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Discussion Paper

1 # Medial Shaping from the Outset. On the Mediality of the
2 Second Presidential Debate, 2016

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4 We argue that all communication is medial in the sense that
5 every human sign-based interaction is shaped by medial
6 aspects from the outset, and we propose a dynamic, semiotic
7 concept of media that focuses on the process-related aspect
8 of mediality. Media are social procedures of sign processing.
9 We criticise the reification of media by arguing that all media
10 are technical media, but the technical aspect cannot be
11 reduced to materiality. Our dynamic concept takes into
12 account the narrow link between "sign" and "medium" in
13 social interaction and is therefore relevant as a theoretical
14 and methodological basis of multimodal interaction analyses.

15 We test the applicability of the proposed definition using as
16 an example the second presidential debate between Hillary
17 Clinton and Donald Trump in 2016, which shows how the
18 spatial arrangement and camerawork create meaning and
19 how the protagonists both use the affordances of this special
20 mediality and have their behavior shaped by it. The analysis
21 also demonstrates that, even in this staged situation, face-to-
22 face communication must already be regarded as an
23 inescapable medium of human communication and has a
24 mediality from the outset.

1. Theoretical Discussion

1.1 The Concept of *Media* in Everyday Language and Science

The word *medium* has many different usages in everyday language. Three of the most interesting and relevant are the following:

a) a thing or pure matter (the material aspect), as either a machine, an apparatus, a device or hardware (e.g. computer, smartphone, television, typewriter), on the one hand, or a "carrier medium" (e.g. sound waves, paper, blackboard, overhead transparency), on the other;
b) an institution (the institutional aspect): "So you want to work in the media";[1]
c) a potential or process in which something, especially meaning, is constituted or generated (the process aspect): He "knew how to express himself in the medium of paint".[2]

These three aspects correspond to three traditional meanings of the word *medium* in the history of Western thought (cf. Margreiter 2003: 152; Lagaay/Lauer 2004: 9f.; Münker/Roesler 2008; Münker 2008):

a) the medium as a means to an end or a tool;
b) the medium as the middle or "the in-between": the place of encounter that brings people and different things together (cf. Margreiter 2003: 152; Roesler 2008: 322f.);
c) The medium as (a necessary condition of) mediation.

Recent media theories and research on mediality thematize and discuss all three aspects. They have been strongly influenced by Marshall McLuhan (1964), who defines *media* as extensions and substitutes of the human body and sensory performance. This definition is extremely broad: for example,

1 https://www.theguardian.com/money/2006/jun/17/careers.graduates3 (last access: 16 June 2019).

2 http://trans-mississippi.unl.edu/texts/view/transmiss.news.odb.18980913.html (last access: 16 June 2019).

eyeglasses, the microscope and the camera extend or replace the eye; clothing expands our skin; a telephone expands our speech organs, and so on. This understanding of media finds its origins in the philosophy of technology of Ernst Kapp and Arnold Gehlen. According to Kapp and Gehlen, *technique* consists of objectified, outsourced body functions, and all technical artefacts are projections of our organs (cf. Margreiter 2003: 153).

Another crucial point in McLuhan's theory is that the mediality of a medium is normally not perceived: we use the medium, talk about it ideologically, but what we do not see or recognize is its mediality, i.e. the ways it shapes the choice of signs and how we use them, and therefore its materiality and processuality (cf. Margreiter 2003: 153). Media have a tendency to make themselves invisible (cf. Krämer 1998). This tendency shapes the mediation process: media do not merely transport something, but are instead part of the way in which sense is produced and constituted. Precisely because they have a tendency to become invisible, they imperceptibly leave their traces on the respective message (cf. Krämer 1998; Jäger 2007, 2012; Linz 2016; Schneider 2006, 2008; Stetter 2005). Krämer's trace theory can be understood as a moderate reading of McLuhan's "The medium is the message". But while McLuhan holds the deterministic view that "cool" media have a different effect than "hot" ones, other media theorists today have pragmatized his theory (cf. Sandbothe 2001; Bolter/Grusin 2002): whether a medium is cool or hot depends not only on its mediality, but also on how we use it. Accordingly, Jay David Bolter and Robert Grusin define a medium as "[t]he formal, social, and material *network of practices* that generates a logic by which additional instances are repeated or remediated, such as photography, film or television" (Bolter/Grusin 2002: 273, italics added).

Furthermore, recent media theories and research on mediality consider not only the processual and material aspects of media, but also the institutional aspect. New institutionalism conceptualizes not only media, especially mass media, but also "social media" like Facebook and Twitter as institutions in order to compare and relate them to other institutions like family, church, school and government: "[...] it can be argued that the mass media have emerged as a

social institution, fulfilling many of the functions that are no longer being served by traditional social institutions such as the family, church, and school" (Silverblatt 2004: 39). Shoemaker and Reese describe the interweaving of mass media and other social institutions in modern societies, especially the US, on the basis of this view: "Indeed, we assume media cannot be understood except in relation to other fields" (Shoemaker/Reese 2014: 99; cf. Cook 1998, 2006; Sparrow 1999' Schudson 2003, 2018).

According to Shoemaker and Reese, this entanglement was overlooked for a long time because journalism was perceived as an independent, objective authority. The traditional norm of journalistic independence promoted the view of a separation between journalism and social institutions (Shoemaker/Reese 2014: 98). According to new institutionalism, however, they cannot be separated at all: mass media have never represented reality "objectively", but are themselves "political actors" (Shoemaker/Reese 2014: 100; Cook 1998; Sparrow 1999).

According to Shoemaker and Reese (2014: 100), this view of media as "an institutional actor allows us to take it seriously in relation to other key political institutions". Considering mass (as well as social) media as social institutions makes it possible to compare them with other key institutions. Following Bourdieu's field theory, the two authors stress that economic and cultural capital interact in the various "fields of action" with which mass media and other institutions are intertwined: "Modern societies, through the interplay of economic and cultural capital as forms of power, develop specialized spheres of action, or fields, which have their own relative autonomy and power dynamics among them" (Shoemaker/Reese 2014: 101). In journalism, media institutions can be culturally or economically rich, and sometimes both (Shoemaker/Reese 2014: 102). The same is true of various television channels and political talk show and discussion formats that combine economic and symbolic capital in different ways.

According to Luginbühl (2019: 128), political television discussions are subject to a threefold logic. First, they function as a fourth estate (cf. Hanitzsch 2007: 373f.), a potential political corrective. Second, they enable the filmed protagonists to present themselves in as positive and

141 successful a light as possible. And finally, they must entertain
142 the audience. In this threefold way, the medium of television
143 is thus a political actor: it presents oral interactions that are
144 shaped from the outset by the institution of television and the
145 media format of television discussion. Without the medium of
146 television, these interactions would never take place in this
147 way, as a result of which the medium not merely transmits
148 the content, but becomes an actor in its own right. As we
149 show below in our analysis of the 2016 US presidential
150 debate, the medium of television is a political institution; it
151 shapes not only the spatial arrangements and the
152 camerawork, but also the conversation itself, including
153 aspects like turn-taking, topic treatment and presentation of
154 self and others.
155 The view that media are institutions fits with the view of
156 language as a medium, because language was also conceived
157 of as an institution early on by some of the most influential
158 linguistic theorists. For both Whitney and Saussure, the
159 language system – for Saussure, *la langue* – is a social
160 institution. This view implies that there is no strict conceptual
161 separation between mass media and semiotic media such as
162 languages, because both are social institutions. For Saussure,
163 there is a dialectical interplay of *langue* and *parole* (language
164 use) at both the social and individual levels: the language
165 system can only develop by being used socially by
166 individuals, and at the same time all language users
167 participate in the social institution "langue". However, langue
168 can only exist in a more or less stable way if the linguistic
169 schemata are internalized in individuals' language "depots"
170 (see Saussure 1967: 383f. Jäger 2010: 188f.). The langue is "a
171 kind of average" ("une sorte de moyenne"; Saussure 1972: 29)
172 between speaking individuals.
173 According to Ryfe (2006: 137), "[i]nstitutions mediate the
174 impact of macro-level forces on micro-level action". They
175 are a necessary condition for social systems and
176 communication. Mass media as social institutions and as a
177 "networked public sphere" (Shoemaker/Reese 2014: 98) can
178 be used to overcome spatial distances. Similarly, the
179 standardization of languages goes hand in hand with the
180 possibility of inter-regional communication. Another
181 similarity between languages and other social institutions is
182 that they are all based on social conventions, rules and habits,

and thus possess an inherent normativity (cf. Silverblatt 2004: 37f.; Austin 1975: 12–46). Just as a speech act is based on conventionalized felicity conditions (cf. Austin 1975: 14–15), there are also conventionalized patterns of action and customs in other social institutions (e.g. one should get to school on time, parents are responsible for their minor children and the government can enact laws to be obeyed).

1.2 A Plea for a Process-related Understanding of Media

As the previous considerations have already shown, in both everyday language and scientific discourses the concept of *media* includes material, processual and institutional aspects. Nevertheless, there has always been a tendency to reify media and reduce them to their material aspect. In some media theories, the term *medium* is still used to refer to only the matter used to "transport" meanings, information or signals from a sender to a receiver. Especially in German media discourse, but also internationally, this technical conception of *media* is still dominant in linguistics (cf. Marx/Weidacher 2014: 54; Schmitz 2015: 8) and some media studies works (e.g. Hartley's widely read introduction to *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies* (2020: 200): "Media of communication are therefore any means by which messages may be transmitted"). Leeuwis (2004: 118) focuses on media as apparatuses combining communication channels that exist "for the 'transportation' of visual, auditive, tactile and olfactory signals"; in his view, communication media are "composite devices which incorporate several channels at once". On the one hand, this is a technical concept in the narrower sense; on the other hand, Leeuwis (2004: 118), along with Schmitz and Marx/Weidacher, emphasizes the idea of *potentiality* when he discusses media as incorporations of channels that "allow for" communicative applications.

In our opinion, the technical aspect of media can be integrated more adequately if a broader concept of *technology* is used that does not reduce the term to hardware, but instead includes the meaning of the word *technique*. As Winkler (2008: 91) points out, this broader concept has its origin in Greek philosophy, where *téchne* referred to certain practical skills, for instance the skill of painting or making music. In ancient rhetoric, elocution skills were also

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223 understood as *téchne*, something between a pure instrumental
224 technology and an esthetic art (Gutenberg 2001: 146). This
225 skill-related aspect is clear in English, as examples in
226 dictionaries show ("I used a special *technique* to make the
227 bread", Merriam-Webster online, emphasis in original).
228 If we employ a definition of *media* that takes into account
229 both the material and the procedural aspects of
230 technology/technique, we can say with Winkler (2008: 91)
231 that *all* media are technical. We understand *media as socially*
232 *constituted procedures of sign processing* (Schneider 2008,
233 2017). This definition first implies that media always have to
234 do with communication and the mediation of signs (cf. Stetter
235 2005; Margreiter 2003: 154). Thus, this definition is narrower
236 than McLuhan's, who understands even a street, a wheel,
237 glasses and a microscope as media, but broader than the
238 technical definition, which only focuses on hardware,
239 apparatuses and sign transmission. A basic assumption of our
240 definition, then, is that face-to-face communication is the
241 first phylo- and ontogenetic procedure of sign processing and
242 thus the basic communication medium among human beings.
243 A specific feature of this definition is the conceptual
244 proximity of *sign system* and *medium* – the two terms
245 describe one and the same multi-faceted phenomenon from
246 different perspectives (cf. Margreiter 2003: 155). If we
247 consider sign systems from the perspective of their mediality,
248 i.e. their materiality *and* processuality, then we look at them
249 as media or medial procedures (Schneider 2008, 2017,
250 following Margreiter 2001: 4). The specific way in which a
251 given medium processes signs defines its *mediality* (Schneider
252 2017; cf. Münker 2013: 247). *Processing* here means not only
253 mediation, but also constitution. The sign with its potential
254 for meaning and its material qualities cannot be separated
255 from its medial processing.
256 This process-related view of mediality makes it clear that
257 media are not simply carrier matter. The classic "Socratic"
258 question "What is a medium?" promotes the reification of
259 media and leads to categorization problems that cannot be
260 solved convincingly. Our action- and process-oriented view
261 leads to different questions. For example, what structural
262 conditions are specific to the medial procedure of face-to-
263 face communication? What effects does mediality, i.e. the
264 characteristics of a given medial process, have on

communication? Seen in this light, "medium" is a typical "zoom concept" (Hermanns 2012: 269), in which the "scopus" can be set differently, the granularity can differ depending on the particular research interest. If the medium "spoken language" is to be compared with the medium "written language", the scopus is relatively wide and coarse; a comparison between face-to-face and telephone communication is narrower, and a comparison between landline telephony and mobile telephony is narrower still. The medial process (= medium) is characterized by its mediality, i.e. by its medial properties or structural communication conditions. It opens up specific latitudes that communicators can use. Thus we always have a certain freedom of action under the specific media conditions. At the same time, however, the media infrastructure shapes what we can do: it is always and inevitably part of meaning production. It is this relationship between the possibilities and limitations given by a media infrastructure, on the one hand, and the way people use this scope for their communicative purposes, on the other, that is addressed by the concept of *media affordances* (Zillien 2008; Hutchby 2014).

McLuhan denies such freedom of action and takes a deterministic view: "McLuhan's own theory is not interested in exploring what we do with media – it is interested in describing what media do with us. And what media do is to shape, according to their technical properties, the people who use them *as well* as the content they transport" (Münker 2013: 247). In Münker's view, McLuhan's – and Kittler's – "media-technological determinism simply misreads the relationship between the technology and the use of media by interpreting the necessary condition of media technology for any media usage as a sufficient condition" (Münker 2013: 250). Even mediality as a whole is not a sufficient, but only a necessary condition of media usage. The crucial point is this: for scientific analysis, a distinction must be made between (a) mediality, i.e. the possibilities of the medium, (b) the sign system(s)/modes employed, (c) the communicative practices (language games in a Wittgensteinian sense) and (d) the skills of the players (see the diagram in Schneider 2017: 45). The mediality of telephoning, for example, consists in simultaneous communication between spatially absent

persons who use the oral signs of a particular language; in this medium, numerous culturally grown language games can be played (e.g. private telephoning with friends, telephone negotiations, making appointments). A further question is how skillfully individuals master these medially shaped practices, how well they can negotiate on the telephone.

Contrary to the deterministic view, then, we argue that there is a strong interdependence between mediality and media use. On the one hand, media contour the use of signs; on the other, individual and social use changes the media.

1.3 Medium and Communication Form

Recent media theories based on a narrow conception of technology do not locate the procedural aspect in the medium, but instead “outsource”: they separate the concept of *communication form* from that of *medium*. The form of communication concerns the structural conditions of communication provided by the medium. The question, however, is whether such a conceptual separation between medium and communication form still makes sense if a medium is understood as a procedure of sign processing. In our opinion, the answer is no. It is much more important to determine how to draw the line between medial procedures and culturally grown, conventional language games (communicative, cultural practices or genres).

Based on a very similar systematic question, Brock/Schildhauer (2017: 15f.) present the currently most sophisticated concept of *communication forms*: they try to separate the mediality of communication from conventional practices/genres while maintaining a distinction between *medium* and *communication form*: “Where does medium end and communication form start, and where does genre take over?” (Brock/Schildhauer 2017: 18).

When we ask about the real medial aspects (= the mediality) of communication, our task is to distinguish mediation/processuality/materiality from content/genre/cultural practices. But is *communication form* then a suitable term? Due to the semantic proximity between *communication form*, *communicative practice* and *genre* in everyday language, the danger of confusion is especially high, as can be seen in Holly (2011: 155), who defines

347 communication forms as “medially conditioned cultural
348 practices” (translated by Brock/Schildhauer 2017: 21).
349 In order to further develop the model, Brock and
350 Schildhauer proceed from Schildhauer’s definition of
351 communication forms:

> 352 Here, I conceptualize *communication form* […] as a
> 353 technical constellation which gives rise to *communicative*
> 354 *potentials*. *Potentials* include the semiotic systems available
> 355 for message production, the possible number of participants
> 356 and the extent to which distance in space and time can be
> 357 bridged. The potentials can be used by several genres to a
> 358 varying extent (Schildhauer 2016: 30–31, as quoted in
> 359 Brock/Schildhauer 2017: 23)

360 According to Brock and Schildhauer, the communication
361 form is a “technical constellation” that *includes* the medium;
362 they opt to integrate the medium into the *communication*
363 *form* concept (cf. Brock/Schildhauer 2017: 33). For example,
364 the human articulatory apparatus is understood as a biological
365 medium that is part of the communication form “public
366 speech” (cf. Brock/Schildhauer 2017: 36). This analysis can
367 also be applied to face-to-face communication and other
368 medial procedures based on orality.
369 By integrating the medium into the communication form,
370 Brock and Schildhauer’s model overcomes the separation of
371 the two concepts. According to Brock and Schildhauer (2017:
372 35), this overcoming is necessary because “the medium
373 imprints itself on the actual message”. Thus, the two authors,
374 like Krämer (1998) and McLuhan/Fiore ([1967] 2001), “focus
375 on how the media co-create rather than merely transmit
376 meaning” (Brock/Schildhauer 2017: 35; cf. Luginbühl 2015;
377 Schneider 2017). As pointed out in Section 1.1 above, media
378 always tend to make themselves invisible when shaping the
379 “message” and can therefore develop their impact all the
380 more subtly and powerfully (cf. Krämer 1998).
381 In this respect, there are many similarities between Brock
382 and Schildhauer’s conception and our own, but also
383 important differences. First, in their definition of
384 *communication form* they include “the technical medium as
385 one of its most basic components” (Brock/Schildhauer 2017:
386 28). Second, and much more important, why could it not be
387 the other way around? Why can we not say that the

388 communication form is part of the medium? Historically, the
389 expression *medium* has always referred to mediation,
390 materiality and potentiality: it is a socially constituted
391 procedure of sign processing. As Christian Stetter (2005: 91)
392 puts it, a medium is a symbolizing procedure operating over a
393 substrate or conglomerate of apparatuses. Viewed from the
394 other side, one could also say that a medium is an apparatus
395 set in motion, "so that through this operation something is
396 produced, namely a representation of a certain form" (Stetter
397 2005: 74, our translation). From this perspective, it becomes
398 possible to dissolve the reifying definition of *media* and at the
399 same time always include in it the material basis of mediality:
400 following Stetter, a procedure of sign processing over or in a
401 material substance or apparatus is the same as a sign-
402 processing apparatus set in motion. If one adopts this way of
403 seeing, then even a computer can be regarded as a medium
404 without necessarily reifying it. For only a computer that is
405 switched on *functions* as a medium (cf. Schneider 2017: 37). In
406 reference to social media, Münker (2013: 252) argues "that
407 some media exist only due to their use". We reformulate this
408 thesis: *all* media exist only due to their use.

409 1.4 All Media are "Technical": The Inescapability of Sign Use

410 As we have shown above, face-to-face communication and
411 public speech can also be regarded as media or medial
412 procedures with a certain mediality. This view overcomes the
413 erroneous traditional notion of medialess communication,
414 which separates things that belong together. In our opinion,
415 there is no such thing as non-medial communication.
416 Some theorists refer to interpersonal communication
417 (especially face-to-face communication) when referring to
418 synchronic exchange between communicating persons. If
419 these persons interact at the same time and in the same place,
420 we have a case of face-to-face communication. For our
421 discussion, it is important that face-to-face communication is
422 usually not considered a medium. Leeuwis (2004: 196), for
423 instance, calls face-to-face communication "non-mediated".
424 When referring to "interpersonal 'media'", therefore, he
425 places the word *media* in quotation marks. However, studies
426 in conversation analysis discuss the "mediality" of face-to-
427 face communication, even though they do not explicitly refer

to oral language as a medium (cf. Auer 2009; Becker-Mrotzek 2009; Imo/Lanwer 2019).

But, as we have seen, the concept *media* includes all the structural conditions of communication. In mass-media communication, for example, there is no separation between "interpersonal communication" and technically mediated communication in the medial procedure. In television discussions, for example, the medial procedure of oral interaction is technically and medially shaped from the outset. As we will see in the empirical section below, this shaping happens, for example, through spatial staging and camerawork.

But the crucial point here is the following: even (unfilmed, "natural") face-to-face communication is "technical" in a broader sense. This view makes it possible, for example, to compare the medial procedure of (unfilmed) face-to-face communication with the medial procedure of television discussion. That these are two different sign-processing procedures would be occluded if we were to regard face-to-face communication as "media-less". Always considering sign use as medially shaped is a precondition for contextualizing and comparing all kinds of sign use. This opens up new horizons for analysis and overcomes the division between phenomena that are actually inseparable. In Section 1.1, we observed something similar with the concept *institution*: by understanding media as institutions, we can see how they are related to other institutions, e.g. political ones. In the same way, understanding face-to-face communication as medium makes it possible to compare it with other media and work out interesting similarities, connections and differences.

The traditional belief that interpersonal communication, especially face-to-face communication, is non-medial was, in our opinion, based on the *myth of authenticity*: face-to-face communication was regarded as genuine and authentic, while written communication acts and acts that depend on human-made devices (e.g. telephoning or watching television) tended to be branded as artificial. But this view is misleading: since the use of signs is fundamental for meaning-making from the outset, there are no completely objective representations; rather, every form of communication and representation is semiotically and medially shaped and thus perspectival.

The remainder of this article is devoted to the analysis of a media event that was watched live by about 66.5 million television viewers (Serjeant/Richwine 2016) and streamed by probably more than 100 million Internet users (Granados 2016): the second presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on October 9, 2016. We do not analyze this debate in terms of content or politics, but instead the media process in which the debate took place. Roughly speaking, what we are dealing with here is a live, unidirectional, mass-media broadcast that encompasses several partial formats, including one-to-many monologues and face-to-face, side-by-side and split-screen communication. As in any face-to-face communication, the oral communication used here is sequential, multimodal and ephemeral. At the same time, however, it is recorded and thus made repeatable for all time. In addition, the presidential debate is not only characterized by its complex mediality, but is also *institutionally* shaped from the outset, because the footage was produced by certain television stations, in this case NBC, CBS and C-SPAN, countless other mass media (television and radio stations, print media, social media) are involved and the entire staging and script is subject to strictly defined regulations.

2. Empirical Discussion

As elaborated above, we understand every communication as mediated and all sign use as shaped by the mediality of the medium in use. Apart from a material aspect that includes technical possibilities and restrictions, we understand the concept *medium* to also include processual, institutional and cultural aspects. Political TV debates are a case in point, as the processing of verbal and nonverbal signs, i.e. the entire interaction, is shaped by the medium of TV (which operates in a certain market, in a certain political system and with certain journalistic norms). This medial shaping affects crucial conversational aspects like turn-taking, topic management, face work, portrayal of self and others and use of the studio space. Of course, these aspects are also shaped by genre and individual competence, but they all rely on the structural moments of the medium mentioned here. What we can

observe here is a media- and genre-specific performance of verbal interaction, a phenomenon Tolson (2006: 10) called the "performativity" of media talk.

Political TV debates are also a good example of what has been referred to as the mediatization of politics (cf. Higgins 2018; Strömbeck/Esser 2014; Hepp 2014; Falasca 2014), i.e. the interdependency of the political and the mass-media system, which results in the adaptation of the political system to the mass-media system and vice versa. As mentioned above, three different logics (journalistic, political and economic) shape the processing of signs in political TV debates as part of the institutional media context. In other words, political information is materialized and processed in a very specific, conversational way, including a specific use of multimodal resources (sensu Mondada 2016). In the following, we will focus on aspects of medial shaping that can be related to structural moments of TV mediality and conversational TV formats.

2.1 Double Articulation and Para-interaction

All conversation on TV is double articulated, as Scannell argued in 1991:

> All talk on radio and TV is public discourse, is meant to be accessible to the audience for whom it is intended. Thus broadcast talk minimally has a double articulation: it is a communicative interaction between those participating in discussion, interview, game show or whatever and, at the same time, is designed to be heard by absent audiences. (Scannell 1991: 1)

TV conversations are performed from the very beginning for a non-present, but always ratified audience. We therefore have to distinguish between the interaction between the interlocutors within the studio and the pseudo-interaction with the non-present audience. The latter has been described as "parasocial interaction" by Horton and Wohl (1956: 215), but we will instead refer to social para-interaction, because we understand all human relationships as "social" (cf. Moores 2005: 75). *Para-interaction* means that parts of the sign use provoke the illusion of face-to-face communication, including mutual perception and two-way communication.

Social para-interaction aims at “intimacy at a distance” (Horton/Wohl 1956: 215) and can be realized e.g. by addressing the audience or staging traits of informal face-to-face conversations. In our example, the audience is directly addressed at the beginning of the show (with a brief greeting, “Good evening”, and some explanation of the debate, “The people you see on this stage were chosen […]”) and again at the end of it (Cooper: “Our thanks to the candidates, the commission, Washington University, and to everybody who watched”, Raddatz: “Good night, everyone”); always accompanied by a look into the camera. Besides of these sequences, the audience at home is only once addressed verbally – and only implicitly and indirectly – by Clinton, in the following turn:

1. CLINTON: Well, Martha, first, let me say – and I’ve said before, but I’ll repeat it, *because I want everyone to hear it* – that was a mistake, and I take responsibility for using a personal e-mail account. (20:59–21:10, italics added)

Although it is clear – and with the greeting and goodbye it is *made* clear – that the conversation is directed at an audience at home, this fact remains marginalized throughout the debate in the verbal utterances. That – except for one camera tripod that appears briefly in one shot (1:30:50) – no cameras can be seen at any point in the debate also serves to deflect attention from the fact that the conversation is directed at an at-home audience. On the one hand, then, *direct* hints at the presence of an audience at home are minimized.

On the other hand, the gaze of the persons on the screen reveals an important aspect of social para-interaction. The politicians use gaze direction strategically: they mostly or at important moments look directly at the camera, and thus at the audience at home. While Trump looks into the camera most of the time when talking, Clinton mostly lets her gaze wander over the studio audience. But she looks straight into the camera at rhetorically key moments (see italics in the following excerpt, Example 2):

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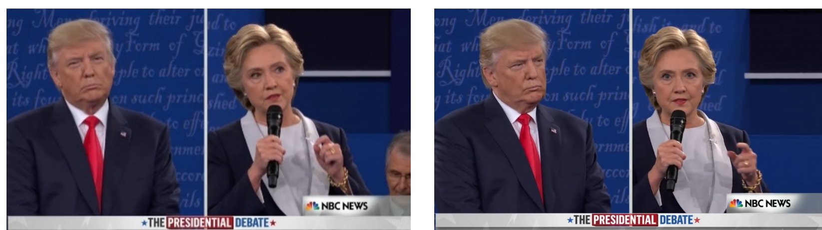
2. CLINTON: So this is who Donald Trump is. And the question for us, the question our country must answer is that this is not who we are. That's why – to go back to your question – I want to send a *message* – we all should – to *every* boy and girl and, indeed, to the entire world that America already *is* great, but we are great because we are good, and we *will* respect one another, *and we will* work with one another, *and we will* celebrate our diversity. These are *very* important *values* to me, because this *is* the America that I *know* and love. And I can pledge to you tonight that *this is the America* that I will serve if I'm so fortunate enough to become your president. (10:13–11:02; italics added)

While Clinton generally looks at the audience in the studio or at Cooper, who asks her a question (see Screenshot 1), she looks into the camera during the sequences indicated above. This is not incidental, but clearly intended to address the audience at home with electoral promises (Screenshot 2).



Screenshots 1–2: Clinton answering a question (10:15, 10:56)

A closer look at the candidates' responses also shows other ways to double articulate answers. Because the main reason to take part in a political TV discussion is not to engage in an objective, rational debate, but to promote one's own person and positions, politicians often switch the topic without verbally indicating that they are doing so, but instead phrasing the transition as if the two topics were related. Trump's topic shifts are quite abrupt, integrated in an argumentative transition only very superficially, as in the following excerpt (Example 3).

3. TRUMP [responding to a question regarding some of his comments regarding women]: But this is locker-room talk. You know, when we have a world where you have ISIS chopping off heads, where you have –

619 and, frankly, drowning people in steel cages, where you
620 have wars and horrible, horrible sights all over, where
621 you have so many bad things happening, this is like
622 medieval times. We haven't seen anything like this, the
623 carnage all over the world. And they look and they see.
624 Can you imagine the people that are, frankly, doing so
625 well against us with ISIS? And they look at our country
626 and they see what's going on. Yes, I'm very
627 embarrassed by it. I hate it. But it's locker room talk,
628 and it's one of those things. I will knock the hell out of
629 ISIS. (6:19–6:59)

630 Trump's remarks about ISIS, which very roughly depict his
631 plans if elected president, seem to be related to his response
632 regarding his disrespectful comments about women. The
633 phrasing "you know, when we have a world where ..." allows
634 us to expect argumentative support for his assessment of his
635 utterances, but what follows is not related to this issue at all.
636 While this topic shift is (even if only superficially) integrated,
637 the next is not (Example 4).

638 4. COOPER: Have you ever done those things?

639 TRUMP: And women have respect for me. And I will
640 tell you: No, I have not. And I will tell you that I'm
641 going to make our country safe. We're going to have
642 borders in our country, which we don't have now.
643 People are pouring into our country, and they're
644 coming in from the Middle East and other places.
645 We're going to make America safe again. (7:36–7:54)

646 While the overall subject remains Trump's behavior towards
647 women, he starts discussing homeland security and "people"
648 that are "pouring" into the country.
649 Although she is much more subtle, Clinton also sometimes
650 employs this strategy. After Trump claims that Bill Clinton's
651 behavior towards women was much worse than his own,
652 Clinton discusses Trump's disrespectful treatment of Captain
653 Humayun Khan. She skillfully and subtly leads to this new
654 topic by accusing her opponent of "never apologiz[ing] for
655 anything to anyone", not even Khan (15:40–16:01). However,

this argumentation cannot hide the fact that Clinton here also switches the topic.

All the aspects mentioned above – the direct or implicit addressing of the audience at home, the gaze behavior and the (more or less) inconspicuous topic shifts – are examples of double articulation. And they illustrate how structural aspects of the medium (one-way audiovisual mass medium, appropriation of public mass media by the political system) transform everyday conversation practices. These transformations show that all answers, and of course all questions too, are not for the audience in the studio, but the one at home.

2.2 Controlling and Spurring the Debate: The Town-hall Framing

The medium of television (as an institution, not as a technical apparatus) aims to create and maintain a social relationship with its audience. Aspects of this "sociability" (Scannell 1996: 28) include the staging of being close to the audience (see above, para-interaction, but also close shots, live broadcasting and so on), the stating of spontaneous behavior and of course the meta-function of television, entertainment. The aim of television companies is to produce an entertaining (which does not necessarily mean un-informative) debate, a dynamic swapping of blows between the candidates. This means that there must be critical questions and not just keywords that allow the candidates to articulate their slogans (cf. Clayman/Heritage 2002). At the same time, however, the debate must be controlled by the medium's agents, the hosts, so that it does not descend into chaos. The ways in which this debate is framed and the hosts vary between sparking off and controlling the debate reveal how the aims of the medium shape everyday conversational action, including asking questions, providing answers, assigning the right to speak, turn-taking in general, real-time processing of utterances and face work. These essential aspects of face-to-face (or side-by-side) interaction are interwoven with the specific mediality of the debate from the outset. This is an example of how the basal mediality of spoken communication differentiates itself within the mass-media television format, but also influences it from the very beginning.

The debate is framed as a "town-hall meeting" (COOPER: "Tonight's debate is a town-hall format, which gives voters the chance to directly ask the candidates questions"[3]). This framing as a town-hall meeting that is open to everyone and makes it possible to ask critical questions "directly" is related to the journalistic norm of serving as the fourth estate, because the journalists appear as agents of control by bringing the citizens' questions to the candidates. But while the frame of a town-hall meeting implies that everyone can spontaneously pose as many questions as they like and the person interviewed can answer in detail, the conversation here is under strong media control: the speaking time for an answer is limited to two minutes; the citizens in the inner circle of the studio are hand-picked and prevented from engaging in any backchannel behavior, whether verbal or non-verbal (another transformation of everyday practices) and from asking follow-up questions; and the studio audience in the outer circle, which cannot be seen but can sometimes be heard and is then silenced by the hosts, is also subject to strict rules (COOPER: "We want to remind the audience to please not talk out loud. Please do not applaud. You're just wasting time". 20:30; RADDATZ: "And really, the audience needs to calm down here". 19:39). This control is related to the journalistic principle of balance, but it is of course also intended to control the candidates' self-promotion and the possible escalation of the interaction.

In some of these cases, we can see how the hosts use the town-hall frame to control the conversation explicitly: they use it to manage the timing and the topics discussed. Timing is crucial for all media talk, as the conversations cannot, unlike in an actual town hall, be open-ended, but have to end right on time. This allows the hosts to interrupt the candidates by referring to the citizens' questions (already at the very beginning, the host Raddatz says: "[...] we hope to get to as many questions as we can. So we asked the audience here not to slow things down with any applause [...]"). In the following extract (00:11:04–12:11), Raddatz interrupts Trump, who is responding to accusations from Clinton ("I said

3 Beginning of the debate, not included in the footage published on YouTube; therefore no timestamp.

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starting back in June that he was not fit to be president and commander-in-chief" 8:39):

5. RADDATZ: And we want to get to some questions from online

   TRUMP: Am I allowed to respond to that? I assume I am.

   RADDATZ: Yes, you can respond to that.

   TRUMP: It's just words, folks. It's just words. Those words, I've been hearing them for many years. I heard them when they were running for the Senate in New York, where Hillary was going to bring back jobs to Upstate New York and she failed. I've heard them where Hillary is constantly talking about the inner cities of our country, which are a disaster education-wise, jobwise, safety-wise, in every way possible. I'm going to help the African-Americans. I'm going to help the Latinos, Hispanics. I am going to help the inner cities. She's done a terrible job for the African-Americans. She wants their vote, and she does nothing, and then she comes back four years later. We saw that firsthand when she was United States senator. She campaigned where the primary part of her campaign...

   RADDATZ: Mr. Trump, Mr. Trump – I want to get to audience questions and online questions.

   TRUMP: So, she's allowed to do that, but I'm not allowed to respond?

   RADDATZ: You're going to have – you're going to get to respond right now.

   TRUMP: Sounds fair.

   RADDATZ: This tape is generating intense interest. [...]

The questions from the live audience and television viewers are not asked at the initiative of the audience members themselves or when the candidates indicate that they are finished answering the previous question, but when the hosts decide; in addition, audience members cannot ask for further clarifications after asking their question. Referring to audience questions also allows the hosts to ask face-

threatening questions and at the same time "deflect" them (cf. Clayman/Heritage 2002), i.e. the hosts can bring up critical issues without having to affiliate or disaffiliate themselves from them (RADDATZ: "So, Tu from Virginia asks: is it OK for politicians to be two-faced?" 43:49).

The hosts perform a tightrope walk between a controlled, answer-question interview and a dynamic quarrel between the candidates. For example, if one candidate provokes the other, the hosts may depart from the question-answer structure. While the overall structure follows the order "question – answer candidate 1 – answer candidate 2", in Example 5 above Trump successfully demands the floor again after Clinton responds to his first answer and attacks him directly (not in transcript). The hosts suspend the regular order here to follow the provocation principle: guests who are provoked get the turn. Nonetheless, Raddatz interrupts Trump after one minute because he does not address the question that has been posed, but instead delivers slogans and demeans Clinton. When he is interrupted, he insists on the provocation principle mentioned above ("So she's allowed to do that, but I'm not allowed to respond?"). In the next example, he also insists on being permitted to respond after Clinton has responded to a question that was directed only to her; in doing so, he refers to the right to equal speaking time, a phenomenon specific to political TV debates (Example 6, 00:41:57–42:04):

6. RADDATZ: There's been lots of fact-checking on that. I'd like to move on to an online question...

   TRUMP: Excuse me. She just went about 25 seconds over her time.

   RADDATZ: She did not.

   TRUMP: Could I just respond to this, please?

   RADDATZ: Very quickly, please.

Situations like these, which are aimed at controlling the debate, often lead to fights for the floor among the candidates and between the candidates and the hosts. Fights over speaking time occur regularly (Example 7, 01:19:16–19:36):

807 7. COOPER: We have to move along.

808 CLINTON: Nine million people lost their jobs.

809 RADDATZ: Secretary Clinton, we have to...

810 CLINTON: Five million homes were lost.

811 RADDATZ: Secretary Clinton, we're moving.

812 CLINTON: And $13 trillion in family wealth was wiped
813 out. We are back on the right track. He would send us
814 back into recession with his tax plans that benefit the
815 wealthiest of Americans.

816 RADDATZ: Secretary Clinton, we are moving to an
817 audience question. We're almost out of time. We have
818 another...

819 Here again, audience questions and time restrictions are
820 mentioned as necessitating changing the subject and finishing
821 a turn, again leading to a situation in which the conversational
822 order is threatened. At such moments, the subject is often
823 abandoned quickly, mutual denials are exchanged and more
824 complex arguments cannot be elaborated. But the audience
825 can witness a highly dynamic verbal fight that could become
826 chaotic, and which the hosts must therefore contain. Such
827 situations have a high entertainment potential and thus
828 contribute to sociability, as the following excerpt
829 demonstrates (Example 8, 00:23:37-24:33):

830 8. TRUMP: [...] What you did – and this is after getting a
831 subpoena from the United States Congress.

832 COOPER: We have to move on.

833 TRUMP: You did that. Wait a minute. One second.

834 COOPER: Secretary Clinton, you can respond, and
835 then we got to move on.

836 RADDATZ: We want to give the audience a chance.

837 TRUMP: If you did that in the private sector, you'd be
838 put in jail, let alone after getting a subpoena from the
839 United States Congress.

840 COOPER: Secretary Clinton, you can respond. Then
841 we have to move on to an audience question.

842 CLINTON: Look, it's just not true. And so please, go
843 to...

844 TRUMP: Oh, you didn't delete them?

845 COOPER: Allow her to respond, please.

846 CLINTON: It was personal e–mails, not official.

847 TRUMP: Oh, 33,000? Yeah.

848 CLINTON: Not – well, we turned over 35,000, so...

849 TRUMP: Oh, yeah. What about the other 15,000?

850 COOPER: Please allow her to respond. She didn't talk
851 while you talked.

852 CLINTON: Yes, that's true, I didn't.

853 TRUMP: Because you have nothing to say.

854 CLINTON: I didn't in the first debate, and I'm going to
855 try not to in this debate, because I'd like to get to the
856 questions that the people have brought here tonight to
857 talk to us about.

858 TRUMP: Get off this question.

859 CLINTON: OK, Donald. I know you're into big
860 diversion tonight, anything to avoid talking about your
861 campaign and the way it's exploding and the way
862 Republicans are leaving you. But let's at least focus...

863 TRUMP: Let's see what happens...

864 (CROSSTALK)

865 COOPER: Allow her to respond.

866 In this example, Clinton can hardly respond coherently
867 because Trump keeps interrupting her; in addition, the host
868 repeatedly tries to save the floor for Clinton. She accuses
869 Trump of diversion, i.e. strategic behavior, and attempts to
870 control the debate herself by suggesting that they move on to
871 the audience's questions. Trump in turn accuses the hosts of
872 neglecting the Clinton e-mail controversy, an accusation
873 Cooper rejects repeatedly before giving the floor to an
874 audience member, causing Trump to utter an ironic remark in
875 which he frames the debate as an unfair fight ("one on three").

Sequences like these are predictable in political TV debates and are not a result of the specific combination of individuals involved here (cf. Luginbühl 1999, 2007). While the politicians try to get as much speaking time as possible in order to promote themselves and devaluate their opponent, the hosts both spur the debate and try to control it in order to combine the medium's needs for entertainment and balance. Sequences like these are predictable because they are *structural* moments of TV communication in general (double articulation, para-interaction, sociability) and political communication in and for TV in particular (mediatization of politics, different logics at work). Aspects of everyday talk like turn-taking, topic management, portrayal of self and others and face and relational work are shaped by these media-specific aspects *from the very beginning* – and not just because they are filmed and aired. The same is true of the town-hall frame: it is optimized for the needs of the medium in order to simultaneously stage a democratic discussion and control the interaction.

2.3 Camerawork and Editing

Nonverbal behavior is also shaped by the medium. We have already mentioned the strategic use of gazing at the camera (i.e. directly at the audience at home). But while politicians can control their nonverbal behavior to some extent, they cannot control which camera perspective is used or how the footage is edited, and their behavior in space is also restricted by the studio design. Final control over the meanings that are broadcast therefore lies with the medium – that is, with the media institution's picture director (Holly 2015). The design of the studio and especially the way the footage is edited shape and contextualize what is said and how the participants (can) use their bodies – and what we can see of this. What we can see and hear is not just a combination of sound and images, but an independent staging of the course of conversation (Keppler 2015: 171). What is most striking in NBC's coverage of the second debate is the predominant use of split screens: of the 68 minutes that the debate lasts, 49:35 consist of split-screen shots in which the two candidates can be seen in close-up. The studio design is obviously optimized for these split screens (Screenshot 3).

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916

917 **Screenshot 3:** studio design (0:00).

918 The two chairs do not face each other or the studio audience
919 (the "town-hall participants'), but the hosts; they have the
920 height of a bar stool, so they are not really intended to be sat
921 on. They indicate the place where the candidates are
922 supposed to stand and, if they move around, return to. It is
923 therefore to be expected that the candidates will stand and
924 move within the red circle and towards the "town-hall
925 participants" to their right and left. The cameras are placed to
926 deliver a full frontal view of the candidates: they are located
927 to the left and right of the hosts (note that the chairs actually
928 face the cameras, not the hosts) and (hidden in black
929 windows and thus hardly visible) behind the "town-hall
930 participants". The room, with its spatial arrangement of hosts,
931 participants and bar stools, with its camera infrastructure and
932 red circle, predetermines how the candidates will move, but
933 without prescribing specific movements (cf. Hausendorf
934 2020). To sum up, the entire room is unobtrusively and
935 invisibly optimized for full-frontal camera shots of the
936 candidates and for staging a town-hall meeting. In addition,
937 the cameras behind the participants allow for medium shots
938 that show both candidates at the same time, one behind the
939 other.

940 As mentioned above, the predominant camera setting is the
941 split screen (see Screenshot 4).

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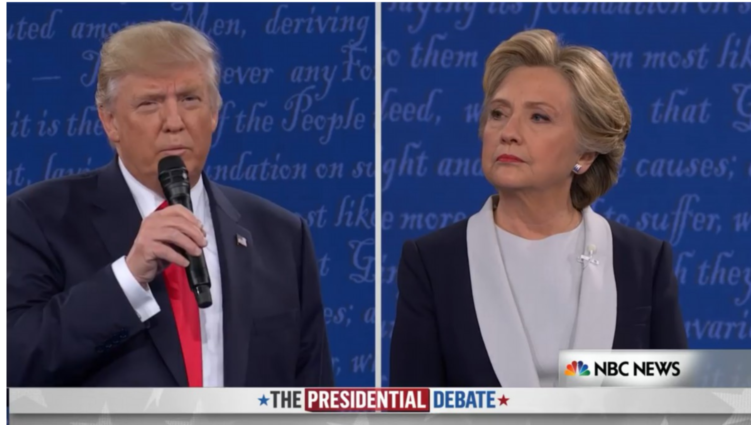
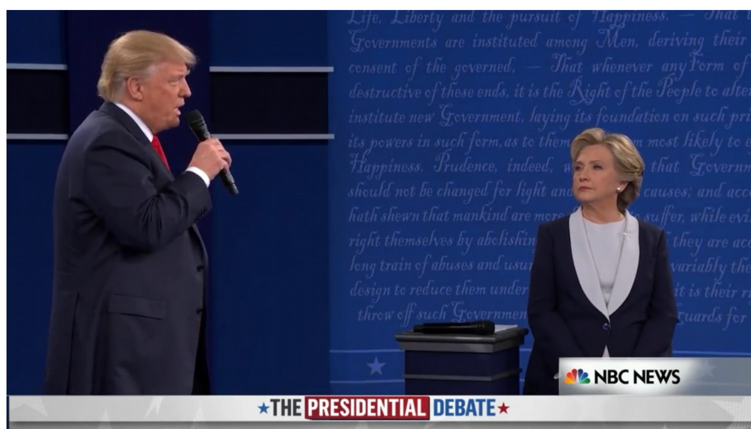


Screenshot 4: split screen (5:15).

The split screen allows for two frontal close shots at the same time, which makes it possible for the home audience to sit very close to both candidates simultaneously and observe even the smallest mimic movements, allowing it to scrutinize the emotional reactions of the speaker and listener at the same time. It is important to note that this is an "impossible" view, as the screenshot below (Screenshot 5) demonstrates: immediately before Screenshot 4, we can see that, from a viewer's perspective on site, it is impossible to see both candidates from the front; and we can also see that they do not have their heads at the same height, contrary to what the split screens suggests.

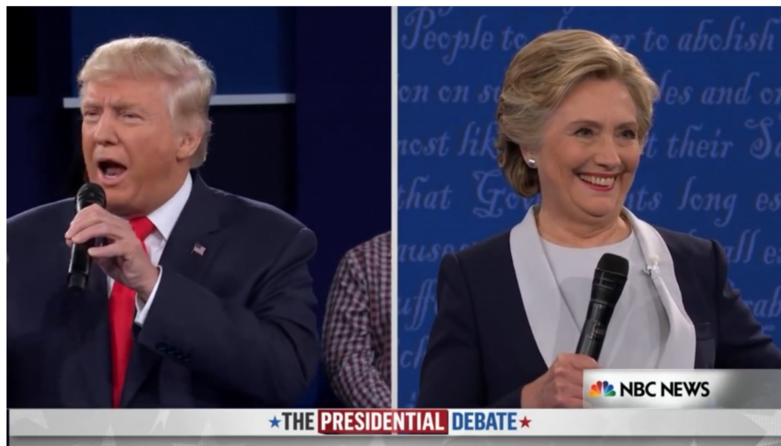


Screenshot 5: split screen (4:59).

A possible attraction of these debates, as mentioned above, is the tightrope walk between control and (conversational) chaos, which also foregrounds face and relational work. And it is these aspects that the split screen, with its "impossible" view of the candidates' faces, also emphasizes. But this view

can also lead to orientation problems on the part of the audience: because the front view is predominant, it can become unclear who the candidates are looking or pointing at.

Together, Example 8 above and Screenshots 6 and 7 below illustrate how the split screen works. While Trump continues to attack Clinton, she smiles broadly, which she rarely does in the entire debate, and shakes her head.



Screenshot 6: Clinton smiling and shaking head while Trump attacks (23:41).

A few seconds later, a four-second shot demonstrates that the split screen showed an "impossible" view that a person on location could not have had (Screenshot 7).

Screenshot 7: Clinton responding to Trump's attacks (23:48).

If only the person talking, in this case Trump, had been shown, Clinton's nonverbal behavior could not have been seen, just as it would have been difficult to see it in the studio. Since the two protagonists are well briefed, they know that

983 the split-screen format predominates, and they expect to be
984 filmed in close-up even when they are not speaking. When
985 she is not speaking, Clinton tries to avoid looking into the
986 camera; in some cases, however, she does glance at the
987 camera before immediately turning her gaze away (37:20–
988 37:38). This is another example of how the media process
989 shapes the actors' communicative actions. We can see here
990 how the camerawork creates a media-specific reality that is
991 intended to allow viewers to witness emotional (or strikingly
992 calm) reactions to attacks. In the end, it is all about who
993 cracks whom.
994 Although the split screen predominates, reporting on the
995 debate focused extensively on shots during which Trump
996 could be seen behind Clinton. Immediately after the debate,
997 for example, the *Guardian* published in its online version a
998 short video excerpt from the debate entitled "Trump 'prowls'
999 behind Clinton during presidential debate" (*Guardian* 2016).
1000 CNN commented as follows: "Donald Trump created an
1001 awkward situation during Sunday's presidential debate,
1002 where the candidates were free to roam around the stage,
1003 and the Republican nominee chose to stand right behind
1004 Hillary Clinton" (Diaz 2016). Clinton herself wrote afterwards:
1005 "It was the second presidential debate and Donald Trump
1006 was looming behind me" (Filipovic 2016). And *New York*
1007 *Times* journalist David Itskoff (2016) created the following
1008 meme (Tweet 1):

1009

1010 **Tweet 1:** Tweet by David Itskoff.

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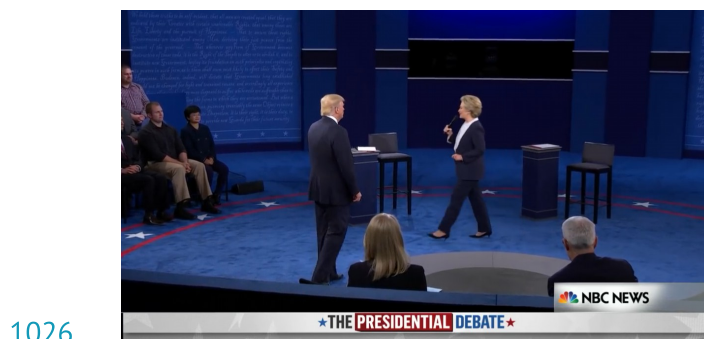
1011 Two things are noteworthy about these shots in which one
1012 candidate can be seen behind the other. First, these shots
1013 comprise only 16 minutes of the debate (compared to almost
1014 50 minutes of split screen); and second, of these 16 minutes,
1015 shots of Trump behind Clinton comprise 11:21, while those of
1016 Clinton behind Trump comprise only 4:56. Trump's "looming
1017 behind" Clinton is a result of not only the fact that he is
1018 shown doing this twice as much as she is, but also that Trump
1019 moves behind Clinton when she speaks, while she does not
1020 move very much when he speaks.
1021 The following screenshots show Clinton moving towards
1022 the right to answer an audience question from that side of the
1023 studio, and Trump moving back to his chair but then
1024 positioning himself directly in sight of the camera that is
1025 filming Clinton (Screenshots 8–10).



1026

1027

1028

1029 **Screenshot 8-10:** Trump aligning himself behind Clinton (25:25-25:50).

1030 We can see here how politicians and the medium (as an
1031 institution) interact at the micro-level: Trump strategically
1032 aligns himself with the camera's line of sight, and the camera
1033 cuts from a close to a medium shot, including both candidates
1034 in one frame, again allowing both faces to be seen at the same
1035 time. When Trump positions himself in a spot that is likely
1036 (but not necessarily) to be captured by the camera, the image
1037 immediately cuts to capture that view. As a result, CNN's
1038 claim that Trump "created" this situation is only half true.
1039 The camera also attempts to capture Clinton in the
1040 background while Trump is speaking but not looking in the
1041 direction of the hosts; but – and this is the difference –
1042 Clinton does not align her body with the camera, but only her
1043 gaze (see Screenshots 11–12).

1044

1045

1046 **Screenshot 11-12:** Clinton behind Trump (29:14; 33:39).

1047 The candidates' gaze work, the way they use the studio room,
1048 how they walk, align and disalign their bodies are all shaped
1049 by the medium of television. As in language use, the effect of
1050 the medium is not secondary. The medium itself influences

1051 the behavior of the persons on screen from the outset and
1052 creates its own reality of the conversation, a reality that
1053 cannot be experienced at the location itself.

1054 **3. Conclusion**

1055 As the analysis of the second presidential debate between
1056 Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump has shown, sign
1057 processing during the debate is continuously shaped by
1058 structural aspects of television and specific traits of political
1059 communication *in* television. These structural aspects – the
1060 technical infrastructure, para-interaction, entertainment, the
1061 fourth estate, political propaganda and so on – can
1062 potentially conflict with each other, which leads to, and is
1063 exploited by, specific practices on the part of the hosts, the
1064 politicians and the studio audience. The way oral
1065 communication is processed (including embodied aspects) is
1066 therefore shaped by the whole medial procedure from the
1067 outset, including the ways in which turn-taking is organized,
1068 topics are introduced and avoided, face work is done and
1069 controversies are cheered on or ended, and where people
1070 move or look.
1071 Therefore, it is not adequate to separate the technical
1072 aspects of the medium, the "hardware", from the processual
1073 aspects and the structural conditions of communication.
1074 These three aspects together constitute the mediality of a
1075 medium, i.e. of a medial procedure. What German linguists
1076 call "communication form" is included in the medial
1077 procedure. If we separate these aspects from each other, it is
1078 impossible to adequately analyze the "medial traces" (cf.
1079 Krämer 1998) they leave behind. Brock and Schildhauer's
1080 (2017) definition of communication form avoids separating
1081 these aspects by integrating the concept of medium into it. As
1082 we have argued, however, the concept of communication
1083 form can be dispensed with altogether if we begin from a
1084 holistic understanding of media and then describe the specific
1085 medium in question in its specific granularity.
1086 The most important task of media linguistics is to describe
1087 communication as consisting of medial procedures under
1088 concrete circumstances. What is the mediality of a given
1089 medial constellation and format? Another task of media

linguistics is to differentiate the mediality of a concrete case from the communicative, culturally constituted practices involved. Mediality also has institutional aspects. A third task of media linguistics is to distinguish between the institutional and other aspects that are constitutive of communicative practices. Making these distinctions will help us understand our communication better and differentiate medial constellations, and they provide a very specific and clear role for what we call *media* linguistics.

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