calls on" Jesús, reminding him that he was slated for a turn (ln. 56). Her reminder interrupts the direct communication between Jesús and Julie, and brings Jesús back into the official meeting discourse of turn taking and list making.

Seemingly taken by surprise at Anika's request, Jesús responds in Spanish (ln. 57). This line bears traces of his earlier "What was the question?" but differs in significant ways. "Se me olvidó lo que iba a decir" [I forgot what I was going to say] is like the previous utterance in that it responds to Julie's speech turn, marking it as unusual or a breach.

It is important to note that, because not all meeting participants understand Spanish, employing Spanish marks an active (although not necessarily intentional) move to orient to a limited segment of his listeners.[5] Hence, while "community" has just been established as a priority, and although "community" can be reasonably interpreted to reference shared, friendly interaction (based on the interpretation above), Jesús elects at this point to shift to Spanish to articulate, first, that he forgot what he was going to say, and second, that he forgot everything that he was going to say. In so doing, he indexes an available opposition within the group—an opposition that has not been interactionally salient to this point. This is an opposition based on language and culture that challenges what "community" presumably means to everyone in attendance. In this way, his comment functions the same way as did Terrence's more disruptive explanations of "decolonization." It destabilizes for a moment the unity and composure of the group, highlighting instead the group's diverse and variously interested makeup.

After the segment above, Anika calls on others to speak, and several participants list challenges to the process. About three minutes later, Anika again calls on Jesús:

Segment 4
1   Anika: {((extends arm)) Jesús.}
     Jesús: What was the question again?
               ((laughter))
     Anika: The <u>challenges</u>
5   Jesús: No no I- one of the challenges {((laughter)) that I see-} ((laughs)) I'm just trying to make people happy.
     Julie: ((laughs)) Now you remember him, right?

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             ((laughter))
      ?:     ((inaud))
10    Jesús:  Don't you gu:ys ever ever think (.) that this has been completely (.) completely (.)
             taken by the whole community.
      Julie:  Oh no no no.
      ?:     Oo:h
15    Jesús:  So (.) we gotta understand that it's not completely com-
      Hel:    Embraced
      ?:     (embraced)
      Jesús:  ah eh you know (.) embraced by the whole community (.) [you know what [I'm
             saying
20    Anika:  [right
      Julie:  [so then community skepticism?
      Jesús:  er (.) and and yeah (.) not everybody in the community
      Terr:   believes
      Jesús:  or understands what the hell is goin on
25    Anika:  ok good
      Jesús:  so that's a big-
      Julie:  Yep
      Jesús:  that's a big challenge, cause unless you do that, forget it, we could- we could work
             for (.) years ((Terrence places
30           hand on Jesús's shoulder)) and if [the people don't understand then they're not
             gonna get involved, and (.) do what-.
      Anika:  [ok
      Terr:   {((to Jesús) we're gonna send you out with a posterboard.}
35    Anika:  alright, so {((sweeps arm) Alicia, David, Julie, and then back to Helena.}
             ((laughter, inaud talking))
      Jesús:  {((to Terrence)) No that's what you gonna do.}
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Jesús begins to state a challenge to the process in line 5, when he says, "one of the challenges that I see-" before stopping to respond to laughter following his previous utterance in line 2. In line 10, he restarts, shifting grammatically from the declarative of line 5 to an imperative construction: "Don't you gu:ys ever ever think (.) that this has been completely (.) completely (.) taken by the whole community." The exact identity of the part of the community that has not embraced the process is not made explicit here. But it is plausible that he is referring to Latina/o community residents. His formulation "don't ever think" suggests that other meeting participants might be under the impression that the process has been "taken" by the whole community. And Jesús, as the only resident representative of the Latina/o community—and a new representative at that—is uniquely positioned to know otherwise through his regular contact with this part of the community.

Following a response by Julie, Jesús continues in line 15: "So (.) we gotta understand that it's not completely com-." At this point he is interrupted by Helena in line 16, who proposes a word, "embraced." Jesús hesitates, and then completes his sentence from the point of interruption, this time using Helena's word: "ah eh you know (.) embraced by the whole community." The challenge, as Jesús represents it here, seems to be that while some of the community may have embraced the process, there remains at least a part of the community that has not.

In line 21, Julie revoices Jesús's challenge, returning to the bureaucratic, text-focused register of Segment 2 with the nominal phrase "community skepticism." This construction effectively reconstructs Jesús's challenge. First, mirroring her talk in Segment 2, Julie's construction strips away any overt representation of human agency, producing ambiguity regarding the nature of the community and the source of the skepticism. Second, Julie's use of an unmodified "community" has removed the emphasis on partiality and incompleteness that so strongly characterized Jesús's formulation. Additionally, the term *skepticism* involves an inference from Jesús's terms *taken by* and *embraced by.* That is, while it might be the case that part of the community was skeptical and therefore didn't embrace

the process, this has not been stated explicitly by Jesús. In any case, what is clear is that Julie neither captures Jesús's focus on partial acceptance, nor does she attempt to clarify the source of or reasons for this lack of complete acceptance.

We noted above that, unlike Julie's enactment in Segment 3 of a reported drama, the competing representations of challenges to the process in Segment 4 are enacted among the participants in the present meeting. Jesús's formulation of the challenge is striking in this regard. He uses a grammatical imperative in line 10, "Don't you gu:ys e̲ver ever think (.) that this has been completely (.) completely (.) ta̲ken by the whole community," accompanied by an emphatic tone of voice with hands clasped tightly together and repeatedly pointing with his index fingers toward the front of the room. The challenge he raises about the process, then, itself has the illocutionary force within the interaction of a challenge to the participants in the meeting. Speaking from his position as the sole resident representative to the Subcommittee of the Latina/o community, he is challenging the present group to recognize the alienated position of this part of the community.

Like Julie's enactment in Segment 3, Jesús's enacted challenge marks a dramatic shift from the "listing" of challenges that has been the primary presupposed genre for talk to this point. Jesús's challenge serves to mark divisions and differences within the group, differences that call into question the assumption that the "community" is a unified whole with shared interests. The interactions that follow suggest that his challenge results from his position as a representative of the Latina/o community. When Jesús begins to repeat his earlier "completely completely," Helena, a Latina, interjects at the point that Jesús had earlier paused, apparently searching for a word before saying "taken"; Helena here offers the term *embraced.* Gesturing his right hand toward her, he takes up the word, incorporating it into his next utterance (lns. 18–19).

Whereas earlier, Jesús responded positively to Julie's mention of community, here, Jesús suggests an alternative reading of the term, a contrary reading in which community is divided or variously invested. Read alongside the alignments suggested above, his challenge appears to express the interests of the Latina/o, Spanish-speaking members of the group, who participate in the process with different stakes than do their African American and white counterparts.

The fracture initiated by Jesús's enactment is furthered as Julie responds to his challenge. After assuring him that they (reinforcing the us–them dichotomy his challenge imposes) do not think ("no, no, no" [ln. 12]) that the whole community has "taken up" the initiative, Julie reframes his challenge as "community skepticism" (ln. 20). In doing so, she returns to the textual-oriented speech of list making, transforming Jesús's challenge into language fitting the standards of the finished document for which the group is brainstorming. That is, while "community skepticism" can be inserted into a finished document, Jesús's emphatic, embodied admonishment cannot. But perhaps even more important for our analysis is the way in which this reframing removes the agency from his statement (erases the marginalized segment of the community and silences voices representing that segment) and erases his primary point: that the community is divided, and divided along ethnic and linguistic lines.

This move is not only significant insofar as it reinscribes a textual orientation but also serves to erase the very differences and distinctions that Jesús's challenge posed. Rewriting Jesús's challenge into "community skepticism" reinscribes a bureaucratic monologicality into the discourse, insofar as it collapses the difference and divisiveness that informs his utterance. This monologicality is emphasized in Terrence's joking suggestion that they send Jesús "out with a posterboard." The image of Jesús carrying a posterboard around the community seems to index monological discourse in an extreme form—posterboard advertising—an example of discourse reduced to the distanced delivery of information, in small, readily digestible fragments. Here, as with the response to Terrence's "decoloniza-

tion" theme, the joking is good-natured, and indeed Jesús participates in it, saying to Terrence, "No that's what you gonna do." Even so, the joking takes place at just the point at which a resident participant points out a central tension in the process. Rather than leading to further elaboration or discussion of the tension, joking defuses the challenge, reestablishing group unity and harmony as participants move on to listing other items for the Vision Statement and Community Plan.

Conclusion

We undertook this analysis to examine the microdynamics of a process that was explicitly committed to undoing an approach to community change that, in the perspective of all participants, had done little good for the community and in fact had done much harm. These efforts to undo "business as usual" had resulted in serious attempts to be not only inclusive of residents in the planning and implementation of the CCL intervention but also in fact give them majority voice in major decisions. It was this effort that led to the addition to the CCL Subcommittee of Jesús and Terrence at this point in the process. Although this was of course intended to ensure representation of and voice for residents, we have shown how, in the microdynamics of interaction, this aim was less than fully realized, and, in fact, the failure to fully "hear" the voices of Jesús and Terrence effectively accomplished, at least in some respects, the continuation of business as usual.

Our analysis suggests ways of understanding how these and other failures of the CCL—which are amply documented in the articles in this issue—were accomplished by participants in and through the interactional contextualizing work that they did. We believe that it would be overly simplistic to hold individuals in the process accountable for whatever loss of voice Jesús and Terrence experienced or were subjected to; indeed, we have little question that all participants in this meeting were personally invested in the official aims of the CCL of ensuring resident representation and leadership in the process. Rather, we account for loss of voice in terms of the dynamics of processes of contextualization, processes that are often tacit and effectively invisible to participants as they act. Specifically, we suggest that orientation to the centering practices of particular institutions—in this case, bureaucratic institutions that are tied up with obtaining and providing funding—resulted in the recontextualization of contributions that might threaten the norms and values that are privileged by those centering institutions. As efforts to promote community voice become more prevalent in education reform efforts, detailed analyses of how tensions in community process are realized and resolved seem crucial for showing how power and privilege operate, often tacitly. Failure to take on such analytic work seems likely to destine such efforts to continue to do business as usual.

Notes

1. In relation to these points, it is worth noting that Terrence, in line 3, attempted to complete Helena's theme—"Unwavering commitment to"—offering "urban renewal" as a possible completion. Helena did not accept Terrence's completion, offering her own, "seeing this through." At this point, Anika repeated Helena's entire theme, "Unwavering commitment to seeing this through," and disregarded Terrence's talk. Here, in recognizing Helena's, and only Helena's, contribution, Anika allows Helena's voice to be heard.

2. Note that a similar effect is accomplished through the recurrent use of infinitive forms. For example, the infinitives in lines 21–22 ("<u>why</u> it's important to do this and and to open the dialogue and to continue the dialogue") grammatically elide the agents of "to open" and "to continue". The agents of the two actions (opening the dialogue, continuing the dialogue) are backgrounded, focusing our attention linguistically on the act of opening or continuing, without specifying just who is responsible for or engaged in that act. This is important in that the agents are possibly but not necessarily the same for each action.

3. Whether this is second person singular or plural can't be determined from this utterance or its uptake in subsequent talk.

4. Note that while the "us" in "give us the plan" is clearly an exclusive 1st person plural, opposing "us" to Julie's "you," the subsequent 1st person plural pronouns become progressively less determinate. For example, the "we" in "and we'll go" could quite plausibly be inclusive of Julie, and a possible index of her liminal position between the community and the outsiders involved in different ways in the process.

5. Code switching to Spanish in the course of such full group discussions was rare in Subcommittee meetings.

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Appendix: Transcription Conventions

Symbol	Significance
.	Falling pitch
?	Rising pitch
,	Slight rise in pitch, indicating "more to come"
~	Falling-rising pitch
-	Truncation
_____	Greater than expected stress (e.g., Get it over as <u>soon</u> as possible)
> <	Accelerated speech (e.g., so >it'll be< five or six locations)
lo, hi	Shift to lower or higher pitch
(.)	Pauses of less than 0.5 second
(..)	Pauses of greater than 0.5 second (number of dots indicates relative length of pause)
=	Latching of speakers' utterances
[	Onset of segments of overlapping speech
:	Lengthened segments (e.g., I don't kno::w)
{(( ))}	Phenomena that overlay the lexical stretch (e.g., {((accent)) text}
(( ))	Non-lexical phenomena, vocal and nonvocal, that interrupt the lexical stretch (e.g., text ((laughter)) text)
((inaud))	Unintelligible speech
((did))	A good guess at an unclear word