The Rhetorical Relationship Between 911 Call Takers And 911 Callers In Police Emergency Response Operations

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THE RHETORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 911 CALL TAKERS
AND 911 CALLERS IN POLICE EMERGENCY RESPONSE OPERATIONS

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Stephen L. Crites, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
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by

Nadia Hamilton Morales
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father, John Andrew Hamilton, who always told me to shoot for the stars, as in doing so, I would get much further than if I had set small goals, and who set the bar high through his example. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Audrey Hamilton, the real genius in the family, who understood the power of humility and sacrifice and to my grandmother, Nadejda Saltikova, my best friend and truly the wisest person I have ever known. My final dedication goes to my good friend, Dr. Harinder Boparai who said that I could do this and that I must do this.
THE RHETORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 911 CALL TAKERS AND 911 CALLERS IN POLICE EMERGENCY RESPONSE OPERATIONS

by

NADIA HAMILTON MORALES, M.A., B.A.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Texas at El Paso

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Abstract

In this project, I interrogated the rhetorical relationship between 911 Call Takers and 911 callers in Garland, Texas in order to evaluate the quality of 911 emergency information transfer and its impact on 911 event final outcomes. I compiled a three-part data set that included transcriptions of 27 911 call audio recordings, 27 Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and 27 Police/Incident Reports. My data set was specific to the following 911 event classifications: Disturbance/Weapon in Progress, Disturbance/Weapon Involved, Shooting, and Stabbing. My data sample came from 911 calls under these classifications made during the month of August 2020. Through my research and data analysis, I identified 911 caller and Call Taker rhetorical strategies, 911 caller/Call Taker rhetorical situation components, and the agency of Norman Fairclough's dialogic and non-dialogic language in the retrieval, interpretation, and dissemination of 911 emergency event information. I examined how the use of language and implicit cultural understandings between the 911 caller and Call Taker informed the quality of 911 emergency information that was transferred to responding police officers. I looked for possible miscommunication events and how these events might inform police officer on scene response and Police/Incident reports. I looked for consistencies and inconsistencies in information retrieval, interpretation, and dissemination and the ways in which these inconsistencies were informed by the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker. Finally, I compared and contrasted all three sections of my data sample in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the 911 caller and Call Taker rhetorical exchange.
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First, I would like to thank Laura Rocha of the Garland Police Department Records Division and Maria Estrada of the Garland City Attorney’s office. Without their help, I would have nothing. I appreciate them for their courtesy, patience, and understanding when answering my repeated calls and emails and for showing a real willingness to help a student when they were under no obligation to do so. Thank you, Maria Estrada, for her patience when I was requesting my second data set. Thank you to Ms. Estrada for being willing to keep re-formatting the second set of 911 calls when I could not open the different file formats you had sent. Thank you to Jennifer Wilhite for helping me prepare for my prospectus defense by listening to my presentation several times. Also, thank you to Jennifer Wilhite for inviting me to participate in her doctoral study. Those meetings and writing workshops really helped me organize my marbles. She provided some very useful and thought-provoking feedback that helped me expand my thinking and generate new ideas not previously considered and assisted with APA citation formatting. The mybib.com application is a lifesaver. Also, many thanks to Jennifer Wilhite and Corina Lerma who read one of my earlier data analysis drafts in our study session and provided very useful feedback that helped me better organize and articulate the many ideas in their different levels of complexity. Also thank you to Dr. Maggy Smith, Corina Lerma, and my cousin Joanna Hamilton Glennon for helping me with my defense presentation. Thank you to Turnip Van Dyke who remembered my project and took the time to provide me with relevant scholarship that I included in my literature review. Thank you to Dr. Louis Herman of the UTEP Writing Center who helped me to format this document. Thank you to Dr. Laura Gonzalez, Dr. Victor Del Hierro, and Dr. Eda Ozyesilpinar who patiently listened to my early project ideas and were encouraging sounding boards. Thank you to Dr. Maggy Smith who met with me numerous times at the beginning of my project, introduced me to Norman
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Chapter 1 Introduction: The Exigency of 911 Call Taker and 911 Caller Relations

Police use of excessive force is a serious problem in the United States today. There have been and still are many questionable emergency response situations in which police officers from around the country inappropriately reacted to anticipated threat events and shot and sometimes killed unarmed citizens. In my project, I do not directly address the variables that might influence police officer threat reactions. Rather, I start at the first recorded interaction between the citizen and the law enforcement by exploring the interaction between the 911 caller and Call Taker as a rhetorical exchange. The exchange of information between caller and Call Taker and the degree of mutual understanding are critical for populating a body of knowledge about an ongoing event that will be transferred to a responding police officer. The primary instrument of this rhetorical exchange is language and its function as a social management tool within the relationship between law enforcement and the community they serve. Starting from the premise that language exchange is a rhetorical, social occasion, I consider the language of the police 911 emergency response interaction as a rhetorical, social act.

The exchange between caller and Call Taker in the police 911 emergency call conversation has not previously been critically examined as a rhetorical occasion. I believe this interaction needs to be considered as such because police 911 information exchange is highly nuanced and complex. This rhetorical interaction, as with any social process, is the forum for the dissemination of hidden ideologies that inform the quality and character of 911 emergency response in information reception, interpretation, and processing and alter the information received by police officers responding to a 911 emergency event scene. Rhetorical elements are the tools of social negotiation that hold an implicit currency in general social interaction. The study of these rhetorical elements can reveal ways to identify problems in social communication and solutions to those problems that
will transfer by extension from the police emergency response domain to all social domains. An understanding of the rhetorical relationship between the 911 Caller and Police 911 Call Taker will perhaps provide insights into the nature of all social communication and the role of rhetoric in informing social communication and framing the political aspects of that social communication. Thus, I expanded the field of rhetoric by applying to tools of rhetoric to the specific social context that is 911 emergency response with broader implications for social context in general.

BACKGROUND:

All social practice involves the transfer of information and the interpretation of information as a rhetorical act. Generally, most would consider a Police 911 emergency response conversation as an information transfer - a reporting situation that includes a reliable understanding of that description. The interaction between the Police 911 Call Taker and the caller is a rhetorical exchange informed by perception and interpretation. The caller calls in to report a danger or threat - telling a story about an event that has occurred, is occurring, or has the potential to occur. The caller tells this story from his or her perspective. The Call Taker receives this information and interprets it. In this interaction, there is an exchange of information and an exchange of reactions. The caller provides a description of a situation, and the Call Taker interprets that description and records the information in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report form using the Computer Aided Dispatch data entry system. Then the populated information is transferred to the 911 Dispatcher who then transmits the information to police officers responding to the scene of the event (Valencia, 2020) (Rocha, 2021).
THE 911 EMERGENCY CALL CONVERSATION IS A RHETORICAL EXCHANGE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

Both Caller and Call Taker subtly communicate inherent/hidden ideologies and implicit understandings through language and vocal inflections.

Both Call Taker and Caller send signals and use symbols that function as placeholders of abstract meaning.

Symbols or signs can include the following: Words, vocal inflections, degree of responsiveness, quality/detail in description and general attitude.

Both the caller and Call Taker are engaged in a social negotiation

Both the caller and Call Taker exchange interpreted information

Both the caller and Call Taker’s interpretation of the information will also be influenced by the following personal meanings: beliefs and values, prior personal experience, cultural background, prior professional experience

When interpreted, the information exchanged between the two parties becomes context specific knowledge for those who have completed the interpreting process. Those engaged in the interpreting process use their own cognitive templates to filter information and create their own, personal context – their subjective feeling about the information they have processed. Informed by their subjective feelings about the information, the Call Taker’s interpretation and degree of understanding will shape the nature and quality of the information that is populated into the Computer Aided Dispatch data entry system – specifically the event classification and priority code.

This notion of subjective feeling is highlighted by Herbert Blumer. Blumer (1969) coined the term “symbolic interactionism” and expanded on a theory originally articulated by George
Herbert Mead (1861-1931). He postulated that people interact in social situations according to personal meanings, and their personal meanings inform what they assume is expected of them and inform their interpretations of the signs and symbols communicated by the person with whom they are conversing. These personal meanings inform what they believe their role in a social interaction is supposed to be and what society at large wants them to do. These personal meanings also inform ideas about what is expected, necessary, appropriate, and permissible in a social situation (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

Many rhetorical exchanges in a social situation occur between two people who know each other, or at least are sitting across the table from each other. The 911 emergency response conversation is most often a rhetorical exchange between two people who do not know each other at all. The social presumption is that the 911 Call Taker will be able to understand most 911 callers and that some sort of mutual, cultural understanding exists. The social presumption is that certain information is obvious and self-evident - with a narrow set of possible meanings. Many people assume that a 911 emergency response conversation between a Call Taker and a caller is a transfer of verifiable information based upon a mutual understanding of reality and its definitions. More often, a 911 emergency response conversation can produce highly ambiguous and nuanced meanings (Raymond and Zimmerman, 1988). The distinctions between information, knowledge, and truth are not always clearly defined or decided. This exchange is often a transfer of interpreted information (information that could be perceived and evaluated in many ways) - a rhetorical exchange. However, 911 emergency response operations, as any government institution, are bound by protocols and definition that perhaps obfuscate ambiguity and nuance and/or dilute their significance. The presumption is that institutional protocol stifles information transfer and fosters miscommunication. In my limited study, I discovered that this presumption may be false.
Miscommunication can lead to the following, none of which are desirable outcomes for a 911 emergency call: false information, incomplete information, ambiguity, confusion, speculation, fear, police wrongful use of excessive force, police wrongful use of deadly force, and possibly danger for both police officer and citizen.

**911 Miscommunication: Police Wrongful Shooting of Suspects:**

Let’s consider the case of a young African American child, Tamir Rice of Cleveland, Ohio, a 12-year-old boy, who, in November of 2014, was shot dead by police officers because his toy gun was mistaken for a real gun. Internal Affairs Investigators of the Cleveland Police Department determined that the Call Taker, Constance Hollinger, failed to provide accurate information to the 911 dispatcher who in turn falsely led the police officer to believe that a grown man was at the location waving a gun. While most reports blamed the police for mistaking a child for a man and a toy gun for a real one, Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Timothy J. McGinty determined that a breakdown in the 911 communications process led to the shooting of Tamir Rice by police officers (Ferrise, 2017) (Heisig, 2019). Thus, essentially, miscommunication as a false understanding of description in the 911 emergency response process from beginning to end contributed to this wrongful shooting by police officers.

In another example, in April of 2018, in the 71st precinct (Brooklyn Borough) of the New York City Police Department, multiple 911 calls came in in which a potential shooter was reported. The man was described as a vagrant who was waving his arms around, feigning shooting gestures with some sort of metal object that witnesses assumed was a gun. The 911 dispatchers, faced with ambiguity, assumed the worst, and assigned a high priority to this call, communicating that they were dealing with an active shooter situation. Police officers expediently arrived on the scene, saw the mentally ill man taking a shooting stance, and shot the suspect dead on the spot (Mueller and
Schweber, 2018). After the fact, it was revealed that he was holding a metal pipe and waving it around. His name was Saheed Vassell, and he had been under treatment for mental illness.

Miscommunication in 911 communications contributed to the mistake in both cases. I define miscommunication as inconsistencies and discrepancies in interpretation, perception, and understanding. A rhetorical understanding of a description that may seem obvious and explicit is critical. A breakdown in communication might be defined as a dissemination of completely false information - a scenario I believe is rare. In both cases, and in many other similar cases, ambiguous language and variations in language interpretation and rhetorical understanding were critical. In addition, we might ask what implicit cultural understandings informed 911 emergency response decisions? What nuance informed the undercurrent that moved the 911 emergency response process forward in the manner that it did? Were there other factors that remained unexplored?

Prior to the start of my research, I believed that culpability lay squarely on the shoulders of the 911 Call Takers, 911 Dispatchers, and responding police officers. After completing this project, I am not so sure. Through my research, I discovered that 911 Call Takers in Garland, Texas communicate in primarily objective and direct ways while much of the nuance is communicated by the 911 callers who hold incorrect ideas about what the 911 emergency response process entails and unrealistic understandings of the exigencies of the 911 caller and Call Taker rhetorical relationship.

Norman Fairclough attempted to identify and explore the agency of these nuanced undercurrents that he believed were commonly known and widely embraced social ideas about what is predictable and manageable in society. He devoted a significant area of his academic life to exposing the falsehoods in these nuanced undercurrents and their negative impact upon real world situations. For Fairclough, the exposure of nuanced undercurrents - dangerous cultural
reasoned an investigation into the science of language interpretation. In this next section, I provide a partial look into the science of language interpretation by exploring Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis theory and the currency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in social communication.

**Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis - Dialogic and Non-Dialogic Language – The Currency of Assumption-Based Statements:**

Fairclough (2003) theorized that all social communication, as text, can be divided into two categories - dialogic and non-dialogic (Fairclough, 2003, p. 46-47). Dialogic text accommodates and facilitates difference regarding what constitutes evidence, interpretation, context, and perspective, includes many possibly opposing voices and contradictions, and attributes very specific information to the author, thereby assigning specific ownership of and responsibility for the stated information (p.46). Dialogic text includes direct quotations that people can specifically evaluate and respond to (p. 46). Non-dialogic text, however, is ideologically based text that neutralizes or obfuscates difference. Non-dialogic text does not include direct quotations or specific references to the information sources, does not assign ownership of and/or responsibility for the stated information, and is often written in the passive voice while offering vague references, generalizations, predictions, and assumptions. Non-dialogic text neutralizes difference and controversy through assumption-based statements in order to forge consensus and convince people that certain things are obvious and inevitable or a settled question (p. 47). Fairclough contends that most social communication and particularly institutional communication is assumption based and designed to obfuscate difference and ambiguity. According to Fairclough, most common-sense assumptions are articulated within a society through non-dialogic language – language that is
vague, symbolic, highly generalized, and ambiguous – only to be understood by those with privileged cultural knowledge (Fairclough, 2003, p. 46-47).

In the 911 emergency call process, assumption-based statements are inevitable. In this project, I explore the currency of assumption-based statements and dialogic and non-dialogic language in 911 emergency call conversations between the 911 Call Taker and caller and examine how both types of language inform the rhetorical interaction that is the process of 911 emergency response. I explore the agency of assumption-based statements in possibly inspiring confirmation bias. People who engage in confirmation bias subconsciously rely on their inherent beliefs and commonly held cultural beliefs and assumptions when examining evidence or scrutinizing a situation. They tend to look for evidence or information that upholds their inherent beliefs and commonly held cultural beliefs and assumptions (Cooley, 2019).

911 Emergency Call Conversation as A Non-Dialogic Narrative Form with a Rhetorical Relevance:

The 911 emergency call conversation between the Call Taker and the caller is a narrative form. The caller calls in to tell a story - as she or he sees it. In the 911 emergency calls, there is an event chronology as in all narrative forms. There is a reported event occurring within a certain timeframe – anticipated to happen in the future, in progress, or having been concluded at an earlier time – thus being reported after the fact. The 911 emergency call follows a sequence, involves description, and automatically elicits interpretation. This interpretation occurs on the part of the caller who witnesses an event or potential event and on the part of the Call Taker who is also interpreting the information he or she receives from the caller. The 911 call conversation follows that prescriptive model of implicit assumptions of normalcy or stasis, a catalyst that disrupts the state of normalcy, the disruptive event itself, action taken, and then a resolution and return to
normalcy or stasis – all typical elements of the narrative form in Western society and with some variation, in all societies in general. As well, the 911 emergency call, as a typical narrative, has a moral variable. (Someone has been hurt or wronged.) The question of whether a crime has occurred is a yet to be confirmed legal question. (It is the police officer’s job to respond to the scene of the potential 911 event and decide regarding the criminality or lack of criminality in a situation.) However, when the caller calls in to report that someone or something has been hurt or wronged, the Call Taker acknowledges that information as either a justified complaint or an unjustified complaint. When the Call Taker acknowledges the complaint as justified, he or she upholds cultural and social standards of good versus bad, right versus wrong, appropriate versus inappropriate, permissible versus impermissible and criminal versus not criminal. When the Call Taker acknowledges the caller’s narrative as valid, he or she is affirming the established rules and protocols of society. Thus, when the caller’s story is acknowledged as a justified complaint, his or her narrative affirms/highlights cultural/social norms and the status quo. A baseline stasis is established. A point of contrast is established implicitly when the complaint is acknowledged as a disruption in the normal functioning of society. Both the caller and Call Taker must have an intrinsic understanding of the concept of “normal” in order for this implicit communication to be appreciated.

The 911 call conversation also involves the communication of a value judgement. In the 911 calls I have listened to, callers often express feelings of sadness, anger, fear, shock, and outrage and a host of other emotions directed either at the potential criminal suspect, if the suspect is known, or at a crime or potential crime that occurred at some point in the past, is ongoing in that moment, or has the potential to occur at some point in the future. Through my analysis of 911 calls
in Garland, Texas I discovered that the 911 callers expression of a value judgment had little to no influence on how a 911 Call Taker classifies and prioritizes a 911 call, in most cases.

The story also follows the protagonist/antagonist motif. The antagonist is the criminal, and the protagonists are the 911 emergency Call Takers and the police who arrive on the scene. The 911 conversation itself has a clear beginning, middle, and end. In the beginning, the 911 Call Taker rhetorically frames the conversation with the words: “Garland 911: what’s the address of your emergency? or “Garland 911: what’s the location of your emergency?” From the point of the initial statement by the 911 Call Taker, the 911 conversation is rhetorically framed as a discussion about an emergency. From that point, all the information that is communicated must meet the standard for what constitutes a valid or justified emergency. In the middle of the conversation, 911 Call Takers ask questions designed to elicit information. Towards the end, 911 Call Takers offer a process explanation in which they explain the reasons for the process and line of questioning. They might also offer a process explanation that includes information regarding the disposition of police officers responding to the scene of the 911 event. Then 911 Call Taker offer a directive – instruction for the Caller - “Please stay on the line.” “Hide under the bed.” “Lock your door.” “Wait for police officers to arrive,” and so on. Usually, 911 Call Takers offer a promise of service in which they state that police will be dispatched and/or are on the way.

The narrative form in the 911 caller and Call Taker interaction ultimately culminates in a suspect description. The caller provides information about the suspect. The Call Taker qualifies that information by asking questions about whether the suspect is white, Black, Hispanic, or Asian. The Call Taker also asks for descriptions of the suspect’s clothing and sometimes asks about distinguishing features such as facial characteristics. The Call Taker always asks for the suspects’ approximate height, build, and age. The entire process itself is non-dialogic in the sense that these
questions are categorical and could potentially be socially representative. The suspect description protocol itself can also be non-dialogic if the description provided invokes stereotypes or culturally specific biases. These stereotypes and/or culturally specific biases might have currency within the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker. These biases matter most if appreciated and/or articulated by police officers responding to the scene of a 911 event.

911 CALL CONVERSATION: SOCIAL NEGOTIATION IN NARRATIVE FORM:

According to Bruner (1990), the narrative form is an institutional genre and a format for social negotiation through which people create meaning (Bruner, 1990, p. 55-56). In the social negotiation of the 911 emergency call conversation, there is a back and forth dynamic – an exchange of rhetorical information. A promise of service is not automatic but negotiated. After having listened to many 911 calls, I noticed that they last much longer than seems warranted to those who are unfamiliar with the process. In many cases, the repeated and intermittent fielding of elicitation questions is necessary to obtain the highest quality information. The Call Taker often asks the same question about the potential crime several times during the call and not in succession, even though a clear answer was given the first time. They also ask repeated questions about suspect descriptions and address verification at several intermittent moments in the 911 call. Call Takers often perform to the standard of due diligence in their attempts to verify everything they have heard. The Call Taker also goes to great lengths to verify worthiness of service, urgency of the situation, the truthfulness of the caller, and the reliability of the information. These criteria are evaluated through the evidentiary information provided by the 911 caller and the consistency with which this evidence is corroborated at various points throughout the 911 call. In a 911 call, there is a back and forth dynamic – an exchange of rhetorical information that is specific to this social negotiation. The social negotiation itself is a natural circumstance of the 911 emergency response
process given that police resources are limited and must be dispatched according to prioritization of need and the police unit’s ability to respond expediently. Within a 911 emergency call, social negotiation contains specific elements that are repeated in most 911 calls with some consistency and predictability. For 911 Call Takers, the social negotiation involves the time spent evaluating the following: worthiness of service, truthfulness of the caller, reliability of the information and the need for police dispatch. For the 911 callers, the social negotiation involves time spent expressing the following: their sense of urgency and a value judgement about the 911 situation, thereby articulating worthiness of service.

Hodge and Kress (1988) propose that the fixed structure of narrative form itself is the bedrock of any society or culture, thereby making it non-dialogic to an extent. The traditional narrative form has a fixed time structure – beginning, middle, and end, frames and sustains cultural norms, and proceeds under fixed, pre-determined models of cause/effect. This bedrock carries many socially constructed meanings and organizes those meanings for social management purposes (Hodge and Kress, 1988, p. 230). The narrative form reproduces the value systems of that given society in which it functions through its communications artifacts – conversations, written records, or other rhetorical exchanges as symbols of relationships informed by cultural understandings and well-defined social relationships in presumably self-evident categories (p. 230). Thus, they contend, human social interaction as primarily representative is non-dialogic (Hodge and Kress, 1988, p. 40).

The 911 emergency call conversation replicates this representative social interaction on a smaller scale within the rhetorical, social microcosm as a narrative event. Imbens-Bailey and McCabe (2000) articulate the narrative form in 911 emergency conversations as comparable to the narrative form in everyday life. They conclude that the narrative form itself is a regular discourse
situation in which people interpret information according to cultural beliefs and values and respond to information based upon their culturally informed interpretation of the information they are hearing – an interactive event (Imbens-Bailey & McCabe, 2000, p. 276). As with any narrative, the 911 emergency call narrative is a culturally informed, interactive event (p. 277). In both 911 emergency narrative and traditional narrative interactive events, “referential communication” is the discourse model (p. 279). “Referential communication” is interactive and interpretations as responses are totally contingent on the reading of verbal cues or signals from the other party (p. 279). Meaning in these narrative interactions is created through implied and/or subliminal negotiation (p. 279). Thus, due to the “referential communication” inherent in the 911 emergency response conversation, communication is non-dialogic in nature as much information is transmitted through insinuation, implied meaning, abstraction, metaphor, and generalization. As Imbens-Bailey and McCabe observe, “the level of elaboration” in a 911 emergency call narrative is significantly diminished in comparison to a narrative exchange in everyday life (p. 279). There is a mandate for expediency. Within this expedient framework, elaboration is sometimes bypassed for simplification and summary that will allow for the efficient dissemination of information and 911 police dispatch. In my research, I examined how the “level of elaboration” informed the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker and ultimately framed the 911 emergency response process as a rhetorical occasion. I discovered that the level of elaboration is much greater than I had previously assumed. Elaboration is necessary to qualify worthiness of service and degree of service. The presence or absence of an emergency situation is qualified through elaboration about evidentiary information, time sequence, and imminent threat levels such as the presence of an active suspect with a weapon.
THE 911 CALL TAKER’S ROLE IS LEGALLY CONSEQUENTIAL:

During the trial of Derek Chauvin, a police officer charged in the wrongful death of George Floyd, the 911 Call Taker, Jena Scurry, testified about what she saw in her capacity as a 911 Call Taker. When Jena Scurry sent police officers to the Cup Foods convenience store in Minneapolis, Minnesota where George Floyd was being questioned for allegedly passing a fake $20 bill, she was able to view a live streaming video of what was transpiring. This was rare, she stated. On most days, they did not have live streaming video access to police on-scene activity. Nevertheless, she testified that she knew something was wrong. She thought the video feed had frozen because she saw Derek Chauvin sitting on George Floyd’s neck for “an extended period of time” (Scurry in Romo, 2021) (Scurry in Bogel-Burroughs, 2021). The other police officers did not move as well. The scene appeared to be a still life frame. Ms. Scurry notified the Minneapolis Police 911 Emergency Center desk sergeant that something was not right. She also questioned the police officers’ use of force and believed this force to be excessive (Romo, 2021) (Bogel-Burroughs, 2021). Jena Scurry’s role in this 911 event was critical. In her role as a 911 Call Taker, she unwittingly became a witness to a murder and her accounting of events was considered to be credible and viable in a court of law as evident through her testimony in the trial of Derek Chauvin. Chauvin was convicted of second-degree unintentional murder among other charges.

THE 911 CALL TAKER’S ROLE IS CONSEQUENTIAL IN THE EMERGING SCIENCE OF POLICE MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS: THE 911 CALL TAKER’S ROLE IS ASSESSING MENTAL ILLNESS PRIOR TO POLICE ON-SCENE RESPONSE:

Mental health considerations are fast becoming a major concern in the world of police 911 emergency response. Police departments around the United States are implementing programs designed to help 911 Call Takers make phone based mental health assessments that will inform
police emergency response protocols. Police officers as well are beginning to undergo extensive mental illness response training. Abramson (2021) notes that some police departments are training their 911 Call Takers to “triage mental health calls during dispatch” (Abramson, 2021, p. 3). Impromptu mental health evaluations of situations and individuals inform instructions provided to police officers responding to the 911 event and will, in some cases, involve the dispatch of mental health clinicians to the scene of the 911 event. In many cases, the 911 Call Taker is playing an active role in facilitating the collaboration between mental health workers and police officers. These mental health interventions on the part of the 911 Call Taker can be critical to reducing incidences of police brutality and other inappropriate or unwarranted police emergency response tactics (Abramson, 2021).

**RESEARCH OVERVIEW:**

In this project, I investigated the nature and quality of communication within the 911 emergency response process and the currency of assumption-based statements in the rhetorical relationship between the 911 emergency Call taker and the 911 caller and in the documents generated through these interactions. I explored the rhetorical nature of the interaction between the 911 Caller and Call Taker and its elements and evaluated how these rhetorical interactions might affect information quality in the initial processing and transfer stages and in the police/incident reports. I analyzed the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in 911 emergency response information transfer with a specific focus on the agency of non-dialogic language in potential 911 miscommunication events. I also evaluated the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in 911 event final outcomes.

In my project, I analyzed three rhetorical, institutional documents: the 911 emergency call conversations, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the police/incident
reports and evaluated the rhetorical interaction between the 911 caller and Call Taker in the 911 emergency call conversation and the flow of information that ultimately culminates in police 911 event on scene response. I looked for inconsistencies and discrepancies created within the 911 emergency conversation rhetorical interaction and evaluated how those inconsistencies and discrepancies might inform the articulation of ideas and lead to miscommunication events in the 911 emergency response process.

**Research Questions:**

My project answers the following questions:

Primary research question: How does the rhetorical exchange between 911 caller and Call Taker inform the 911 emergency response information transfer process and 911 event final outcomes?

In order to answer my primary question, I analyze my findings in response to the following supporting or secondary questions:

A. What are the characteristics/elements of the rhetorical exchange between 911 emergency response Call Takers and 911 callers?

How does the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and Call Taker influence the quality of information in the 911 emergency response process?

How are misunderstandings and information gaps managed by 911 Call Takers?

How might misunderstandings and information gaps influence final event outcomes?

B. Is the rhetorical exchange between 911 caller and Call Taker primarily dialogic or primarily non-dialogic? Why or why not?

How does the use of dialogic and non-dialogic language (Fairclough, 1995, 2003) influence the quality of information in the 911 emergency call interaction?
How might non-dialogic language be used to bridge information gaps and neutralize ambiguity and difference?

C. Does confirmation bias occur (Cooley, 2019)? Why or why not?

How might non-dialogic language elicit common-sense assumptions?

How might common-sense assumptions elicit confirmation bias?

How often do common sense assumptions inform and guide the 911 event classification and prioritization process?

Confirmation Bias Definition:

People who engage in confirmation bias subconsciously rely on their inherent beliefs and commonly held cultural beliefs and assumptions when examining evidence or scrutinizing a situation. They tend to look for evidence or information that upholds their inherent beliefs and commonly held cultural beliefs and assumptions while ignoring evidence that conflicts with these inherent beliefs (Cooley, 2019).

“A British psychologist named Peter Wason conducted much of the original research on confirmation bias in the 1960s. He believed that most people try to confirm their hypothesis rather than trying to falsify it; as a result, they do not adequately test it. According to Gatlin et al. (2017), confirmation bias involves consciously or unconsciously avoiding information that contradicts our currently held views. They suggest that confirmation bias is a cognitive bias that favors information that confirms what we already believe; it impacts how we gather, interpret, and recall information. Digdon (2017) explains that when information is inconvenient for the researcher, it is often filtered out, distorting the evidence. She states: “confirmation bias…cherry picks available evidence, merely leaving out the problem bits,” (p. 2). Because confirmation bias impacts our ability to make sound
decisions (Stewart, 2005), it has a negative impact in various fields. Stewart (2006) found that confirmation bias played a role in military pilot errors; Bradford (2015) found that it played a role in misdiagnosis in doctors’ offices; Bashir (2013) found that it impacted poor investment decisions; Hoch and Ha (1986) found that as it relates to advertising, people are more likely to interpret ambiguous evidence as hypothesis-confirming when there is little contradictory evidence presented” (Wason, Digdon, Stewart, Bashir, Hoch and Ha, cited in Cooley, 2019, p. 50).

Those who engage in confirmation bias hold a certain ideological mindset. They embrace certain ideas about patterns of cause/effect behavior that may or may not be true and tend to see what they believe while processing new information through their fixed ideological mindset. Being unable to conceptualize beyond the narrow parameters of their cognitive mold, they may falsely interpret a situation by fitting that situation into their ideological mold and pre-conceived beliefs about patterns of cause/effect. They do not see reality. They create reality. They will a situation into being what they believe it to be and/or what they believe it should be.

**MY SUBJECTIVITY:**

I am from Alexandria, Virginia - a historically high crime area of the country. Over a span of six years - from 1978 to 1983 - my mother, my grandmother, and I all became victims of muggings - purse snatchings – within an 8-mile radius. While I did not experience any physical harm, I was threatened at knife point. My grandmother and mother were knocked to the ground and experienced bruising. Early in life, I had aspirations of becoming a police officer. As a teenager, (1978-1981) I volunteered with the Police Explorer program attached to the Alexandria Police Department. In my capacity as a Police Explorer, I was allowed to perform volunteer work in the 911 Communications Center and answer 911 emergency calls along with the
Communications Clerks. I was also allowed to work with the NCIC machine and transfer vital information to the 911 Dispatcher who was located in a separate room apart from the 911 Communications Center. In those days, the technology was rudimentary in comparison to the technology that is in use at the El Paso Police Department 911 Emergency Response Center on Threadgill Drive and also at the 911 Emergency Response Center in Garland, Texas. Still, the basic protocols have not changed much. After observing at the El Paso Police Department Emergency Response Center, I learned that Police 911 Call Takers must follow a protocol and ask certain questions in a specific order. They must adhere to classification and priority code criteria when assigning a classification and priority code to a call. Of course, the whole process is managed by the Computer Aided Dispatch Data Entry System. Back in 1978, we would answer the 911 calls, talk with the 911 caller, gather information, and write down the information in these small, rectangular, flash cards. Then we would walk over and literally hand these cards to the 911 Dispatcher.

In my capacity as a Police Explorer, I rode along with police officers for a full 8-hour shift. I was able to go to crime scenes and listen to victims providing narratives for police officers who would subsequently create police reports. I saw and felt their anguish, sadness, and at times, devastation after being robbed at gunpoint or having their homes burglarized and ransacked. I also spent a considerable amount of time assisting an I.D. Technician, officer Beverly Kennerly, who would go to homicide scenes and accidental drownings to assist with the identification of the victims and the collection of forensic evidence. I believe my early exposure to law enforcement operations inspired a certain curiosity about social problems and the institutional management of those social problems.
OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Questions

In the introduction, I articulate the concept of rhetorical technology in the context of my project. I then expand upon that concept by postulating the 911 emergency call conversation as a rhetorical technology in the narrative form. I discuss how and why the conversation between the 911 Caller and Call Taker is a rhetorical exchange in narrative form. I then explain how this rhetorical exchange informs the quality of information in the emergency response process and how the quality of 911 information exchange ultimately informs and directs police officer emergency event on-scene response. I also include a discussion of my personal subjectivity in relation to my project as the final section of this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In my literature review chapter, I compile a body of scholarship in rhetoric and writing studies and in criminal justice and examine the 911 emergency call conversation as a rhetorical event within the narrative genre. I review literature in which the authors argue for the inherently non-dialogic nature of institutional communication, processes, and documents. I discuss Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis theory with a specific focus on his non-dialogic language categories. I place his theory in conversation with Michel Foucault, T.E. VanDijk, Mike Meyers, Ruth Wodak, Clay Spinuzzi, and Seawright, among others. My primary purpose is to forge a convergence of the scholarship around assertions regarding the inherently non-dialogic nature of institutional, social, and cultural rhetorical interaction. In the course of the literature review, I connect Norman Fairclough’s non-dialogic language to social semiotics theories of Jerome Bruner, Herbert Blumer, Hodge and Kress, and Eviatar Zerubavel, who all forward theories of the narrative form in society as the rhetorical platform for the currency of folk psychology and common-sense
assumptions. Next, I cite scholarship on 911 emergency responders and articulate how these scholars are illuminating the non-dialogic nature of 911 emergency response operations and the currency of folk psychology and common sense-assumptions.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Background of Garland, Texas 911 Emergency Response Center:

In this chapter, I list and discuss my research questions. I layout my methodology and how each specific step is used to identify the elements of the 911 caller and Call Taker rhetorical exchange, identify, and analyze ambiguities and inconsistencies in information exchange, and signal the presence or absence of confirmation bias. I explain how I reviewed three document forms, the 911 emergency call audio/transcripts, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports. I explain my process of searching for consistencies and connections between all three documents and the identification and analysis of any inconsistencies and disconnections in the information flow. I discuss my use of grounded theory coding - initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014) and provisional coding (Saldana 2016), and componential analysis (Spradley, 2016) to analyze the 911 emergency call conversations. I then discuss my use of theoretical coding for Norman Fairclough’s non-dialogic language categories in order to further analyze the 911 emergency conversations and evaluate the currency of common-sense assumptions. I then discuss my use of grounded theory coding - initial and focused and theoretical coding – to analyze the related Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports. Finally, I discuss my use of grounded theory coding- initial, focused - and theoretical coding – in the coding of the final police reports and my application of a comparative analysis in the review and analysis of my findings from my coding of all three data sets.
I also provide demographic information about the city of Garland, Texas, to include information about the overall socio-political makeup of this city and crime statistics. I discuss the significance of Garland’s crime rate and its general situational dynamic.

**Chapter 4: Data Analysis: Part 1 – Discussion of Findings of Initial, Focused, and Provisional Coding Processes**

In this chapter, I present a data analysis of the rhetorical exchange between 911 callers and Call Takers in the 911 emergency response conversation. I present the findings of initial, focused, and provisional coding of the selected 911 calls. I discuss the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies generated through the initial and focused coding processes and evaluate the effectiveness of those strategies. I also examine and evaluate the agency of the rhetorical situation categories generated through the provisional coding process and explain how these rhetorical situation categories inform the 911 emergency response process.

**Chapter 5: Data Analysis Part 2: Discussion of Findings from the Componential Analysis and the Agency of Dialogic and Non-Dialogic Language in the 911 emergency call conversations:**

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of my componential analysis process and the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language identified in the theoretical coding process and explore and evaluate how this language informs the 911 caller and Call Taker rhetorical relationship/situation components and facilitates or thwarts the 911 emergency response process.
In the conclusion section, I discuss the findings from my comparative analysis process through which I compared and contrasted all three data set elements. I discuss the presence and absence of inconsistencies, the overall quality of the Garland, Texas 911 emergency information transfer process and one possible case of confirmation bias. I also provide a general overview of my findings and discuss their significance. I discuss the exigency of this work and possible next steps. I discuss my work in the context of existing research in the field of rhetoric and writing studies and in the context of 911 emergency response operations. I explain how my findings might inspire further conversations about the role of rhetoric in articulating police 911 emergency response processes that will ultimately inform police 911 event on-scene decisions.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

While there is little to no rhetorical scholarship that directly addresses the 911 emergency response process and the 911 caller/Call Taker interaction as a rhetorical interaction, to respond to my research questions, I draw upon the scholarship of Critical Discourse Analysis that speaks to the non-dialogic nature of social, and by extension, institutional communication, and the general, rhetorical nature of both. I also interrogate the 911 emergency response scholarship that articulates 911 emergency response communications as a microcosm of traditional western cultural forms in general and the narrative form in particular. I expand the conversation by examining the language of rhetorical exchange in the 911 emergency call conversation and by exploring how this language informs the quality of information that is populated in 911 documents that ultimately inform 911 event outcomes.

Critical Discourse Analysis Defined:

Fairclough defines discourse as commonly held and/or shared beliefs, values, assumptions, conscious and unconscious attitudes, and other cognitive social processes that influence behaviors and decision making. Critical Discourse Analysis is a “transdisciplinary analysis of relationships between discourse and other elements of social process” (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, p. 10). He later theorized that text can be divided into two categories - dialogic and non-dialogic (Fairclough, 2003, p. 46-47). Dialogic text accommodates and facilitates difference as it pertains to what constitutes evidence, interpretation, context, and perspective while including many possibly opposing voices and contradictions (p. 46) Dialogic text attributes very specific information to the author and assigns specific ownership of and responsibility for the stated information through direct quotations that people can specifically evaluate and respond to. Non-dialogic text is ideologically based text that neutralizes and/or obfuscates difference, does not include direct
quotations or specific references to the information sources, does not assign ownership of and/or responsibility for the stated information and is often written in the passive voice. Non-dialogic text contains vague references, generalizations, and assumptions that neutralize difference and controversy in order to forge consensus and convince people that certain things are obvious and inevitable or a settled question (p. 47). In the 911 emergency call process, assumption-based statements are inevitable. Information is time sensitive and there is an urgency to process and classify. The Call Taker does not usually know the caller and is unfamiliar with the context of the information he or she is hearing for the first time. The caller, in turn, perhaps is unfamiliar with the fixed institutional technology and protocols in 911 emergency operations. Are those gaps in meaning reconciled and if so, how?

Fairclough (1995, 2010) also contends that Critical Discourse Analysis involves an exploration of dialogue as a power struggle in which social roles are negotiated and clear winners and losers emerge. Thus, Critical Discourse Analysis is a study of the strategies of language - both conscious and unconscious (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, p. 19). And yet, he argues, language is much more than merely the venue through which social roles are negotiated. Language and the understandings behind language maintain and sustain class structures in Capitalistic societies (p. 25). Language interactions are informed and directed by what Fairclough calls “background knowledge” or BGK (p.30). This background knowledge consists of a dossier of commonly held beliefs and assumptions maintained in certain words and phrases that function as placeholders. Background knowledge is a product of “beliefs, values, and ideologies” (p.30). Background knowledge or BGK is the filter through which all acquired information is processed and assessments regarding the truth value of the information are made (p. 45). Most significantly, “background knowledge” or BGK relies on knowledge of language codes, knowledge of principles
and norms of language use, knowledge of the situation, and knowledge of the world” (Winograd, 1982, p. 14 in Fairclough, 1995, 2010, p. 36). One example of the agency of “background knowledge” is found in Fairclough’s study of a rape case in England. Judgments were made prior to trial based upon “background knowledge” in juxtaposition with commonly held beliefs and assumptions (p.31). The victim was known to be a highly emotionally charged woman who would frequently initiate and/or participate in public brawls. When she didn’t react in the same emotionally charged way after her rape, the officers thought she was lying about the incident. They thought she was not afraid because she usually exhibited fear with a strong emotional display when threatened (p. 33). This anecdotal case draws upon a cultural assumption that people follow predictable patterns of behavior. The officers also relied on other “implicit propositions” - that most women have bad tempers and that a woman would not willingly go to a man’s house if she didn’t expect to have sexual intercourse with him (p. 33). These officers relied on their background knowledge. As the substance of social interaction, these knowledge bases are grounded in the institution “as an apparatus of verbal interaction” within an “order of discourse” (Fairclough, 1995, 2003, p. 39-40). In my research, I focused on the unconscious strategies of language in the narrative description that is a 911 emergency call conversation. I searched for ways background knowledge (commonly held beliefs/assumptions and folk psychology) might have potential currency in the 911 emergency response call and related information dissemination processes.

Fairclough forwarded critical discourse analysis as a study of the relationships between inherent cultural beliefs values and social process (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, p. 10). Critical Discourse Analysis performs the following tasks: Investigates and critiques relationships as directed and informed by social process, performs a systematic analysis of texts, provides descriptive and normative assessments, and addresses social wrongs for the purposes of
intervention (Fairclough, p. 10-11). Critical Discourse Analysis as method evaluates all human interaction as the substance of relationships and power-based social roles articulated through conversation, writing, listening, and other communicative events. Thus, every human communicative event is a negotiation - either conscious or unconscious- that informs and validates certain cultural and social understandings that premise social interaction. Critical Discourse Analysis explores objects in the physical world, relationships, institutions, events - all directed by language and genre for the purposes of creating meaning and meaning-making processes (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, p.3). In this meaning-making process, all relationships are dialectical in the sense that they are fluid, evolving, and constantly subject to nuanced and often subliminal negotiation (Fairclough, p. 3). The tools of this subliminal negotiation are the following elements: Representation - ideas and cognitive processes of conceptualization and association and Identification - personal context (beliefs, values, experience, positionality) (Fairclough, 2003, p. 27). In the 911 emergency response process, both the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller must rely on their belief that they are being acknowledged and understood. They must have faith, at least to some extent, that they are processing the same information and conceptualizing that information in the same way. The Call Taker repeats questions and elicits more detail as the call progresses. During the process, the Call Taker has some agency over the situation; however, ultimately the accuracy of information transfer and value judgments made are contingent upon a meeting of the minds that is elusive and undefined. This meeting of the minds involves agreement regarding what constitutes viable evidence and nuanced distinctions about the degree of threat level. The 911 caller and Call Taker must agree regarding the presence of a threat, the degree of the treat, and the usefulness of police intervention.
LANGUAGE AS TEXT AND THE SYMBOLISM OF NON-DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS:

In the 911 Emergency response process, the information gathered is interpreted and transformed into knowledge that informs empirical experience based upon the rhetorical interaction between the 911 Caller and 911 Call Taker. The tool of this information transfer is text in the form of the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report and the Police/Incident report. While there are many unknown and unarticulated contingencies, I believe there is one constant – the fixed nature of institutional protocol through those documents and the related language. Wodak (1995), a student of Fairclough, articulates that language as text is that one constant in communication – a rhetorical agent for the representation of fixed, non-negotiable relationships (Wodak, 1995, p.204). The nature of these relationships is inherent in the text and conceptually fixed within the institution (Wodak, 1997, p.173). Because, as Wodak postulates, relationships are inherent in written and verbal exchange within an institution, the dynamic is inevitably non-dialogic. The members of the institution know what is expected by implication, insinuation, or abstraction, elicited through the language of the document. The occasion for exposition is obfuscated by the expedient nature of language as compacted meaning.

Critical Discourse Analysis is an examination of relationships and power dynamics within relationships. The 911 emergency call conversation is a relationship of necessity in what appears to be a power struggle between the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller. It is a test of wills. Wodak (1995) articulates critical discourse analysis as designed to examine “relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" for the purposes of social interaction (Wodak, 1995, p.204). Social interaction often unfolds as a linguistic process through all the documents that manage society and inform power structures and social roles. Relationships, power structures, and agreed upon protocols rely on relationships that are inherent in written and verbal
exchange (Wodak, 1997, p. 173). Because, as Wodak postulates, relationships are inherent in written and verbal exchange within an institution, the dynamic is inevitably non-dialogic. The members of the institution know what is expected by implication, insinuation, or abstraction, and yet the occasion for exposition is obfuscated by the institutional processes themselves only to the extent that the 911 call is automatically rhetorically framed as an emergency. The 911 Call Taker, as an institutional representative, is bound to protocol. However, the protocol itself is designed to facilitate exposition. In my research, I discovered that the Call Taker strives for exposition. However, the impatient and scared 911 caller works to obfuscate the need for detail in the service of expediency by using non-dialogic language. For the 911 Call Taker, control over the situation is obtained through the retrieval of evidentiary detail. For the 911 caller, control is obtained when the Call Taker agrees to send the police to the scene of the 911 event. That is the power struggle.

All human relationships are battles for influence in various domains of human activity. Geisler (2004) contends that all rhetoric is a form of power and agency – a way to manage others and assign and enforce social position. Context, social networks, and individual will factor into the process (Logie as cited in Geisler, 2004, p. 14). Text as verbal or written communication is the rhetorical platform for this power struggle. And yet, the text limits the platform for this power struggle by informing and guiding the situation within the constraints of a few possible linguistic options. This text as the platform for human interactions has its own shape or form that is elusive in nature. Jager (1996) theorized that language and communication contain an “intrinsic logic” with “implications and insinuations that are implicit in some way” through the use of “idioms, sayings, cliches, vocabulary, style, actors, and sources” (Jager, 1996, 1999, in Meyer, 2011, p. 12). When a text has an intrinsic logic, it remains unexamined because the intrinsic logic is considered a self-evident redundancy of archetypal knowledge. This archetypal knowledge is only
considered as such to the creators of the text who own its meaning and to those with the privileged knowledge of the creator’s intentions and motivations. Jager argues that language usage is intrinsically non-dialogic as it functions within a culture through “insinuation, implication, symbolism, and metaphorism” (p.12). By default, language is often closed to exposition and meaning is contingent upon shared and never articulated cultural understandings. In my research, I focused on the implications and insinuations in everyday language and figurativeness as description in the 911 emergency call narrative. I analyzed the 911 emergency call conversations and looked for that “intrinsic logic” that guides the process and the codes embedded in non-dialogic language that influenced the manner in which 911 caller information is interpreted and processed when situational context is unknown, ignored, misunderstood and/or replaced by the personal context of either the 911 caller or the 911 Call Taker.

As power struggles articulated through language as text are limiting, so is language itself. Van Dijk (1981) argues that “propositional structures” are inherent in language (Van Dijk, 1981, in Meyer, 2011, p. 12). Thus, certain ideas are implied within the words themselves as subtext or connotative meaning that is never openly identified and thus, not open to exposition and examination. If an act of discourse has a “propositional structure” the manner in which the rhetorical exchange will proceed has already been decided. The structure itself has obfuscated the need for exposition. The 911 emergency call conversation has a propositional structure. The first thing that the Call Taker asks the 911 caller is “what is your emergency or what is the address of your emergency?” This act alone bounds the conversation within a certain framework - emergency versus non-emergency and forces a rhetorical commitment on the part of the 911 caller. This is inherently a non-dialogic process. In my research, I focused on the propositional structures inherent in non-dialogic language itself. In my process, I discovered that common sense
assumptions are usually applied by the 911 caller as the Call Taker elicits dialogic exchange that will inform classification and priority code decisions in a 911 emergency event situation.

Van Dijk postulated Critical Discourse Analysis as a process that includes the analysis of context specific knowledge with its inherent “implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness, omissions and polarizations” (Van Dijk, 1981, in Meyer, 2001, p. 13). It is a study of “linguistic markers” that inform structures and inherently pick sides in a verbal or written exchange and predetermine outcomes (Van Dijk, 1981, in Meyer, 2001, p. 13). Van Dijk speaks to the non-dialogic nature of social discourse in general. As Fairclough (1995, 2003) and Gee (2014), he recognizes “linguistic markers” as nominalizations - a key tool of background agency that may or may not have an ideological purpose (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 824). Gee (2014) argues that nominalizations are like “trash compactors” and can function as abstract representations of a host of implied cultural knowledge that is treated as inherent, self-evident, and not requiring exposition (Gee, 2014, p.69). The nominalization is a verb transposed into a noun form in order to defer agency while articulating an abstraction. For example, take the verb to interfere. When used in its verb form, it needs a noun subject that identifies the person completing the action. When transposed to a nominalization, the word becomes interference. It can function as the subject of the sentence or as the direct object of a linking verb without any assignment of agency (Fowler & Butterfield, 2015). For example: Interference was widespread. The nominalization, Van Dijk contends, is a primary and most common agent of non-dialogic communication (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 827). He articulates a nominalization as a description of an action whose agency or author is unknown, and/or can be known through context or inferred general knowledge (p. 827). The common use of nominalizations has relevance for institutional communication. Institutions, and particularly governmental institutions rely on classification words that compact dense meaning.
To what extent is this dense meaning known, understood, and able to be articulated, either through a 911 Call Taker or a 911 caller in a 911 emergency response conversation? What is the currency of implicit assumption, vagary, allusion, and other indirect meanings in a 911 emergency call interaction when nominalizations are not open to exposition? Implicit assumptions, allusions, vagueness, and other indirect meanings are non-dialogic as interpretations might be varied, understandings might be skewed, and clarity might be avoided. In my project, I explored the ebb and flow of implicit assumptions, allusions, and other indirect meanings as part of the rhetorical exchange between the Call Taker and 911 caller in a 911 emergency conversation. I examined local meanings inherent in the 911 emergency conversations and the extent to which these “local meanings” have currency. I analyzed emergency situations in which the context was unknown, and the available information was ambiguous. I addressed the ideas that substituted for actual context and the process through which the 911 caller or 911 Call Taker placed available information within a general, cultural context through the application of common-sense assumptions. I did not identify a specific use of a nominalization in the 911 emergency response process and common-sense assumptions had little agency in expediting police 911 emergency response.

All cultural meanings are subject to negotiation or mediation in which various social interpretations of an event are considered. Scollon (2011) postulated Mediated Discourse Analysis as requiring a mediated action— the process of human interaction necessary to complete tasks and achieve goals. “A mediated action is not a class of actions but rather the moment in real time when multiple social practices intersect to form a unique moment in history that is identified by participants as a social action” (Scollon, 2011, p. 9). I look at the 911 emergency call conversation as a “mediated action” – an event in which a 911 caller calls in an emergency and whose
articulation of the event is interpreted and guided by the 911 Call Taker. The Call Taker wages an intervention, so to speak, when he or she answers a 911 emergency call. He intervenes on the part of the government as not only a mediator but as a manager. He manages the situation by compelling the 911 caller to narrate what may be a complex and nuanced event within the prescripts of the 911 protocols. He asks the questions, and she must provide answers to those specific questions. The framing of the questions informs and limits the rhetorical exchange. Initially, I believed that Call Taker questions were intended obfuscate difference, ambiguity and the unexpected in service of the institution. In reality, the Call Taker questions facilitated exposition and the revelation or clarification of the unusual, the ambiguous, and/or the obscure in service of the institution.

Scollon also theorizes a “nexus of practice - the social organization that links habitual practices and protocols” within a “community of practice – a community of people who regularly interact with each other for some common purpose or goal” (Scallon, 2011, p 8-15). A “nexus of practice” is a non-dialogic venue as “habitual practices and protocols” are bound in a common thread. These habitual practices and protocols work in synchronicity and complement each other. The 911 Emergency Response Department in any police agency is a “nexus of practice.” The 911 emergency Call Taker follows a process, exhibits habitual practices, and is grounded by method and protocol. The 911 emergency call is a mediated process as the Call Taker answers, listens, interprets, and decides what must be done. The Call Taker makes judgments based upon his or her dialectical exchange with the 911 caller. The Call Taker applies a method. The degree of understanding between the Call Taker and the 911 caller informs the process of mediation. However, sometimes process and method are not one hundred percent reliable. Life is messy. People are messy. There is an assumption when a 911 call is received by the Call Taker that the person reporting shares a general understanding about the community in which they both live.
There is an assumption that both reporting party and receiver have the same general beliefs and values and understand the same communally held definitions. This, of course, is not always the case. And so, ultimately, a caller may believe he is communicating one message when in fact he is communicating another one. What happens when the Call Taker either misunderstands the context or is unaware of the context? What is the impact if the 911 caller or 911 Call Taker apply common sense assumptions that may have no applicability in that case? Through my research, I discovered that the Call Taker’s process of seeking evidentiary information through elicitation and clarification questions helped fill in the gaps.

**Language as Cultural and Ideological Representation in Police 911 Emergency Response:**

Police 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers deal in information transmitted through language. Language has power, influences thoughts and reactions, informs perception, planning and problem solving. The tools of language, words, are posits of experience -representations of perceptions informed by beliefs systems or ideologies. 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers are cultural and socio-economic language brokers. Garber (2012) contends that words are “loaded” with contextual meanings (Garber, 2012, p.6). These words “are stuffed, even over stuffed, with meanings and implications, like a sofa or a foie gras duck or a comic farce, or a loaded gun” (p. 6). These words, like all language, represent either knowledge or belief. The problem is that there is often a profuse bleed between knowledge and belief and the two become confused. These loaded words often function as placeholders for knowledge that is informed by belief rather than verified knowledge (p.7). Thus, words are non-dialogic often in the sense that they are representations of beliefs rather than articulations of experience or placeholders of empirical meaning. The 911 emergency call interaction is a microcosm of a larger social macrocosm. Call Takers and 911 callers, responding
under great pressure and time limits, have the potential to perceive and evaluate according to their inherent beliefs about the way the world works. When a 911 Call Taker is answering a 911 call, the situation transpires rapidly. Contrary to my original assumptions, the Call Taker proceeds as if there is time. The Call Taker doesn’t want to waste limited police resources and assumes a meticulous posture in an attempt to get it right. To that aim, the Call Taker, as a matter of protocol, asks more questions and almost forcefully draws out more precise detail. Nevertheless, certain calls require immediate classification, prioritization, and police dispatch. In those instances, there is little time to distinguish between knowledge and belief. Symbolism could have currency on the part of the Call Taker and the 911 caller when there are ambiguities or abstractions and little time. However, through my research, I discovered that it is the 911 caller who most often defers to belief when there are many unknowns, and the perceived threat level is high. Symbolism had currency in two isolated incidents.

Belief is cultural, political, and socio-economic. When a Call Taker or 911 caller relies on belief, he or she is relying on personal context, individual perception/worldview, and personal experience that may or may not align with the context of the situation or the personal context of the either party. How might Police 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers use the power and influence of language to promote belief over fact in the emergency response communications process?

All language is symbolic in some sense. Klatch (1988) argues that symbolism is highly consequential within American society. Symbols represent “orientation” or the position one holds or the role one plays ‘within our society (Klatch, 1988, p. 141). Words and their dossier of compacted meanings are symbols that represent one’s positionality and status while functioning as placeholders or posits of experience. Words are symbols of the complex and abstract in human experience and are used to obfuscate or bypass exposition while communicating presumably self-
evident cultural positions (Klatch, 1988, p. 141). If words are symbols, they are inherently non-dialogic. Words that function as symbols are only understood by those who have this specialized knowledge created within an exclusive knowledge community.

In my research, I explored how words were used in the 911 emergency call conversation, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports. What is the currency of symbolic non-dialogic language? What is taken for granted as understood? What gaps in meaning remain ignored? 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers and 911 callers are also people who live and work in society. They too have their beliefs. They too apply common sense assumptions and engage in the collective consensus regarding commonly held beliefs and assumptions. As holders of beliefs and values reinforced through symbolic language, they too must contend with the profuse bleed between belief and knowledge or belief and fact. In law enforcement, facts matter most. However, the process of determining fact from fiction is a taxing one. How does one define a “fact?” What constitutes evidence? What constitutes urgency or an immediate threat? The respective police departments have their legal definitions and protocols. I looked beyond the presumed obviousness of the institutionally prescriptive. I explored how common-sense assumptions/folk psychology reconcile the bleed between fact and belief, between ambiguous and clear, and between the ordinary and the unexpected. I analyzed outcomes of 911 call events and concluded that belief is sometimes confused with fact.

Can representation be a tool in and of itself? Can belief be a weapon? Klatch (1988) cites Karl Marx who postulated that symbols are weapons through which people manipulate and oppress other people, gain, and maintain power, and promote particular cultural ideas (Marx in Klatch, 1988 p. 142). Can something as seemingly innocuous as a 911 emergency call become the forum for the manipulation of cultural ideas? Does 911 emergency response process function through the
currency of cultural beliefs in words or phrases or in the currency of evidence-based knowledge? Can evidence based knowledge itself be representative as a cultural weapon?

The 911 emergency call conversation is a social negotiation and a power struggle. As a social negotiation and a power struggle, the 911 emergency call conversation can be an occasion for manipulation. The manipulation occurs when either the 911 caller or 911 Call Taker uses the more effective words. Duncan (2018) contends that words are not innocuous and have influence far beyond their surface uses and applications. Words and phrases have power. Duncan observes that words are used as tools of psychological violence (Duncan, 2018, p. 9). She refers to the racial profiling in Arizona in the midst of the anti-illegal immigrant campaign and the use of the term “reasonable suspicion” as a placeholder for a host of negative assumptions about people of color and illegal immigrants (p. 9). Duncan insists “that words have mass, especially if they are written down” (p. 9). Through my research, I discovered that the 911 callers more often use words fraught with psychological violence such as “suspiciously there.”

Ordinarily, we think of language as innocuous when considered for informational purposes only. However, language - word and phrases- are inherently cultural and ideological. Language organizes our lives through words and phrases that articulate the meaning of experience and posit ways of living and the related methods and processes. Word and phrases also posit belief systems and function as placeholders for a multitude of related ideas within a belief system. Mulcahy (2016) argues that in the United States we have a public culture that is premised on relationships of colonialism in the Americas (p. 197). Mulcahy postulates that we live in a post-colonial public culture in the United States in which the residues of colonial power relations between the dominant and the dominated are still evident in commonly held beliefs and assumptions. In the aftermath of colonialism, language is the primary tool for the dissemination of belief that informs thought and
action rather than for merely the dissemination of information - particularly in governmental and institutional contexts. I focused on the language of 911 Emergency conversation between the Call Taker and the 911 caller and the related documents as not mere information but as platforms for the dissemination of institutionally and culturally informed belief. I discovered little to no evidence of obvious colonial/imperial motifs in the institutional processes; however, I did discover that a colonial cultural reference was used by a criminal suspect to explain his crime to the victim.

Language, as Jurgen Link postulated, is the tool of collective symbolism that establishes, informs, and stabilizes power structures. Link (1983) postulates that discourse as “an institutionally consolidated concept of speech inasmuch as it determines and consolidates action and thus already exercises power” (Link, 1983, p. 60). Thus, language used for institutional purposes is somewhat fixed in nature as an instrument of power and as a tool for the dissemination of cultural frameworks that facilitate cultural dominance and sustain power relationships far beyond the expediencies of mere communication. What does cultural dominance mean in the 911 emergency response domain? How is the 911 emergency response system a culturally specific system that reinforces the dominant cultural model while ignoring the validity of other cultural models? How does the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Police 911 Call Taker undermine or reinforce the dominant cultural model? Is the 911 Police Call Taker protocol informed by a cultural model and to what extent is this protocol fixed? Are there opportunities to bypass institutional protocols to accommodate differences or variations from the language and cultural norms? I considered whether the 911 emergency call audios/ transcripts are documents for the negotiation of meaning or forums for the expression of fixed cultural and institutional structures. I concluded that the 911 call and the related documents are informed by institutional process for the purpose of facilitating the retrieval and expression of evidentiary information.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AS NON-DIALOGIC PROCESS:

Meaning in all social interaction is in flux – an ongoing, evolving process. Meaning within a social interaction is also always contingent upon the behaviors of the participants. Blumer (1969) postulated that meaning is constructed in the process of social interaction as dialogue, and/or forms of written communication (Blumer, 1969, p. 3-4). He coined the term “symbolic interactionism” to name the process through which meaning is created as people receive information, interpret information, and respond based upon their unique, individual interpretations (p. 4). The first premise of Blumer’s theory is that people react towards things, concepts, and people based on the inherent meaning those things, concepts, and/or people have for them. They assume that their inherent meanings are universal meanings, and the construction of meaning is taken for granted (p. 2). Interpretation is key in “symbolic interactionism.” However, it is a unique form of interpretation - interpretation based upon a gut feeling regarding mutuality in understanding within a given verbal or written exchange (Blumer, 1969, in Charmaz, 2014, p. 265). This gut feeling is informed by common sense assumptions/ folk psychology. In the process of interpretation based upon gut feeling, social structures are reproduced (Blumer, 1969, in Charmaz, 2014, p. 266). Often, this gut feeling is also informed by prior interactions which Blumer contends are in turn also framed by the collective life of any given society (p. 266). Most significantly, Blumer argues that social interaction informs and determines decision making processes, and by default, human conduct (Blumer, 1969, p. 8). The process is non-dialogic in the sense that meaning is insinuated and abstract and yet with a ubiquitous currency.
FOLK PSYCHOLOGY AND COMMON-SENSE ASSUMPTIONS IN SOCIETY/SPEECH AS NON-DIALOGIC SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

Folk psychology is relevant to 911 emergency response operations because it inherently informs the manner in which people interact in the experiential domain of human communication. Bruner (1990) forwarded the concept of “folk psychology” “as a system by which people organize their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world” (Bruner, 1990, p. 35). He proposed that this “folk psychology” is established knowledge - what he terms “canonical” (p. 39). This knowledge is not documented in any formal capacity; however, its precepts are ubiquitous within a culture and widely accepted as self-evident and unquestionable. Its primary tool of dissemination, according to Bruner, is the narrative form of oral and written communication – simply put, the storytelling tradition. The narrative always has a basic structure - the plot or theme, the negotiation between the real and the imaginary, and the expected and the unexpected. However, most significantly, Bruner postulates that the narrative form is a management/mediation tool and organizes experience, distinguishes the “exceptional from the ordinary” or the expected from the unexpected, and constructs logical links between information (Bruner, 1990, p. 47). The authors of a narrative or the storytellers use “folk psychology” as their gauge to evaluate what is standard and expected behavior and what is abnormal or deviant. According to Bruner, “folk psychology” in the narrative manages the abnormal and consolidates it within standard forms. The narrator or storyteller modifies difference so that it fits within the mold of manageable and processible information (p. 49). The 911 emergency conversation, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report, and the related Police/Incident reports are all narrative forms. Each 911 document tells a story about what happened and situates an event in real time with its cast of
characters. Furthermore, each 911 document constitutes managed and processed information that is institutionalized.

Those who use folk psychology assume that everyone has the same value system and/or that there is only one value system that matters. It stands to reason that folk psychology might be a viable and efficient social management tool. Folk psychology conjures notions of widespread agreement regarding the regular patterns that govern the functioning of society and widespread consent regarding what those patterns should be. Folk psychology fools people into believing that their governmental institutions are controlling the environment for them and that everything is predictable and explainable. In fact, folk psychology obfuscates the need to acknowledge the anomalies that might be just as consequential. Folk psychology neutralizes difference and ambiguity and conjures a false sense of trust in the system and dependence on comfortable ways of living. In reality, many events/actions are anomalous, random (without identifiable variables of cause and effect) defy logic, escape explanation, and are completely unable to be controlled or predicted. In my investigation of the 911 emergency response process, I discovered that no matter how competent the 911 Call Taker was or to what extent he or she elicited or almost commanded detail, some 911 callers were disingenuous and/or had hidden motives. In some cases, 911 callers’ were too overwhelmed or fearful to provide accurate information. The only implicit cultural understandings that appeared to have any real currency were the roles of citizen watchdog and vigilante citizen intervention in the 911 emergency process.

**THE 911 EMERGENCY CALL CONVERSATION AS A NON-DIALOGIC/STRATEGIC, NARRATIVE FORM:**

The police 911 emergency call conversation, as a narrative form, tells a story about people and the society in which they live. The police 911 call exchange represents the articulation of an
event and a response to the articulation of that event – 911 Call Taker and 911 caller interaction. The 911 emergency call is the instrument through which a citizen can call for help; however, it is much more. The 911 emergency call interaction is strategic. The 911 Call Taker is not merely listening for the purposes of documentation. He or she is listening with the obligation to act. He or she must assess the accuracy of the information and the urgency of the situation. Since his or her action might critically impact a life and death situation, the Call Taker must validate the caller and the information before acting. He or she is obliged to forge a relationship of trust with a perfect stranger. Through this interaction, information will be received, evaluated, classified, and prioritized. This information will be applied to concrete action that is police emergency response.

Hodge and Kress (1988) propose that the narrative form itself is the bedrock of any society or culture. This bedrock carries many socially constructed meanings and organizes those meanings for social management purposes (Hodge and Kress, 1988, p. 230). The narrative form reproduces the value systems of that given society in which it functions (p. 230).

The speech act, as the key instrument of the narrative form, is inherently consequential not merely as a communication medium. The speech act is nuanced and complex. Voloshinov (1973) postulates that the speech act itself is socially constructed and when people engage in speech acts, there is a mutual acknowledgement/understanding between participants “whose consciousness has already been socially constructed” (Voloshinov, 1973, in Hodge and Kress, 1988, p.19). I considered the 911 call audio/transcripts as speech acts within a narrative framework in which the participants communicate in socially constructed ways using dialogic and non-dialogic language as cultural. I considered the impact of folk psychology and common-sense assumptions in the non-dialogic language exchanges.
Within any social exchange, most communicated ideas, as well as social roles and power dynamics, are accepted as self-evident. Exposition is considered as a redundancy and an oddity. Hodge and Kress (1988) postulated that all texts - conversations, written records, or other rhetorical exchanges are all symbols of relationships informed by cultural understandings and well-defined social relationships in presumably self-evident categories. Thus, they contend, human social interaction is primarily representative as “participants in semiosis typically transmit a great profusion of messages in a number of codes about the status of the exchange and their own and other’s roles” (Hodge and Kress, 1988, p. 40). I considered the 911 emergency event call conversation and its related documents as rhetorical documents of social representation. I considered the reliability of the implied symbolism in the 911 emergency call exchange between the 911 Call Taker and caller. What is left unsaid or un-interrogated in a 911 emergency call exchange? What is processed at face value? I explored the possibility that cultural understanding and social representation neutralize and manage unknowns and reconcile ambiguity, thereby providing epistemological license for the implementation of the 911 emergency response process.

I discovered that the communication of viable evidentiary information that qualified the 911 emergency event dominated the process of 911 emergency communication.

Hodge and Kress also articulate the concept of genre as the foreground or platform for the dissemination of commonly held beliefs and assumptions. They contend that genre itself is a unifying social tool that is functional while “carrying a preexisting set of understandings about roles, meanings, and styles that are shared by all participants, including viewers” (p. 51). The 911 emergency call audio/transcripts, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and Police/Incident reports are all sub-genres within the genre of police 911 event documentation. The 911 call is a universalized and institutionalized conversation. The police 911 event documentation
is institutionalized narrative. This documentation primarily upholds the efficiency of the police department and is streamlined according to department policies. Within that consideration, the police 911 event documentation is scientific in nature, strategic, and functional. As a management tool, information that is populated is often generalized, vague, and designed to serve the purposes of the “universalized” epistemological constructions (Hodge and Kress, 1988, p. 257).

The 911 emergency call conversation narrative is a microcosm of larger narrative form of general social communication. Bailey and McCabe (2000) compare and contrast the narrative form in 911 emergency conversations with the narrative form in everyday life. First, they conclude that the narrative form itself is a regular discourse situation in which people articulate information according to cultural beliefs and values and respond to information based upon their culturally informed interpretation of the information they are hearing (Bailey and McCabe, 2000, p. 276). As with any narrative, they contend, the 911 emergency call narrative is an interactive event (p. 277). They cite “referential communication” as the rhetorical discourse model in both 911 emergency narrative and non-emergency narrative (p. 279). “Referential communication” is interactive, and interpretations and responses are totally contingent on the reading of verbal cues or signals from the other party (p. 279). Meaning in these narrative interactions is created through implied and/or subliminal negotiation (p.279). Through my research, I discovered that the 911 caller’s communication is often non-dialogic in nature as much information is transmitted through insinuation, implied meanings, abstractions, metaphor, and generalization in an attempt to articulate worthiness of service and the urgency of the situation.

Bailey and McCabe also claim that the “the level of elaboration” in a 911 emergency call narrative is significantly diminished in comparison to a narrative exchange in everyday life. In my study, I explored the narrative exchange between Call Taker and 911 caller and expanded upon
this initial articulation of “referential communication.” I reviewed and analyzed the transcription protocols and sequence of responses while searching for the layers of meaning beneath the surface of words and phrases and evaluating the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language (Fairclough, 1995, 2003) in decision making and ultimately in the whole 911 emergency response process.

The 911 call conversation is a social negotiation. As any social negotiation, its participants have their implicit roles within the framework of a self-evident platform. Raymond and Zimmerman (2016) frame the narrative structure of the 911 emergency call conversation as a negotiation that is limited within the rhetorical framework of “beneficiary and benefactor” (Raymond and Zimmerman, 2016, p. 727). They argue that the extent to which a call successfully brings a resolution is contingent upon the degree of articulatory compatibility between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker within the strict rhetorical framework of “beneficiary and benefactor”(p. 723). Thus, he observes, the 911 emergency call is a negotiation between two parties who share a mutual understanding that is devoid of exposition. Much of this mutual understanding is obscure, implied, and symbolized in nuance. He refers to an “alignment” between 911 caller and 911 Call Taker premised on the fixed roles of beneficiary and benefactor as something that is critical and yet mythological in nature (p. 729). This alignment does not have specific criteria and yet in its absence, miscommunication or a total communication breakdown occurs. If the rhetorical framework of a 911 emergency call conversation is situated within the fixed rhetorical roles of “beneficiary and benefactor,” the nature of the interaction is non-dialogic. This interaction is non-dialogic in the sense that the conversation must proceed within this fixed framework, thus obfuscating any contingency that falls outside of the said framework. Also, because the criteria for “beneficiary and benefactor” escape specific definition and exposition, the understanding that is forged between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker is ambiguous, abstract, highly generalized, and
mythological in nature. The dynamic must be non-dialogic by default. Also, within the roles of benefactor and beneficiary, there is a dynamic of dependency. The benefactor or police 911 Call Taker is in a position of control. The beneficiary, the 911 caller, must defer to the police 911 Call Taker’s better judgment and authority in this situation. Thus, the 911 caller is dependent upon the police 911 Call Taker. The quality of service that this 911 caller receives is contingent upon the rhetorical relationship he forges with the 911 Call Taker and the degree of understanding and empathy this 911 Call Taker holds for the unfolding situation and possibly the 911 caller him or herself.

Beyond and above the personal, rhetorical roles that are assumed by both 911 caller and 911 Call Taker is the institutional role of the police department and its agents. Zamboni (2019) conducted a study of “911 call operators” and emergency responders and concluded that they are “street level bureaucrats” who primarily serve the agenda of the institution that is their respective police department (Zamboni, 2019, p. 466). According to Zamboni, when not deferring to bureaucratic protocols and agendas, 911 Call Takers and emergency responders often relied on their personal cultural beliefs and values when making assessments regarding how to provide emergency care (p. 466). 911 Emergency on scene responders often made strategic decisions based upon their perceptions of “clients’ behavior and personal characteristics” (Willson, 1989, Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003; Lipsky, 2010 in Zamboni, 2019, p. 466). Also, they were more likely to act favorably towards a client whose circumstances were similar to their own or whose struggles they could empathize with due to mutual experience. Zamboni also concluded that 911 emergency responders often make value judgments regarding the integrity of their clients. They decide who deserves service and who doesn’t based upon their personal beliefs and values and culturally informed common-sense assumptions. Thus, it appears that the processes of 911
emergency response and triage are non-dialogic to the extent that the 911 emergency responder’s personal sentiments are an extension of his or her position as an institutional agent. The 911 emergency responder, according to Zamboni, uses institutional protocol, to impose personal value judgments - on the spot moral assessments based upon their pre-conceived mindsets. Of course, on those occasions, the 911 emergency providers were those who went to the scene of an event and interacted with the people they were serving. In my research, I examined and analyzed the 911 emergency call conversation and the rhetorical exchange between the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller. I found little culturally grounded bias in the verbal exchange information that was transferred to the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports and informed call classifications and prioritizations. In turn, I found no evidence of culturally grounded bias in the Police/Incident reports.

911 Call Conversations are also non-dialogic to an extent because police 911 Call Takers follow institutional protocols and guidelines when answering 911 calls and dispatching police officers to the scene of a 911 event. The 911 emergency conversation itself has a protocol. The existence of a fixed protocol makes the process non-dialogic; however, the protocols themselves are dialogic in the sense that they are designed to elicit complex and nuanced detail. 911 Call Takers are obliged to ask certain questions in a specific way in order to elicit very specific answers. The 911 emergency conversation and related processes are also bound by the protocols and laws of the legal system and the content of the 911 call can become evidence in a court of law where it must meet a legal standard.
CONVERSATION AS A DISCOURSE EVENT PREMISED UPON AND INFORMED BY NON-DIALOGIC CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE:

All knowledge as conversation is cultural and implies ubiquitous, self-evident ideas to some degree. Gee (1999, 2014) contends that all conversation is a discourse event – whether it relates to what Gee terms “big D” discourse as it the macrocosm of cultural motifs and folk psychology or the “little d” as in personal beliefs and ideological conceptions (Gee, 2014, p.46). Conversations, Gee argues, are often grounded on insinuation, generalization, and cultural abstractions that constitute privileged knowledge. The mutual understanding of these cultural abstractions is accepted as automatic and self-evident. This mutual understanding or lack thereof remains unexamined in much of the discourse that is both public and private conversation in our society. I believe that Gee would agree that both “little d” discourse and “big D” discourse are classification events in which the exposition of difference and nuance are obfuscated - a non-dialogic, social dynamic (p. 46). In my research, I explored this non-dialogic dynamic as the unexamined and taken for granted mutual understanding in the 911 emergency call conversation. Does this mutual understanding premised ubiquitous cultural knowledge exist, or it is merely believed to exist? What happens when there is no mutual cultural understanding? How is ambiguity and highly abstract and/or metaphorical language interpreted and processed in the 911 call conversation? I discovered that when there is no mutual cultural understanding between the 911 caller and Call Taker or when information is ambiguous and/or highly abstract, the Call Taker fields repeated elicitation questions designed to seek out, isolate, and qualify evidentiary information.

According to Gee (2014), all conversation is either a speech or a writing event and non-dialogic by default, at least initially (Gee, 2014, p. 72). Conversations are premised on social
language with the “embedded” social ideas that are never explicitly stated or examined (p. 72). This knowledge stays in the background of any social interaction and is a common currency in society at large or only within specific groups. Some will have a clear awareness and understanding of this implied cultural knowledge and others will not (p. 72). Much of this cultural knowledge functions cognitively as created “simulations” (p. 99). People create mental images of the standard forms, what is expected and familiar, and what is morally right or wrong. Through these cognitive simulations, people imagine what has happened, what should happen, or what will happen (p. 99). These simulations are also informed by personal experience that is merged with cultural knowledge. These simulations frame the initial context as the interaction between speakers progresses (p. 119). The context in any conversation is developed as a certain “reciprocity” occurs between participants as the speaker puts forth a statement and the listener interprets that statement and responds. This is a “reciprocity between language and personal or situational context” (p. 120).

In my exploration of 911 call conversations and Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, I looked for evidence of these created simulations as applications of common-sense assumptions in the 911 classification and prioritization assignment process. I interrogated the reciprocal relationship between the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller and the process of context development.

**Classification Processes as Inherently Non-Dialogic:**

A key component of the 911 emergency response process is classification. When the Call Taker receives a call, he or she listens to a story that warrants an immediate decision. He or she must decide how to transcribe the story he or she is hearing into the protocols of the institution so that police officers may respond. He or she must classify that call by choosing from a list of
possible options mandated through the police department 911 protocol and law enforcement procedure.

The human tendency towards classification is natural and very strong - a socially constructed function that dominates all aspects of life (Zerubavel, 1991). As humans, we are obsessed with boundaries - spatial, cognitive, and linguistic and we develop metaphors to manage those boundaries (Zerubavel, 1991, p. 16). We consider meanings as always existing in units with presumably related subsets of an overarching idea - all lumped together.

“As we group items in our mind (that is, categorize the world) we let similarity outweigh any differences among them. As a result, we perceive mental fields as relatively homogenous lumps and regard their constituent items as functionally interchangeable variants of a single unit of meaning. Even when we notice differences among them, we dismiss them as totally irrelevant – making no difference – and consequently ignore them” (Zerubavel, 1991, p. 16).

First, based on Zerubavel’s contentions, classification is a socially constructed and yet almost spontaneous process with a strong hold on the human psyche. 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers are performing tasks that they have been conditioned to perform through their cultural upbringing. Most significantly, classification, by its very nature, is not nuanced or highly individualized but generalized according to socially ingrained ideas. Classification is a tool that feeds the socially constructed affinity for sameness, order, and standard forms. The unexpected and abnormal - that escape classification- must still be classified in a 911 emergency response situation. In what instances might 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers ignore difference and ambiguity and defer back to their spontaneous compunction to classify according to what they know - common sense cultural assumptions, with the intention of restoring order to disorder and
sense to the senseless? When under pressure, the 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers could potentially perceive and process information in the world of black and white using the prescripts of strict cultural and institutional frameworks. Zerubavel argues that our epistemological framework is in fact not a framework at all but a gray area in which many ideas bleed into each other (p. 62). Therefore, reality often defies classification. I rooted out those gray areas in 911 emergency call events in which language was vague or highly generalized non-dialogic language and evaluated its currency. I found that the gray areas in communication were usually reconciled through the Call Taker’s series of carefully articulated elicitation questions that sought, isolated, and qualified evidentiary information.

**Cultural Politics as Non-DIALOGIC Exchange in 911 Communications Operations:**

Rhetoric is the science of cultural politics. Rhetoric can be defined as the implicit signals that people send to each other that express what is believed to be appropriate, moral, likeable, generally accepted, and agreed upon behavior. These ideas are cultural in the sense that they are premised on culturally specific ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, permissible and impermissible, moral and immoral, and criminal or not criminal. When I think about politics, I think about members of Congress. They all embrace a certain lifestyle. In their jobs, they must follow certain protocols and procedures when initiating and developing legislation. They must follow certain modes of propriety in public and private and honor the wishes of their constituents. Many of these expectations are implied, widely known and understood, but never specifically written down on paper. Regardless, the currency of these ideas is real. These implicit ideas about political expectations and appropriate behaviors have explicit agency in political life. For all these reasons, they are rhetorical. Politics within any culture is a belief system - ideas about the way the world should work and concepts of the ideal in any given situation. The politics of any society or
institution constitutes a body of ideas about best practices and methods that should be used to achieve goals. Politics is associated with expectations and judgments. “As with politics in general, cultural politics involves the expression of the collective values of a people, the feelings of people about their social and group identities, and above all else the tests of loyalty and commitment” (Pye and Verba, 1965,19). Therefore, those who do not honor these implicit ideas and do not send the right rhetorical signals are scrutinized, censored, and judged in the public domain.

As information processors, 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers have complex tasks, and they experience many work-related struggles that influence their information processing skills. They too are subject to cultural politics. Cultural politics are generalized abstractions about institutional roles, purposes, and expectations. Cultural politics involves fixed ideas or motifs that fit into narrow conceptual frameworks. In that sense, any cultural politics in a workplace environment is non-dialogic in nature. These cultural political motifs are not easily defined, not negotiable, often vague, and yet exactly powerful – non-dialogic in nature. Within this environment, 911 Call Takers and dispatchers must meet expectations and face judgments. They must protect themselves while simultaneously meeting the institutional requirements of the job. Stress is one factor that has a significant impact. Cultural influences and socio-economic motifs can also influence information processing. Call Takers and 911 Dispatchers are regular people. They often share commonly held beliefs that are ubiquitously held throughout our society and think in ways that are culturally, politically, and socio-economically informed. How often are they compelled into conformity by the natural conditions of their workplace environment? In other words, why would a 911 Call Taker or Dispatcher be inclined to confirmation bias? When one is perpetually being evaluated and judged in a high-pressure situation according to non-dialogic institutional standards, one wants to avoid indecisiveness and insecurity. One wants to appear prepared. The application of common-
sense assumptions might be a protective, defense mechanism within an uncertain and high-pressure environment that hides indecisiveness and shields uncertainty. Through my research, I discovered that the 911 caller can be inclined to confirmation bias due to fear and uncertainty in his plea for police assistance. The 911 caller, in the face of the unknown, will err on the side of caution and exaggerate the situation or invoke culturally based common-sense assumptions or implicit cultural ideas in the hopes of instigating prompt service from the police.

**GENRE AS NON-DIALOGIC:**

Traditionally, genre itself has been non-dialogic. The genre concept has been a way to delineate boundaries and manage the flow of information. Its forms have been ironclad and there has been no bleed between the separate genres such as the novel and the document, the letter, and the life insurance claim form - etc. The 911 emergency conversation and its related documents are no different.

Fairclough (2003) contends that “a genre is a way of acting and interacting linguistically …. through interview, lecture and news report…..” “Genres structure texts in specific ways” and these ways inform and manage how information is interpreted and processed (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17). The concept of structure itself is limiting and obfuscates the need to consider variations and/or neutralizes difference. Because of its strict limits of structure, the person who communicates within a specific genre is bound by the prescripts of that genre. Therefore, only information that will fit into those prescripts becomes functional within that genre domain. The 911 call conversation and the related documents are no different. Genre forms are epistemological and function as ways of retrieving, interpreting, and processing information. Bawarshi (2000) theorizes that “genres help us function within particular situations and at the same time they help shape the
ways we come to know these situations” (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 340 in Seawright, 2017, p. xx). The 911 emergency response process is a genre that performs epistemological functions.

I explored the ways in which the genre of narrative form in the 911 emergency calls informed the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker and guided the decision-making process in 911 emergency response. My research methods are premised on the notion of genre as not merely academic and/or curricular but genre as socio/political and what Charles Bazerman articulates as context building (Bazerman, 1988). In my project, I analyzed the 911 Emergency Response Communications within the genre of narrative with its own unique properties. How are contexts created or ignored within the rhetorical exchange that is a 911 emergency call conversation? To what extent does institutional protocol dictate the type of narrative form in the 911 call conversation? To what extent is the narrative form non-dialogic and why does it matter?

**The 911 Emergency Call Conversation is an Institutional Genre:**

A genre is a form of communication that prescribes certain protocols and behaviors, both explicit and implicit “in a specific class of situations” (Hodge and Kress, 1988, p. 51). The 911 emergency call conversation and related documents are tools of the 911 emergency response process. As tools of the emergency response process, they address a “specific class of situations.” The 911 emergency response process has been established to serve the needs of the citizens; however, its primary function is to forge and sustain the viability of the institution of the police department and meet its exigencies. The 911 emergency call conversation is an institutional genre for the following reasons:

**Institutional Protocol:** Police 911 Call Takers follow institutional protocols and guidelines when answering 911 calls and dispatching police officers to the scene of a 911 event. These protocols
and guidelines are designed to meet the exigencies of the police department as a governmental institution.

**911 Conversation Protocol:** Police 911 Call Takers are obliged to ask certain questions in a specific way in order to elicit very specific answers that will facilitate the expedient and efficient execution of police 911 emergency response.

**Legal Historical Record:** The 911 conversation and related documents are bound by the mandates of the legal system as their content can become evidence in a court of law where it must meet a legal standard. The 911 conversation and related documents serve as the historical record of the 911 emergency response process and must be consistent in order to viable in a court of law. Thus, the 911 call conversation and related documents fall into the genre of institutional historical record.

**Police Report Writing as a Non-Dialogic Process:**

Police report writing is the final stage in the 911 emergency response process I reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated in my project. Police reports document final event outcomes and serve as legally binding records of a multi-step, nuanced and complex processes. In my study, I used police reports as the basis for a comparative analysis that sought to establish corroboration between 911 emergency conversations, Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and Police/Incident reports that document 911 event final outcomes. Seawright (2017) conducted a study on police report writing from its initial processes to the litigation stage. She concluded that police officers often omit critical details that raise extended speculation from their police reports in order to serve the exigencies of the legal system and sustain personal reputations when in the courtroom (Seawright, 2017, p. 8). Their primary goal is to present a neat and tidy police report that facilitates resolution rather than its opposite. In the view of the police officers she studied, a report without a clear resolution indicates failure on the part of the reporting officer. Seawright
also concluded in her findings, after interviewing lawyers and judges, that these police officers were misguided. The lawyers and judges favored more exposition in police reports. Their chief complaint was that police reports were often incomplete and/or ambiguous and, thereby, complications in the litigation process. Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, Seawright contends, the police report is not really created to serve the needs of the victim (p. 35). The police report is designed to serve the needs of the institution by sustaining the reputation of its members and viability of its processes (p. 36). Officers interviewed stated that their primary goal when writing a police report was that of efficiency and expediency – to obtain their supervisor’s approval of the report in a timely manner (p. 36). This information is significant as it speaks to the non-dialogic nature of this police department as an institution and the non-dialogic nature of its processes. According to Seawright, in the fashion of non-dialogic discourse, police report information in this police department is geared towards institutional standard, representative abstractions, and manageable generalizations rather than nuanced and complicated detail that might serve the victim or the falsely accused. Through my research, I discovered that police reports were often more detailed, nuanced, and complete than expected.

**Non-Dialogic Nature of Institutional Language and Its Tool, the Document:**

The 911 emergency response process functions through institutional documents. The three primary documents are the 911 emergency call audio recordings, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports. These documents provide for the efficient operation of the police department, the execution of the legal protocols, and the prosecution of criminal events. Those who fill in or complete these documents are bound by institutional definitions, protocols, and classifications that serve those purposes. As tools of efficiency, these documents are more objects of symbolism than agents of exposition. Thus, to a
certain extent, these 911 documents are inherently inexorable in certain aspects. Foucault (1972) argues that the language of the document is not incidental and objectively functional but fraught with cognitive placeholders that influence thinking and direct actions in significant ways. Language is the tool of the document. The tools of language are words and sentences (Foucault, 1972). Words and sentences as language tools are complicit in facilitating the totalizing and unifying and yet oppressive discourse of history and social structure. By its very nature, language, according to Foucault, is non-dialogic as it is totalizing and categorical in the context of social structure. Furthermore, language in the document, as an instrument of power, is strategic and evaluative. Language tools and the emergent strategies usually instigate actions with exacting consequences. The language tools inform evaluations and judgments that are made public, obfuscate questioning and exposition, and cannot be undone. Thus, language that is used for governmental and institutional purposes is non-dialogic by its very nature.

According to Foucault, the document is revered and heralded as holding the status of the monumental because history recognizes it as the primary forum for truth. He contends that “history now organizes the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describe relations” (Foucault, 1972, p. 6-7). Foucault’s own observations affirm the primacy of written language – the tools of the document. We can question the legitimacy of written language, but we cannot question its impact. Written language facilitates power and control, creates history that grounds societies, and informs social structures. Furthermore, according to Foucault, written language creates absolutes that obfuscate the need for dialogue and negotiation while maintaining social order. In my research, I explored the possibility that institutional documents such as the 911 emergency call audios/transcripts, Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and
Police/Incident reports obfuscated the need for dialogue and negotiation, thus being inherently non-dialogic in nature. I discovered that these documents, for the most part, performed the opposite function by facilitating exposition in the revelation and articulation of evidentiary information.

Furthermore, the document, as a tool of classification, also provides a structural mediation for difference or discontinuity in the system. The document mediates discontinuity by affirming a hierarchy with those who meet or exceed the typical expectation placed at the top. Documents are used to assign social status or positionality. For the purposes of my exploration, I considered 911 Emergency Response audio recordings/transcripts as documents that manage government operations and social situations. I considered 911 call audio recordings/transcripts in the context of structural mediation as 911 emergency response management and explored the extent to which structural mediation obfuscated difference and facilitated non-dialogic exchange.

Foucault also proposed that statements, as the substance of documents, organize experience and facilitate classification. Statements follow grammatical rules and abide by semantic choices - all of which are culturally framed and informed (Foucault, 1972, p. 32-33). Foucault observes that in many documents, a statement may take the form of description. Description itself is suspect, he argues. Example of a Statement: The patient has exhibited erratic behavior on occasion. This statement appears to be innocuous on its face. Let’s examine further. The word “erratic” is open to interpretation based upon culturally specific ideas. Irrationality and rationality are culturally specific ideas. Interpretations of the word “erratic” are highly subjective. The words “on occasion” are also suspect. The words “on occasion” refer to a time frame that is ambiguous in nature. What is an occasion - once per minute, once an hour, once a day, or once a week? What number or degree of frequency would one assign to an occasion? Foucault’s point is that different people have different conceptualizations of different terminology. Meanings are fluid and subject to
modification within changing contexts. Human communication is fraught with ambiguity that facilitates culturally biased assumption. In my examination of 911 emergency call audios/transcripts and related documents, I used grounded theory coding to initially classify statements and look for the dialogic and non-dialogic statements and the ways in which these statements are managed in the 911 emergency response process. I focused on the manner in which ambiguities in 911 emergency communications were interpreted and processed.

Foucault also interrogates the concept of description – a key tool in 911 emergency response documents. Objects, he avers, are “named, described, analyzed, appreciated or judged” by discriminatory and repressed ideologically and culturally biased totalizing discourses (p. 32-33). In order to fully articulate the concept of description, Foucault discusses medical evaluation forms as totalizing discourses. All documents, including medical ones, Foucault contends, are informed by ideological and cultural protocols and thus cannot be objective. Protocol also governs physicians’ assessments of patients and greatly influences the thinking process of one who is observing a patient. Therefore, description of what one sees can never be truly reliable. It is a question of this: does one believe what he sees, or does one see what he believes? In my analysis of 911 emergency call audios and transcriptions, I examined description in the event narrative. How specific is description? How much description is generalized or vague? How are deviations in standard description terminology neutralized and homogenized for the purposes of classification in a 911 event? To what extent is description a non-dialogic institutional or cultural assumption? How does the accuracy of a description affect the 911 emergency response process? I discovered that description is carefully evaluated by 911 Call Takers and checked for consistency and reliability.
For Foucault, description is never autonomous or objective. Word choice and definition in description are culturally and ideologically informed (p. 34). Foucault also argues that statements, and particularly descriptive statements, are thematic in nature and that those using the document will manipulate by alluding to a thematic unity that will inspire a host of related assumptions and associations (Foucault, 1972, p. 35). Description facilitates the inherent definition feature of documents. Documents depend upon definition - the meaning behind word usage that – and are grounded, according to Foucault, to a large extent, on related assumptions and associations. The point is that discourse (beliefs and values and the actions that these beliefs and values inform and direct) informs all definition and all social meaning. All definition, thus, is the product of ideology - social and cultural formations (p. 46-47). The substance of any document (the words and their definitions) is not objective but conjured through a series of social relations (p. 47). Foucault believed that many documents, even though fraught with ambiguity and discrepancies, were efficient management tools as they functioned as cultural placeholders for hegemonic belief systems.

The document is also a non-negotiable institutional artifact. Spinuzzi (2000) proposes that the document, as all institutional and governmental forms of communication and information management, represents an inherently a “closed system” (Spinuzzi, 2000, p. 170). The document is “centrally designed, officially produced and authoritatively controlled,” thereby forging an abstract distance between its user and its creator (p. 170). Due to this abstract distance, the user’s understanding of the document is formulaic, ambiguous, and premised on a host of abstractions that allude to privileged knowledge. The user’s agency is limited to his degree of familiarity with this privileged knowledge. The user’s interaction with the document is non-dialogic. As with all institutional documents, I believe the 911 emergency response documents function in the same
manner. I explored the documents in the 911 emergency response protocol that inform the 911 emergency call conversation. To what extent does the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology report accurately represent the rhetorical interaction between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker? To what extent does the final police report document accurately represent the rhetorical interaction between the caller and Call Taker? To what extent is the 911 emergency call narrative protocol framed to serve the institutional purposes of the 911 emergency response documents? Spinuzzi proposes open system genre ecologies that would provide the anti-template model for future documentation non-systems. By exploring the genre of the 911 emergency response narrative and the genre of 911 emergency response documentation, I hope to consider new avenues that might facilitate dialogic communication in 911 emergency response operations.

**COLLECTIVE THINKING IN 911 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS AND THE THREAD OF COMMON-SENSE UNDERSTANDINGS:**

Is there a common-sense understanding among 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers and if so, what is the currency of this common-sense understanding? Are these common-sense understandings fixed in some way? Vargas, Preito-Hodge, and Christofferson (2019) examine how the digitization of police work and emergency response has further marginalized previously marginalized racial and ethnic groups. They explore the surface features of the 911 dispatch system without delving into specific technologies such as computer routed calls, scripts, protocols, and emergency response instruction. “The adoption of new technologies is increasing citizens e-contact with the criminal justice system and, in doing so, producing new forms of digital racial inequalities” (Vargas, Preito-Hodge, and Christofferson, 2019, p. 72). According to one study of 911 dispatchers in several precincts throughout Chicago, Illinois, 911 Dispatchers in African American and Latino neighborhoods were more likely to release confidential citizen information
than in white neighborhoods (p. 72). Also, due to more streamlined and sophisticated digital technology, gangs were more easily able to monitor police frequencies and obtain information about citizens reporting crimes (p.72). Furthermore, due to the highly digitized criminal justice system, a criminal record of any sort, no matter how small and relatively inconsequential, will more assuredly follow a person for life, preventing employment and other civic opportunities (p. 73).

This dynamic speaks to a certain mindset in 911 Emergency Communications. Why would dispatchers release confidential citizen information in some neighborhoods but not in others? Did they make broad-based, collective assumptions that the citizens in these areas didn’t care or didn’t have any information that was worth protecting? This information certainly suggests that these 911 Dispatchers have a sense of social boundary. However, more importantly, they appear to lump one group into one homogenous classification and another group into a different homogenous classification - important and unimportant. Their approach is not nuanced. They appear to be applying a form of culturally biased knowledge - stereotypes about people living in poor, minority communities. If they are applying culturally biased knowledge in information confidentiality practices, it might be presumed that culturally biased knowledge and stereotypical thinking might possibly be applied in the processing of 911 calls in general. Of course, the authors of this article are extending the discussion into the grand scheme of things. How does broad based classification affect whole populations on a larger bureaucratic scale? Police are also gathering data from databases kept in other government agency files and streamlining that data – re-populating information into other databases using other algorithms to further identify and weed out potential criminals (p. 73). Vargas, Preito-Hodge, and Christofferson (2019) postulate the strong impact of digitization on 911 Dispatcher work that correlates with the work of Terrell, McNeese, and
Jefferson (2004) who studied the impact of emergency procedures. Both researchers identify and analyze the effects of the standardization and streamlining of process and protocol that is framed within the digital age. Both articles highlight digitization as new agent of the system that reinforces social structure that is often non-negotiable.

**Professional Risk and Stress Reactions in 911 Emergency Response:**

911 emergency response work is not without a long-term impact. Johns-Fiedler and Van Mersbergen (2014) explored the physical impact of 911 dispatch work. They uncovered a prevalence of voice and speech disorders connected to 911 dispatch work. They also discovered that 911 dispatchers deal with stress disorders comparable to PTSD (Fiedler and Van-Mersbergen, 2014, p. 388). Participants were asked questions about work performance, absences, personal lives, career change potential as well as questions about devices used to perform their jobs, noise levels, shift length, call volume, physical symptoms, and end of shift comparisons (p. 389). This article relates to much of the scholarship on police related shootings in as much as it affirms the ways in which emergency workers respond to and are affected by their work environment. This scholarship affirms the human connection – that emergency workers are human beings who respond to stress in natural ways comparable to stress responses within the general population. The presence of high stress levels and its long-term impact speaks to a great need for epistemological solutions and stress minimizers during high-pressure ambiguity. How might common-sense assumptions and folk psychology as coping and management strategies function as the epistemological fail-safe methods?

Professional risk is another factor contributing to the mindset of the 911 emergency Call Taker and Dispatcher. LaTourette, Peterson, Bartis, Jackson, and Houser (2003) explore the emergency response and 911 dispatch systems in the United States from 1986 to 2000. They focus
on professional risk and the environmental factors that may contribute to 911 emergency management. They identified a multitude of ways that emergency responders risk their lives that might not seem to be the obvious ones. 911 responders often are killed or injured due to motor vehicle accidents, helicopter accidents, and stress related heart attacks (La Tourette, Peterson, et al., p. 21). Nine percent of those in the populations studied were victims of homicide p. 21). This study emphasizes the stress factor and the urgent need for stress management strategies and highlights the real-world consequences of daily cognitive challenges while mandating a solution for those cognitive challenges.

The fight or flight instinct is also a relevant factor. Anshel, Umsheid, and Brinthaupt (2013) document a long-term study of 911 Emergency Dispatcher stress related outcomes and the coping skills used to manage these stress related outcomes. The authors of this study concluded that stress reactions were widespread and the nuanced and a multifaceted byproduct of police work and related fields. (Anshel, et al, 2013, p. 1). The two primary categories of coping mechanisms are as follows: avoidance coping and approach coping. (p. 2-5) 911 Dispatchers varied in their choice of whether to utilize avoidance coping or approach coping methods based upon their individual personalities, characters, real-world experiences, and current life situations (p. 2). “Approach coping, also referred to as attention, sensitization, monitoring, engagement, or vigilance, consists of the thoughts or actions of a person following an event perceived as stressful with the intention of reducing or managing the unpleasant experience” (Anshel 2000). To Roth and Cohen (1986), an approach coping strategy is characterized by cognitive and emotional activity that is oriented toward the threat. Along these lines, Krohne (1993) refers to approach (vigilance) coping “as those strategies which are characterized by intensified intake and processing of threatening information” (p. 21). Examples of approach coping include seeking information or knowledge, covert rehearsal,
arguing, planning, monitoring, venting, strategizing, psyching up, and imaging (Anshel, et al, 2013, p. 2). “Avoidance coping, on the other hand, consists of physically removing oneself from a perceived threat (e.g., exercising, walking away), filtering out or ignoring information, discounting the relevance or meaningfulness of potentially stressful input (i.e., not taking it seriously), or psychologically distancing oneself from the stressor” (Anshel, 2001; Krohne 1993; Roth & Cohen, 1986). This coping style is also referred to as desensitization, distraction, repression, blunting, non-vigilance, passive, or disengagement coping. Consistent with my observations of 911 Call Takers interactions with 911 callers, approach coping is used most often in law enforcement (Anshel 2011).

The purpose of this study was both exploratory and therapeutic. The researchers sought to identify the most effective coping strategy for a given circumstance. They did not seek to advocate for one strategy over another but wanted to affirm the practical therapeutic uses for all coping strategies in different contexts. How might Approach Behavior or Avoidance Behavior impact the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller interactions? How might Call Takers and Dispatchers filter and manage information in a manner that enables them to control the situation? How often do they unconsciously filter out or ignore information while embracing the information that seems more logical and manageable for them? How often do they attempt to merge ongoing situations with their own common-sense assumptions and belief systems? In my study, I looked for those instances in which 911 Call Takers use a form of avoidance behavior by consciously or unconsciously ignoring information that was ambiguous, confusing, or overwhelming and substituting common-sense assumptions. I did not find a 911 emergency event in which avoidance behavior was evident.
EMOTIONAL STATES IN 911 CALL TAKERS AND DISPATCHERS:

The 911 Call Taker/Dispatcher’s emotional and psychological states are also variables in emergency response operations. Danielson (2006) discusses the importance of the physical location of the dispatch center, the structure itself – to include design and layout – and the environment – temperature, lighting, ease of access and user-friendly tools. Danielson also highlighted the importance of morale in a dispatcher community (Danielson, 2006, p. 30). Dispatchers must have a sense that they are valued and that they are part of a loving and caring community. Employees also need to feel a sense of personal agency or control over their work circumstances and need to feel that there is a sense of justice and fairness within their community (p. 30). Of note was the emphasis on community building activities that facilitated 911 Call Taker and Dispatcher involvement with citizens outside of the 911 emergency context (Danielson, 2006, p. 30). Their goal was to boost morale through the cultivation of expanded community contexts and mutual understanding that is forged through personal and communal relationships.

Personal and communal relationships provide a certain degree of psychological support for 911 Call Takers. However, for some 911 Call Takers, these interventions are insufficient. Baker, Van Hasselt, Larned, and Couwels (2014) articulate the importance of psychiatric intervention for 911 dispatchers who become overwhelmed by their experiences in crisis management situations. They also emphasize the importance of training for managing highly emotionally charged individuals who make 911 calls. Through their study, they identified stress reactions in police dispatchers as exponentially greater than those stress reactions found in the general population and advocate for mental health services that address the unique stress related issues that police dispatchers cope with (Baker, et al., 2014).
Their study considers 911 Dispatchers and Call Takers as unique individuals with nuanced and complex personalities and psychological dispositions that impact stress reactions. The authors privilege individual mental health assistance over standardized, institutionalized protocols. Mental health issues can definitely be consequential within a highly nuanced dynamic. How do underlying premises about archetypal communal criminality influence one who is mentally and emotionally unstable? In the absence of complete reason and disciplined contemplation, what cushion does the 911 Dispatcher or Call Taker use when faced with the unknown? What epistemology is most readily available and second nature? What is the currency of folk psychology and common-sense assumption? While my research does not address stress levels in 911 Call Takers, stress levels could be a hidden component in the rhetorical relationship between 911 caller and Call Taker.

Personal relationships also factor into 911 emergency response operations. Delprino (2017) explores the correlations between work and family issues surrounding Call Takers, 911 Dispatchers, and police officers. This study compares work and family issues for two groups of public safety employees: law enforcement officers and emergency service dispatchers. While not directly involved in responding to emergency calls to the degree of police officers, these researchers concluded that dispatchers could experience impaired work ability due to the high mental stress that is a consequence of their jobs. The police officers and dispatchers from a small-town agency participated in this study. Spouses/significant others of police officers and dispatchers also participated. Survey questionnaires were used to collect data which included scales and open-ended questions related to job satisfaction, occupational stress, relationship satisfaction, work/family conflict, communication, and perceived departmental support. There were significant differences in perceived job satisfaction between Police Officers and 911 Dispatchers. Based on the study’s conclusions, the researchers also found that police officers and 911 Dispatchers dealt
with major communications challenges in all areas of their personal and professional lives to include communications challenges within their marriage relationships (Delprino, 2017). Overall, relationship problems can be one more distraction in a series of related distractions in the workplace environment. If a Call Taker’s attention is split or diverted by personal problems, how clear is the 911 emergency story being communicated at that given time? Do the 911 Call Taker’s personal circumstances contribute to ambiguity and/or confusion in the 911 emergency conversation narrative?

**POLICE OFFICER RESPONSE AND CALL TAKER INSTRUCTION:**

Is police officer response highly informed by 911 Call Taker instruction? Paul Taylor, an advanced Force Science Specialist, and doctoral candidate at the State University New York – Albany, conducted a series of studies within police use of force scenarios. He enlisted a group of police officers between 20 and 60 years of age and with varying years of professional experience (Remsberg, 2019). In this study, Taylor created active shooter threat simulation scenarios and tested police officer use of force in confrontation events. He concluded that the accuracy of dispatcher instructions contributed significantly to police officer use of deadly force. Vague and abstract instructions resulted in police officers unnecessarily shooting the simulated unarmed suspects. Specific 911 Dispatcher instructions resulted in more prudent and restrained behaviors by police officers and a decreased incidence of the shooting of unarmed suspects and the use of excessive force. Curiously enough, race was not a factor in these simulated police officer threat reactions. I am willing to consider that race is not a factor in every police emergency response situation and when racist undertones exist, perhaps the signs are too nuanced to identify and analyze explicitly.
Taylor termed his concept “Dispatch Priming” (Taylor, 2019 as cited in Remsberg, 2019). Taylor starts with the general definition of the word “priming” - “exposure to an earlier stimulus can influence the response to a later stimulus” (Eitam and Higgins, 2010 in Taylor, 2020, p. 314). Taylor cites Molden (2014) who argues that personal contact with ideas that stimulate social currency influences perception and decision making when the contact subject is presented with a similar situation at a later time (Molden, 2014, as cited in Taylor, 2020, p. 314). Taylor contends that in 911 emergency response situations, when split second decision making is required, people unconsciously defer back to social currency associations. They embrace the first thought that comes to mind which is inherently an ideological one (Taylor, 2020, p. 315). Thus, they engage in confirmation bias (p. 315). Call Takers, Taylor postulates, embrace the available information if that information fits neatly into their prior ideological/social currency mold. They tend to ignore possible complications to that mold (p. 315). In my research I explored the early stages of the 911 emergency response process and the cognitive events that occur long before the information reaches a police officer. I identified rhetorical situation components that inform the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker and frame the exigencies of police 911 emergency response. I followed the process of information reception, interpretation, exchange, and transfer in the 911 emergency response process and examined the distinct agency of evidentiary information that is provided to the police officer prior to his arrival at the scene of the 911 event.

**COMPUTER AIDED DISPATCH SOFTWARE AS NON-DIALOGIC BY DEFAULT:**

The Computer Aided Dispatch software program is the program used by the Garland Police Department 911 Emergency Response Center and many other 911 emergency response centers around the United States. Whalen (1995) reports that the Computer-Aided Dispatch, or “CAD,”
functions within a protocol of “serially ordered steps” (Whalen, 1995, p. 4). The Call-Taker converses with the 911 caller and simultaneously enters information into pre-populated text boxes on the computer screen, thereby developing a textual narrative of the reported event. During this process, the Call Taker assigns a call classification from the available options in the CAD program and then assigns a priority to the call. The classification can be modified, and the priority upgraded or downgraded as the situation is often fluid. The information is transferred to another computer screen and read/processed by the 911 Emergency Response Dispatcher. The 911 Dispatcher then decides regarding the required response and assigns a police unit to go to the scene (Whalen, 1995). Whalen explores the dynamic in the 911 Call Taker/911 caller interaction and the currency of innuendo and presumption. He observes that something as seemingly innocuous as the 911 caller’s vocal inflection or degree of pause in articulation can compel a 911 Call Taker to make certain unconscious value judgements about the nature of the call and the urgency of the situation. If a 911 caller pauses, Whalen theorizes, the 911 Call Taker automatically presumes that the situation is abnormal and unexpected. This pause might also insinuate apprehensiveness on the part of the 911 caller, thereby suggesting dishonesty, confusion, or a misunderstanding on the part of the 911 caller (Whalen, 1995, p. 11). In my analysis of the 911 emergency conversation audio recordings/transcripts, I noted that often a 911 caller’s vocal inflection and/or attitude prompted the 911 Call Taker to frame the answer he assumed would be given as a question for the 911 caller, thus leading the 911 caller’s answers to some extent. However, 911 Call Takers consistently followed a protocol of fielding elicitation questions that sought, isolated, and qualified evidentiary information. This process was very effective in identifying inconsistencies and clarifying ambiguities and misunderstandings. When 911 callers were lying, withholding information, or
misrepresenting the context of the 911 event, there was no way to know until police officers arrived on the scene of the 911 event.

911 EMERGENCY RESPONSE OPERATIONS AS NON-DIALOGIC BY DEFAULT:

There are possibly many unknowns in an emergency response event. However, one thing is certain - 911 emergency response operations are informed and directed by institutional process. Institutional process is, by its very nature, non-dialogic as its procedural guidelines and protocols are fixed and not negotiable. The 911 emergency response Call Taker/caller conversation is, by default, a non-dialogic exchange due to the Call Taker’s application of a consistent protocol. The 911 Call Taker/caller conversation contains one primary element of what Fairclough (1995, 2003) termed non-dialogic language – strategic language. The 911 Call Taker/caller conversation immediately incorporates the strategic aspect of non-dialogic language. The Call Taker’s first question in the 911 emergency call exchange is as follows: “What is your emergency, what is the address of your emergency, or what is the location of your emergency?” This type of question is posed for the purposes of making a determination regarding the nature and urgency of the situation – what Fairclough would identify as a non-dialogic, strategic decision. The term “emergency” is also a classification – Fairclough’s non-dialogic generalized abstraction. This first question forces the caller into a rhetorical commitment based on a term that might be considered abstract to the caller. Is the situation an emergency or not? What is the definition of an emergency? The answer to that question may vary depending on the 911 caller’s cultural beliefs, personal context, situational context, and prior experience. The extent to which the 911 Call Taker understands the 911 caller’s emergency assessment may also depend on a 911 Call Taker’s cultural belief, personal context, interpretation of the situational context and/or prior experience. In many 911, calls, the ambiguities are cleared up as the 911 caller provides more detail and description. What cognitive
framework does a 911 Call Taker use to assign a classification and a prioritization to a 911 emergency event when the information is speculative. Overall, through an examination of the processes of classification and prioritization in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports and Police/Incident reports, I discovered that 911 Call Takers seldom experience communication gaps and usually assign reasonable and accurate classification and priority codes to 911 events.

In consideration of the institutional nature of 911 emergency response, the fixed nature of the document, (both verbal and written) as the primary tool for record keeping, and the non-dialogic nature of 911 emergency response protocols, I proceeded to seek more context that would further inform my project and enhance the overall data analysis process. In the next chapter, I discuss my methodology and provide background information about the city of Garland, Texas to include crime rate statistics, demographic information, and logistical factors that might influence the work of the Garland 911 Call Takers.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Background of Garland, Texas 911 Emergency Response Center and City of Garland, Texas

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

My project answers the following questions:

Primary Research Question: How does the rhetorical exchange between 911 caller and Call Taker inform the 911 emergency response information transfer process and 911 event final outcomes?

In order to answer my primary question, I answered the following supporting or secondary questions:

A. **Rhetorical Relationship Questions:**
   - What are the characteristics/elements of the rhetorical exchange between 911 emergency response Call Takers and 911 callers?
   - How does the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and Call Taker influence the quality of information in the 911 emergency response process?
   - How are misunderstandings and information gaps managed by 911 Call Takers?
   - How might misunderstandings and information gaps influence final event outcomes?

B. **Dialogic and Non-Dialogic Language Questions:**
   - Is the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and Call Taker primarily dialogic or primarily non-dialogic? Why or why not?
   - How does the use of dialogic and non-dialogic language (Fairclough, 1995, 2003) influence the quality of information in the 911 emergency call interaction?
• How might non-dialogic language be used to bridge information gaps and neutralize ambiguity and difference?

C. Confirmation Bias and Overall Assessment Questions:

• Does confirmation bias occur (Cooley, 2019)? Why or why not?
• How might non-dialogic language elicit common-sense assumptions?
• How might common-sense assumptions elicit confirmation bias?
• How often do common sense assumptions inform and guide the 911 event classification and prioritization process.

BACKGROUND: CITY OF GARLAND, TEXAS AND GARLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT 911 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

Why Garland, Texas?

I chose to conduct my study in Garland, Texas for several reasons. First, Garland, Texas is a multicultural, multiethnic city. Its residents come from around the world and diverse socio-economic circumstances. Certain areas of Garland struggle with high crime and communal challenges. The data sample represents a small segment of the population of the city of Garland and is situated within the 911 call classifications of shooting, stabbing, disturbance/weapon involved, and disturbance/weapon in process. I chose these specific crime classifications because by implication these situations are potentially high stress situations. I believe that high stress situations afford the greatest possibility for miscommunication in all its various forms. Originally, I had attempted to collect data from the cities of San Jose, California, El Paso, Texas, and Alexandria, Virginia. I considered the city of San Jose because I have several family members who live there, and I have spent a considerable amount of time in this city caring for my mother over the past ten years. I considered Alexandria, Virginia because this is my hometown, and I
volunteered in this city during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s as an Alexandria Police Explorer. I considered El Paso as I am currently living there and have been a resident since 1983. In San Jose, I was refused access to 911 call data and related documents outright. The San Jose city attorney’s office stated that this information was only available to the public with very specific stipulations and only under unique circumstances associated with litigation under California law. In the city of Alexandria, Virginia, I was also refused access because I was no longer a Virginia resident. In El Paso, Texas, I was provided limited access to 911 calls and related documents for considerable fees. Ultimately, when obliged to choose between either El Paso, Texas or Garland, Texas, I decided that Garland was the best option because all sections of my data sample were easily obtainable in accordance with the public domain laws for Texas residents and Mary Rocha of the Garland Police Department Records Division and Maria Estrada of the Garland City Attorney’s office were very helpful and cooperative. They charged minimal fees for access to this data and in some cases, they charged nothing at all. They also provided the data sample in a timely and expedient manner.

**Basic Information:**

The city of Garland, Texas is multicultural and multilingual with Spanish speakers making up a significant number of residents. According to the 2019 United States Census, the city of Garland is 63.8% white, 14.9% Black, 11.2% Asian, 0.04% and 42.5% Hispanic (United States Census Bureau, 2021). English is the dominant language of Garland. 51.74% of Garland residents speak only English and 48.26% speak other languages. The most prevalent foreign language is Spanish – spoken by 35.09% of the population (Garland, Texas Population, 2021) (Demographics, Maps, Graphs, 2021).
The city of Garland has organized many community revitalization projects and community watch programs. The Garland city government has an office of Neighborhood Vitality. This organization sponsors a Neighborhood Management Academy and the Annual Neighborhood Summit. The Neighborhood Management Academy provides the following services: “citizen engagement, leadership development, and neighborhood management” (City of Garland, 2021). In the Annual Neighborhood Summit, participants discuss home values, home improvement strategies, community building, and socio-economic issues (City of Garland, 2021). The city of Garland also sponsors a Neighborhood Vitality Matching Grant in which the city will match funds donated by citizens to improve neighborhoods struggling with infrastructure issues. The city of Garland also sponsors a Community Garden and provides matching funds for citizens who participate in revitalization projects designed to cultivate vacant lots (City of Garland, 2021).

**Crime Rate in Garland:**

Garland, Texas is ranked number 15 out of 100 on a scale of 1 to 100, with 1 rating representing the highest crime rate. The city with a ranking of 100 is considered the safest city in the United States. The crime rate is 29.49 percent per one thousand residents. This means that 294 people out of 1000 residents will become a victim of a crime. Overall, a person living in Garland has a 1 in 34 chance of becoming a victim of any crime. A person living in Garland has a 1 in 38 chance of becoming a victim of a property crime and a 1 in 325 chance of becoming a victim of a violent crime (City of Garland, 2021). (See Appendix A)

The city of Garland received a grade C from Crimegrade.org, a data analysis organization. Garland received this grade because their crime rate is slightly higher than the average US city. According to Crimegrade.org, 60 percent of United States cities are safer than Garland and 40
percent of United States cities are more dangerous (The Safest and Most Dangerous Places in Garland, Texas: Crime Maps and Statistics| CrimeGrade.org, 2021).

The Garland Police Department data condenses information about criminal activity in Garland, Texas to include statistics for types and frequencies of crimes committed, and demographic information about areas with the highest criminal activity concentration. Property crimes - primarily residential burglaries and auto theft - are the most prevalent types of crimes. (see Appendix A)

**Garland Police Department 911 Communications Center:**

The Police 911 Call Taker (also known as a Public Safety Dispatcher) answers 911 calls. The calls are processed by the Computer Aided Dispatch system and a coordinated GPS system. When a 911 call is answered, the 911 Call Taker will receive an exact location for the origin of the call or an approximate location for the origin of the call that will show up on a grid map through GPS technology. The telephone number and location of the 911 caller are usually displayed on the computer screen. The Call Taker assigns a priority and a classification to the call based upon his or her interpretation of the information given. The Call Taker sends the information to the 911 Dispatcher who assigns the call to a police officer based upon available resources, the priority assigned, and the disposition of police officers in various locations around the city (Garland, Texas, 2021). In Garland, the Police 911 Call Taker and the 911 Dispatcher both hold the title of Public Safety Dispatcher, and their positions are interchangeable.

**Flow Chart of 911 Emergency Response Process:**

Figure 2.1

The 911 Call Taker receives and answers the 911 call.
The 911 caller’s name and location/address appear on the computer screen via GPS technology.

The 911 Call Taker asks questions and gathers data. The 911 Call Taker then inputs the data into the Computer Aided Dispatch System.
The 911 Dispatcher reads the data input on his or her computer screen. He or she views available units and their respective locations and makes logistical decisions when sending logistical decisions when sending police to the scene of a 911 event.
The 911 Dispatcher transfers the 911 Call Taker’s information to the police officers responding to the scene of the 911 event. Police go to the scene of the 911 event armed with the 911 caller’s narrative that has been interpreted by the Call Taker. This information influences police officer perceptions that inform the decision-making prior to and upon arrival at the scene of the 911 event.
**DATA SET:**

**27 -911 Call Conversation CD Audio Recordings/Transcripts:** These documents serve as the historical record of the 911 emergency call.

**27 -Related Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports:** This document serves as the historical record of the information obtained by the 911 Call Taker during the 911 emergency call and transferred through data entry into the computer. This document is transferred on to the 911 Dispatcher who sends a police officer to the scene of the 911 event. This document contains 911 event classification and priority codes along with an “event remarks” section that provides the narrative of the 911 event. This document also contains information about 911 callers, the address of the 911 event, contact information, information about responding police officers, victims, and suspects, and their dispositions throughout this 911 event.
27-Police/Incident Reports: These reports are completed by the police officer or officers responding to the scene of the 911 event. These reports include a 911 event narrative, information about suspects and arrests, and status/disposition information pending potential prosecution.

3 -Garland Police Department 911 Emergency Response and Police Report classification codes and acronyms documents: These documents contain the codes and abbreviations that are used in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports and in the Police/Incident reports.

1-Garland Police Department Event Remark codes document – for Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports and Incident Reports. This document contains the list of codes used to abbreviate sections of the 911 event narrative that is populated into the Event Remarks section of the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report.

1 Garland Police Department Classification Criteria Document: This document contains a list of 911 event classifications and the definitions for each 911 event classification used in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report and in the Police/Incident Report.

1 Garland Police Department Priority Code Criteria Document: This document contains a list of the priority codes and the definitions that qualify the use of each priority code used in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report and in the Police/Incident Report.

DATA RETRIEVAL:

The data samples that I obtained are considered open records in Garland, Texas. In the first part of my process, I requested all the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports for the month of August 2020 under the following classifications: Shooting, Stabbing, Disturbance: Weapon in Progress, and Disturbance: Weapon Involved. After paying a small fee of around $38.00, I received 300 Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports about 911 events
under those classifications. I chose 27 Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports that fell under the categories of disturbance: weapon in progress, disturbance: weapon involved, stabbing, and shooting. I believed that these 911 event classification documents would provide in depth material. After sorting through and reviewing the selected Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, I then requested the 911 emergency call conversations and police/incident reports for those documents. Laura Rocha of the Garland, Texas Police Department Records Division mailed 16 audio recordings in the form of audio CD’s to my home address. I paid a fee of around $38.00 for that first set of audio recordings. A few months later, I requested the related police reports for those exact same 911 events. I also requested access to an additional 20 911 events and their related documents. I was denied access to that data set because those 911 events involved pending litigation. Upon denial, I received a letter from the Garland, Texas City Attorney’s Office explaining the reason for their course of action. I also requested the Garland Police Department codes and acronyms list and 911 emergency response classification and priority code criteria documents. About four months after my initial request, I re-submitted my request for the 20 911 audio recordings and related police/incident reports that had previously been denied. The Garland City Attorney’s office gave me access to 12 of those twenty 911 event data sets as those 911 events were no longer under litigation. No additional fee was charged. This request was processed by Maria Estrada of the Garland City Attorney’s Office. The Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports for those 911 events were part of the original 300 Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports from my original request.

**Methodology Overview:**

My primary method was Critical Discourse Analysis using Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis method. I also applied Kathy Charmaz’ qualitative methods - grounded theory
coding – initial and focused in order to create a baseline or foreground for my critical discourse analysis. I used Saldana’s (2016) provisional coding process and Spradley’s (2016) componential analysis method to reinforce my critical discourse analysis process. I also conducted a theoretical coding of the 911 calls and related documents using Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis theory. I consulted the following texts: Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis by Kathy Charmaz (2014), The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers by Johnny Saldana (2016) and The Ethnographic Interview by James P. Spradley (1979, 2016), Language and Power by Norman Fairclough (1989) and Analyzing Discourse by Norman Fairclough (2003). I used this eight-step methodology with the intention to facilitate a convergence in the data analysis. This attempt was successful. My intention was also to use the initial and focused coding processes to inform the provisional coding and componential analysis processes through a scaffolded coding process. The naming, descriptive, and evaluative words and phrases generated through the initial and focused coding processes helped me to identify and define the elements and characteristics of the caller/Call Taker rhetorical relationship as a segue to the creation of the Rhetorical Situation Components.

I interrogated and evaluated how the rhetorical exchange between 911 Caller and Call Taker influences the quality of emergency response information by analyzing 911 emergency call conversations, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports. I addressed the rhetorical connections that informed the following primary criteria through grounded theory – initial, focused, and theoretical coding, provisional coding, componential analysis, and comparative analysis:

1. The Elements and characteristics of the rhetorical relationship between caller and Call Taker.
2. The use of dialogic and non-dialogic language and the currency of both in eliciting common-sense assumptions.

3. Correlation or lack of correlation between the 911 call conversation, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology event classification, and the Police/Incident report event classification and description.

4. The currency of common-sense assumptions or folk psychology in the 911 emergency call interaction and related documents.

5. The presence or absence of ambiguity and both the caller and Call Taker’s treatment of ambiguity.

6. The quality of information processing in 911 emergency call conversations and the rhetorical connection to final event outcomes.

7. The presence or absence of confirmation bias. Filtering evidence through pre-conceived ideas and prejudices.

8. Miscommunication Events that might lead to (Police Wrongful Use of Excessive Force/Police Wrongful Use of Deadly Force)

**Initial Coding:**

I coded for basic information in order to create a summary - a baseline analytical template or overview of each 911 emergency call conversation. I named each line of a 911 call conversation, Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report Event Remarks (narrative section), and Police/Incident report narrative section with descriptive or definitive terms (Glaser, 1978) (Charmaz, 2014) (Saldana, 2016). Through this process, I identified and classified the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies within the 911 emergency call conversation.
Focused Coding:

I conducted a focused line by line coding of the 911 emergency call conversations, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report narrative section, and Police/Incident report narrative sections in which I assigned a value judgment category to each line (Charmaz, 2014) (Saldana, 2016). Through this process, I generated qualifying terms that I considered in conjunction with the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies identified in the initial coding process. I used these qualifying terms to create the definitions for the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies.

Theoretical Coding: Critical Discourse Analysis


Provisional Coding: 911 Emergency Call Conversations Only

First, I created these provisional coding categories that constitute the elements and characteristics of the rhetorical exchange between 911 caller and Call Taker after having been informed by my literature review and in consideration of my findings in the initial and focused coding of the 911 call transcripts. Next, I created definitions of these provisional coding categories having been informed by my focused coding of the 911 call transcripts (Saldana, 2016). I then reviewed and populated 911 call conversation sentences that provided the best information about each rhetorical exchange category into my provisional coding list and generated analytical/evaluative statements about the agency of the example sentences in framing the nature of the 911 call conversation rhetorical exchange.

Componential Analysis: 911 Emergency Call Conversations
I borrowed some of the categories created in the preliminary step of the provisional coding process and populated them into my componential analysis process. I determined that some of these categories constituted the rhetorical components of the 911 Emergency Call Conversation in the context of dialogic and non-dialogic language while others didn’t, after having been informed by my data analysis process.

In this step, I drew upon theoretical coding for the 911 emergency call conversations. I reviewed the dialogic and non-dialogic language that had been generated for each 911 call through the theoretical coding process and populated the best examples into the rhetorical situation component categories. I then generated analytical/evaluative statements for each example of either dialogic or non-dialogic language in the 911 calls and explained how these examples inform each rhetorical situation component category in each 911 call conversation. I evaluated and discussed the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in relation to each of the componential analysis categories. I conducted a componential analysis of the 911 Call rhetorical situation using Spradley’s componential analysis method (Spradley, 1979, 2016, p. 173-184). In this process, I looked for “attributes” or units of meaning associated with “cultural symbols” that constitute semantic relationships (Spradley, 1979, 2016, p. 174).

**Comparative Analysis of the Three Data Sets: Two-Fold Process**

First, I compared and contrasted the 911 emergency call conversations and the narrative sections of the related Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports. I also paid close attention to the assigned event classification and priority codes. I made determinations regarding the justification or lack of justification for these classification and priority code assignments while consulting the Garland Police Department classification and priority code assignment criteria. Next, I compared and contrasted three coded data sets from all coding processes:
1.) 911 emergency call conversations 2.) Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report narrative 3.) Police/Incident report narrative. I compared all coded analytical memos from all coding processes. I reviewed and evaluated classification code and priority code assignments in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports and Police/Incident reports while consulting the Garland Police Department classification code and priority code criteria. I made determinations regarding the following: currency of common-sense assumptions, miscommunication events, and presence or absence of confirmation bias.

**Methodology Discussion:**

My primary goal was to ascertain how the rhetorical interaction/exchange between 911 caller and Call Taker informs miscommunication in 911 emergency response. I believe that rhetorical elements inform understanding and yet are often nuanced and implicitly understood but never articulated. I explored the possibility that the degree of implicit rhetorical understanding between the 911 caller and Police 911 Call Taker can impact the quality and type of information that is transferred to the 911 dispatcher who in turn transfers the information to the police officer responding to the scene of the 911 event and inform Police 911 Call Taker response levels and attitude. Through a study of the agency of rhetoric in police 911 emergency response, I have identified the nuances that can lead to miscommunication and identified strategies that both 911 Call Takers and 911 callers use to negotiate and prevent miscommunication events. In order to examine the nature of the rhetorical exchange in the 911 emergency call and evaluate the currency of this implicit rhetorical understanding within the agency of the 911 emergency call conversation itself, I reviewed around 300 Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports of 911 call events in Garland, Texas from the months of July and August 2020. I focused on the month of August as I believe that this month is one in which social activity is high and there is a greater
probability of high 911 emergency communication traffic. Falk (1952) claims crime rates have seasonal variations and that “if the total crime rate is thus considered, it follows that it culminates in August, while it is even the rest of the year” (Falk, 1952, p. 205). Lauritsen, J. Ph.D., & White, N. Ph.D., (2014) conducted a study published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in which they also contend that crime rates have seasonal fluctuations and that crime rates in the United States consistently escalate during the summer months, with August being the peak month (Laurtisen & White, 2014, p. 2-3).

I reviewed the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports and selected certain reports under the following classifications: shooting, stabbing, disturbance: weapon in progress, and disturbance: weapon involved. I then retrieved 911 emergency call transcripts/audio recordings for those specific Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports. I manually transcribed all 911 call audios. I chose to focus on these call classifications as I believe those types of calls present with the most ambiguity and variation in language usage, thus foregrounding a more nuanced rhetorical exchange and the expanded articulation of non-dialogic language. Also, these calls create a climate of urgency and foster an environment that is particularly high pressure. I believe that high pressure circumstances are occasions when confirmation bias is most likely to occur.

**Detailed Explanation of Methodology:**

**Step One: Initial Coding of 911 Calls**

In the first step, I coded for basic information in order to obtain a descriptive baseline/overview of the 911 emergency call conversation. I used grounded theory – initial line by line coding of the 911 emergency conversation audio calls/transcripts. In my initial line by line coding, I named each line (Glaser, 1978). The names for each line are descriptive and/or definitive.
terms designed to summarize what is happening in each line of the 911 conversation. I generated summative memos based upon the information gathered in this initial coding stage. Through these memos, I generated the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies.

Through initial, line by line coding, I achieved the following goals:

“Breaking the data up into their component parts or properties
Defining the actions on which they rest
Looking for tacit assumptions
Explicating implicit actions and meanings” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 125).

Initial, line by line coding afforded me the advantage of an initial inquiry stage. Through this initial inquiry stage, I created a conceptual baseline summary of the information that functioned as the framework for the more detailed coding. According to Charmaz (2014), two step or multi-step coding helps to mitigate personal bias, emotionally charged interpretations, and other highly subjective interpretive forms (Charmaz, 2014, p. 133).

Prior to my focused coding stage, I reviewed earlier codes, memos, and analyses for 911 calls. I conceptually refined these codes, memos, and analyses.

**Step Two: Focused Coding of 911 Calls**

In the focused coding process, I generated evaluative statements that would help me form definitions for the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies. These definitions articulate the overall functioning of the 911 emergency response system and qualify the agency of the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies in the 911 caller and Call Taker rhetorical relationship/situation.

**Step Three: Provisional Coding of 911 Calls**

In consideration of the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies created through the initial and focused coding processes, I generated the elements and characteristics of the rhetorical exchange
between 911 Call Taker and Caller in the 911 emergency conversation by conducting a provisional coding of the 911 audio recordings (Dey, 1993, & Miles, 2014 as cited in Saldana, 2016, p. 168). I went back and reviewed and evaluated aspects of each 911 conversation and chose sections of dialogue that provided the best examples for each provisional coding category.

In provisional coding, “the provisional list is generated from such preparatory investigative matters as: literature reviews related to the study, the study’s conceptual framework and research questions…” (Saldana, 2016, p. 168). I have generated my categories based upon the conceptual framework of my study. Layder (1998) defines provisional coding as the search for “key words, phrases, and concepts that spring to mind in thinking about the area under consideration before any data collection or even a literature search has begun” (Layder, 1998, p. 31, as cited in Saldana, 2016, p. 168).

Focused Coding:

a.) Focused Coding of Dialogue Sections in Provisional Coding Categories:

After identifying dialogue sections from the 911 conversations that fit into these provisional codes, I conducted a focused coding – generating evaluative statements for the information that was populated into each provisional code category.

b). Focused of the Provisional Coding Categories:

I reviewed the provisional coding categories and generated evaluative words and statements for each category that helped me create definitions for my provisional coding categories – the elements and characteristics of the 911 conversation rhetorical exchange and quality criteria and informed my overall analysis in the provisional coding process.

Provisional Coding Categories: Elements and characteristics of 911 Conversation Rhetorical exchange and Quality Criteria:
1. **Language Clarity:** The degree to which the speaker enunciates, provides accurate detail through correct word choice, and is audible.

2. **Attitude Assessed by Vocal inflection and Language Style Used:** The agency of tone of voice and word choice as considered in the context of the verbal exchange between 911 caller and Call Taker.

3. **Level of Responsiveness:** The extent to which either the 911 Call Taker or 911 caller reacts to the information provided and attempts to answer a question or abide by a directive (911 Call Taker) or narrative description (911 caller).

4. **Urgency of the Situation:** The extent to which the 911 caller communicates the urgency of the situation and the extent to which the 911 Call Taker agrees and prioritizes the call.

5. **Believability of the Caller:** The extent to which a 911 caller is consistent, provides evidentiary information, and speaks in a coherent manner. Other context specific variables/factors within the parameters of the 911 emergency conversation are also considered.

6. **Reliability of the Information:** The extent to which the information is consistent, is evidentiary in nature, and is timely and relevant.

7. **Implicit Cultural Understandings:** Cultural understandings about cause/effect and problem/solution dynamics that are mutually understood between the 911 caller and Call Taker. They may also be cultural understandings of another nature. These understandings inform and guide the 911 emergency response process but are never stated explicitly.

8. **Common-sense Assumptions:** These are also culturally based understandings premised upon Western cultural epistemology and western reasoning and logic that inform ideas about how the world works and why/how we know what we know.
9. **Description of the 911 event**: The quality of the description provided to include specific detail, evidentiary information, accuracy, timeliness, and relevance.

10. **Worthiness of Service**: The degree to which a 911 caller qualifies a 911 event, and the Call Taker evaluates the 911 event and determines that this event is an emergency and merits police response.

11. **Caller and Call Taker’s Treatment of Ambiguity**: The 911 caller and 911 Call Taker’s reaction and methods applied when faced with uncertainty or when one or both parties is misunderstood.

**Step Three: Theoretical Coding of 911 Calls: Critical Discourse Analysis**

In the third stage, I reviewed the critical discourse analysis results from my initial, provisional, and focused coding processes for the 911 emergency call conversations. I then coded each line of the 911 emergency call conversations for dialogic and non-dialogic language using Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis dialogic and non-dialogic language categories and definitions. I applied Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis non-dialogic language categories to code for the presence and currency of common-sense assumptions. I then generated an overall analysis of this data and my findings. According to Charmaz (2014), theoretical coding may be useful in forging an overall coherence in the data (p. 150). Theoretical coding is also useful for establishing overarching relationships between categories generated in initial and focused coding exercises (p.150).

In this stage, I evaluated the use of dialogic and non-dialogic language, the currency of common-sense assumptions, and how non-dialogic language may or may not bridge information gaps.
Definitions of Dialogic and Non-Dialogic Language: (Fairclough, 1995, 2003)

**Dialogic Language:** clear, includes direct quotes, assigns ownership of information, provides specific details, accommodates difference, establishes context, and is open to exposition. Sentences are in the active voice.

**Non-dialogic Language:** vague, ambiguous, highly generalized, predictive/value based, common-sense assumptions, logic of appearances, representational meanings: thoughts, feelings, sensations. Sentences are in the passive voice and/or use nominalizations.

**Non-DIALOGIC NOMINALIZATION:** Verb that is transposed into its abstract noun form and functions as the subject in a non-dialogic sentence

**Non-DIALOGIC SENTENCE EXAMPLE:**

The argument was heated.

**Ambiguity**

Use of a nominalization: Argument is from the verb to argue that has been transposed into its subject noun form. The word “argument” is an abstraction. Define argument.

Who is engaged in the argument? Who is arguing with whom?

For what purpose? The purpose of the argument is not stated.

Define “heated.” This word could be interpreted in many ways.

The sentence does not contain enough detail for exposition.

**Dialogic Sentence Example:**

John Hamilton argued with his brother Brian over their recent problem with the family business.
Clarity

Sentence is in the active voice - John Hamilton argued….

The person who performed the action is named.

The purpose of the action is identified.

The sentence has enough detail to invite exposition.

I used the following non-dialogic categories in this theoretical coding process:

1. Nominalizations: Active verbs that have been transformed into their noun form as abstractions for the purpose of obfuscating specificity and assigning information ownership (Fowler, 1979, as cited in Fairclough, 2003, p. 220).

2. Strategic Actions: Actions that are aimed at achieving specific results and facilitating a particular outcome or reaching a goal. Strategic action is a management tool (Fairclough, 2003, p. 110).

3. Predictions and Evaluations: Predictions are statements that foretell a future event or qualify a theoretical cause/effect or problem/solution idea. Evaluations are value judgment statements that qualify the desirable or undesirable nature of a person, situation, or place (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 109-116).

4. Logic of Appearances: Certain situations are deemed to be obvious and inevitable as indicative of self-evident truths that in fact are not self-evident. This logic relies on commonly held cultural beliefs and assumptions used to interpret an ongoing event (Fairclough, 2003, p. 94-95).

5. Assumed Values (implicit assumptions): These are ideas that are accepted based upon implied value systems. People suppose there is a common understanding and self-evident standards that inform the articulation of people and events (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55, p. 81).
6. **Representational Meanings:** Ideas that are abstract and indirectly represent other ideas. These meanings are often grounded in thoughts, feelings, sensations, and other aspects of the social world. The most abstract representational meanings are social practices, social structures, a series of social events, and patterns of behavior (Fairclough, 2003, p. 134, p. 138).

**Step Four: Componential Analysis/ Critical Discourse Analysis: Analyzing the Components of the 911 Call Conversation**

I drew from the theoretical coding data for the 911 emergency call conversations and the rhetorical relationship/situation categories generated through the provisional coding process. I selected the provisional coding categories that I felt applied to the Critical Discourse Analysis process and functioned as the most viable platforms for the expression of both dialogic and non-dialogic language. I reviewed my theoretical coding notes and the 911 call transcripts. I selected examples of either dialogic or non-dialogic language in the 911 calls that fit into the respective rhetorical situation components. I generated analytical/evaluative statements for each rhetorical situation component in each 911 call and for the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in each rhetorical situation component. I conducted a componential analysis of the 911 Call rhetorical situation using Spradley’s componential analysis method (Spradley, 1979, 2016, p. 173-184).

**Componential Analysis Categories: 911 Call Conversation Rhetorical Situation Components**

How does dialogic and non-dialogic language inform the following:

**1. Urgency of the Situation/Level of Responsiveness:** The extent to which the 911 caller communicates the urgency of the situation and the extent to which the 911 Call Taker agrees and prioritizes the call.
2. **Believability of the Caller:** The extent to which a 911 caller is consistent, provides evidentiary information, and speaks in a coherent manner. Other context specific variables/factors within the parameters of the 911 emergency conversation are also considered.

3. **Reliability of the Information:** The extent to which the information is consistent, is evidentiary in nature, and is timely and relevant.

4. **Implicit Cultural Understandings:** Cultural understandings about cause/effect and problem/solution dynamics that are mutually understood between the 911 caller and Call Taker. They may also be cultural understandings of another nature. These understandings inform and guide the 911 emergency response process but are never stated explicitly.

5. **Common-sense Assumptions:** These are also culturally based understandings premised upon Western cultural epistemology and western reasoning and logic that inform ideas about how the world works and why/how we know what we know.

6. **Description of the 911 event:** The quality of the description provided to include specific detail, evidentiary information, accuracy, timeliness, and relevance.

7. **Worthiness of service:** The degree to which a 911 Call Taker evaluates the 911 event and determines that this event is an emergency and merits police response.

8. **Caller and Call Taker’s Treatment of Ambiguity/Miscommunication:** The 911 caller and 911 Call Taker’s reaction and methods applied when faced with uncertainty or when one or both parties is misunderstood.

**Step Five: Initial, Focused and Theoretical Coding of Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports**

In the fifth step, I conducted an initial, focused, and theoretical coding of the narrative section of the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, assigning evaluative
categories to each section of the narrative. I used the Garland, Texas Police Department, 911 Communications Center coding and acronym guides during this process. I generated analytical memos that articulate my conclusions.

**Step Six: Comparative Analysis of the 911 Emergency Call Conversations and the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports**

In this step, I looked for information gaps and miscommunications. I screened for the currency and agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in the two documents. I reviewed codes and memos generated for the 911 calls and Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports. I compared and contrasted my findings. I identified the call classification and prioritization listed in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports and attempted to qualify the connection or disconnection between these classifications and prioritizations and the information exchanged in the 911 emergency call conversations.

**Step Seven: Coding of Police Reports**

In this step, I looked for information gaps, miscommunications, the currency of common-sense assumptions, and the presence of absence of confirmation bias. I conducted an initial, line by line initial coding and a focused line by line coding of the narrative section of the related Police/Incident Reports using Grounded Theory Coding (Charmaz, 2014). I generated an overall evaluative discussion about the nature and content of each related police report. Last, I conducted a theoretical coding of the narrative section of the police reports using Norman Fairclough’s non-dialogic language categories. I generated memos and detailed notes that I used as a framework for my evaluative discussion of the police report coding process.

**Step Eight: Comparative Analysis of the 911 Emergency Call Conversation, The Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Final Police/Incident Reports:**
In this step, I compared and contrasted all three data sets. I made determinations regarding the currency of common-sense assumptions, miscommunication events, and the presence of absence of confirmation bias by conducting a comparative analysis of my coded documents – the 911 emergency call transcripts, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronologies, and the Police/Incident reports. I looked for discrepancies between information generated in the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker 911 conversation, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports. I looked for correlations or the lack of a correlation between the 911 emergency call rhetorical exchange, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report, and the Police/Incident report. I evaluated whether non-dialogic language was used to bridge information gaps and neutralize ambiguity and difference. I screened for an overall convergence of the data and consistent patterns or the lack of convergence and consistent patterns.

Charmaz (2014) contends that comparative analysis is an effective way to test the emergent theories (p. 132). Comparative analysis also provides a frame of reference for later re-evaluation of the data and the creation and/or further development of emergent theories (p. 168). Overall, comparative analysis is a way to show that the data converge in some way and can be used to articulate an overarching theory (p. 175).

**Methodology Justification:**

I chose an eight-step methodology because I wanted to facilitate the occasion for repeatable results. I had hoped that an eight-step methodology would help draw out emergent patterns and a generalizable data analysis. Through an eight-step methodology, I strived to generate a data analysis and findings that would converge and reveal trends and patterns in the 911 emergency response.
SAMPLE METHODOLOGY APPLICATION - CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF A 911 CALL

TRANSCRIPTS: (NOT PART OF MY DATA SET)

Critical Discourse Analysis of the transcript of the 911 call in the Saheed Vassell Shooting – 71st Brooklyn Precinct, New York, N.Y.

This is an actual 911 emergency call transcript of a widely publicized police officer involved shooting. This transcript is evidence of a non-dialogic exchange that does not consider or accommodate different cultural contexts and proceeds from one, homogenous cultural context and value system.

I am analyzing the non-dialogic language (Fairclough, 1995, 2003) in the following 911 emergency response transcript:

Non-dialogic language: Vague information and hasty generalizations:

The caller is not sure of her location. She is in her car and not within a very close proximity to the potential perpetrator. The caller reports that she sees a man who appears to have something protruding from his jacket. She states that he is pointing something, and a popping noise is being omitted.

Hasty generalization: Does a protrusion from an item of clothing signal danger or foretell some hostile or aggressive behavior? Does a pointing finger indicate an act of aggression that qualifies as a life-threatening event? Is a popping noise always indicative of the presence of a weapon of some sort?

The Call Taker’s first question is this: “Is anyone injured.” He must ask this question because he is obliged to prioritize the call.

Caller: “He looks like he is crazy but he’s pointing something at people
that looks like a gun and he’s like popping it like he’s pulling the trigger. He’s not pulling a trigger but he’s making a motion as if he is and there is something sticking out of his jacket.”

Non-dialogic Assumptions:

Existential assumptions: assumptions about what exists

Propositional assumptions: assumptions about what is or can be or will be the case

Value assumptions: assumptions about what is good or desirable” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55).

Value assumption: “He looks like he is crazy.”

…”that looks like a gun…” …”he’s like popping it like he’s pulling the trigger.” … “he’s making a motion as if….”

Notice that the caller uses terms such as “as if” and “like.” These are terms that are used to refer to theoretical situations and speculations. These are not factual statements. These are conditional statements. These words rely upon certain conditions that have not yet been qualified.

Value assumption and Evaluative Statement: “He looks like he is crazy.”

What does a crazy person look like? In my cultural mindset, a crazy person is probably disheveled, poor looking, dirty, possibly smelling of alcohol and disoriented. Are there different descriptions of a crazy person? Yes, there are many definitions of crazy based upon different cultural values and beliefs. Both the Dispatcher and the Caller seem to be in mutual agreement on one cultural definition of crazy. They both believe that someone who is making erratic or unexplainable gestures is crazy. More to the point, is craziness synonymous with a violent threat? They don’t stop to consider any other context for the suspect’s actions other than the context of violent threat. The dispatcher never asks the caller to elaborate on her statement “He looks like he is crazy.” He accepts her information at face value. He has to. He cannot afford to take a chance.
when people’s lives could be potentially at risk. Of course, the Call Taker must make a determination regarding whether this “crazy” person is violent or has the potential for violence. In the absence of specific and conclusive evidence, he must make what Norman Fairclough calls a common-sense determination. In our society, insanity is any behavior that is atypical or inappropriate in a given setting. Insanity is also typically assumed to live in a symbiotic relationship with violence. If a suspect is African American, there is possibly an unconscious assumption of his inherent violent and aggressive nature. Based on the caller’s assertion that the guy looked “crazy” in juxtaposition with his physical description as an African American male, compelled the Call Taker and Dispatcher to err on the side of caution and assume that a violent event was in progress even though no one had actually seen a gun.

“...relations of power are best served by meanings which are widely taken as given” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 58)

The caller states that she believes there is a possibility that the suspect has a gun and is posturing as if in a pantomime act. The Dispatcher accepts the 911 caller’s assumption as fact—primarily because he is obliged to categorize and prioritize the situation. He does not ask the caller to describe what the man is pointing. I imagine that she is not close enough to the scene to make that determination.

I noted that in this transcript, there is a record of the 911 Dispatcher threat determination that compels him to automatically dispatch an EMS unit. He is making an unconscious prediction that there will be violence, injuries, and even possibly death.

**Logic of Appearances:** no “description of concrete events or processes, but description of processes at a high degree of abstraction from the concrete” (Martin, 1992).
This information lacks substance—exposition or detailed description and cause/effect explanation. This information is divorced from its own unique context and placed within the context of commonly held cultural beliefs and assumptions. (Fairclough, 2003, p. 95)

In the dialogue below, the caller is assuming a threat situation based upon her mutual cultural understanding with the 911 dispatcher.

**Here are the elements that qualify the threat situation in this case:**

911 Caller: “putting something in people’s face like it’s a gun” (yet this information is never verified)

making a trigger sign

People are ducking

Something is hanging from his jacket

911 Caller:

“he’s crossing the street and putting it in

people’s face like it’s a gun and pulling his hat, he’s doing some (unintelligible) and pulling it back, like he’s making a trigger sign and people is like ducking and like trying to avoid because they’re thinking it’s a gun. There is something hanging out of his jacket.”

My first question is this: What is he putting in people’s faces? What is the significance of the man “pulling his hat back”? What is a trigger sign? What is specifically hanging out of his jacket? And yes, people are “thinking it’s a gun.” Their thoughts don’t make it so. However, there is a certain logic at play here. The suspect is behaving in a peculiar manner. One could logically assume, based upon this caller’s description, that the suspect has a gun and is a threat. This is the “logic of appearances.” And really, who could fault anyone in this case? A 911 dispatcher doesn’t have the luxury of conducting a thorough investigation. He must act in the moment.
Ultimately, the caller and the 911 dispatcher have perhaps conjured a scenario that did not in fact exist. When the police arrived, they were psyched up for trouble. Did they see what they were expecting to see and make a split-second decision based upon their expectation? I would imagine that when the police arrived and were greeted by the presence of EMS, they might have already assumed that someone was injured or dead.

Another 911 Call About the same incident:

The dispatcher assumes the suspect is firing a gun without obtaining verification that there is an actual gun on the scene. This is logical. He can’t take that chance. He must assign a priority to the call. If he errs, he must err on the side of protecting the citizens under a presumed threat.

911 Dispatcher: “Are there any injuries? Is he firing the gun?

911 Caller: “I don’t know (unintelligible) I tell you he have gun in hand and now there is a lot of cops in my first floor (unintelligible)”.

911 Dispatcher: “Did you hear any shots miss? Did you hear any shots?”

911 Caller: “I don’t hear nothing, I’m inside the laundromat. I just want you to know, if you want to see the guy’s picture, you can come to my store.”

Abstraction: The woman does not appear to be at a location where she can see the gun. I am assuming that she is panicking based upon what she has heard from others. Also, she sees the massive number of cops already on the scene near her location. She did not hear any shots. Does she know that the suspect has a prior criminal record? Why would the laundromat owner have a picture of the suspect in her store? Is she making assumptions about his behavior based upon his past behaviors?
**Confirmation Bias:** It appears that the 911 callers and the 911 dispatcher have decided that an active shooter is present based upon their shared cultural assumptions and what Fairclough terms “the logic of appearances.”

The vague language, the abstractions, the compartmentalized cultural abstractions, the language of assumption and prediction, and culturally grounded evaluative statements such as “he looks like he is crazy” are all significant examples of the use of non-dialogic language.

**Final Event Outcome:** Police arrived on the scene, drew their weapons, and shot the unarmed suspect.

**Grounded Theory Benefits:**
1. Is meticulous and detail oriented.
2. There are multiple steps that facilitate a convergence of the data and data analysis.
3. Recognizes diversity and irregular aspects of any investigation.
4. Generates strong description.
5. Requires repetition of basic steps, thereby mandating due diligence in treatment of the data sets.
6. Draws out emergent theories.

**Provisional Coding Benefits:**
1. Provides a control or baseline of ideas that can be compared with theories generated through grounded theory analysis.
2. Facilitates a convergence of the data set and analyses.

**Critical Discourse Analysis Benefits:**

Theoretical Coding: Norman Fairclough’s dialogic and non-dialogic language categories.
1. Provides a baseline through which to examine rhetorical relationships.
2. Will draw out social and cultural patterns of thinking.
3. Will draw out previously hidden social/rhetorical influences.

**COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS BENEFITS:**
1. Provides another baseline generated from real world categories.
2. Provides a foreground for testing emergent theories.

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BENEFITS:**
1. Facilitates the convergence of data sets and data analysis.
2. Helps identify discrepancies and inconsistencies.
3. Provides evidence of a disconnection in the data sets and analyses.
4. Reveals corroboration of the evidence or disproves a theory.

**GROUNDED THEORY LIMITATIONS:**

Charmaz (2014) observes that researchers often ground their research premises on prior perspectives, commonly held beliefs, or a general world view. She advises that researchers must step back from personal perspectives and acknowledge those perspectives as equally co-existing among many different perspectives on a topic (Charmaz, 2014, p. 132). Charmaz also warns that theoretical coding, when not applied correctly, can make an analysis “opaque and impenetrable” (p. 150). Theoretical coding can also stifle the emergent nature of coding as it relies on prior knowledge and, when applied, incorrectly, can reproduce established motifs while obfuscating growth and discovery (p. 150).

I realize that my underlying beliefs and values were inherently present in the coding concepts I applied during my initial and focused coding processes. My aim was to be as objective
as possible while presenting a body of evidence that stands alone and supports itself apart from
my grounded theory coding process. I hope that through my data analysis, I have drawn out
inherent concepts that forge a close correlation to each other and to an overarching idea. This
overarching idea articulates the presence of patterns, consistencies, and an epistemological
coherence that culminates in the convergence of all the relevant variables.

**Methodology/Study Limitations:**

I received redacted 911 audio recordings, Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology
Reports, and police reports. Confidential identification and point of contact information was
removed from all these documents prior to my contact with them. In some Police/Incident Reports,
event narratives had been redacted. All of the information retrieved for my data set in considered
public domain in the state of Texas for Texas residents (Estrada, 2021). During the process of data
collection, I worked closely with Laura Rocha of the Garland Police Department Records Division
and Maria Estrada of the Garland City Attorney’s Office. I submitted my requests via email to
either Laura Rocha or Maria Estrada. They would seek approval from the Garland City Attorney’s
office and then send my requests on the Garland Police Department 911 Communications Center.
Personnel at the Garland Police Department 911 Communications Center accepted the requests
and retrieved the 911 emergency call conversation audio recordings, the related Computer Aided
Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports and send them back to either
Laura Rocha or Maria Estrada who would then send the files on to me through email or USPS.
They sent the 911 audio recordings in the form of CD’s through first class mail. This data set was
subject to institutional processes. Also, I was denied access to any 911 emergency response
documents for any 911 events that were currently under litigation or subject to future litigation.
In this chapter, I discussed my methodology procedures and provided background information regarding the city of Garland, Texas and the 911 Call Taker’s job description and qualifications. I also included a flow chart that provides an overview of the 911 emergency response process from the beginning of the 911 call to the end of the 911 emergency information transfer process when a police officer arrives at the scene of a 911 event. In the next chapter, I discuss the first part of my coding process – the coding of 911 emergency call transcripts through initial and focused coding methods (Charmaz, 2014).
Chapter 4: Data Analysis Part 1: Findings from the Initial, Focused, and Provisional Coding Processes

In this chapter, I discuss the rhetorical relationship between the 911 Call Taker and the 911 caller and how this relationship informs 911 event information processing and the 911 Call Taker’s decision-making process. I identified the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller strategies and the basic structure of the 911 call conversation through the initial and focused coding of the 911 call transcriptions of the 911 call audio recordings. Through the subsequent coding processes - provisional coding and componential analysis - I expanded upon an examination of the rhetorical relationship by identifying and qualifying the elements/characteristics of this rhetorical relationship and evaluating the agency of those elements and characteristics. Through the final coding process of comparative analysis, I examined the effectiveness of the 911 caller/911 Call Taker rhetorical relationship in informing information interpretation, processing, and transfer. The graphic below provides an overview of the coding processes in the order in which they are discussed in chapters 4 and 5. As per my discussion in Chapter 3, I listened to the 911 audio recordings, transcribed them, and identified the language of 911 caller and Call Taker strategies. Through the initial and focused coding processes, I named and defined this language. Next, I considered the agency of this language in the provisional and componential coding processes and evaluated this agency. I then analyzed this language in the context of the rhetorical situation categories that I created having been informed by the initial and focused coding processes and having been guided in the provisional coding and componential analysis processes.
Illustration 4.1

IDENTIFICATION OF THE 911 CALL TAKER AND CALLER RHETORICAL STRATEGIES:

Each 911 Call Taker initiates the 911 conversation/rhetorical exchange with a standard question: “Garland 911: What’s the address of your emergency? or What’s the location of your emergency?” From that starting point, the whole conversation is framed as a conversation about an emergency. The term emergency initiates a rhetorical exigency between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker. Although the 911 Call Taker attempts to remain objective, there is a sense of urgency, anticipation, and expectation that both parties must address either directly or indirectly. Those engaged in this conversation – the 911 Call Taker and the 911 caller, are navigating through the written and unwritten protocols/behaviors of an emergency situation. Whether there is a real emergency or not is a yet to be determined empirical reality. Nevertheless, this 911 emergency call conversation is a rhetorical situation with its inherent issue, audience, context, rules of engagement, and set of constraints.
To answer the question, **what are the characteristics of the rhetorical exchange between the 911 emergency response Call Takers and 911 callers?**, I examine the rhetorical relationship of the 911 caller and Call Taker as articulated through the basic protocols and strategies of 911 emergency response. These 911 protocols/strategies inform rhetorical agency on the part of both the 911 caller and Call Taker, create the platform for the transfer of critical information, and guide the overall process of 911 emergency response. Through the initial and focused coding processes, I identified the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller strategies and how the application of those strategies created the context for 911 caller emergency situation articulation and informed the rhetorical relationship that is inherent in the 911 emergency conversation.

**Illustration 4.2**

**911 Caller and Call Taker Strategies Generated Through the Initial and Focused Coding Processes:**

In the initial coding of the 911 call transcripts, I read through each line of each transcript and assigned a name/classification to the dialogue. In the focused coding process, I analyzed the
dialogue sections and evaluated the dialogue content in the context of the assigned names/classifications. Through this process, I identified the separate 911 caller and Call Taker strategies that are implemented during the 911 emergency call conversation. I also identified strategies that are used by both the 911 caller and Call Taker.

The 911 caller and Call Taker strategies inform the rhetorical relationship that is an inherent consequence of information exchange. Both the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies elicit responses that create and support a symbiotic relationship between the two parties. Ultimately these elicited responses define the nature of this rhetorical relationship and, by default, the quality of the 911 emergency information exchange process.

Rhetorical Relationship Between The 911 Caller and Call Taker: Initial and Focused Coding Processes:

In the section below, I examine and evaluate the agency of the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies in creating and sustaining this rhetorical relationship that guides the 911 emergency response process. I also examine and evaluate how the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of these strategies as rhetorical tools will forge negative or positive 911 event outcomes. I consider the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies in the beginning of my analysis as isolated and further on in the analysis as synchronous strategies that often work in conjunction with each other during the 911 emergency call conversation.

1. 911 Call Taker Strategies:

The Call Taker strategies below were generated through an initial and coding process by which I named and classified points in the 911 emergency call conversations when the 911 Call Taker spoke to the 911 caller. These Call Taker strategies are divided into two subset
classifications – questions and statements, primarily because they function in different ways in the 911 emergency response call dialogue and serve different overall purposes.

1A. Call Taker Strategies - Questions:

The graphic below illustrates the strategic questions a Call Taker uses to facilitate the 911 emergency response process and classify and prioritize a 911 emergency call/event. The quality of the information generated through the use of these questions will inform the effectiveness of police officer on-scene response. Each will be discussed with an example from the Garland 911 emergency call transcripts.

Illustration 4.3
**Location question:** “What’s the location of your emergency” or What’s the address of your emergency? This question is always asked first. The 911 Call Taker wants to verify the address of the emergency before all other details in order to ensure expedient and efficient response.

During this rhetorical exchange, the 911 Call Taker devotes a considerable amount of time to determining the correct address/location of the 911 event. This information must be accurate for the purposes of police on scene response and the historical record. These 911 Call Takers repeat address verification questions intermittently throughout the 911 conversation. Sometimes there are misunderstandings predicated on language barriers, a caller’s lack of knowledge of his or her surroundings or the 911 event, or a 911 caller’s misunderstanding of the 911 emergency response process itself.

In the rhetorical interaction of 911 event 2020E082436 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Delinquent Activity), multiple 911 callers called in to report an ongoing crime. Neighbors in one apartment complex reported that teenagers were throwing rocks, bottles, and chairs at their apartment, thereby smashing windows while cursing and threatening them. I chose to transcribe and analyze two of those 911 calls. I discuss only one for the purposes of my data analysis. The 911 Caller begins the exchange by asking a location question that the 911 caller is unable to answer initially. Through persistence and an intermittent fielding of this same location question shown below, the 911 Call Taker finally obtains the address. The Call Taker also suggests a way that the 911 caller can obtain her address.

Call Taker: “What is the address there?”

Caller: “It’s about…I’m really not sure. We just moved in not too long ago.”

Call Taker: “What is your address? Can you get a piece of mail and tell me your address?”

Caller: “Ah, I’ll check. Hold on.”
Caller: “Let me check.”

Caller to third party: “Nellie, Nellie! I need the address!”

Caller Taker: “Mam, are you on Jupiter?”

Caller: “It’s … Yes, it’s in Jupiter Road.”

Call Taker: “What room number? What apartment number?”

Caller: “Excuse me?”

Call Taker: “What apartment number? (In an irritated and condescending manner)

El numero de apartamento? Caller speaking to third party in Spanish.”

Caller: “201.”

Call Taker: “201 at Shadowwood Apartments.”

**Elicitation Questions:** The Call Taker attempts to draw out more concrete detail to include quantifiable information, suspect description, and vehicle description along with status/disposition information. Through elicitation questions, 911 Call Takers attempted to identify suspects, obtain quantifiable/concrete detail, determine time frame, and determine the status/disposition of the suspects. Identification questions and location questions are usually answered expediently, thereby obfuscating the need for elicitation questions. However, if there is an ambiguity inherent in the answers provided, the 911 Call Taker might defer to a series of elicitation questions that will assist the 911 caller in clarifying the description of a suspect, determining the exact location of the 911 event, or qualifying the context of the situation.

**Two Types of Elicitation Questions:**

1. **Suspect Description Question:** The Call Taker initially asks if the 911 caller knows the identity of the suspect. If the 911 caller does not have that information or if the information is inconclusive, the Call Taker asks for information about a suspect’s race and age, clothing, and for specific
descriptions of a suspect vehicle. The Call Taker also asks about distinguishing marks or features on persons or property.

In the example below from 911 event 2020E86923 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Threatening Display of a Shotgun), the Call Taker asks the 911 caller if there are any distinguishing marks on the suspect’s vehicle. She then asks for a suspect description and repeats an earlier question that addressed whether or not the 911 caller knew the suspect and could positively identify him.

Call Taker: “Did they have any kind of rams that would be noticeable?”

Caller: “No. It was just younger kids who were driving.”

Call Taker: “Who had the shotgun?”

Caller: “The driver.”

Call Taker: “What, what race was he?”

Caller: “Ah, it was dark, but they looked like Hispanic because they did slow down and then left.”

Call Taker: “Ok. And you all didn’t know them?”

Caller: “Nope. No, no, no.”

The Call Taker’s use of the word “rams” might be non-dialogic. The term “rams” is not familiar to most people, in my experience. The term is abstract and falls under the category of privileged knowledge within a community that uses esoteric language. I was only able to find the meaning of this term by searching under “hydraulic rams.” Hydraulic rams are a hydraulic suspension device added to vehicles to facilitate non-standard suspension and are a common feature in gang style vehicles and low riders. I am assuming that one of the reasons that this 911
 caller was unable to answer the Call Taker’s specific vehicle description question was because she did not understand the meaning of the term “rams.”

2. Status/Disposition Question: The Call Taker monitors the situation and asks for current and continually updated logistical information regarding the potential crime and potential suspects. The 911 Call Taker goes to extreme lengths to obtain status information – whether the crime just occurred, occurred two hours ago, or occurred two days ago. The Call Taker might also ask for information about the location and/or destination of the suspect(s) and/or the number of people on the scene of the 911 event and their various roles. The effectiveness of police 911 emergency response is contingent upon the timing of the 911 event and contextual/logistical information that determines the possibility of suspect apprehension.

The dialogue below reveals the rhetorical skills of the 911 Call Taker and illustrates how her persistent fielding of repetitive elicitation questions ultimately drew out more detailed, context specific information from the 911 caller. The time-frame questions and status/disposition questions are particularly important in informing the nature and quality of police emergency response. The 911 caller’s answers to those questions will help the 911 Call Taker accurately determine the nature and degree of the threat and the merits of immediate police intervention. This process often involves questions about the physical location of suspects and whether he or she is holding a weapon and/or in the process of using it. In the dialogue below from 911 event 2020E082436 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Delinquent Activity), the Call Taker is fielding status/disposition questions in an attempt to determine if the threat is imminent or if the event occurred a while ago.

Call Taker: “Do they still have the beer bottles and the chair now?”

Caller: “Well…well… they just went out there cause….we live upstairs…they went downstairs…”

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Call Taker: “Did they have the beer bottles and the chair earlier this morning?”

Caller: “Ah, yeah, they do.”

Call Taker: “They still have it in their hand right now?”

Caller: “Oh. Not right now. I believe. Not right now.”

The 911 caller’s response above has much relevance. When she states that the suspects do not have the weapons in their hands right now, she is implying that they are not engaged in the criminal acts at this moment. This information lowers the classification of the 911 event, which by default, in most cases, also lowers the priority of the 911 event/call. A call with the classification Disturbance/Weapon in Progress receives an automatic priority 1 code – “immediate threat to life” (City of Garland, 2021). A call with the classification of Disturbance/Weapon Involved will be assigned a priority 2 code – “urgent response required” (City of Garland, 2021).

**Suspect Identification Question:** The Call Taker asks for the identification of the suspect (s) and the identification of the caller and any victims. This is a critical part of the process of gathering evidentiary information. The following transcript excerpt is from 911 call 2020E102588 (Stabbing). In this 911 call, a bystander volunteers to call police for the victim. As is revealed in the police/incident report, the victim in this case was being deceptive. He did in fact know the person who stabbed him - a known drug dealer – with whom he was having a drug deal dispute.

Call Taker: “Ok. Did you….did you, ah…Could you ask him if he has someone…Do they know who’s the one that stabbed him?”

Caller: “I didn’t ask him, no. (Turns and asks the victim) Do you know who stabbed you sir?”

(Victim in background) “Ah, no. I just need them to hurry up and get here.”
In this example from 911 event 2020E082436 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Delinquent Activity), the Call Taker focuses on the action word - broke – and proceeds from that point with a series of elicitation questions designed to identify the suspects by name if possible and obtain their descriptions.

Call Taker: “Ok what’s goin on there?

Caller: “Ok. It’s cause ok we had a complaint earlier like around 3 in the morning. They broke a window and there were like…..”

Call Taker: “Who broke your window?”

Call: “They’re the managers kids.”

Call Taker: “The manager broke your window at three in the morning?

Caller: “The kids of the manager are the ones breaking our window and I have two kids here in the house.”

Call Taker: “I understand that.”

Call Taker: “I’m askin…what are the ages of the manager’s kids that broke your window?”

Caller to third party: “What age are they bro?”

Third party in background: “They’re like 15, 16.”

Caller: “They’re like 16.”

Call Taker: “Are they white, black, Hispanic?”

Call Taker: “Are they white, black, Hispanic?”

Caller speaking to third party.

Caller: “I don’t know. I think they’re like ……“

Third party: “I think they’re white.”

(Caller and third party speaking in Spanish.)
Call Taker: “Male or female?”

Caller: “They’re Hispanic and they’re male.”

Primarily, the evidentiary information consists of four critical things - the possible identity of the suspects (manager’s kids), the suspects’ age, race, and physical description, the crime they allegedly committed, and the time frame. These are the bits of information that can be verified as either true or false on a police report and/or in a court of law. Evidentiary information is important because it constitutes that which is physical - concrete – and can be seen or collected. This evidence is not ambiguous, theoretical, or abstract (at least under normal circumstances).

**Clarification Question:** The Call Taker repeats the information that he/she heard in order to verify the accuracy of his or her hearing, interpretation, and understanding. The question format is used as an implied rhetorical strategy - that of deference to the 911 caller and a temporary transfer of authority. In other words, the 911 Call Taker is asking the 911 caller if he heard the description clearly and/or understood the nature of the potential crime in order to obfuscate any epistemological complication in the future.

In 911 call E02020E091257 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved), a mentally ill man draws a knife at a family gathering and starts threatening his neighbors, friends, and relatives. In the transcript excerpt below, the Call Taker listens to the caller’s description of the situation. The dynamic is a bit complicated. Several parties are involved and following the suspect. The Call Taker fields a clarification question designed to determine exactly what the suspect is doing and to whom and the role that each one of the intermediaries/bystanders is playing. In the further dialogue not shown here, the 911 caller states that her father and brother are also following the suspect. The clarification question example below is followed by more clarification and elicitation.
questions designed to determine the roles of the 911 caller’s father and brother at the scene of this 911 event.

Caller: “He’s following his dad with a knife down the street. And he threatened my dad, and he threatened my brother too.”

Call Taker: “Alright. He’s following his own father. Is that right?

Caller: “His own father. Yes.”

Overall, questions are designed to help the Call Taker evaluate the information effectively and make the right decisions regarding classification and prioritization in the 911 emergency response process. The questions are also designed to help the Call Taker manage confusing or ambiguous situations. The questioning process itself is also a sustained discipline exercise that affords both the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller time to contemplate and fully conceptualize what is happening and what is being communicated to the person on the other end.

1B.Call Taker Strategies – Statements:

The graphic below illustrates the strategic statements a Call Taker uses to facilitate the 911 emergency response process and manage the 911 caller’s actions while monitoring the scene of the potential 911 event. The quality of the information generated through the use of these statements will inform the effectiveness of police officer on-scene response. Each will be discussed with an example from the Garland 911 emergency call transcripts.
**Directive/Instruction:** The Call Taker instructs the 911 caller for his or her own safety or the safety of the victims with information such as the best place to wait for the police to arrive and how to proceed from any points forward after the beginning of the 911 call. Some typical directives are as follows: “Please stay on the line with me until the police arrive.” “Please stay inside your home.” “Do not give the victim any food or water” etc.” Typically, the words given in response are “ok, alright, Uh Huh…or thank you, mam.” If the Call Taker is satisfied with the answer he or she receives, an acknowledgement statement or word is offered. The best that the 911 caller can do is to attempt to convince the 911 Call Taker that he/she is experiencing a real emergency and persuade police dispatch. The 911 Call Taker works diligently to maintain control of the situation.
The Directive is the 911 Call Taker’s primary tool in that regard. The Call Taker might instruct the 911 caller regarding information management procedures. In some cases, a directive consists of a Call Taker’s repeated instruction to the 911 caller to only answer the questions that were asked.

In 911 call 2020E092052 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved), the caller, a gas station manager, calls in to report a fight with weapons involved. He wants immediate police dispatch but is reluctant to provide accurate suspect descriptions. The 2nd Call Taker gives this 911 caller a directive in an effort to persuade him to be more cooperative.

Call Taker: “Give us some information so nobody gets hurt there.”

In 911 call 2020EO92969 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) the 911 caller calls in to report that she is hiding in a hotel room and being threatened by an acquaintance who is banging on the hotel room door and threatening her. In the dialogue below, the Call Taker directs/instructs the 911 caller to keep talking. Then she instructs the 911 caller to move her focus away from her line of sight and listen to what the suspect is saying to her.

Call Taker: “Ok. So, they’re telling you you have something of hers? Is that what she is saying?”

Caller: “She’s saying…she’s saying that I, …. I have…. She’s saying that I have….”(Whispering)

Call Taker: “Go ahead Jasmine. Keep talking to me.”

Call Taker: “She’s saying what now?”

(Faint mumbling in the background)

Call Taker: “Jasmine, are you able to talk to me freely?

I need to know what she is saying. What is she saying?”
Call Taker: “Forget about what you see.”
Caller: “She’s saying “all my clothes are gone”…and she says she’s never… and …she’s like…she’s like “all my clothes are gone…”

The Call Taker’s directive proved to be very effective in drawing out more contextual information. Through the process of listening to the suspect and repeating her words, the 911 caller exposes herself and exposes the real context of the situation – that the dispute is over hidden or missing drugs - as evident in her statements below:

   Caller: “She keeps sayin that I have her shit and I don’t.” (Whispering)

   (Talking in background. Sounds distant.)

   Caller: “They’re saying: “she has drugs up in here,” and I don’t.”

**Process Explanation/Strategy Statement:** The Call Taker explains his/her process and explains why certain actions were taken or are in progress. Through the process explanation, the 911 Call Taker assumes an active role in monitoring the situation and advising the victim regarding how to handle any potential escalation in the existing situation or any new threat. In the example below, the process explanation is followed by a directive. The process explanation statements and promise of service statements almost always include a directive that has simultaneous agency in the 911 emergency response rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and Call Taker.

   Call Taker: “Yeah. I’m gonna keep you on the line until help gets there. Ok. Just let me know if you see anything else happen. Alright?”

**Promise of Service:** The Call Taker tells the 911 caller that police are on the way. Due to the 911 emergency response protocol, police dispatch is not automatic. It must be negotiated. The promise of service usually is given after an extended discussion and the gathering of qualifying evidentiary information.
For example, in 911 call 2020E087837 (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress) a witness called in to report delinquent teenage activity and the possible firing of weapons on the grounds of a local high school. The promise of service statement below works in conjunction with a directive/instruction to the 911 caller. The 911 caller is directed to call back if the situation escalates and/or if a new threat is identified.

Call Taker: “Ok. We’ve got officers en route. If anything changes, just give us a call back.”

Clarification Statement: The Call Taker repeats the 911 caller’s given information as a statement in order to obtain verification regarding what was just communicated by the 911 caller and interpreted by the Call Taker. Sometimes the repeated statement leads into another elicitation question/disposition question or the repetition of a clarification question.

In 911 event 2020E089488 (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress), the clarification statement is followed by an elicitation question designed to determine the 911 caller’s disposition and the status of the 911 event. In the dialogue below, the 911 caller states that she has cameras installed in her apartment. The Call Taker repeats the statement back to the 911 caller to make sure that she heard the information correctly.

In the dialogue below, the 911 caller offers this unsolicited information at the beginning of her narrative of the 911 event. The Call Taker listens and then repeats the 911 caller’s statement back to her in order to verify that she just heard that the 911 caller actually has cameras in her apartment. The Call Taker’s clarification statement also functions as a segue to the elicitation question/disposition question that follows. The Call Taker learns that the cameras are outside of the 911 caller’s house, giving her an optimal position through which to view and evaluate the situation.
Caller: “Uhm. We….we have cameras in our apartment and some guy just pulled out a gun on some other guy like really next door to our apartment complex.” (Apprehensiveness in her voice)

Call Taker: “Alright. So, you said you have cameras in your apartment. Are you watching the cameras on the outside of your apartment or inside?”

Caller: “On the outside. We were just watching them because we just put them up. We were looking when the guy pulled out the gun. I have kids in my apartment.”

**Description Statement:** The Call Taker might repeat a description back to the 911 caller for verification purposes and in order to set the stage for the elicitation of further information.

Caller: “There was 2 guns for sure. One of them was on foot and one of them was in a car.”

Call Taker: “The one on foot. Was he white, Black, Hispanic, Asian?”

Caller: “Uhhh…”

Call Taker: “Was he white, Black, Hispanic?”

Caller: “He’s black. He’s black. He’s black.”

Call Taker: “And about how old did he look?”

Caller: “He looked like he was probably about….like in High School.”

Call Taker: “So teenagers?”

Caller: “They all looked like high school aged kids. They all looked like high school aged kids.”

And uhm……All of them were getting out of cars. There were about 5 to 10 cars…

Call Taker: “The Black male with the gun that was on foot…What color shirt and pants was he wearing?”

Caller: “He’s wearing a white shirt. A white tank top.”
911 Caller’s Statement Re-Framed as A Question: The Call Taker frames language in various ways in repeated attempts to obtain accurate information. In some instances, the 911 Call Taker, when attempting to verify information, will re-frame the 911 caller’s statements as questions designed to elicit acknowledgement and/or verification of the information previously provided by the 911 caller. In other 911 calls, the 911 Call Taker frames the 911 caller’s anticipated elaboration on a previous response as a question designed to function as a check for understanding of the 911 caller’s information – particularly when the 911 caller is hesitant, confused, anxious, or otherwise distracted.

In 911 call 2020E095508 (Shooting), Multiple Callers called in to report that they had either heard gunshots or saw someone shooting within an apartment complex area. The following example is from one of those calls:

Call Taker: “Did you see anyone or just hear the gunshots?”

Caller: “I just saw three…three…. a young, young men just as I’m talkin to you now…they just passed by the house running…ah, but I don’t know…uh, you probably wanna just send the police over there in those apartments to see what’s goin on ah….Ah, I hope no one got shot or is…anything like that.”

Call Taker: “Ok. The men you saw right in front of your house…Can you give me a description of them? Are they white, black, Hispanic?”

Caller: “Ah, they …all three was black, ah, but I only got a description on one. He was wearing orange sweatpants and a white muscle shirt.”

In the dialogue below, the Call Taker repeats the 911 caller’s suspect description statement and re-frames it as a question.

Call Taker: “He was wearin orange sweatpants and a white muscle shirt?”
Caller: “Yes… and he had long…. long hair.”

The second example is from 911 event 2020EO92969 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved). In the dialogue below, the Call Taker listens to the caller’s account of events and then repeats the information back to the caller in the form of a question designed to obtain verification.

Caller: “She keeps sayin that I have her shit and I don’t.” (Whispering)

(Talking in background. Sounds distant.)

Caller: “They’re saying: “she has drugs up in here,” and I don’t.”

Call Taker: “Ok. So, they’re telling you you have something of hers? Is that what she is saying?”

Caller: “She’s saying…she’s saying that I, …. I have…. She’s saying that I have….“(Whispering)

911 Call Taker statements are management tools designed to control a possibly unpredictable and nuanced situation. Through the use of these various types of statements, the Call Taker can identify unexpected or ambiguous context specific information and isolate inherent volatilities that were not explicitly identified by the 911 caller. When the Call Taker is able to identify the unexpected or ambiguous context specific information and isolate inherent volatilities, he or she can better prepare the police officer for his or her 911 event on-scene response.

2. 911 Caller Strategies:

The graphic below illustrates 911 caller strategies that the 911 caller uses in order to negotiate with the Call Taker and obtain the services of police 911 dispatch. Overall, these strategies are ineffective rhetorical posturing tools unless coupled with timely and relevant evidentiary information. These strategies used by the 911 caller are always followed by a series of
elicitation questions fielded by the Call Taker. Each will be discussed with an example from the Garland 911 emergency call transcripts.

Illustration 4.5

**Pleading for Service:** Often a 911 caller emphatically requests immediate police assistance and will emphasize either the urgency of the situation or the number of calls made and the delayed police response. He might also use other emotionally charged language to convey feelings of fear, anger, disgust, or outrage directed either at the potential suspect and/or at the crime itself.

This is an excerpt from 911 event 2020E102588 (Stabbing). The 911 caller is making the call for the stabbing victim who emphasizes his urgent desire to meet with the police without offering a specific reason other than what he has initially reported. He believes that the information he has provided is enough and that police will respond faster if he expresses his desire for service emphatically and in an emotionally charged way. The 911 Call Taker appeared immune to this rhetorical strategy in all of the 911 calls of that nature that I listened to and transcribed.
Caller: “He just says they need to hurry up and get here.”

In 911 call 2020EO82436 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (3rd Call,) the 911 caller calls in again to report delinquent teenagers who are breaking the windows in his apartment and threatening his family.

Call Taker: “Garland 911. What is the location of your emergency?”

Caller: “We’ve been calling. Like…We already called like two times…” (more speaking - muffled and inaudible)

Caller: “We already called. We already called like 20 times, and we got little kids right here…. ” (inaudible)

Call Taker: “Where are the kids right now…Where are the kids right now?”

Caller: “They’re with their…. They came out… They broke our window again.”

In pleading for service, he emphasizes that they have called multiple times and there has been no police response.

**Affirming the urgency of the situation:** The 911 caller uses emotionally charged adjectives to describe an environment, potential suspects, and/or their own personal, current emotional state. The 911 caller might also attack the character of the suspect and/or refer to a prior criminal record and negative patterns of behavior. They might use words that convey their fear, anger, or a state of panic in any given situation. In many cases, they will provide descriptions that signal an imminent threat or an escalating situation.

In 911 event 2020EO82436 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (3rd Call), the 911 caller is implying that he and the other tenants in his apartment are trapped as the suspects wage a sustained attack – throwing rocks, bottles, and chairs for an extended period of time with no let up.

Caller: “It’s cause we cannot come out cause ...they broke our windows and everything…”
The 911 caller also introduces the urgency of the situation not only as informed by the sustained nature of the attack but also due to the fact that his small children are in the apartment with him.

Caller: “….we got little kids right here…”

Affirming the urgency of the situation and pleading for service are strategies that appear very similar in nature and yet have nuanced distinctions. The 911 caller who pleads for service does not provide details or elaborate regarding the needs of the situation. He believes they are self-evident and relies on his emotionally charged words to have a rhetorical impact upon the Call Taker. The person who affirms the urgency of the situation does provide detail that he or she believes will qualify the need for police dispatch. This strategy is more effective if the 911 caller is able to provide specific, evidentiary information and/or qualify an imminent threat with this evidentiary information.

Narrative/Description Statement of the 911 Event: The 911 caller tells the story of the 911 event from his or her perspective. The narrative/description has all the typical elements of the traditional narrative form in Western culture. In 911 event 2020E099578(Disturbance/Weapon Involved), the victim begins his narrative by describing a state of stasis – he is working in a customer’s backyard as per usual. Then there is a disruption in the stasis. He hears a noise. He proceeds to inquire. He sees the suspect. He confronts the suspect. The suspect threatens him with a gun. The suspect then flees. The situation returns to normal. After the encounter with the suspect and the suspect’s subsequent departure from the scene, the victim realizes that several items are missing from his van. The victim acknowledges the consequences – some of his property has been stolen. Most importantly, as in the traditional narrative form, the account is bound by a linear time sequence.
Call Taker: Ok. What’s goin on there?

Caller: “Ok. So, I’m here doin a job. Ah, I was in my customer’s backyard, and I heard some commotion in the front, so I poked my head over the fence and there’s a guy goin through my van…my work van…so I jumped the fence and I pushed him, and he pulled a gun on me and then got on his little moped and took off. I’m missing my keys, my wallet …ah several other items.”

Promise of Compliance: The 911 caller states his intention to abide by the 911 Call Taker directives. The promise of compliance strategy can function in many different contexts. The 911 caller may use these strategies to respond to a Call Taker directive or process explanation. In some cases, the 911 caller assumes the role of citizen watchdog in which case the promise of compliance strategy has a completely different rhetorical meaning. The citizen watchdog uses this strategy as a pledge to work in collaboration with the 911 Call Taker. This type of 911 caller presumably has more agency that the typical 911 caller and the Call Taker responds in consideration of this shared power relationship.

In 911 event 2020EO98498 (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress) (Crazy Man with a Machete), the 911 caller called in to report a crazy man wielding a machete. This 911 caller assumes the role of citizen watchdog and monitors the situation while reporting back to the Call Taker. The Call Taker makes several strategy statements and provides several directives. The 911 caller initially responds by affirming his citizen watchdog role – he gives a detailed description of the suspect’s actions, moment by moment. The Call Taker responds by asking about the police officer’s disposition. After the 911 Call Taker’s final acknowledgement statement, the 911 caller responds with a promise of compliance designed to affirm their mutual collaboration.
Call Taker: “I have an officer in the area. Let me know when the officer makes contact with him, ok?”

Caller: “Ah, ok. I see him. Yep. He’s coming out of the laundromat right now. With a bicycle. (women’s voices in the background) He just walked in there and stole that bicycle. Yeah yeah. He’s got him. He’s gonna get him, I hope.

He’s runnin. Ah no, he fell.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Ok.”

Call Taker: “The officer is with him?”

Caller: “Yes.”

Call Taker: “Ok.”

Call Taker: “Did you want to speak to the officer in person?”

Caller: “Uhm, I can if you need anything.”

In the case just examined, the protocol is followed in a typical manner. The Call Taker asks if the 911 caller would like to speak with police officers. The 911 caller responds in an atypical way. He says he will meet with police officers if they “need anything.” This language suggests that the 911 caller believes he has played a consequential role in the apprehension of this suspect and is not merely a witness. 911 callers in my data sample rarely implied that the police might need their help. 911 callers usually hold the reverse opinion, that they need police to mediate a situation in which they are personally involved and feel threatened.

3. 911 Caller and Call Taker Strategies:

The graph below illustrates the 911 emergency call strategies that are used by both the 911 caller and Call Taker. These strategies highlight the symbiotic nature of the 911 emergency call
conversation as both the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies are often contingent upon one another. Each will be discussed with an example from the Garland 911 emergency call transcripts.

Illustration 4.6

**Acknowledgement Statement:** Either the 911 caller or Call Taker will provide a verbal recognition that affirms their hearing and understanding of the information communicated by the other person engaged in this 911 emergency conversation. Both the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker provide acknowledgement statements. The Call Taker usually gives an acknowledgment statement in response to a narrative description of the 911 event or in response to the 911 caller’s answers to the Call Taker’s elicitation questions. In the dialogue below from 911 event 2020E102922
(Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Road Rage Incident), the 911 caller has assumed the role of citizen watchdog. the Call Taker is acknowledging the 911 caller’s role in monitoring the suspect:

Caller: “I’m not parked. I am actually viewing him, but I am moving around because I don’t want him to get close to me.”

Call Taker: “Ok.”

Process Explanation/Strategy Statement: Both the 911 Call Taker and 911 caller will sometimes explain the reason for the measures he or she has decided to take in order to mitigate the 911 emergency situation. In most cases, the 911 Call Taker provides process explanations. In certain rare cases, the 911 caller will also provide a process explanation.

911 Caller Process Explanation/Strategy Statement: In rare instances, the 911 caller assumes a proactive role in the 911 event and informs the Call Taker that he is monitoring the situation and/or the suspect in some way. In the dialogue below, the 911 caller’s process explanation is followed by a directive from the Call Taker.

In 911 event 2020E102922 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Road Rage Incident) the 911 Call Taker fields elicitation questions designed to draw out more evidentiary information, the 911 caller ignores the questions and provides his own process explanation. In the dialogue below, the 911 caller explains his strategy and the Call Taker responds with an acknowledgement statement - thereby giving implied permission for the 911 caller’s authoritative role.

Caller: I’m not parked. I am actually viewing him, but I am moving around because I don’t want him to get close to me.

Call Taker: “Ok.”

After receiving the Call Taker’s implied permission, the 911 caller provides further information about the suspect’s disposition and status.
Caller: “Cause…he’s leaving his vehicle. He’s talking trash to other people there at the gas station.”

The Call Taker responds by re-framing the 911 caller’s statement as a question for verification purposes.

Call Taker: “Ok. So, he’s in…having a disturbance with other customers at the gas station?”

Caller: “I see a police officer’s vehicle.”

Call Taker: “And, so, you’ll be waiting over by the Cici’s for officers to contact you?”

Caller: “Yeah, Uhm. Right now, I am trying to be at the Super Cuts across from Cici’s Pizza actually just in between like right there ah, and I am able to view the Tom Thumb gas station from where I am at.”

In the dialogue below, the Call Taker responds to the 911 caller’s process explanation by giving a directive through which he will learn where to meet to police officers responding to the scene of this 911 event.

Directive:

Call Taker: “Ok. If it’s safe to do so, please just wait there in front of the SuperCuts so that officers can locate you.”

In the dialogue below from 911 event 2020E091257 (Disturbance/ Weapon Involved), the 911 caller is explaining her role in monitoring the suspect, her positionality, and the measures she has taken to protect her children from the suspect until the police arrive.

Caller: “I can’t see but there…. everybody’s looking really nervous down the street. And I don’t want them to know I’m calling so I stayed in the house, and I have the kids with me. We brought them inside. (To third party) That’s ok.”
**Call Taker Process Explanation/Strategy Statement:** The Call Taker explains the measures he or she is taking to help mitigate the situation. In the dialogue from 911 event 2020EO97146 (Random Shooting) the Call Taker explains why she has to ask very specific questions about the victim’s location. The 911 caller is an apparent victim of a random shooting or road rage incident that occurred when she was exiting the freeway onto an access road. The Call Taker assumes that the victim may be in shock, and she feels that her series of elicitation questions warrant some explanation. The Call Taker not only wants to put the 911 caller at ease but also wants to ensure expedient police response and the 911 caller’s continued safety. There is perhaps the possibility that the suspect will return to the scene in the immediate future. Usually, Call Takers do not explain why they are fielding elicitation questions. They just proceed with their process.

Call Taker: “Ok. Tell me what happened.”

Caller: “Ah, I was driving down 30 and a car drove past me, and I am guessing shot out my back window. It shattered in my son’s face. Uh, I just heard a pop and then my window shattered.”

Call Taker: “Thank you mam. So where exactly are you right now?”

Caller: “Ah, I’m on the service road. Hold on. Let me look at this sign behind me. So, I’m on the service road and I just passed Broadway and I’m on the service road.”

Call Taker: “But it… the shot happened at Rosehill, and you drove up to Broadway?”

Caller: “Ah, it happened at about Broadway, I believe, because I drove a little bit before I could exit.”

Call Taker: “Ok. I just want to make sure I can get officers to you exactly where you are. Did you see anything nearby you?”

Caller: “Ah, it’s like at this curb…all this glass to drive to go…” (inaudible)
Call Taker: “No, I understand. I just wanna make sure that we know where you are.”

**Description Statement:** The 911 caller will provide a description statement of either the 911 event and/or suspects. The 911 Call Taker might repeat that description statement back to the 911 caller for verification purposes or as an opening for further elicitation questions. In the dialogue example below from 911 event 2020E089488 (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress), the Call Taker does both.

Call Taker: “Was he white, black, Hispanic?”

Caller: “He’s black. He’s black. He’s black.”

Call Taker: “The black male with the gun that was on foot…What color shirt and pants was he wearing?”

Caller: “He’s wearing a white shirt. A white tank top.”

The mutual 911 caller and Call Taker strategies highlight the shared agency of both parties in many 911 conversation instances and affirm the importance of mutual understanding and cooperation.

4. The Agency of Multiple Strategies:

911 caller and Call Taker strategies are not only shared at isolated points in a 911 conversation. Often, these strategies work simultaneously within the 911 conversation for an extended period of time. Most importantly, the extent to which these strategies complement each other will inform the outcome of the 911 emergency call conversation and possibly the on-scene 911 event resolution. Below are examples of those extended dialogue instances in which multiple strategies work together.

**Elicitation Question -Status Question/Process Explanation Response:**

Some 911 Call Taker/Caller exchanges are somewhat different in nature due to the positionality of the caller in relation to the Call Taker. In this one case, 911 event
2020E102922 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Road Rage Incident), the 911 caller was a security guard, although he didn’t state so until well into the call. His attitude was different from the attitude of the typical 911 caller. He conveyed a tone of confidence and control. He called in to report a road rage incident in which a driver of this truck tried to run him off the road. He later stated that the suspect threatened to smash his car with a metal bar. In any case, the 911 caller immediately placed himself in the role of proactive citizen who was going to monitor the situation until the police arrived. The Call Taker did not exactly oblige him in that role but proceeded to solicit evidentiary information. In his role as proactive citizen, the 911 caller responded to requests for evidentiary information by providing his process explanation information and sought acknowledgment statements from the Call Taker. The Call Taker provided mild acknowledgment statements near the end of the call but also fielded a series of elicitation questions while coaching this security officer in the process of monitoring the suspect. Curiously enough, even though the 911 caller is a security guard, he appeared to become frustrated with the Call Taker at one point. The Call Taker asked him if he were injured – a status question. The caller refused to answer the question and attempted to regain control of the situation by offering more descriptive information and reaffirming his intention to monitor the situation:

**Elicitation Question: Status Question:**

Call Taker: “And, are you injured?”

Caller: “He’s got a Colorado…”

Call Taker: “Are you injured? “

Caller:” I’m…. I’m in my vehicle. I am trying to stay away from this guy. I am giving a description, ok.”

Call Taker: “So, you do not need an ambulance? You are not injured? “
Caller: “No, I don’t want to be in that situation, ok.”

The 911 caller dismissed the 911 Call Taker’s question regarding possible injuries. It seems unusual that a security guard with some knowledge of law enforcement procedure would dismiss what is a standard procedural question. The 911 caller continued to provide extensive, detailed description of the suspect, the suspect’s disposition, and his monitoring process. This 911 caller appeared to be seeking acknowledgement statements from the 911 Call Taker. Instead, he received a series of elicitation questions. It appeared that the 911 caller wanted the Call Taker to know that he was in control and being strategic as he was moving around the parking lot in his vehicle – trying to stay away from the suspect and watching his every move at the same time. Based on 911 conversation audio and transcripts, the 911 caller appeared very solicitous in his interaction with the suspect. The fact that he wanted to interact with the suspect was unusual.

911 Caller Narrative Description Statement; 911 Call Taker – Elicitation Questions; Suspect Description Questions; Status/Disposition Question; 911 Caller -Affirming the Urgency of the Situation; Directive; Promise of Compliance:

In 911 event 2020E092052 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Fight), a convenience store clerk called in to report a fight outside in the parking lot of his store in which one of the parties displayed a shotgun. He provides a narrative description of the 911 event. The Call Taker responds to his narrative description statement with a series of elicitation questions and one critical directive statement. The Call Takers who responded to the 911 call and the 911 caller appeared to be a power struggle. The 911 caller’s initial posture was that of a steward taking responsibility for a situation he knew nothing about. He was reluctant to provide any descriptions of the suspects. He wanted the police to be dispatched immediately and appeared to want to stay uninvolved in the situation aside from his duty to report. When asked for descriptions, he initially deflected with
assertions regarding the urgency of the situation. The bulk of the dialogue of this 911 call reveals the Call Taker’s process of subtle coaching through sustained elicitation questions and a directive affirming the need for the 911 caller’s compliance. In the dialogue below, the 911 Caller provides a narrative description of the 911 event:

   Caller: “Ok. We got a problem. Ah, somebody pulled a gun on somebody out here and stuff. A man’s out here kicking on the truck. A little girl got out the truck with the gun and she pulled……she pulled the gun on somebody out here and we need police assistance.“

The Call Taker responds to the narrative with a status question. She wants to know if the 911 event is in progress or occurred a while ago. This information will inform the need for immediate police dispatch. With this status question, the Call Taker proceeds to affirm her control of the situation.

   Call Taker: “How long ago did this happen?”
   Caller: “Just now.”
   Call Taker: “Ok.”
   Caller: “We need the police up here this second.”

   The Call Taker responds to the 911 caller’s pleads for service by fielding evidentiary questions – suspect description/identification questions and disposition questions - also designed to affirm institutional control of the process itself.

   Call Taker: “Who, who did this, though? It…Was it a male or a female?”
   Caller: “I have no idea of the customers, mam.”

   The 911 caller is reluctant or unable to provide suspect descriptions. He responds by affirming the urgency of the situation with claims that somebody has a gun and that many people are in potential danger. The 911 caller considers his statement about a suspect with a gun and a
crowd of potential victims as self-evident/self-explanatory information that will catalyze police dispatch.

Caller “Can you get somebody out here? There’s somebody out here with a gun. I’ve got a bunch of customers in here. They’re out in the parking lot arguing and carrying on.”

Call Taker: “Ok.”

The Call Taker acknowledges the 911 caller’s statements and yet appears immune to his assertions and continues to field description and disposition questions in an attempt to draw out more information. The dialogue below is an example of the Call Taker’s elicitation questions - suspect description and disposition questions:

Call Taker: “And how many people are there?”

Caller: “There are about 4 or 5 people standing out here, but this involves about 3 people.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Could you give me a description?”

Caller: “Ah yes. One guy…As a matter of fact…one guy , one guy’s a Hispanic male, both of them are Hispanic. There’s a black guy out there. Mam, there’s a bunch of people out here, mam.”

Call Taker: “Ok is it two Hispanic males and one black guy?”

Caller: “Yes. And, ah, ah…a a… Hispanic female…”

Call Taker: “Is there a vehicle involved around there?”

Caller: “Ah, there’s a white – one of them old police cars and there’s a black truck.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Are you able to see a license plate?”

Caller: “No mam, I’m not, but they’re not going nowhere. They’re in the middle of the parking lot.”
After the 911 caller provides a narrative/description statement, the Call Taker immediately seeks to establish the time frame of the event. The 911 caller responds with an affirmation of the urgency of the situation. The 911 Call Taker then seeks a description of the suspects, the number of suspects, and disposition information. The Call Taker realizes that the situation is fluid and wants to provide the most accurate information to police officers.

The Call Taker was persistent and eventually obtained the descriptions she needed to pass on to the responding officers. The 911 caller made a point of telling the Call Taker that this suspect was a child. He did, however, seem very reluctant to provide a positive identification of this girl. Even after identifying the suspect as a young female early on, when pressed for clarification, he fielded excuses and deflections. He also devoted a considerable portion of the dialogue to reaffirming what he believed was his sole role and obligation as a guard who was negotiating for police assistance by articulating the urgency of the situation. The dialogue below transpired at a later point in the call as the Call Taker went back and fielded the same elicitation questions at various intermittent points with the hope of obtaining a better response.

Call Taker: “Sir. Could you give me a description of the person that has the gun?”

Caller: “Excuse me?”

Call Taker: “Could you give me a description of the person that has the gun?”

Caller: “Ah…mam, she’s inside the truck. She’s sittin in the truck.”

Call Taker: “Ok. So, it’s a female who has the gun?”

Caller: “I can’t see through the windows on the truck.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Was it a female who had the gun?”

Caller: “No mam.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Was it a male who had the gun?”
Caller: “I can’t hear you. Excuse me. Do you hear…do you hear them arguing?”

Call Taker: “Sir, was it a male or female who had the gun?”

Caller: “A female. “

Call Taker: “A female?”

Caller: “Yes mam.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Could you give me a description? What was…what race was she?”

Caller: “I can’t give no. I don’t….I’m not trying to get a description, mam….All I need is for….”

The 911 caller seems reluctant to describe any suspects, particularly the person with the gun for some unknown reason. In any case, at one point, the caller says he was unable to hear the question. At another point, he was able to see that the person exiting the truck with a gun was a young girl; however, once she was back inside the truck, he was unable to see through the windows of the truck to positively identify her. Two Call Takers participated in this call. The Second Call Taker issued the directive and ultimately obtained some of the description both Call Takers had been seeking.

Second Call Taker: “The truck that the female with the gun is in. What kind of truck is it or what color is it?”

Directive: “Give us some information so nobody gets hurt there.”

The Call Taker’s use of a directive in this case is significant. She is attempting to reason with the 911 caller by predicting a potential escalation if accurate and timely information is not provided. Through the use of this directive, the Call Taker is wielding her power and influence while attempting to project a good deal of the responsibility onto the 911 caller regarding the existing or potential dynamic in this situation.
This 911 call was resolved through the full cooperation of the 911 caller and his promise of compliance. What is interesting in this case is the nature of the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and the first Call Taker and the nature of the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and the Second Call Taker. During the first part of the call when the 911 caller was talking to the first Call Taker, he assumed the demeanor of an uninterested/uninvolved steward of the convenience store who was reporting the 911 event out of a mere legal obligation to do so. In his interaction with the second Call Taker, after heeding her directive, he assumes the role of citizen watchdog who is monitoring every nuance and reporting back to the call center. At some point, he accepts complete ownership of his citizen watchdog role and even reveals a sense of pride in his rhetorical posture.

Caller: “I gave you the tag number on the truck.”

Second Call Taker: “Ok. What color is the truck? A white, a white pickup?”

Caller: “Yes mam. It’s a white pickup.”

Second Call Taker: “Older model or newer model?”

Caller: “Ah, a new model. Brand new.”

Second Call Taker: “Chevrolet, Dodge. Can you tell?”

Caller: “Yeah. It looks like a Chevy.”

Second Call Taker: “So, a white, newer model, Chevy pickup.”

Caller: “Yes mam.”

Second Call Taker: “And she’s still there.”

Caller: Yes mam. “They’re still out here. You you…” (inaudible)

Second Call Taker: “Are they by the pumps?”

Caller: “Yes, mam. They’re by the pumps. They’re in the middle of our isle. Yes mam."
(Later in the call.)

Caller: “Well, I went out there to get the tag for you and stuff and he said “I’m not goin anywhere. I’m not leaving. I’m waitin for the police.”

**Process Explanation, Directive, Elicitation Questions, Promise of Service:**

In the dialogue below from the same 911 event, the second Call Taker provides a process explanation, a directive, and a promise of service. I believe that the Call Taker’s process explanation reassures the 911 caller and puts him at ease. The process explanation provides the justification for further elicitation questions and affirms the importance of the 911 caller’s cooperation while implying that he is a valued mitigating agent. Then the Call Taker proceeds with an extended line of elicitation questions through which she is able to obtain detailed suspect descriptions, detailed suspect dispositions, and context specific information that could be critical to suspect apprehension. At this point, the 911 caller reveals that he knows more about the suspects then he was previously willing to disclose. He reveals that he knows the habits of the one suspect, thereby implying that he has seen him and possibly interacted with that one suspect several times on previous occasions.

Second Call Taker: “Ok. I am going to keep you on the line. Just let us know if she leaves, ok.”

Caller: “Ok.”

Second Call Taker: “And the officers are on the way, but we need to the direction of travel if they leave.”

Caller: “Ok. No problem. …….Thank you.”

Second Call Taker: “Anybody else that’s involved there have a vehicle or are they on foot?”
Caller: “I don’t think he’s on…. I don’t know whether….he normally drives a car, but I think he’s on a bicycle today....”
Second Call Taker: “So, the other party is the Hispanic male on a bicycle?”
Caller: “Yes.”
Second Call Taker: “What’s he wearin?”
Caller: “He’s wearin a, let me see...he’s wearin a grey, striped shirt, he’s wearin a grey, striped shirt. He’s got a black pants on...black pants...I mean black, black pant shorts on....black shoes on. He’s got a ponytail and he’s got a little facial beard.”
Second Call Taker: “Great. Thank you.” (In a subdued, somewhat condescending voice)
Second Call Taker: “And they’re still out there arguing?”
Caller: “Yes mam. They’re still arguing. Do you want me to go outside so you can hear?”
Second Call Taker: “No sir. Do not put yourself in any danger.”
Caller: “Ok.”
Caller to third party: “What’s up mate?”
I hear you man. I’m doing ok. What’s up buddy. Are you doing alright today? Yeah, there’s too much goin on for me to talk to you right now.”
Caller: “Ok.”
Second Call Taker: “And the pickup is still there, correct.”
Caller: “Yes mam, the pickup truck is still here.”
Caller: “Well, I went out there to get the tag for you and stuff and he said “I’m not goin anywhere. I’m not leaving. I’m waitin for the police.”
Second Call Taker: “Ok. Any idea why...”
Caller: “You gotta understand. This is some money. (Ebonics for this is the truth.) This is a little girl who pulled this gun from what I understand.”

Second Call Taker: “A little girl like a child?”

Caller: “Like a minor. He was kickin on the truck or something. I don’t know. But he’s arguing. She’s a minor. You wait…That’s ok. Wait until the police get here. “

Through his active engagement, the 911 caller begins to appreciate the value of his agency as a citizen watchdog. He also begins to seek further acknowledgement of his role as a citizen watchdog from the Call Taker. He goes back outside and holds his phone to the commotion so that the Call Taker can hear what the suspects are saying and doing. The Call Taker continues with her extended line of elicitation questions designed to determine if there are injuries and gain more context regarding the status and disposition of the suspects.

Caller: “Are you listening?”

Second Call Taker: “Yes.”

Caller: “Excuse me.”

Second Call Taker: “Yes. I’m listening.”

Caller: “Ok. I came back in.”

Second Call Taker: “But you hear the conversation, correct?”

Caller: “Yes. “

Caller: “Hello?”

Second Call Taker: “Yes. I hear sir.”

Caller: “Yes. That’s them out here arguin mam.”

Second Call Taker: “Nobody’s injured, right?”

Caller: “No, I don’t see nobody injured mam. No.”
Caller: “But I just had customers goin out so I just walked over to the door so you could hear them on the phone.”

Second Call Taker: “Ok.”

Caller: “Yeah. They makin threats with guns and whatnot ah again, so I don’t know what’s goin on.”

Caller: “Uhm Uhm Uhm…”

Caller: “Always something up here.”

Second Call Taker: “Yes sir.”

Caller: “Ah boy.”

Second Call Taker: “Is the guy on the bike still there?”

Caller: “Excuse me?”

Second Call Taker: “The guy on the bike is he still there?”

Caller: “Yes, he’s still here. He’s the one runnin his mouth arguin with the other guy.”

Yes, he. They both still here. They in each other’s face. But, I mean, there ain’t no swinging yet or whatnot, but they’re pretty well heated.” (Well-heated – Ebonics for angry and emotionally charged)

Second Call Taker: “Ok.”

In the dialogue below, the second Call Taker issues another directive, and the caller acknowledges this directive and states his willingness to cooperate. The 911 caller plays an active role in the promise of service dynamic. He acknowledges police presence on the scene and communicates this information back to the second Call Taker. Then the second Call Taker reaffirms the 911 caller’s agency in the situation by directing him to go and speak with the police.

Second Call Taker: “Just stay in because I don’t want anyone to get hurt.”
Caller: “Ok. No problem.”

Caller: “Here they come. Here’s the police. The police are here now, mam.”

Second Call Taker: “Ok. Go talk to them. Thank you, sir.”

In the example above, the second Call Taker, while assuming control of the situation, also acknowledged the agency of the 911 caller. This acknowledgement led to cooperation and the retrieval of critical information. The Call Taker approached the situation not as an agent of the government who intends to institutionally act upon a situation but as an agent of the government seeking mutual cooperation. This strategy was successful in forging a peaceful resolution. Police officers responded to the scene and the situation was resolved without any violence.

Through the initial and focused coding processes, I learned that the 911 emergency call conversation has a rhetorical structure in the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies. While the structure itself is fixed, there is an affordance for nuance. The 911 caller and Call Taker strategies are used in different ways, at different times, and to meet different exigencies. 911 caller personalities and emotions have become evident at various points while Call Takers have appeared to consistently conceal their emotions and personalities. While there were variances in levels of effectiveness, there seems to be an overall functionality in this system - a functionality I will discuss at a later point in my data analysis.

AN EVALUATION OF THE RHETORICAL RELATIONSHIP/SITUATION CATEGORIES AS GENERATED THROUGH THE PROVISIONAL CODING PROCESS:

Through the provisional coding process, I selected sections of each 911 call conversation that fit into the categorical elements of 911 caller and 911 Call Taker rhetorical exchange. I then looked through and evaluated transcriptions of my 911 audio call recordings and selected words, phrases, or sentences of dialogue in these conversations that provided the best examples of these
rhetorical situation categories. I classified the various characteristics of 911 caller and Call Taker interaction as not merely incidental but strategic and with a viable currency. These categorical elements qualify the 911 caller’s rhetorical role in pleading for service and the 911 Call Taker’s role of obtaining information and making value judgments. In terms of addressing my research question about the characteristics of the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker, I focus on analyzing the positive traits such as patience, understanding, and persistence on the part of the 911 Call Taker in the process of information retrieval. These rhetorical situation categories inform the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker and shape the nature and quality of 911 emergency information processing and 911 emergency response. (See Chapter 3 Methodology)

**Provisional Coding:**

The graphic below illustrates the rhetorical relationship/situation categories generated through the provisional coding process. These categories constitute various aspects of the 911 emergency call dialogue in which the 911 caller and Call Taker exchange information. I created the categories and definitions below after having been informed by the initial and focused coding processes and the analysis generated in the provisional coding process of the 911 call transcripts and the inherent elements identified through this process. I believe these elements have the most agency in the formation and maintenance of the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker and ultimately guide the 911 emergency response process.
1. **Language Clarity:** The degree to which the speaker enunciates, provides accurate detail through correct word choice, and displays audibility.

2. **Attitude Assessed by Vocal inflection and Language Style Used:** The agency of tone of voice and word choice as considered in the context of the verbal exchange between 911 caller and Call Taker.

3. **Level of Responsiveness:** The extent to which either the 911 Call Taker or 911 caller reacts to the information provided and attempts to answer a question or abide by a directive (911 Call Taker) or acknowledge a narrative description (911 caller).

4. **Urgency of the Situation:** The extent to which the 911 caller communicates the urgency of the situation and the extent to which the 911 Call Taker agrees and prioritizes the call.
5. **Reliability of the Information:** The extent to which the information is consistent, is evidentiary in nature, and is timely and relevant. The caller could be sincere in his or her reporting narrative and still provide inaccurate information.

6. **Believability of the 911 Caller:** The extent to which a 911 caller is consistent, provides evidentiary information, and speaks in a coherent manner. Other context specific variables/factors within the parameters of the 911 emergency conversation are also considered.

7. **Implicit Cultural Understandings:** Cultural understandings about cause/effect and problem/solution dynamics that are mutually understood between the 911 caller and Call Taker. They may also be cultural understandings of another nature. These understandings can inform and guide the 911 emergency response process but are never stated explicitly.

8. **Common-sense Assumptions:** These are also culturally based understandings premised upon Western cultural epistemology and western reasoning and logic that inform ideas about how the world works and why/how we know what we know.

9. **Description of the 911 Event:** The quality of the description provided to include specific detail, evidentiary information, accuracy, timeliness, and relevance.

10. **Worthiness of Service:** The degree to which a 911 caller qualifies a 911 event, and the 911 Call Taker evaluates the 911 event and determines that this event is an emergency and merits police response.

11. **Caller and Call Taker’s Treatment of Ambiguity:** The 911 caller and 911 Call Taker’s reaction and methods applied when faced with uncertainty or when one or both parties is misunderstood.

   When answering the question **How does the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker influence the quality of information in the 911 emergency response**
process?, I considered the transfer of information in the 911 emergency call as contingent upon the rhetorical relationship/situation and the variables within this rhetorical relationship that inform 911 emergency response. The goal of this rhetorical relationship is information quality that will effectively guide the police on-scene decision-making process. Information quality is predicated on accuracy of description and context. A good description must contain detail and specific evidentiary information that legally qualifies a situation and establishes context. Sometimes people are reluctant to reveal the context of a 911 event because they are embarrassed, ashamed, confused, afraid, or protecting themselves from police discovery of information that would make them legally liable for something. The process can be tedious. The 911 Call Taker must embrace the challenging task of attempting to obtain the context of any given situation through subtle persuasion in a patient, understanding, and kind manner. In most cases, the 911 Call Taker engaged the 911 caller in a process of subtle coaching through a sustained line of elicitation questions that were sometimes repetitive. In some of the 911 calls I listened to and transcribed, the 911 caller did not understand the process and was not expecting the Call Taker’s line of questioning. Once the Call Taker explained his or her process and the 911 call progressed, most 911 callers became fully compliant and provided the requested information to the best of their abilities. I did not observe an occasion in which the 911 Call Taker directly caused the 911 caller to withhold information or refuse to elaborate. On the occasions when significant information was left out of the 911 exchange, the 911 caller acted deceptively for reasons unrelated to his or her interaction with the 911 Call Taker. In answering the research question recently mentioned, I identified the optimal rhetorical qualities held by both 911 caller and Call Taker that help facilitate the transfer of quality descriptive/contextual information that prepares the police officer for his or her on-scene response.
In the following analytical segments, I grouped each rhetorical situation category according to how and when they occur within each 911 emergency call as these qualities work in conjunction with each other and help inform the overall process that is inherent in all 911 emergency calls.

2. **Attitudes - Patience, Sympathy, Kindness:**

When analyzing the following rhetorical situation category, I considered how a Call Taker’s attitude might inform 911 caller compliance and assist in drawing out pertinent information. Considering that high levels of stress are usually present in these situations, I explored how the process of patient elicitation transpired and potentially impacted the quality of the information transferred to the responding police officer. A Call Taker’s attitude is important when the 911 caller does not understand the process and/or is nervous and upset as was the case in the 911 call below:

In 911 event 2020E86923 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Threatening Display of Shotgun), the caller called in to report that some teenagers in a car stopped by her house and displayed a shotgun before driving away. Initially, the 911 caller insisted that she did not know the suspect(s). The Call Taker was persistent and yet patient, sympathetic, and kind. She kept asking tailored description questions designed to draw out more information and/or jog the caller’s memory.

The Call Taker asked similar questions intermittently throughout the call perhaps because the initial answers were not conclusive. Most importantly, the Call Taker offered sympathetic and understanding words when the 911 caller still struggled to answer. She intermittently asked the 911 caller if the vehicle had any distinguishing marks or “any kind of rams” three times. The third time was the charm. During the third instance of questioning, something jogged the caller’s memory:
Call Taker: “And so, you all didn’t know him or anything? Did you see any rams they had special on it or anything to identify it with?”

Caller: “No. No.”

Call Taker: “That’s ok. I know it probably happened quickly.” (Sympathetic and understanding tone.)

Caller: “Yes. I am thinking now that it was probably my daughter’s boyfriend who she got into a fight with, and I now remember they have one like that.”

Call Taker: “Ok. So, you think it’s gonna be your daughter’s ex?”

Caller: “Probably so. Yes. Yes. I remember seeing that ...that Suburban or whatever. He’s dropped her off a few times.”

Through an analysis of the 911 calls, it became evident that patience and understanding on the part of the Call Taker can lead to the revelation of more information. The patient 911 Call Taker affords the 911 caller time to find his or her bearings in the middle of a stressful situation and inspires reflection and critical recall when panic can easily inform the situation.

2. Attitude: Call Taker’s Patience; 911 Caller’s 2. Attitude: Vocal Inflection and Language Style Used: impatience, disorientation, cursing

In the next attitude category, I examine a 911 call dialogue in which ambiguity is prevalent. The Call Taker faces a challenge to her control of the situation and the level of volatility is unknown. The 911 caller appears untrustworthy. The Call Taker’s patient attitude keeps the 911 caller on the line and talking. This strategy proves to be useful.

In 911 event 2020E092969 (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress) (Threats and Intimidation), the 911 caller calls in to report that she is being threatened by a woman with whom she spent the last 24 hours. The suspect was apparently banging on the hotel room door and attempting to break
in order to retrieve some presumably stolen items. The 911 caller was highly emotional and somewhat disoriented. She changed her story several times. The Call Taker was patient, attentive, and obliging. The Call Taker let the 911 caller tell her story in its entirety while intermittently fielding status/disposition questions. Eventually, a possible truth came out. The 911 caller revealed that the suspect was accusing her of hiding drugs. What is also significant in this case is that during the process of attempting to obtain evidentiary information, the Call Taker fields a series of status/disposition questions that perhaps provide a sense of security for the 911 caller. The 911 caller might feel that Call Taker is monitoring the situation, is vigilant, and is concerned for her welfare. These positive feelings might have been reinforced when the Call Taker issues a promise of service several times throughout this 911 call. This sense of security conjured by the Call Taker may also have inspired the 911 caller to gradually become more forthcoming.

Call Taker: “Ok. Are they inside of your room now?”

Caller: “No. I’m trying to get under the bed.”

Call Taker: “Ok. So, you’re under the bed?”

Caller: “No, I can’t fit under the bed.” (Whispering)

Call Taker: “Ok. Are you not able to speak freely right now?”

Caller: “They’re not in the room…. yet.”

Call Taker: “Ok. They’re not. Ok. good They’re not in the room yet.”

Call Taker: “They’re not in the room yet. I’ll let officers know. They’re in route. Ok.”

Caller: “She keeps sayin that I have her shit and I don’t.” (Whispering)

(Talking in background. Sounds distant.)

Caller: “They’re saying: ‘she has drugs up in here,’ and I don’t.”
Call Taker: “Ok. So, they’re telling you you have something of hers? Is that what she is saying?”

Caller: “She’s saying…she’s saying that I, …. I have…. She’s saying that I have…”. (Whispering)

Call Taker: “Go ahead Jasmine. Keep talking to me.”

Call Taker: “She’s saying what now?”

This 911 caller’s attitude becomes evident in the language she uses, her highly agitated vocal tone, and her stream of consciousness call opening. The 911 caller is anxious, cussing, and appears to have trouble expressing herself. She is attempting to communicate many ideas at once. She doesn’t seem sure regarding what information is most important. The 911 caller begins the call with “It’s Garland. Here we go. Here we go,” as if she were talking to herself while talking to the Call Taker. Also, most 911 callers I listened too don’t identify themselves by the name of the city. This action suggests that this caller has already made previous calls to the 911 emergency response system and is familiar with the protocols. This response might also be the caller’s answer to the transfer directive. In some instances, the 911 call is initially processed through the Dallas, Texas 911 Emergency Response Center and transferred out.

Caller: “It’s Garland. Here we go. Here we go. Yes. There’s at the fucking door just trying to get in…banging at the fucking door. She’s just attacked me. She tried…..She stabbed me.”

The Call Taker remains calm. She looks for evidence of a stabbing. In the dialogue below, the Call Taker fields a status question. The 911 caller’s answer will inform the Call Taker’s 911 event classification and priority decisions. This question also highlights the Call Taker’s level of engagement with the 911 caller and her ability to draw out nuance.
Status Question:

Call Taker: “Are you bleeding mam?”

Caller: “Ah yes…..yeahhhhh” (Whimpering)

What is significant in this case is that the Call Taker does not focus on the 911 caller’s emotions. She looks for evidentiary information by asking what act was committed, when, with what weapon, and if there are any injuries. The Call Taker devotes her energies to ascertaining the threat level, the disposition of the suspect in relation to the victim, and specific identifying information that a police officer on the scene can look for. However, the Call Taker’s response, however procedural, is also rhetorical because her clarification and elicitation questions are in response to the tone of the 911 caller’s narrative. The Call Taker is responding not only to the content of the narrative but also to the spirit of the narrative. The 911 caller is upset, somewhat disoriented, and scared. The Call Taker’s process is designed to manage the 911 call, place the information in a logical sequence, and help control the emotions of the 911 caller. The Call Taker’s attempts to control the 911 caller’s emotions are indicative of rhetorical process. The Call Taker’s attempt to control the 911 caller’s emotions also implies some level of empathy and understanding.

4. Urgency of the Situation:

In the next category, I explore how both the 911 caller and Call Taker negotiate the need for police response. In order for the 911 caller to effectively convince the Call Taker of the urgency of the situation, he or she must clarify the presence of a weapon and clarify that the 911 event is in progress.

The 911 caller goes to great lengths to establish the urgency of the situation. How the 911 Call Taker considers the urgency of the situation can influence the quality of information exchange. The 911 Call Taker must decide if the situation is really urgent, and if there is time to
further assess the situation. The 911 Call Taker does not make any immediate decisions in this case. She responds to the 911 caller’s urgent pleas by eliciting more information, repeating questions for verification purposes, and fielding a status question. This 911 conversation lasted about 15 minutes.

   Caller: “She stabbed me. You need to hurry there.”
   Caller: “You need to hurry there. You need to hurry….She’s saying…..

   **Status/Disposition Question:**

   Call Taker: “Does she have a knife on her?
   Caller: “Yes, yes.”
   Caller: “They’re kicking in the door now. They’re getting in the door now, so I don’t know what the fuck I’m gonna do.”

   The caller’s posturing regarding the urgency of the situation might have been effective in isolation; however, her story keeps changing and she seems confused. The 911 caller also qualifies the urgency of the situation by testifying to the suspect’s purported drug abuse and frames the suspect as in a drug induced rage.

   Caller: “She went crazy on me cause she’s comin down off of drugs….she’s goin crazy.”

   There might be an implicit cultural understanding shared by both the 911 caller and Call Taker that those who are using drugs are more of a threat and have the potential for volatile behavior or an escalation of existing behaviors.

   Caller: “She’s coming. I’m afraid.” (Whispering)

   The Call Taker does not directly address the 911 caller’s fear or confusion. She continues to seek evidentiary information that qualifies the nature of the 911 event and will help her make decisions regarding how to advise the 911 caller.
The Call Taker was not completely successful in drawing out every relevant detail. Still, she was able to obtain different versions of events that highlighted the 911 caller/victim’s mindset - the victim claimed to be stabbed at first but then claimed to be strangled with a shoestring during a possible drug dispute. As both the suspect and the caller might possibly have been under the influence some illegal substance, the information could not be considered as completely reliable. However, the Call Taker obtained enough contextual information so that the responding officer could be prepared for different possible scenarios. In the final analysis, the Call Taker may have taken the 911 caller too seriously. She classified this call as Disturbance/Weapon in Progress with an automatic assigned priority code of 1. No police report was filed on the scene.

5. Reliability of the Information:

In the next category, I examine how the reliability of the information informs the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker. In this case, the 911 caller is a business owner who becomes an eyewitness to a beating. There is a good level of communication between the 911 caller and Call Taker because the 911 caller, as an objective/bystander eyewitness, can offer some degree of inherent validity to his narrative. The 911 caller is also engaged in a dialogue with the suspect as the 911 call opens. He provides a detailed description of the event and is speaking with the victim while simultaneously reporting back to the Call Taker.

In 911 event 2020E095399 Disturbance/Weapon Involved (Physical Abuse), the 911 caller is an eyewitness to a beating. He also sees the physical evidence on the woman’s body. The backstory is open for speculation. The Call Taker is interested in obtaining a good description of the suspect, determining the degree of injury, and ensuring the victim’s compliance with police. The 911 Call Taker sustains a line of questioning designed to clearly identify the victim and the suspect and determine if immediate medical assistance is needed. The 911 caller defers to the
victim when responding to the Call Taker and is engaged in a simultaneous dialogue with both the victim and the Call Taker. The Call Taker notes the descriptions given and fields a status question designed to determine the need for medical assistance.

Call Taker: “Did a white male beat the lady up? What did she look like?”

Caller: “A white lady…a white lady.”

Call Taker: “Ok.”

Caller: “I’m gonna tell her to stop and wait until they arrive.”

**Status Question:**

Call Taker: “Do you need an ambulance out there, sir?”

Caller: “I don’t know. (To victim) Hey, you need to…just wait for the police.”

(To victim) “No…just just….”

Call Taker: “What does the male look like? What is he wearing? What color shirt? What color pants?”

Caller: “He’s a dark complected. He’s wearing a black hat with a black backpack. She can describe him better.”

Call Taker: “Ok. What color shirt? What color pants?”

Caller to victim: “What color shirt and what color pants was he in?”

Caller: “Grey shirt, black shorts.

He’s walking across Jupiter right now. He’s got a white…It looks white, the shorts.”

Call Taker: “Is it white shorts or black shorts?”

Caller: “White shorts.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Did he have a gun? Did anybody have a gun because I heard you all talking about a gun?”
Caller: “No. He said that someone had pulled a gun on him because of what……something she did.” (Victim talking in background)

The 911 caller’s description is not entirely consistent with the victim’s description. The victim says the suspect was wearing black shorts. The witness states that the suspect was wearing white shorts. The suspect is also not immediately identified as a black male. This information is only later clarified in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report and the Police/Incident report.

6. Believability of the Caller: Different Ways of Conceptualizing a Situation: When the victim’s perspective is not expected:

In this same 911 event 2020E095399 Disturbance/Weapon Involved (Physical Abuse), the victim/2nd 911 caller is not concerned with the fact that she has been badly beaten. She is only concerned that the drug dealer has mistakenly identified her as a snitch. There is no dispute regarding the fact that she was beaten because there is an eyewitness who sees the bruises on her body. There is some question regarding police intervention and the victim’s commitment to testifying against her assailant.

Call Taker: “Ok Mam. What did he….What did he say?”

2nd Caller/Victim: “He came up to me and said that I told a known drug dealer that he stole their drugs. Not what happened. A man came up to me and asked about a girl named “huera.” I said yes, she walked past us earlier and he said well she just stole my wallet. Did you see where she came from? I said she came from the Super 8 and she was talking to this man Cornelius Monteeth and that’s all I heard…”

Call Taker: “Ok mam. Do you need an ambulance out there hun?”

2nd Caller/Victim: “I don’t need an ambulance. I just need to get cleaned up.”
Call Taker: “Ok. So do you wanna….”

1st Caller: “She’s beat up pretty good. She’s beat up pretty good.”

The original 911 caller and witness states that the victim is badly beaten. The witness is willing to testify to the beating he saw but nothing else. He states that these people are known drug addicts and he doesn’t want to get involved. The fact that both the suspect and the victim are known drug addicts makes their words suspect. The beating, however, is an obvious fact.

1st Caller: “Well, you know…they…they’re both on dope and it’s clear that….so I don’t wanna be associated with that because I run a business.” (laughs)

The 911 caller appears to assume the role of a detached steward of the neighborhood who is almost whimsical in his approach, as is evident in the dialogue excerpt above.

Throughout this 911 call, this female Call Taker, however, communicates a rhetorical response of empathy for the victim in her repeated questions about the victim’s status and need for medical attention. She also advises the victim to wait in the 911 caller’s shop because she fears that the suspect will return to the scene of the crime and resume beating the victim.

6. Believability of the Caller 11. Call Taker’s Treatment of Ambiguity:

In the categories below, I consider how the Call Taker verifies information and navigates through unusual or ambiguous situations. The Call Taker seeks evidentiary information in all cases and fields elicitation questions in a perpetual and consistent fashion.

In 911 event 2020E092969 (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress)(Threats and Intimidation), discussed earlier, the 911 caller’s information is speculative because of her disoriented state, erratic behavior, and inconsistencies. The believability of the 911 caller influences the quality of the information exchange and how the Call Taker will consider the offered information. In this case,
the Call Taker keeps asking the same questions and seeking verification. The Call Taker does not accept the first answer given but asks qualifying questions as evident in the dialogue below:

Call Taker: “Ok. Are you bleeding mam?”
Caller: “Ah, yes….yeaahhh. (Whimpering)
Call Taker: “ You are bleeding, but did she stab you?”
Caller: “Shit, I don’t know. She was……”(whispering noises)
Call Taker: “Mam, listen to me. Listen to me. Did she stab you? Did she stab you?”
Caller: “No.”
Call Taker: “No, she did not stab you? Ok.”
Caller: “Jesus Christ, I’m trying to tell you what she did. She put the damn shoestring around my neck and strangled me.”

After a prolonged line of questioning, the 911 caller completely changed her story. At a certain point, she said she was strangled after having claimed to have been stabbed up to this point. Her story was inconsistent and unreliable. The Call Taker kept fielding questions and considered the range of possibilities that constituted the portfolio of scenarios that the police officer would become aware of prior to arriving on the scene.

According to the 911 caller, she and the suspect had just spent the last 24 hours together; however, the nature of the relationship is never clearly established. There is also ambiguity regarding the nature of the dispute. There is a chance that the caller was also on drugs. The 911 caller initially claimed that the dispute was over missing clothing and that the suspect was in a drug induced rage. While the information is highly speculative, the Call Taker was correct to draw out nuances. The Call Taker was effective in this endeavor as she kept the 911 caller engaged and responsive. The 911 caller ultimately revealed the essential truth of the situation after an extended
dialogue in which she provided confusing, contradictory, and ambiguous information. The statement below speaks to actual reason for the dispute that is later verified when police officers arrive on the scene.

Caller: “They’re saying “she has drugs up in here and I don’t.”

7. Implicit Cultural Understandings: Motive for the Crime:

When examining the next category, I looked for implicit cultural understandings between the 911 caller and Call Taker. In most of the 911 calls I analyzed, the implicit cultural understandings that informed the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker were communicated by the 911 caller. The following 911 call presents an unusual scenario. The 911 caller/victim engaged in a verbal exchange at some point after the suspect was caught by the victim and in the act of threatening him with a gun. The 911 caller quotes the dialogue of this verbal exchange back to the Call Taker during his narrative account given during this 911 call. In this verbal exchange, the suspect invokes an implicit cultural understanding that the Call Taker hears and acknowledges. This dialogue provides further context for the 911 event and informs the Call Taker’s response within this rhetorical relationship/situation.

In 911 event 2020E099578 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Theft and Threat at Gunpoint), a service worker/maintenance man became a victim of a theft and threats. A suspect on a moped took items out of the victim’s unlocked and open van. When the victim caught the suspect in the act and attempted to fight him, the suspect drew his gun and chambered rounds on the ground as a warning. This 911 event is unusual because the victim confronted the suspect, and they had a dialogue. The suspect invoked implicit cultural ideas associated with the financial and social persecution of minority populations in the United States and how the Covid 19 pandemic had exacerbated this persecution.
Call Taker: “And you said he took your keys and your wallet?”

Caller: “Yeah. I can’t find my keys or my wallet. They were both sittin in the passenger seat here. I didn’t expect to be back in the backyard for very long. As soon as I heard something, I hopped the fence.”

Caller: “(Speaking to third party) He pulled a gun on me. Yeah. Right here. I’ve still got the rounds.”

Call Taker: “You said he chambered a round?”

Caller: “Yeah. He chambered a round. One flew out. I picked it up.”

He said something about “This Covid has got me fucked up and you white people aren’t letting anybody work…” and I was like “dude, I didn’t do nothin to you.”

Call Taker: “Ok. And that’s what he was saying?”

The Call Taker noted the contents of this dialogue and populated it into the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report. Soon after the 911 caller provided a narrative of this conversation with the victim, the Call Taker provided a promise of service. However, I don't believe the implicit cultural understanding included in the 911 caller's narrative had any currency regarding the 911 Call Taker's process.

7. Implicit Cultural Understanding 2. Attitude Assessed by Vocal Inflection and Language style used: Moral/Value Judgement Communicated:

In 911 event 2020E095399 (Physical Abuse), discussed earlier, a witness catches a man in the act of viscously beating a woman. The witness intervenes and stops the beating. The suspect believes he is justified in his actions. The 911 caller/witness admonishes the suspect and advises him regarding proper behavior in a civil society. The 911 caller assumes that there is a mutually acknowledged implicit cultural understanding that beating a woman is wrong. The Call Taker
listens in the background. The Call Taker considers the suspects’ attitude later in the call when she advises the victim of her fear that the suspect is a viable threat who may return for a further escalation of the situation. While this dialogue does not directly involve an exchange between the 911 caller and Call Taker, the information that is revealed informs the rhetorical situation in which all parties involved in the 911 emergency call conversation must engage.

Suspect in background: “She told that white boy I stole their dope and they came a pulled a gun on me. Man, he tried to pull a gun on me.”

Caller: “You’ve got to go to jail dude. You can’t be out here doin this.”

Suspect: “He already came and pulled a gun on me.”

Caller: “But dude. That’s when you go to the police. You can’t do this. Look at her.”

Caller: “Hey man. Let her go. Go...go...”

The Call Taker listens to this verbal exchange between the witness and the suspect. She hears the suspect mention a gun and acknowledges the 911 caller’s outrage at what he has just interrupted. This exchange the Call Taker overhears ultimately helps forge an understanding between the 911 caller and Call Taker regarding the urgency of the situation and the worthiness of service.

7. Implicit Cultural Understandings:

In the dialogue analysis below, I explore how description can be grounded in implicit cultural understandings. First, the Call Taker initiates her line of questioning with cursory inquiries about what the suspect is wearing. Her question “Did you see what they had on top?” could be interpreted several ways. Was she inquiring about a shirt or jacket description or something else? Regardless, this question prompts the 911 caller to volunteer unsolicited information about the suspects’ hair style. The Call Taker is unfamiliar with the cultural references that the 911 caller
has made in his description narrative of the suspects’ hairstyle. Through her process of subtle coaching in the fielding of elicitation questions, the Call Taker obtains clarification of meaning and reconciles the ambiguities in the suspect description. Her line of questioning facilitates the revelation of unexpected and unsolicited information that could be defining in terms of suspect identification.

In 911 event 2020E094320 (Random Shooting), the 911 caller’s description of the suspects requires specific knowledge of gang culture and fashion practices. The 911 caller is obliged to explain his description of a particular type of gang hairstyle to the Call Taker. The Call Taker does not make any value judgements on the information. She merely sustains her line of questioning in order to obtain clarification and verify meaning.

Call Taker: “Did you see what they were wearing?”
Caller: “Ah…jeans…sagging past their butt, you know.”
Call Taker: “Sagging jeans?”
Caller: “Yes.”
Call Taker: “Did you see what color top they had on?”
Caller: “Black, either black and red, but either black or red or one had a different one. There’s just ….And they always got paper fazed…. “
Call Taker: “You got paper? What is that?”
Caller: “Paper faze. Like a fade on the side hair with either carrot top on the lawn.”
Call Taker: “Faded side? Faded side hair? So, the hair is shaved on the side?”
Caller: “Yeah real stoner.”

The suspect description communicated in the dialogue above could be invoke stereotypical ideas and constitute profiling scenario. Individuals who wear clothing with gang colors are not
always gang members. Individuals who style their hair in the paper faze style and wear sagging jeans are not always gang members getting ready to commit crimes. This information could be used to compile a biased profile of a criminal suspect.

8. Common-sense Assumptions:

In my analysis of the next category - common-sense assumptions – I examine how typical thinking about cause/effect scenarios informs the 911 caller and Call Taker rhetorical situation. In most cases, the Call Taker fields an elicitation question, and the 911 caller is caught off guard. He or she does not have or does not want to provide a definitive answer. In this case, the 911 caller defers to the currency of common-sense assumptions when attempting to explain what is ambiguous, unknown, or guarded.

A rhetorical interaction through the currency of common-sense assumptions can impede the quality of information exchange in the 911 emergency response process. In 911 event 2020E089495 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Threat to Shoot), the 911 caller knows the suspect who threatened to shoot his mother and provides the Call Taker with the suspect’s name, address, and license plate number. The Call Taker then attempts to obtain a description of the weapon. The caller is unsure and attributes the ambiguity to his inability to see.

Call Taker: “What kind of weapon was it?”

Caller: “Ah, it was ah……I’m not too sure. I was on the passenger side. I wasn’t able to see.”

The caller hesitates: “It was ah…I’m not too sure.”

The common-sense assumption in this case is that the 911 caller was not close enough to clearly view the suspect’s weapon because of his proximity to the suspect being seated in the passenger side of the vehicle. There could be several other explanations for his uncertainty.
Through the dialogue in the 911 call, it is evident that he wants to protect his mother. He also appears to desire police response with the least degree of personal risk. Maybe it was dark. Perhaps the caller believes that if he does not provide a specific weapon description, he will not have to follow through if any subsequent legal action is taken. Perhaps he merely wants police intervention in order to put the suspect on notice regarding threats to his mother. He provides the Call Taker with specific information regarding where to find the suspect but nothing specific that will connect the suspect to an actual crime. He appears reluctant to provide any evidentiary information that would connect the suspect to the act of displaying the gun. The police/incident report confirmed my suspicion. After the incident, both the victim and the son refused to follow up. They claimed that they could not positively identify the suspect even though during the initial 911 call they had stated he was a close neighbor whom they knew personally.

10. Worthiness of Service:

In the next category, I examine how the 911 caller and Call Taker reached a consensus regarding worthiness of police response. In most of the 911 calls I listened to and transcribed, the reported offense is unclear and/or there is no eyewitness account and both the 911 caller and Call Taker engage in a negotiation process in which the 911 caller pleads for service and affirms the urgency of the situation with what he believes is relevant detail and the Call Taker responds with a series of elicitation questions. This case was different. The 911 Call Taker affirms the 911 caller’s assertions about worthiness of service. This is an unusual dynamic. The 911 caller seems afraid that the suspect will come back and beat the victim.

In 911 event 2020E095399 (Physical Abuse) – discussed earlier, a witness catches a man in the act of viscously beating a woman. The witness intervenes and stops the beating. In this case, the 911 Call Taker affirms the 911 caller’s assertions about worthiness of service. This is an unusual dynamic. The 911 caller seems afraid that the suspect will come back and beat the victim.
some more. The Call Taker shares the same sentiments, particularly after having heard the suspect’s account in his own words (noted earlier). In this case, the Call Taker takes a pro-active stance in articulating worthiness of service from an institutional perspective. The Call Taker senses that the victim does not recognize herself as a victim deserving of help and does not recognize the crime as mandating punishment for her perpetrator.

Caller: “I’m gonna tell her to stop and wait until they arrive.”

Call Taker: “Do you need an ambulance out there, sir?”

Caller: “I don’t know. (To victim) Hey, you need to…just wait for the police.”

(To victim) “No…just just…”

Call Taker to victim (2nd 911 caller): “Ok. Where are you gonna be so I can have officers contact you again? Were you gonna go back with that gentleman to his shop? I’m just concerned about that subject comin back and hittin you again.”

Victim/2nd caller: “I’m gonna be at Woods Street and Jupiter.”

Call Taker: “Ok. You’re gonna be just standin there on the corner?”

Victim/2nd caller: “Yeah.” (Unintelligible.)

Call Taker: “Ok mam. Do you need an ambulance out there hun?”

Victim/2nd caller: “I don’t need an ambulance. I just need to get cleaned up.”

Call Taker: “Ok. So do you wanna….”

Caller: “She’s beat up pretty good. She’s beat up pretty good.”

The Call Taker wants to know how the suspect can be found and if he is still in the area, making police intervention possible. She also wants to know the identity of the victim and her description so that officers can find her. A call is only worthy of immediate intervention if the police officers have the capability to stop a crime in progress or apprehend a suspect and/or if
medical assistance is needed. Otherwise, particularly if patrol cars are already sourced out, a victim can go to the police station and file a police report there. In the dialogue below, the Call Taker fields a status/disposition question with the hopes that the answers given will assist in the apprehension of the suspect.

Call Taker: “Where’s the male right now that beat up the female?”

Caller: “Where’s he at?”

Call Taker: “Uh hun.”

Caller: “I don’t know. He was walking down the street.” (To victim)

Caller: (To Call Taker) “Yeah. He’s goin towards the freeway. Kingsley? Ok.”

Call Taker: “Ok. And what is the victim’s name, sir?”

Caller: “What’s your name?” (To victim who answers: name given) (redacted)

Call Taker: “Ok. And what is Heather wearing? What color shirt? What color pants?”

Call Taker: “Yes mam. What are you wearing? What color shirt? What color pants?”

Victim/2nd caller: “It’s a white shit….white shirt and blue shorts.”

In most 911 calls, the victim is the 911 caller who believes in his or her entitlement to police assistance. In this case, the witness and the Call Taker express more concern for the victim than the victim does for herself. In the context of worthiness of service, the 911 caller and Call Taker are collaborators in this rhetorical relationship rather than competitors engaged in a negotiation process. Both the 911 caller and Call Taker agree that this 911 event unquestionably warrants police response. The victim is more concerned with the possibility that she will be labeled as a snitch.
Multiple Rhetorical Situation Categories Working Together:

In the discussion below, I look at how several rhetorical situation categories inform each other and work simultaneously to articulate the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker and forward the 911 emergency response process.


In 911 event 2020E094320 (Random Shooting), the 911 caller, one of several callers, calls in to report habitual offenders in his apartment complex who are shooting guns at the ground. The 911 caller appears to be reliable because he explains that he lives in an optimal location where he is able to see everything the suspects do.

Caller: “No, mam. Where I’m at….Where I live, I can see everything because I’m on the courtyard. But when they’re comin from the… where they parked at, they’re four of them….I think….yeah, it was four…The last one put his gun out the way and the front two had guns or had a gun….they had something in their waist tool up front.”

The 911 caller seems believable because he appears to know the suspects well and provides a detailed narrative of the history of the issue. The 911 caller assumes he shares an implicit cultural understanding with the Call Taker regarding Western cultural epistemology. The 911 caller is very knowledgeable regarding the habits of these suspects, and he depends upon the Call Taker’s implicit understanding regarding the currency of the information he is providing. In Western Epistemology, patterns of behaviors are part of the tools we use to process and analyze information. Also, they have currency as qualifiers of present behaviors and predictors of future behaviors. This 911 caller frames the suspects as habitual offenders who have a history of encounters with law enforcement and lack the ability to reform. The Call Taker responds to the
911 caller’s historical narrative for her own purposes. She continues in her search for evidentiary information by fielding a series of elicitation questions designed to determine the context of the shooting and the current disposition of the suspects. In the dialogue below, the Call Taker considers the 911 caller’s historical narrative as segue for the fielding of elicitation questions whose answers will help her determine how the suspects enter and leave the premises. She focuses on key words - “apartment” “vehicle” and “front entrance.” The first two words represent evidentiary information – the suspects can be found in an apartment, and they drive a vehicle. The third word represents the suspects’ disposition - they use the front entrance to gain access to the property.

Caller: “They always pull up in a white charger. They is always hanging out with the people that stay next door to this office. That’s… I don’t not which one… exactly what door it is. This is the location these kids used to hang out with them.”

Caller: “No, no. They they…. These kids robbed the people under me. They ended up getting stabbed by a couple of these guys and they all got kicked out and then this all just…. ”

Call Taker: “Ok. So right now, you’re saying that the subjects that did the shooting to the ground …. they live in the apartment?”

Caller: “No, no. The friend lives with … stays here and they are just hanging out.”

Caller to third party: “Dang. They’re not supposed to have pot. They’re not supposed to be here. And after like I talked to the maintenance guy everybody yells after all the commotion’s stopped “they’re not supposed to be here.” They’re not supposed to be on the property. They’ve been in and out of jail, bothering people.”

Caller: “If you see them…. You will see them come out. They don’t leave. They don’t. And they get…. And you’ll see the fuck (excuse me) the Charger in the backside as soon as you
pull into the apartments once you get the… by the leasing office and the apartments that are right there. You’ll see the Charger as soon as you pull into the apartments.”

Call Taker: “Ok. You said the apartments…So when you come into the front entrance…”

Caller: “There’s only one entrance mam.”

Call Taker: “Oh ok. So, the vehicle’s located near the front entrance?”

Caller: “Yeah. It’s in the backside of the apartments on the front entrance or in the front, literally. If it’s not there, they usually park in the back for the fact that they’re smokin in it.”

As evident in the dialogue above, the Call Taker was successful in obtaining information about the possible current disposition of the suspects and patterns of behavior that might be considered in the search for the suspect vehicle.

Through the provisional coding process, I established criteria for the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker that informs the quality of 911 emergency response. I also made determinations about the priorities of this rhetorical relationship and the manner in which those priorities became articulated throughout the 911 emergency response process. I discovered that the Call Takers always look for quantifiable data and specific physical evidence. Abstractions and theories are irrelevant to them in the 911 emergency response process. In turn, they ignore any editorializing and emotionally charged language. When there is a gap in cultural understanding, the Call Takers continued to field elicitation questions until clarification of the 911 caller’s meaning was obtained. In the next section, I re-populate some of my baseline rhetorical relationship criteria and consider the agency of this criteria in the use of dialogic and non-dialogic language.
Chapter 5: Data Analysis Part 2: Componential Analysis Findings:

An Exploration of the Agency of Dialogic and Non-Dialogic Language in the Rhetorical Relationship Components Generated Through the Componential Analysis Process

Through the componential analysis process, I looked at the ways dialogic and non-dialogic language informed the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker. The Call Taker’s use of dialogic language was critical in making the 911 caller feel comfortable and in drawing out information. Dialogic language used by the Call Taker and 911 caller facilitated the articulation of the 911 event description and contextualized information. Dialogic language used by the Call Taker also compelled the 911 caller to provide information that established time frames and imminent threat levels that informed the priority and classification code that was assigned to the 911 call. Dialogic language exchange also drew out nuanced distinctions that would ultimately qualify the nature of the 911 event through identifying/descriptive information that articulates logistics, context, witnesses, suspects, and the respective roles. Overall, Call Takers engaged in the dialogic process of fielding elicitation questions in efforts to draw out and verify evidentiary information. 911 Callers used dialogic language when providing evidentiary information in response to these questions in most cases. When a 911 caller was in doubt regarding an answer, he or she sometimes deferred to non-dialogic language when providing or qualifying a narrative. They also used non-dialogic language when pleading for service or affirming the urgency of the situation in some cases. Call Takers, for the most part, remained unaffected by non-dialogic language and kept strictly to their protocol that while inherently non-dialogic facilitated the dialogic process of two-way communication.
Componential Analysis:

The graphic below shows the steps of the componential analysis process in their sequential order:

Illustration 5.1

In the componential analysis process, I used most of the rhetorical situation categories generated and evaluated in the provisional coding process that qualify the rhetorical relationship between 911 caller and Call Taker. I then populated the examples of dialogic and non-dialogic language (obtained through the theoretical coding process) into the rhetorical relationship/situation categories and analyzed their agency in each 911 emergency call rhetorical relationship/situation.

Critical to my componential analysis process are the dialogic and non-dialogic language classifications/definitions that were identified and evaluated in the theoretical coding process. The following dialogic and non-dialogic language definitions that I interpreted, evaluated, and applied...
are from Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis theory (Fairclough, 1995, 2003)–
discussed earlier in Chapter 3 (Methodology).

**Dialogic Language:** clear, includes direct quotes, assigns ownership of information, provides
specific details, establishes context, accommodates difference, is open to exposition. Sentences
are usually in the active voice.

**Non-dialogic Language:** vague, ambiguous, highly generalized, predictive/value based, common-
sense assumptions, logic of appearances, representational meanings: thoughts, feelings, sensations.
Sentences are usually in the passive voice and/or use nominalizations.

The categories below are detailed non-dialogic language criteria from Fairclough’s critical
discourse analysis theory:

1. **Nominalizations:** Active verbs that have been transformed into their noun form as
abstractions for the purpose of obfuscating specificity and information
ownership/assignment (Fowler, 1979, as cited in Fairclough, 2003, p. 220).

2. **Strategic Actions:** Actions that are aimed at achieving specific results and facilitating a
particular outcome or reaching a goal. Strategic action is a management tool (Fairclough,
2003, p. 110).

3. **Predictions and Evaluations:** Predictions are statements that foretell a future event or
qualify a theoretical cause/effect or problem/solution idea. Evaluations are value judgment
statements that qualify the desirable or undesirable nature of a person, situation, or place

4. **Logic of Appearances:** Certain situations are deemed to be obvious and inevitable as
indicative of self-evident truths that in fact are not self-evident. This logic relies on
commonly held cultural beliefs and assumptions used to interpret an ongoing event (Fairclough, 2003, p. 94-95).

5. Assumed Values (implicit assumptions): These are ideas that are accepted based upon implied value systems. People suppose there is a common understanding and self-evident standards that inform and define expected behaviors and the articulation of people and events (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55, p. 81).

6. Representational Meanings: Ideas that are abstract and indirectly represent other ideas. These meanings are often grounded in thoughts, feelings, sensations, and other aspects of the social world. The most abstract representational meanings are social practices, social structures, a series of social events, and patterns of behavior (Fairclough, 2003, p. 134, p. 138).

Through the following rhetorical relationship/situation components, I answer the question of how dialogic and non-dialogic language inform the rhetorical relationship between 911 caller and Call Taker. These categories are modified from the original rhetorical relationship/situation categories generated in the provisional coding process. Three of the original categories have been eliminated in consideration of the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in the 911 emergency call rhetorical relationship.

1. Urgency of the Situation/Level of Responsiveness: The extent to which the 911 caller communicates the urgency of the situation and the extent to which the 911 Call Taker agrees and prioritizes the call.

2. Believability of the Caller: The extent to which a 911 caller is consistent, provides evidentiary information, and speaks in a coherent manner. Other context specific
variables/factors within the parameters of the 911 emergency conversation are also considered.

3. **Reliability of the Information:** The degree to which the information is consistent, is evidentiary in nature, and is timely and relevant.

4. **Implicit Cultural Understandings:** Cultural understandings about cause/effect and problem/solution dynamics that are mutually understood between the 911 caller and Call Taker. They may also be cultural understandings of another nature and can be specific to a particular culture or community and/or apply to a particular context. These understandings inform and guide the 911 emergency response process but are never stated explicitly.

5. **Common-sense Assumptions:** These are also culturally based understandings premised upon Western cultural epistemology and western reasoning and logic that inform ideas about how the world works and why/how we know what we know.

6. **Description of the 911 Event:** The quality of the description provided to include specific detail, evidentiary information, accuracy, timeliness, and relevance.

7. **Worthiness of Service:** The degree to which a 911 caller qualifies a 911 event, and the Call Taker evaluates the 911 event and determines that this event is an emergency and merits police response.

8. **Caller and Call Taker’s Treatment of Ambiguity/Miscommunication:** The 911 caller and 911 Call Taker’s reaction and methods applied when faced with uncertainty or when one or both parties is misunderstood.

In this section, I answer the following research questions: **How does the use of dialogic and non-dialogic language inform the rhetorical relationship between 911 caller and 911 Call Taker and how might non-dialogic language be used to bridge information gaps and**
neutralize ambiguity and difference? By employing and expanding upon some of the same basic classification components from the provisional coding process and considering the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language (identified through the theoretical coding process) I evaluate the framing and articulating of this rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker through the lens of Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis theory. I also evaluate the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language used by both the 911 caller and Call Taker in establishing and sustaining relationships of trust between the two parties that inform the quality of 911 emergency response information that is sent on to responding police officers.

In most of the 911 calls I transcribed and evaluated, the rhetorical relationship/situation between the 911 caller and Call Taker was not seamless, and the 911 caller had to negotiate for service by offering solid evidentiary information that was slowly drawn out through the Call Taker’s tedious process of fielding elicitation questions. In most of these 911 calls, the Call Taker implemented a completely dialogic line of questioning and did not accept non-dialogic responses at face value. There was one distinct exception, however, that I will analyze here.

911 Event 2020E098498: (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress) (Crazy Man with A Machete):

In 911 Event 2020E098498 (Disturbance: Weapon in Progress) (Crazy Man with a Machete), the 911 caller calls in to report a situation that he perceived as alarming but did not fully understand. The 911 caller provides purely opinion-based information. The Call Taker never introduces an extended line of questioning but automatically processes the information and implicitly assigns the 911 caller the role of citizen deputy. The concept of a citizen deputy itself is an assumed value (cultural understanding) that informs worthiness of service. In acknowledging the 911 caller’s role as a citizen deputy, the 911 Call Taker is, by implication, acknowledging that a valid crime has occurred or has the potential to occur.
The 911 caller uses several non-dialogic language strategies - predictive/evaluative language, the logic of appearances and assumed values (implicit cultural understandings) to qualify the urgency of the situation, qualify worthiness of service, and instigate immediate police dispatch. Critical to this process was the manner in which non-dialogic language was functional enough to invoke, articulate, and solidify an implicit agreement between the 911 caller and Call Taker, significantly informing the believability of the 911 caller and obfuscating the elicitation question process that Call Takers usually engage in.

In this 911 event, the 911 caller reports that he is witnessing a man, presumably on drugs, walking around with a machete in his hand.

Caller: “I’m at ah Taco Casa on Beltline between Broadway and 30. There’s a guy in the parking lot who has a machete. He looks like he’s high.”

The above statement “looks like he’s high” is evaluative because it communicates a value judgement statement. The 911 caller is judging the suspect’s behaviors to be drug induced and conveying his determination to the 911 Call Taker. The statement “looks like he’s high” also qualifies as representational meaning. In our society, drug use is associated with a host of related negative qualities and fits into the “road to perdition” metaphor that qualifies all other actions perpetrated by the suspect from that point forward. All present and future actions will be considered to exist in a symbiotic relationship with the suspects’ presumptive drug use. Furthermore, the caller assumed that given the suspect “looks like he is high,” the other information will be taken for granted since the mention of drug use has representational meaning as a placeholder for a threat component that holds a dossier of associated ideas that are never openly articulated and examined. This threat component is implicitly informed by cultural understandings associated with weapons, drug use, and violence. When considered together, an
enhanced threat is articulated. Moreover, there is an implicit moral component in the 911 caller’s reference to drug use as drug use is considered as taboo in traditional Western cultural understanding.

In the dialogue below, the 911 caller embraces the currency of assumed values that informs an implicit cultural understanding that is shared with the Call Taker. He assumes his entitlement to the role of citizen watchdog and assumes that in his role as citizen watchdog he is morally correct and justified to censure a person under the influence of drugs. The 911 caller also uses non-dialogic predictive/evaluative language when making value judgments using the currency of the logic of appearances. He makes predictions about the suspect’s future behaviors based upon his observations of the scene and speculations about what is uncertain.

Caller: “He was swinging it around and walking around the dumpsters like he was chasing somebody…”

The 911 caller believed the suspect was chasing someone while moving the knife in a swinging motion. The qualifying term is “like he was chasing something” - another representational meaning based upon the 911 caller’s thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Whether he was actually swinging the knife around had not been established with certainty. The 911 caller made value judgment decisions regarding what he witnessed and anticipated the suspect’s next moves. However, the 911 caller never saw the suspect follow through with the anticipated behaviors. He relied on an implicit cultural understanding informed by the logic of appearances when providing his narrative to the Call Taker. In other words, he trusted his biased perception of the scene and his brand of rationality as self-evident and indisputable.

In the dialogue below, the speculative nature of the 911 caller’s narrative becomes more evident with his repeated use of the term “looked like.” The term “looked like” is used to function
as a disclaimer and qualify the information as speculation. The 911 caller hopes that the Call Taker will appreciate the assumed value of the 911 caller’s role as a citizen watchdog and trust his judgment.

Caller: “So, we were in the drive thru and there was a black lady who looked like she was homeless walking past him where he was hiding behind the dumpsters and as she walked by and went around the corner, he ah, he came out and looked like he was looking for her…he looked left and right and tried to chase her around the building…. ”

The caller also depends on the currency of speculation to qualify his narrative with the phrase “looked like” that he uses repeatedly when claiming that the suspect was stalking a homeless woman with the intention of a possible attack. The 911 caller additionally uses the word “looked like” many times to qualify the undesirable nature of the suspect. He makes value judgment statements about an undesirable behavior that predict the suspect’s future behaviors by implication and ubiquitous cultural ideas. Other implicit cultural understandings about homeless people and particularly African American homeless people might also have factored into the 911 caller’s value judgments about the situation. All these unarticulated, non-dialogic statements could have informed the 911 Call Taker’s level of responsiveness and her interpretation of the urgency of this 911 event, at least on a subliminal level.

The dialogue below is another example of the currency of the logic of appearances and representational meaning. The 911 caller is providing what he believes is a self-evident description of a crazy and/or criminal person that is ubiquitously understood as peculiar behavior.

Caller: “He keeps looking over his shoulder – left and right and back. He’s kind of walking fast.”
In our society, someone who is looking around as described might be presumed to either be witnessing something sinister, be hiding something sinister, or be getting ready to commit a crime. The 911 caller is perhaps hoping that the 911 Call Taker will appreciate the nuance in his words and believe that the suspect is looking around because he is hiding something or getting ready to commit a crime. The 911 caller also trusts in this assumed value about what criteria defines suspicious behavior. This assumed value that will inform his implicit cultural understanding with the Call Taker that someone who is walking fast is attempting to avoid someone else or avoid the cops. The 911 caller is also relying on the currency of an assumed value associated with someone who is exhibiting nervous and erratic behaviors. In our society, a nervous demeanor can be construed as a sign of guilt. Erratic behaviors are considered as threatening. Sometimes behaviors that appear erratic or random may be perceived as signs of mental illness. Distinctions between erratic behavior caused by mental illness and erratic behaviors caused by criminal culpability and matters of degree forthwith are never explored. Overall, any behavior that is sudden, without explanation, erratic, or unusual in any way could be considered to be threatening in our society. People tend to easily reconcile those ideas into their thinking processes as though they are self-evident and automatic.

The 911 caller uses specific information to communicate his own abstract ideas about what constitutes random, erratic, and/or odd behavior. He assumes that there are typical patterns of crazy behavior that are self-evident, widely recognized, and widely acknowledged as threatening behavior. Furthermore, sudden movement, sustained and erratic movement, and unexplained movement all qualify a threat situation within the prescripts of an assumed value that informs an implicit cultural understanding in our society that is functional in the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker. In this case, the currency of common-sense assumption
also functions in a symbiotic relationship with an assumed value/implicit cultural understanding about the threat posed by a mentally ill, drug impaired individual. Someone who appears to be swinging a machete will inevitably act – especially if he “looks like he is high” and in consideration of all his other strange behaviors. The fact that he is an African American male is another consideration that might be associated with a host of other implicit cultural understandings and racial stereotypes. While I did not interrogate the concept of race in this project, I believe that my research framework will facilitate an examination of articulations of race in future projects related to police emergency response information transfer processes. Future research might entail an interrogation of suspect descriptions and racially qualifying language. Implicit cultural understandings about race might also be articulated in conjunction with implicit cultural assumptions about lifestyle practices associated with homelessness and poverty, drug use, mental illness, and violence.

The 911 caller speculates about the suspect’s actions with the knife based upon an unknown vantage point. The Call Taker does not seek verification of 911 caller’s disposition in relation to the suspect and does not make a logistical assessment of the situation. The question of whether he is really holding a knife and if the knife is actually a machete is never verified and the Call Taker only fields one elicitation question to the 911 caller that is ignored. Further elicitation questions may have drawn out information about the 911 caller’s vantage point.

Caller: “He was swinging it around and walking around the dumpsters like he was chasing somebody……He’s holding the handle with his hand and walking like swinging it with his leg.”

Call Taker: “Alright. And you didn’t see him actually chasing anyone; it just looked like he was?”
Even though the Call Taker seeks to clarify contextual distinctions and accommodate difference in this one instance, she does appear to be coaching the answer based on the structure of the question. Thus, in essence, the Call Taker is telling the 911 caller what he is thinking while simultaneously seeking verification for that thought. The 911 caller does not answer the Call Taker’s one elicitation question but proceeds to offer an extended narrative with the qualifying term “looked like.” The Call Taker implicitly recognizes the call as legitimate by asking for the 911 caller’s identification and contact information. She then proceeds to ask the 911 caller if he is able to see the suspect. The 911 caller describes what he sees, and the Call Taker states that she will keep him on the line so he can continue to provide information to the responding police officers. This last action by the Call Taker solidifies the **implicit cultural understanding** that the 911 caller will assume the role of citizen watchdog.

Call Taker: “Ok. Alright. And uhm... What was your name?”

Caller: (Redacted.)

Call Taker: “And what is your phone number?”

Caller: (Redacted)

Call Taker: “And do you still see him now?”

Caller: “Yeah. He’s right in front of the Walgreens. I can see the tip of the machete sticking out of his basketball shorts.”

Call Taker: “Ok. I’m going to keep you on the line as long as you are able to see him ah, just so I can give my officers an updated location of where he’s at.”

In the dialogue below from the same call, the 911 caller also offers an evaluative statement that qualifies an action. He thinks that the suspect walked into the laundromat with the intention to steal a bicycle and followed through with that intention. This has not been verified. He also
makes a predictive statement about the likelihood that the officer will apprehend the suspect. Then he makes a value judgement statement in which he expresses his pleasure in anticipation of the apprehension of the suspect. In other words, the apprehension of this suspect is a good and desirable thing – another evaluative aspect in his statement. On the surface, the 911 Call Taker appears neutral and impartial.

Caller: “He just walked in there and stole that bicycle. Yeah yeah. He’s got him. He’s gonna…. get him, I hope.”

All information reported about this possible 911 event is predicated on the cultural concept of strangeness. In recognition and consideration of this “strangeness,” the 911 caller presumed a host of potential negative events that would follow. The 911 caller called in to report the behaviors of a person he thought was under the influence of drugs. He relied on a non-dialogic assumed value regarding the criteria and definition of strangeness and drug use that informed the implicit cultural understanding that he shared with the Call Taker regarding what was transpiring and what could potentially transpire. The Call Taker’s level of responsiveness is high as she accepts the information at face value. In the dialogue below, there is an implicit understanding regarding the urgency of the situation and worthiness of service that is never openly articulated.

Caller: “I’m at ah Taco Casa on Beltline between Broadway and 30. There’s a guy in the parking lot who has a machete. He looks like he’s high.”

Call Taker: “Alright. This guy: Is he white, black, Hispanic, or Asian?”

The Call Taker validates the 911 caller’s information by asking for a description of the suspect. In asking for a suspect description, the Call Taker is implying that she is considering the report as serious and plans to send the police to the scene of this potential 911 event.
The most important aspect of the rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and Call Taker is the **believability of the 911 caller**. All other rhetorical situation categories are informed by the extent to which the Call Taker trusts the person on the other end of the line. In the dialogue excerpts below, the Call Taker uses **the non-dialogic language of strategic action** to acknowledge the **believability of the 911 caller** as he states that he will transfer the caller’s information to update officers regarding the suspect’s disposition and instructs the 911 caller to remain vigilant and track the suspect until the officers arrive. From a rhetorical perspective, the Call Taker believes the 911 caller and agrees with his interpretation of the situation to the extent that she solicits the 911 caller’s continued assistance as a citizen watchdog. Thus, the Call Taker believes in the moral value of the 911 caller’s narrative and frames this narrative as trustworthy.

Call Taker: “Ok. I’m going to keep you on the line as long as you are able to see him ah, just so I can give my officers an updated location of where he’s at.”

Call Taker: “It looks like we have an officer in the area. Let me know when he spots the guy, ok?”

The Call Taker also uses **strategic words** to pave the way for the further elicitation of information at a later time that will help police officers and repeats requests for citizen assistance. What is significant is that the suspect has been implicitly labeled as such without evidentiary verification and the 911 caller has been assigned as a citizen watchdog without evidentiary verification of his ability to do so. His information is speculative and yet the Call Taker trusts his narrative description and implicitly approves of his spontaneous role as a citizen watchdog.

And yet, there is an inherent ambiguity in the scenario. The 911 caller attempts to reconcile that ambiguity by invoking certain cognitive placeholders that will fill in the epistemological gaps through insinuation. The 911 caller uses non-dialogic assumed values and representational
meanings to articulate his description of the 911 event. The suspect and victim descriptions provided may be implicitly informed by a host of common-sense assumptions and cultural understandings that could be premised on biases and prejudices. What does a crazy, Black man look like? How does a crazy Black man behave? What does a homeless Black lady look like? How does a person know when one person is stalking another person? The 911 caller does not provide any specific criteria but assumes that the Call Taker will understand his implicit meaning based on the description given that invokes implicit, self-evident, and ubiquitous cultural understandings about threatening and crazy/drug induced behaviors that are considered as reliable patterns.

This was only one of three calls in which an armed, mentally ill person was reported. The 911 caller’s use of non-dialogic language neutralized ambiguity and obfuscated the Call Taker’s need for exposition that would enable the exploration of other possibilities. The Call Taker recognized, understood, and accepted non-dialogic language that informed the urgency of the situation/level of responsiveness. Both implicitly agreed upon only one scenario that was presumed to be self-evident. When police officers arrived on the scene, they determined that no crime had been committed. They closed out the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report with a notation that no police report would be filed. This call was originally assigned a priority 1 dispatch code. Priority code 1 is the highest code indicating the greatest sense of urgency as qualified by the definition “immediate threat to life,” thereby suggesting imminent danger for one or all persons directly or indirectly involved in an ongoing 911 event (City of Garland, 2021).

911 Event 2020E094320/Shooting:

In the discussion below regarding a second 911 call transcript, I explore the 911 caller strategies that inform the believability of the 911 caller and the reliability of the information. I look at the importance of framing information within a certain context. The 911 caller is not
merely providing a description but also qualifying his description with assumed values that establish an **implicit cultural understanding** with the Call Taker.

In 911 event 2020E094320 (Shooting), the 911 caller calls in to report that his neighbors in his apartment complex are consorting with non-resident gangsters who have been firing off guns. The information provided appears to be reliable because it is being provided by a person who has extended, long-term knowledge of the suspects and who qualifies his logistical proximity as an optimal witness. In consideration of the 911 caller’s role in the dynamic, the term with representation meaning - “looking like they always do” is also significant when considered in conjunction with the aside information that 911 caller conveys about the suspects’ habitual trespassing, habitual marijuana use, and prior criminal record coupled with failed police interventions. The 911 caller has created an on-the-spot dossier of the suspects’ history. The **information also seems reliable and the 911 caller believable** because he provides the 911 Call Taker with information that, while hearsay, can be verified to an extent. They could interview the manager and other residents and find out if there is a trespassing record associated with those suspects. They could check for the existence of a criminal record.

In the dialogue below, the Call Taker fields a series of dialogic elicitation questions through which she draws out evidentiary information that might establish the context of the situation and inform the **reliability of the information and the description of the 911 event**. The 911 caller does not answer the question at first but begins to go on a tangent about the history of the issue with statements such as “these kids have been for the past year…They got kicked out….every time someone calls the cops on these kids…” that indicate a pattern of repeat offenses, punishment by the apartment management, and police intervention.
Call Taker: “Ok. You’re sayin now there’s a White Charger and what’s happening with the White Charger?”

Caller: “Shit. These kids been for the past year since I’ve been here…they’ve been havin…They don’t live here no more. They got kicked out.”

Call Taker: “Ok. What’s goin on tonight with the white Charger?”

Caller: “Ah mam. Ah…I just know these kids are getting out that car. Me and my wife are literally about to fall asleep and then we hear bang…bang…bang and I looked out the window and there was like four of them are walking up to my apartment complex and they’re goin into ah, you know, there’s a courtyard in the center of my apartment complex.”

Call Taker: “Did you hear gunshots sir?”

Caller: “Yeah. We saw it.”

Call Taker: “Oh Ok. You heard how many shots?”

Caller: “Four or five. I saw them shoot the ground four- or five-times man like it pissed me off…. my kids sleep here…I just can’t say anything because every time someone calls the cops on these kids……”

Call Taker: “So you saw…Ok. Just a second. So, you saw teens shoot four or five shots on the ground?”

Caller: “Yep. Right by the office.”

Call Taker: “On the ground. Ok. And like…."

Caller: “This is the second time they shoot.”

It is notable in the dialogue above that the Call Taker does not respond to the narrative about the history of the issue but seeks evidentiary verification of the role of the white charger and
fields elicitation questions to the 911 caller whose answers will qualify if shots were seen or heard, how many shots, where the shooting occurred, and suspect description information.

In the excerpt from the 911 call dialogue below, the 911 caller provides dialogic contextual information about the manner in which the residents react to these suspects and the management’s failure to fix the situation that informs the **believability of the caller and the reliability of the information.** His narrative highlights his familiarity with the situation and the suspects themselves. His commentary also implies his lack of objectivity in this situation. Non-dialogic language is embedded in his dialogic, contextual detail. The lack of objectivity is evident in his non-dialogic evaluative statement “they’re not supposed to be here” - implying that he believes that their trespassing alone is a moral and legal violation and that they are guilty merely by the fact of their presence. The other statement –“they’re not supposed to have pot” is another evaluative statement about the morality of their practice of smoking marijuana. The suggestion in the 911 caller’s statement is that this practice is morally wrong according to the unwritten rules of the apartment complex and illegal. The second statement “they’ve been in and out of jail, bothering people” contains a representational meaning predicated on the assumed value that former criminals will always be guilty - pertaining to their prior criminal record which by implication in our society makes them automatically suspect for anything and everything that happens in their vicinity. The 911 caller is informing an implicit cultural understanding through his non-dialogic language that he hopes will be appreciated by the 911 Call Taker. The 911 Call Taker appears immune to his manipulations and continues to seek evidentiary information.

Caller to third party: “Dang. They’re not supposed to have pot. They’re not supposed to be here. And after like I talked to the maintenance guy everybody yells, you know, after all
the commotion’s stopped “they’re not supposed to be here.” They’re not supposed to be on
the property. They’ve been in and out of jail, bothering people.”

The Call Taker continues to use a dialogic process of fielding a series of elicitation
questions in an attempt to obtain information about the suspect vehicle license number and their
specific address. She fails in those attempts; however, with each new question fielded by the Call
Taker, the 911 caller thinks of more contextual detail that might be relevant.

Call Taker: “Not a problem. I just need some information, sir. I will make sure that you’re
anonymous. Ok.

And they were in a white Charger?”

Caller: “They always pull up in a white charger. They is always hanging out with the
people that stay next door to this office. That’s either….I don’t know which one…exactly
what door it is. This is the location these kids used to hang out with them.”

In the dialogue below, the 911 caller invokes the currency of assumed values when
informing an **implicit cultural understanding** with the Call Taker regarding inappropriate and
criminal behaviors in our society.

Caller: “They’ve been known for doing dumb shit.”

In the statement above, the 911 caller invokes a non-dialogic assumed value and
representational meaning through the use of non-dialogic language - vague, ambiguous, and
highly generalized language - to create an implied dossier of the suspects’ actions. The Call Taker
is free to make a host of assumptions. Define: “dumb shit.” In our society, there is a cultural
understanding of what constitutes “dumb shit.” People in our society who have a general sense of
what that term means might define “dumb shit” as trespassing, vandalism, drug use, excessive
public drinking, stealing, fighting, public nudity, and other random, criminal activity. Also, this

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term could have multiple meanings that are context specific. The language is so vague yet all-encompassing that the need to ascertain actions and motivations is obfuscated. The 911 caller alludes to a prior history of some sort of delinquent action. The 911 Call Taker is free to assume that by the term “dumb shit,” the 911 caller means firing off guns randomly or maybe worse. The 911 caller’s language could also signal the potential for escalation or allude to the immature, child-like nature of the suspects. In any case, this 911 caller’s use of the term “dumb shit” expands the field of possible interpretations.

In Western cultural epistemology, past behaviors are predictors of current and future behaviors. The 911 caller uses non-dialogic, predictive language to describe the suspects’ actions based upon past habits and practices through the use of the phrase “you will see them….” Later in this 911 call, the 911 caller makes non-dialogic/evaluative, moral judgments about the suspects’ present actions, past actions, and overall lifestyle.

Caller: “If you see them….You will see them come out. They don’t leave. They don’t. And they get….And you’ll see the fuck (excuse me)…you’ll see the Charger in the backside as soon as you pull into the apartments once you get the… by the leasing office and the apartments that are right there. You’ll see the Charger as soon as you pull into the apartments.”

I observed that the Call Taker does not directly respond to the assumed value/representational meaning narrative but frames the given information as a segue for further elicitation questions. The Call Taker also identifies and sorts out the evidentiary information that is often embedded in cultural references that are expressed through non-dialogic language. The Call Taker responds to this non-dialogic discussion with specific description, context, and
disposition questions. The Call Taker also sorts out the evidentiary words - apartment, vehicle, front entrance.

Call Taker: “Ok. You said the apartments…So when you come into the front entrance….”

Caller: “There’s only one entrance mam.”

Call Taker: “Oh ok. So, the vehicle’s located near the front entrance?”

Caller: “Yeah. It’s in the backside of the apartments on the front entrance or in the front, literally. If it’s not there, they usually park in the back for the fact that they’re smokin in it.”

In the last statement above, the 911 caller is referring to the fact that the suspects park in a different place when they smoke marijuana.

In the dialogue below, the 911 caller offers a non-dialogic evaluative statement that also contains representational meaning – a portfolio of characteristics that qualify a person as worthy of punishment – thereby informing the **worthiness of service through an implicit cultural understanding**.

Caller: “You can all roll up on them.”

(Meaning I hope the police find them and make them pay.)

Caller: “I’m not gonna lie to you all. You can all roll up on them. All up on them looking like that like they always do. I’m always the last one. I just want some answers about this apartment complex. One of these days, I am gonna talk to Laura and let her know. She runs it. The cost of living in my apartment complex goes up every other day.”

With the words “looking like they always do,” the 911 caller is juxtaposing the suspects’ appearance with other negative patterns of behavior. He is insinuating that they engage in a culture of bad behavior that is self-evident through their physical appearance and that all aspects of their
lives are negatively interrelated. The 911 Call Taker remains unaffected by this information and proceeds to gather more evidentiary information. The phrase “looking like they always do” is offered in conjunction with descriptions of their gang clothing and gang hairstyle.

In Western cultural epistemology, all those deserving of punishment are believed to be subject to the retribution of the law. In other words, the law is believed to be the great equalizer and doles out punishment that is contingent upon the nature of the crime committed. In the dialogue above, the 911 caller is implying that these suspects deserve the retribution of the law, not only for the current crime that has been committed but also for their lifestyle and practices in general. Thus, they are worthy of punishment. The 911 caller invokes the assumed value of worthiness of punishment and representational meaning associated with criminal behaviors that solidifies an implicit cultural understanding between the 911 caller and Call Taker. The Call Taker does not respond to his sentiments as evident in her continued search for evidentiary information. Above all, the Call Taker wants to know if the suspects can be found on the premises and apprehended for questioning. She also wants to know if she can obtain a quality eyewitness account of events.

In the next few 911 call analysis discussions, I look at how the assumed values of vigilante justice or citizen watchdog appear to inform the believability of the caller, the reliability of the information, and the worthiness of service. In my analysis of the following 911 call excerpts, I determined that the threat of vigilante justice and/or the promise of citizen engagement has more rhetorical agency than I might have previously thought. Perhaps vigilante justice and citizen engagement signal the potential for the escalation of the 911 event. Nevertheless, the Call Takers seemed to possess an implicit cultural understanding of this concept and did not question its expression, whether implied or direct, in the 911 calls that I listened to and transcribed.
In same 911 event 2020E094320 (Shooting), discussed earlier, the 911 caller predicts that the suspects have the potential to provoke him. In his statement “I don’t want them pushing my buttons,” he is invoking the assumed value of vigilante justice. This may also be a strategic move designed to assure police response:

Caller: “Yes, mam. I don’t want them pushing my buttons, but I know how they are and I’m real hot headed. They can push my buttons mam and I don’t wanna…”

The 911 Call Taker responds with a directive and promise of service, thus qualifying worthiness of service. She does not correct or admonish the 911 caller’s threats in any way but implies that they have currency as evident in her immediate pledge to send a police officer. The Call Taker also instructs the 911 caller to maintain his safety. Is she instructing him to hide and wait for police or defend himself if necessary?

Call Taker: “Ok. Well, maintain your safety. We do have that call in. We’ll get an officer to …ah… check that area out for you, Ok?”

911 Event 2020E088948:Disturbance/Weapon Involved:

In the discussion below, I analyze a 911 call in which the 911 caller reports a crime for her son who is the victim and assumes an unusual role as one who is able to identify and pursue a witness before police arrive. I explore how the non-dialogic, assumed value of citizen watchdog/vigilante justice informs implicit cultural understandings in the 911 caller/Call Taker rhetorical relationship and appears to inform the 911 call’s worthiness of service.

In this 911 event 2020E088948 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved), the 911 caller calls in to report that her son, his girlfriend, and her cousin were almost run over by a woman who deliberately drove her car into their path after taunting and stalking them. The driver of the vehicle
got away but not before dropping off one of her passengers, a potential witness. The 911 caller identifies the potential witness and is in the process of following her while making this 911 call.

Call Taker: “Ok. What’s goin on there?”

Caller: “My son and his ….ahh girlfriend and her friend were walking, and this car passed by with these ah females in them. And ah they’re staring so my son gave them the finger and they tried to run my son, his girlfriend, and her cousin over. And then they took off. But one of the ladies….my son tried to take her down. One of the ladies got off the car and she’s right here walking by my house, and I told her “where’s the lady who tried to run over my son?” She said she don’t know nothin……but I’m right here just stalling her. She’s walking through the senior citizen like parking lot on Avenue A.”

The 911 caller alludes to her son’s earlier vigilante action as he “tried to take her down” (meaning the witness) but somehow abandoned the effort. She then implies that she is assuming her authority as a citizen to pursue this potential witness and obtain information that will help find the suspect. This 911 caller assumes an implicit cultural understanding with the 911 Call Taker in the assumed value of citizen watchdog, as a vehicle for potential prosecution that might inform the worthiness of service. To that aim, she states that she has verbally confronted the witness who denied any involvement; however, the 911 caller intends to continue her engagement – “I’m just stalling her.” In affirming her role in the management of the situation and the potential apprehension of the suspect, this 911 caller is asserting her right to citizen engagement and maybe vigilante justice. The 911 Call Taker acknowledges the viability of that role due to the fact that she never attempts to correct this assumption or propose alternative action on the part of the 911 caller.

From the beginning of this 911 call conversation, the 911 caller makes it clear that she has taken a proactive role in the situation as one who is pursuing a potential witness that she has
identified and interacted with in the hopes of gathering information about the suspect. The Call Taker continues to monitor the 911 caller and draw out more information in order to determine what police officers can actually do when they arrive on the scene. The Call Taker also continues to monitor the 911 caller’s action in case the situation suddenly changes as evident in the question below:

Call Taker: “Ok. And are you going to continue following her?”

The Call Taker’s actions are dialogic as she invites exposition and establishes context that informs the believability of the caller and the reliability of the information through a series of dialogic elicitation questions designed to draw out suspect description, specific detail, and context. The Call Taker also attempts to ascertain the caller’s motives in relation to the potential witness by sustaining a line of questioning that facilitates her continued engagement with the 911 caller and her continued monitoring of the situation. In the dialogue below, the Call Taker obtains information about the disposition of the caller and the witness and other potentially relevant context specific information. She learns that the caller is presently in a vehicle and that her son, one of the victims, is a passenger. Notable is what the Call Taker does not say. She never tells the 911 caller to stay uninvolved and wait for the police to resolve the situation.

Caller: “Yeah. I’m still. She’s walking to the gas station now….to the Shell gas station.”

Call Taker: “Ok.

Caller: “On Avenue D and Fifth Street.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Are they….are you at this gas station right now?”

Caller: “Yeah. I’m about to just pull up and she’s just walking through the parking lot.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Are you saying Avenue B as in Boy or D as in dog?”

Caller: “D as in Dog.”
Call Taker: “Ok. What is she doing right now?”
Caller: “She’s just smokin a cigarette and she’s just ah…she’s just walking.”
Call Taker: “She’s still walking?”
Caller: “She’s still walking. Heading towards the store. She went inside the store actually.”
Call Taker: “Is she inside Shell?”
Caller: “Yeah. She’s inside.”
Call Taker: “Ok. Where’s your son right now?”
Caller: “He’s with me in the car. And his girlfriend and her cousin…they went back home.”
Call Taker: “Ok. You’re in a vehicle.”
Caller: “Yes. I’m in my car.”
Call Taker: “Ok. What’s your vehicle look like?”
Caller: “It’s a…it’s a black Honda Accord.”
Call Taker: “Ok. Are you parked at the Shell right now?”
Caller: “Yeah. I’m goin in circles because there’s two …two entrances to the Shell so I’m seeing if she’s comin out to the other side. No, I don’t see her yet, but she went in. I saw her go inside.”

The Call Taker fields several status/disposition questions that will provide information about the potential witness and the 911 caller. Throughout this process, the Call Taker continues to acknowledge and respond to the 911 caller’s process, thereby validating the 911 caller’s role as a citizen watchdog who is entitled to pursue justice.

911 Event 2020E09476: Disturbance/Weapon Involved:

In the discussion below, I explore how implicit cultural understandings in the rhetorical relationship between 911 caller and Call Taker are informed by assumed values associated with
drug use and vigilante justice that possibly inform the urgency of the situation/level of responsiveness and worthiness of service. In this 911 event 2020E09476(Disturbance/Weapon Involved), (Not to be confused with the Crazy Man with A Machete call) the 911 caller calls in to report that a presumably crazy man is standing in the middle of the apartment complex parking lot waving a knife in the air and threatening people. The 911 caller is speculating about the suspect’s demeanor and the plausible reasons for his erratic behavior. The 911 caller is also depending upon the Call Taker’s recognition of the assumed value that drug use is associated with violence, erratic behaviors, and the potential for escalation.

Caller: “He’s on some dope…looks like.”

The 911 caller also implies the possibility of vigilante justice if the police do not respond quickly and take action. In other words, she provides a non-dialogic predictive statement about a possible future event and a plausible cause/effect scenario. If police fail to act, citizens will. Perhaps this 911 caller and her husband believe that police will respond more quickly if they threaten vigilant justice.

Call Taker: “Is anyone injured?

Caller: “He’s out there acting crazy.”

Call Taker: “Is anyone injured?”

Caller: “ No. He’s just gonna be…Somebody’s gonna be out there to hurt him if we don’t.”

Man in background (“Somebody’s gonna try and fuckin kill him.”)

In this case, the mentally ill suspect was a white male. This fact did not spare him the wrath of his neighbors.

What is quite remarkable is that in every instance in which a 911 caller either directly or indirectly expressed the intention to exercise vigilante justice, the 911 Call Taker did not
admonish, correct, or chastise that 911 caller in any way. The Call Takers appeared to have ignored both direct and indirect threats in that regard. They gave their implied consent through the act of refraining from commentary. I believe that the assumed value of vigilante justice has a unique currency in the state of Texas. I speculate that vigilante justice is not accepted as a self-evident right in other areas of the United States.

**Perspective as an Overarching Component in 911 Events with Multiple Callers:**

After completing the coding processes for both data sets of 911 emergency call conversations, I thought of a new evaluative category that I had not previously considered – perspective in multiple 911 calls for the same 911 event. During my study of the second data set, I reviewed 911 events that had multiple callers. Two calls stood out - 911 event 2020E089488:(Disturbance/Weapon Involved), and 911 event 2020E095508: (Shooting). In both of those 911 events, many callers called in. Some 911 callers provided very flat and cursory information. Others provided in depth context, however speculative.

**911 Event 2020E095508: Shooting:**

In this 911 event 2020E095508 (Shooting), many 911 callers called in to report hearing multiple gunshots in the vicinity of their apartment complex. What is notable is that in all of these calls, the Call Taker’s first elicitation question is about the same. They consistently seek to distinguish between witnessing a shooting and hearing one and look for other nuanced, but highly qualifying differences. The 911 caller’s descriptions of the reported 911 event vary in degree of detail, perspective, and value judgment assigned.

The first 911 caller provided very little description and seemed only slightly interested.

**1st Call:**

Call Taker: “But you didn’t see them shooting from that vehicle or anything?”
Caller: “No. No. I just heard it.”

Call Taker: “And do you want officers to contact you in person or just check the area?”

Caller: “Just check the area.”

In the dialogue above, the 1st caller uses non-dialogic vague and ambiguous language when qualifying **worthiness of service and the urgency of the situation**. The 911 caller’s request for police officers to “check the area”, being vague and ambiguous, conveys a low level of responsiveness. There is no detail that might inform the urgency of the situation and the level of service expected is low. The 911 caller seems neutral towards the situation and does not express fear. The Call Taker is not provided with anything specific that will aid the responding police officer in the search for evidence, or in the interviewing of any potential witnesses. This Call Taker was not as aggressive in the search for information as the second Call Taker or any subsequent Call Takers. If the Call Takers were limited to that one 911 call, they may not have obtained information about the range of possibilities. Among the multiple callers, there were some who provided a higher quality of information and more contextual, evidentiary detail.

**2nd Call:**

The second 911 caller seems more involved in the process and more willing to make an effort to provide details. The Call Taker maintains strong control of the situation and cuts the caller off in mid-sentence many times in order to pose his questions and obtain information expediently.

Call Taker: “Garland 911. What’s the location of your emergency?”

Caller: “Ah, yes sir. About two minutes ago, I heard gunshots approximately……”

Call Taker: “What’s the address?”

Caller: “Ah, it’s not at my address. It’s in front of Audoban Recreation Center.”

Call Taker: “Ok. What is your address?”
Caller: “5414 Coronado drive.”

Call Taker: “How many shots did you hear?”

Caller: “Five……and there’s also a lot of siren activity so it could be related but still…..sounded like it was on Oates in front of Audubon Recreation..”

Call Taker: “You didn’t see anyone shooting? Correct?”

Caller: “No sir. I was in my yard.”

The second 911 caller was able to provide information about the number of shots heard and the fact that she heard siren activity in the area. In the dialogue above, the non-dialogic/ambiguous phrase “a lot of siren activity” informs worthiness of service in its implication that police are already on the scene or in the vicinity of this 911 event. She also clarifies her disposition in relation to the shooting – “I was in my yard.” The second caller also insinuates worthiness of service by using a non-dialogic predictive/evaluative phrase – “it could be related” – clarifying her reference to siren activity as possibly qualifying the notion that police already have agency at the scene of this 911 event or are responding to a different scene for the same 911 event.

2nd Caller: “There’s also a lot of siren activity so it could be related but still…sounded like it was on Oates in front of Audubon Recreation.”

5th Call:

The 5th caller was able to provide information about a number of suspects and witnessed them running.

Call Taker: “Did you see or anyone or just hear the gunshots?”

Caller: “I just saw three…three…a young, young men just as I’m talking to you now…they just passed by the house running….ah, but I don’t know…uh, …..”
The 5th caller also articulates **worthiness of service and urgency of the situation** by using non-dialogic value/ambiguous language as evident in his reference to “a flurry of gunfire” and “multiple guns,” thereby framing the situation as urgent.

Caller: “It was a flurry of gunfire going off over there in those apartments. It was like multiple guns.”

In this case, the caller is speculating about what he heard and assigning a definitive description to his narrative of events. He describes the type of gunfire he heard –“a flurry.” The term “flurry of gunfire” is vague and ambiguous and yet articulates an impressive scene.

Caller: “You probably just wanna send the police over there in those apartments to see what’s going on ah…Ah, I hope no one got shot or is….anything like that.”

In the statement above, the 5th 911 caller is articulating the fluidity of the situation through the use of non-dialogic predictive/evaluative language foretelling danger and/or escalation and suggesting that police response is indisputably warranted. He is also predicting a possible catastrophic situation in which someone might have gotten shot and/or will possibly be shot in the future.

**7th Call:**

During the seventh call, the Call Taker attempts to establish context while eliciting more detail with the following question: “Did you hear or see anything other than the shooting?” He was successful in eliciting more detail about the shooting itself and the nuanced nature of the act. The shooter unloaded the clip, indicating that he did not intend to shoot anymore and was merely firing off warning shots not intended to do damage.

Call Taker: “Did you hear or see anything other than the shooting?”
Caller: “Yes. When we were sitting in the house, they started shooting out there in the parking lot. He shot twice and then unloaded the clip.”

Call Taker: “Are they still there? Do you know because I don’t want to……”?

Caller: “No! They gone. They gone now but they shooting at my son’s friend’s sister or some shit. I don’t know.”

Call Taker: “Ok. Ok. Hang on one second. Is everybody…Is everybody with you, ok?”

Caller: “Yeah. We good. I don’t know who they was shootin at but I got a house full of kids. They could have shot through my house.”

In the section of the dialogue above, the 7th 911 caller introduces new information that, if understood at face value, could signal another ongoing situation and/or an imminent threat of escalation. The Call Taker asks a status question designed to elicit further information that will prepare the police officers for any potential on scene situations. In the process of this exchange, the 911 caller reveals that his son and his friends possibly know the shooter or shooters and are involved in some way. Based on the structure of qualifying statement, the 911 caller seems to be claiming that the shooting of his son’s friend’s sister is in progress or has just occurred. In his response to the Call Taker’s status question, he clarifies by implication that he was referring to the past tense and that his son’s friend’s sister was not hurt. In his final statement in that section of the dialogue, he claims he is speculating about what he saw or thought he saw – “I don’t know.”

In the final police report for 911 event 2020E095508, the details conflicted with the callers’ reports, and the actual victims never called the police. I get the sense that there is a bleed between law abiding citizens and criminal suspects in this neighborhood and distinctions are nuanced. I also get the sense that multiple shooting events or potential shooting events were occurring at
relatively the same time in the same vicinity. I am not certain that each 911 caller was referring to the same shooting event.

In Western culture, we tend to think in binary terms of conceptualizing good versus bad, suspect versus victim, perpetrator versus object of the perpetration, etc. In some of these 911 calls, as evident in the Police/Incident reports, the victims also played the role of criminal suspect responding to an attack by fighting back instead of calling the police. Also, situations were highly fluid in some cases, and roles were in flux and evolving in what I believe were gang disputes. The victims/suspects seemed accustomed to random shootings and wanted to keep the police uninvolved while witnesses were very fearful and outraged. In this shooting event in which several cars and an apartment were shot at multiple times, the one victim who is identified never calls the police to report that his car and apartment have been riddled with bullets. Later evidence reveals he fired back and shot multiple times at his attacker’s vehicle, thereby suggesting a gang style dispute. As there were no eyewitnesses who could affirmatively connect this suspect to the shooting, he was not charged in this incident but arrested for an outstanding warrant. (See Chapter 6)

911 Event 2020E089488: Disturbance/Weapon Involved:

In 911 event 2020E089488 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved), multiple 911 callers called in to report their neighbors pulling guns on some other residents. The value of perspective becomes evident through the varying accounts in which 911 callers express emotions, qualify their degree of involvement, qualify their logistical and/or historical relationship to the 911 event, qualify witness testimony, and provide value judgments about the ongoing 911 event.
1st Call:

In the first 911 call, the Call Taker attempts to establish the reliability of the information and worthiness of service by seeking dialogic nuanced but clarifying details that accommodate difference. She also poses different possible scenarios and infers that a misunderstanding could have occurred with the statement “Several people carry weapons.” She wants to make sure that the 911 caller is able to distinguish between the act of carrying a weapon and the act of threatening someone with it. She wants to be sure that the 911 caller is clear about what she saw. The caller, in fact, is clear and emphatically answers that she did see one guy pull a gun on several others. She insists that she witnessed a threatening situation.

Call Taker: “Ok. Did they pull the gun out and point it or threaten anybody with it? I mean… Several people…Several people carry weapons, mam. Did he threaten the guy? Er…” (Third party talking in the background)

Caller: (Loud, emphatic tone) “He pulled the gun!! He pulled the gun on the other guys that are out there!”

The Call Taker in this case makes several attempts to invite exposition. She is unsuccessful with the first caller but successful with the second caller. Both callers live in the same house and are husband and wife. Their attitudes are different, their perspectives are different, and the second caller is a better witness who provides critical detail.

1st Call: (wife speaking):

Call Taker: “Ok. So, he’s wearing all black. And what kind of gun was it? Was it a handgun? A shotgun?”

Caller: “A handgun. I don’t know what kind of gun it was. Like I said. I was looking out of my camera.”
Call Taker: “Ok mam. And what is your name?”

Caller: “Ok. Ah… I do not want to disclose my information.”

2nd Call: (Same Household – husband speaking)

Caller: “…and we just happened to look at our camera just a minute ago and there’s 3 . Well, the guy says he stays next door and ah the, I guess, some guy got out in a white car and pulled a shotgun or something. He had a big gun and pointed it out on the next-door neighbor standing right here in front of his house.”

Call Taker: “Was it….?”

Caller: “I mean… I’m not gonna… I thought they were just like homeless people because we have a whole bunch of homeless people that’s been comin in and out of our next-door neighbor’s house.”

Call Taker: “Were they white, black or Hispanic?”

Caller: “There’s two black guys outside and a white guy… and the guy that pulled a gun is a black guy.”

Call Taker: “Ok. And did you see what kind of vehicle he got out of?”

Caller: “Uh. Yeah. He got out of …it looked like a pearl white Infinity…like a uh. a sports Infinity. I seen……I seen him pull out a…I seen when he got in the car…I didn’t see him get out of that car, but I seen him get in when he pulled out…”

Call Taker: “When he pulled out a gun?”

Caller: “Yeah. They pulled out a gun on the guy who’s next door but…but my kids…my kids sleep…We’re staying in a townhouse so we’re right next to each other and like, you know, that’s like right in front of my kids’ window so. They’re upstairs but still. What if they go to shooting or whatever…? You know what I’m sayin?”
Call Taker: “What apartment number are you in?”

The 2nd caller uses the non-dialogic currency of representational meaning and the logic of appearances to inform implicit cultural understandings with the Call Taker when he claims that his neighbor’s house is a hub for homeless people, that the townhouses are in close proximity to each other, and that this type of crime has occurred many times before. The statement “they constantly have traffic next door” implies that this is a drug dealing house based upon appearances considered in conjunction with pre-conceived notions about what drug dealing houses look like. The term “traffic” in our culture is often associated with a drug sale environment. These phrases “hub for homeless people” and “traffic next door” constitute representational meaning as they are abstract terms that indirectly represent a dossier of ideas associated with homelessness and drug use as evident in the dialogue below:

Caller: “I’m in apartment 101 and they’re in 102 next door. But they’re constantly have… they don’t come up here, but they constantly have traffic next door like in an out all the time. We done reported them plenty of times.”

The 911 caller relies on the currency of an assumed value that informs his implicit cultural understanding with the 911 Call Taker regarding habits and practices of drug dealers that are widely known and understood. No elaboration is needed because the 911 Cal Taker does not attempt to elicit further information in that regard. She accepts his information at face value.

The 911 caller also implies that police response in the past has been ineffective. I believe there is perhaps an implicit cultural understanding that drug dealers are skilled at avoiding the law and that law enforcement is primarily ineffective at apprehending and prosecuting these types of suspects or in controlling homeless populations. In a sense, this 911 caller is challenging the police to do a better job.
In the dialogue below from the same 911 call, the 911 caller claims that the suspects look like homeless people because of their patterns of movement and is depending upon the Call Taker to share this implicit cultural knowledge about a dossier of other related characteristics that are specific to homeless people.

Caller: “I mean… I’m not gonna… I thought they were just like homeless people because we have a whole bunch of homeless people that’s been comin in and out of our next-door neighbor’s house.”

The 911 caller does not know for certain that these people he sees are homeless. He assumes they are homeless due to their appearance and other generally recognizable, presumed characteristics of homeless people and conveys non-dialogic, representational meaning – thoughts, feelings, sensations – in the following phrase: “thought they were just like homeless people.” These assertions work in conjunction with the implicit meaning behind the word “traffic” and the claims of drug use. The unexamined implication is that homeless people are usually drug users, drug users frequent locations where they can obtain drugs, and that scenarios in which many different people enter and leave a domicile on any given day are indicative of homelessness and a drug sale environment.

The information could be considered as questionable and biased; however, when a Call Taker is faced with ambiguity and uncertainty, multiple perspectives can be important. Information that might appear to be flat or cursory can evolve through multiple 911 calls about the same event. Different callers have different personalities. Some callers are more forthcoming than others. Some callers are more observant and insightful than others. Some callers are more willing to report whereas others are reluctant to become involved in any potential 911 event. Multiple callers provide information that expands the portfolio of possibilities and enables the Call Takers to better
inform the responding police officers. Detail and variety can also inform the Call Taker’s reaction. A study of multiple calls about the same 911 event might also reveal the nuance in a Call Taker’s process. An uncovering of nuance and subtlety might pave the way for a study of implicit biases that are usually not obvious. An examination of different 911 Call Takers’ interactions with 911 callers who are reporting the same event might reveal the use of and variation in the application of different strategies and different attitudes on the part of both 911 caller and Call Taker. The 911 event topic might function as a control of sorts. An examination of these 911 calls for the same event might also uncover variations in perspective and interpretation of the information on the part of the 911 caller and Call Taker, thereby foregrounding an exploration of possible implicit bias.

In answering the question **is the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and Call taker primarily dialogic or primarily non-dialogic? Why or why not?**, I identified and analyzed the uses of dialogic and non-dialogic language by both 911 caller and Call Taker in the context of the rhetorical relationship/situation categories. I identified and examined the prevalence and agency of both dialogic and non-dialogic language and the role of both types of language forms in articulating and guiding the 911 emergency response process.

The rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker is both dialogic and non-dialogic. In one sense, the exchange is non-dialogic due to the Garland Police Department 911 emergency response protocols and the diligence of the 911 Call Takers in consistently implementing those protocols. There is an inherent contradiction that seems to work well. While the concept of protocol/procedure itself is non-dialogic, the protocol does facilitate a dialogue. Through the use of a non-dialogic protocol, the Call Takers controlled the tone and scope of the rhetorical situation during the 911 call when they were talking with the 911 callers. However, the exchange, in all cases, was dialogic to varying degrees as a dialogue was established and more
detailed and nuanced information was sought and drawn out. Call Takers took nothing for granted, in most cases. They consistently sustained a thorough dialogic line of questioning designed to draw out nuance. If someone reported a shooting, they asked if the caller just heard a gunshot or physically saw the suspect with the gun and if they knew where the bullets went. If someone reported a suspect pointing a gun, the Call Taker fielded questions designed to clarify nuanced distinctions. Did the suspect point the gun in the air, directly at someone, or did he merely display it? Did he cock the gun or not? They also devoted a considerable portion of the conversation to establishing context. Does the caller know the suspect? What is the nature of the relationship? What is the specific nature of the crime? What is the motivation for the crime? When did the crime occur? Who are the participants? What is each role? To what extent or degree is each suspect contributing to the situation?

911 Event 2020E102588: (Stabbing)

The attempt to establish context was particularly evident in one 911 event - 2020E102588. The caller called in to report that a man had been stabbed in the shoulder at Ebenezer’s Pub and Grub. The Call Taker asked specific questions about the nature of the wound and logistical details. Who was in the area? Who was assisting the victim? Where were the interested parties in relation to each other? Were there any witnesses? The Call Taker did not directly ask if the suspect could still be on the premises; however, her other questions alluded to that possible intention. The 911 Call Taker attempted to obtain detailed description, establish context, identify witnesses, determine logistical details, determine status, uncover motivation, and determine the degree of injury - all dialogic processes.

Call Taker: “Ok. Do you know if anybody there saw the person that stabbed him or anything or if anybody saw the incident at all?”
Caller to victim: “Do you know if anybody saw it or anything?”

Caller: “He says no.”

Call Taker: “Is it just you all two out there?”

Caller: “Ah, ah, well yeah. Just us…and uh, us two ah, well, people are walking….people are coming in and out of the bar…It’s just mostly us two.”

Caller: “Well, he’s got another man helping him put pressure on the wound so it’s three of us.”

Call Taker: “So, did the person just blind side him, stab him, and left, er?”

Caller: “I have no idea. I don’t know. The person who did this is obviously not here.”

The 911 caller sounds irritated by this line of questioning and just keeps repeating the victim’s desire that the police arrive there expediently. The 911 Call Taker is persistent and attempts to retrieve more details about the particulars of the stabbing and the suspect’s possible process. Perhaps information about the process will provide clues regarding the suspect’s next steps. The 911 caller, on the other hand, believes that the suspect has assuredly fled the scene. Based on the nature of the crime and any potential motivation, the suspect may not have felt the need to flee the scene. Who knows at this point? The follow up information in the final Police/Incident report reveals that the victim was stabbed at another location by a known drug-dealer during a drug dispute. (See Chapter 6)

In answering the question how does the use of dialogic and non-dialogic language influence the quality of information in the 911 emergency call process?, I followed the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in the chain of evidence that was initiated in the 911 emergency call, populated into the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and then transferred to the responding police officer. I looked for accuracy in the process and went back to
identify the source of this accuracy. In all cases, the dialogic language strategies used by Call Takers facilitated the greatest accuracy in 911 emergency response.

Dialogic language in the form of purposeful questioning can elicit information about the context of the situation, detailed description, logistical details, urgency of the situation, time frame or sequence of events, potential witnesses, motivation, and cause/effect variables. For these reasons, dialogic language used by the 911 Call Takers significantly increases the quality of the information that is obtained and transferred on to police officers responding to the scene of the 911 event. Non-dialogic language can be deceptive and/or misleading. The use of non-dialogic language by 911 callers had no significant effect on 911 Call Taker actions and 911 event final outcomes, in most cases. In one case, (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress) (Crazy Man with A Machete), I believe the 911 caller’s use of non-dialogic language compelled the 911 Call Taker to assign a priority code of 1 –“immediate threat to life” - for a 911 event that turned out to be a non-event (Garland, 2021).

OVERALL SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE CODING PROCESSES:

Through the processes of initial and focused coding, provisional coding, and componential analysis, I discovered that the 911 emergency call conversation is a negotiation in which the 911 caller must provide evidence that fits into the standard prescripts for 911 emergency response. In other words, the 911 caller is obliged to provide information that indicates worthiness of institutional response. Often the 911 caller attempts to bypass this process through the use of emotionally charged language and predictive/evaluative language. On some occasions, the 911 caller will employ the currency of common-sense assumptions and/or assumed values/implicit cultural understandings. These strategies didn’t seem to affect 911 Call Taker actions, at least in most cases. The whole dynamic can be summarized as an interplay between the 911 caller’s
expectation of service versus the 911 Call Taker’s pursuit of evidentiary information, verification of evidentiary information, and the assignment of a value judgment.
Chapter 6: Data Analysis Part 3: Comparative Analysis of Three Data Sets: 911 Calls, Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and Police/Incident Reports;

Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I examined how the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and Call Taker informed the reception, interpretation, and processing of 911 emergency narratives. I identified key rhetorical components of the rhetorical relationship/situation that exists in a 911 emergency call conversation and evaluated the agency of those rhetorical components while identifying a hierarchy that informs the situational dynamics. In the concluding chapter, I examine the 911 emergency response process as a whole and evaluate the efficacy of 911 emergency response communication through a comparative analysis of three documents - the 911 emergency call conversations, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports. To that aim, I evaluate the agency of the rhetorical situation components in facilitating successful communication and informing final event outcomes by answering the following questions: How does the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and Call Taker influence the quality of information in the 911 emergency response process? How accurate is the 911 emergency call information exchange? How are misunderstandings and information gaps managed? What is the overall agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in the 911 emergency response process? I answer these questions through a two-step process. In the first step, I compared, contrasted, and evaluated the 911 calls and Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports in my data sample. In the second step, I compared, contrasted, and evaluated all three documents - the 911 calls, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports.
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: 911 EMERGENCY CALLS AND COMPUTER AIDED DISPATCH EVENT CHRONOLOGY REPORTS:

In step one of my comparative analyses, I evaluated the quality of 911 emergency response information transfer from the initial 911 emergency call to the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report while considering the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language. I looked for discrepancies and miscommunication events. As a preliminary step in my first comparative
analysis, I conducted an initial, focused, and theoretical coding of the Event Remarks or narrative section of the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports. During this process, I found that the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report data correlated with the information in the 911 emergency call conversation in all but one case. The efficacy of the dialogic exchange between the 911 Caller and 911 Call Taker was reflected in most of the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports in which the level of accuracy and consistency was significant. One Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report - 911 event P2020E092969 (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress) (Dispute Between Drug Users) was the exception. The 911 call itself lasted fifteen minutes. The Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report was surprisingly short – 1 page. The Call Taker identified the suspect as signal 18 – a narcotics suspect - as per the information provided in the 911 call conversation. The Call Taker, however, left out many logistical details that the 911 caller had provided. The Call Taker also failed to accurately record the victim and the suspect’s names as provided by the 911 caller and failed to include the full body of information that pointed to a narcotics dispute. The Call Taker did not mention that the suspect had accused the caller of hiding drugs as per the caller’s quote of the suspect’s words. The responding officers must have made that determination early in their interaction with both the suspect and the 911 caller. The final entry in the Event Remarks section of the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report provided by responding police officers states: “argument between signal 18 users, no charges.” Perhaps the Call Taker’s use of the code signal 18 was sufficient for the responding officers. As they handled the situation with no violence and no arrests, I can only assume that they have dealt with other similar scenarios in the past. Strangely enough, this call was assigned an automatic priority code of 1 – “immediate threat to life”- given the Disturbance/Weapon in Progress classification (City of Garland, 2021). No police report was filed.
The Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report uses non-dialogic language to an extent. These reports utilize abbreviations/acronyms and codes to include codes for unit dispositions, codes for 911 event on scene actions taken, and codes for criminal and medical events. (See Appendix B) These codes are non-dialogic because they indicate representational meanings. They are only understood by 911 Call Takers, 911 Dispatchers, police officers, and others who work with law enforcement documents. The codes function as placeholders for a dossier of meanings that are compacted for efficiency. One Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report for 911 event P2020E082436 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Teenagers Engaged in Delinquent Activity -Throwing Rocks/Breaking Windows) was particularly dialogic in nature. The Call Taker recorded all the nuanced details that were communicated in the 911 call conversation in which multiple callers called in to report teenagers breaking windows and threatening people within this apartment complex. While I only analyzed two calls for this 911 event, there were many other calls as well. The Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report included information from all the calls for that 911 event. This report revealed that the suspects might have used knives and bats and that one of the victims/callers – a female – had been punched in the face by one of the suspects. Another event remark included this statement that reads as follows: “Thinks the manager is the one who threw a rock.” Strangely enough, the Call Taker closed out the call with the codes for “no further information” and “no one to contact” (City of Garland, 2020). This call was assigned a priority code of 2 – “urgent response required” (City of Garland, 2021).

Another Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report – 911 Event P2020E102922 (Disturbance/Weapon Involved) (Road Rage/Threats) indicated a “road rage issue.” The rest of the report contained specific details that mirrored the 911 call conversation. In this case, the 911
Call Taker accepted the 911 caller’s words at face value and immediately sent police dispatch. The 911 caller, a security guard, stayed on the scene and vigilantly monitored the suspect who had threatened to run him off the road and hit him with a metal bar. When the police officers arrived on the scene, they conducted what they call a “vehicle search” which basically means that they drove around looking for the suspect vehicle. The suspect was long gone at that point. It appears that the term “road rage issue” conjured a sense of urgency and angst. I get the sense that this 911 event was “much ado about nothing.” No police report was filed.

In order to determine if confirmation bias occurred (Cooley, 2019) and/or if common sense assumptions inspired confirmation bias that informed and guided the 911 event classification and prioritization process, I first identified 911 emergency response documents in which discrepancies were indicated and then examined and evaluated the nature of those discrepancies:

As a means of clearing up misunderstandings and managing information gaps, the 911 Call Taker asks the same questions repeatedly at various points in the 911 emergency call. The 911 Call Taker wants to verify his or her understanding and assess the truthfulness and reliability of the 911 caller. In most cases, the 911 Call Taker accepted nothing at face value and questioned the 911 caller to the point of saturation before making decisions about 911 event classification and priority codes. There was one obvious exception in which I believe a mutual understanding of common-sense assumptions between the 911 caller and Call Taker guided the event classification and prioritization process. I would also consider this case an example of confirmation bias. The 911 caller applied common sense-assumptions when evaluating a perceived situation and saw what he wanted to see. He filtered what he thought he saw and placed his perception into a preconceived mold of patterns of cause and effect and prescribed variables that he believed are usually reliable and consistent. The 911 Call Taker accepted this information at face value and assigned a priority
1 code to the call – meaning “immediate threat to life” (City of Garland, 2021) that turned out to be nothing at all.

In this 911 Event P2020E098498 (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress) (Crazy Man with A Machete), referred to above, the 911 caller reported that a young, black male was walking around and swinging a machete. He was reported to look like someone who was on drugs. During the course of this 911 call, the 911 caller assumes the role of citizen watchdog, reporting the suspect’s every move. The 911 caller accuses the suspect of stalking and chasing a homeless woman and stealing a bicycle. None of this turned out to be true. When officers arrived on the scene, they learned that the possible female victim and the male suspect knew each other and there was no altercation. No machete was found. Also, no bicycle had been stolen. No police report was generated. However, this call was initially assigned a priority code of 1 – “immediate threat to life” (City of Garland, 2021). The fact that the 911 Call Taker erroneously assigned a priority code of 1 to this call based on the non-dialogic description of the 911 caller makes this 911 event a possible case of confirmation bias.

In another 911 event, P2020E092969, the Call Taker’s common-sense assumptions might have informed the event classification and priority code assignment. This 911 call is classified as a Weapon in Progress with a priority code of 1 – “immediate threat to life.” This 911 event was a dispute between two female drug addicts presumably over hidden drugs. The only weapon I could identify from the 911 call audio and the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report was the suspect’s foot kicking on the door. The suspect was not with the victim at that time and the presence of a weapon had not been clearly established. I can only assume that the Call Taker made implicit associations between drug use and potentially escalating violence.
In the final process of my comparative analysis, I reviewed the Police/Incident reports and compared the populated information to information drawn from the 911 emergency call conversation audios/transcripts and entered into the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports in order to identify inconsistencies, discrepancies, or outright miscommunication. The 911 emergency call conversation information very nearly lined up with the information in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports in most cases. The Police/Incident reports did not indicate any miscommunication. In some cases, information was incomplete but not inaccurate. In a few cases, the context of the 911 event was misunderstood in the 911 emergency call conversation and Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report but clarified in the Police/Incident report.

**Comparative Analysis – 911 Emergency Calls, Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and Final Police/Incident Reports:**

Through the comparative analysis of all three 911 emergency response documents, I answered the following questions: How are misunderstandings and information gaps managed? How accurate is the 911 emergency call information exchange and how might misunderstandings and information gaps influence final event outcomes? Does confirmation bias occur? (Cooley, 2019) Why or why not? Do common sense assumptions inspire confirmation bias that informs and guides the 911 event classification and prioritization process?

The comparative analysis demonstrated that the 911 emergency call information exchange is highly accurate, for the most part. There were one or two exceptions, and the information gaps were negligible, in my view. There were two instances in which suspect descriptions varied slightly between the 911 calls and the Police/Incident report. In one 911 event, the description of
the 911 event was accurate but the context was completely different. In this 911 event, there was a remarkable variation in context due to the victim’s withholding of information rather than a miscommunication or misunderstanding in the 911 event information dissemination process. The one obvious misunderstanding was predicated on deception by the victim. Final event outcomes remained unaffected by the small discrepancies in 911 emergency information transfer and in that one case of deception by the victim.

In the first example, the 911 emergency response documents reveal the potential complexity of a 911 event in which the situation is fluid, and the situational dynamics are continually evolving. In this 911 event, multiple parties become engaged in a dispute that occurred at another location. The context of the situation is not immediately evident and only becomes clear in the Police/Incident report.

**911 Event P2020E092052: Weapon Involved - Police Report R20R15271 A20a001521:**

In the 911 event conversation, the 911 caller, a Chevron store clerk, called in to report what he believed was gang style confrontation that could escalate into a violent fight. He mentioned that one of the suspects who appeared to be a minor female wielded a gun. In the Police/Incident report, it was noted that the female suspect (the driver of the suspect vehicle) had accidentally hit a man on a bicycle (same bicycle that was on the 911 scene) prior to arriving at the scene of the fight. The minor female suspect was confirmed to be the female driver’s daughter. After the bicycle incident, the male victim/suspect followed the females into the Chevron parking lot and began cursing at them and threatening. The female suspect said that the minor female pulled out the gun for protection because both mother and daughter thought they were going to be attacked. The male suspect claimed that his bicycle was slightly damaged but that the driver of the vehicle almost ran him over. The male suspect started cursing at the police officers when he realized that the women
were not going to be arrested. He claimed that the juvenile female pointed the gun at him several
times. The Police/Incident report narrative provides new information but does not contradict
statements made during the 911 call conversation or recorded in the Computer Aided Dispatch
Event Chronology Reports. The particular details regarding the involved parties vary somewhat in
the Police/Incident report. In both the 911 emergency call conversation and the Computer Aided
Dispatch Event Chronology Report, it is noted that two Hispanic males and one black male were
engaged in an altercation with a minor female displaying a gun from a vehicle. In the
Police/Incident report, the dispute is articulated as between a Hispanic female driver, her passenger
daughter, and a Hispanic male on a bicycle, although other men were on the scene when police
arrived. Apparently, after the initial altercation between the Hispanic female driver and the
Hispanic male on the bicycle, the Hispanic female went back to her residence to pick up her
husband. Both the female driver and her husband returned to the scene of the 911 event to confront
the suspect who had threatened her. The black male is never mentioned in the report. The
particulars of the expanded argument are never discussed in the Police/Incident report. The only
element fully addressed in the report is the element of motive – the reason for the dispute – and
the female driver and male bicycle rider’s conflicting accounts.

In this next example, the 911 caller and his mother, the victim, call in to report death threats
made by their neighbor after a traffic dispute. The 911 caller and his mother refute the suspect
description given in the initial 911 call and claim they cannot identify the suspect.

**911 Event P2020E089495: Weapon Involved – Police Report R2020R014832:**

In this 911 event, the 911 caller called in to report a road rage type of incident. The caller
and his mother were driving home when the suspect vehicle was blocking the road. The caller and
his mother attempted to persuade the suspect to get out of the middle of the road. The suspect then
threatened to shoot the mother. Initially both the mother and son stated that the suspect was their neighbor whom they knew somewhat. The Police/Incident Report is mostly consistent with the initial 911 conversation and the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report. The mother and son’s 911 event narratives matched up exactly in all three 911 event documents. In the Police/Incident report, it is noted that officers went to the suspect’s residence and attempted to interview him. He was intoxicated and had multiple tattoos on his body. The suspect told the police officers to come back with a warrant. Officers ran the suspect’s license plate number and discovered that he had multiple arrests and convictions for terroristic threats and aggravated assaults. In the Police/Incident report, it is noted that the female victim and her son said they were unable to positively identify the suspect even though they stated otherwise in the initial 911 call. There is one other small discrepancy. In the initial 911 emergency call conversation, only three parties are named in the 911 event - the 911 caller (the victim’s son), the victim, and the suspect. In the Police/Incident report, it is noted that the victim remembers a passenger in the suspect’s truck who was attempting to calm him down.

In this next 911 event, mentioned earlier, what appeared to be delinquent activity perpetrated by some random teenagers turned out to be something else altogether. This 911 event was revealed to be a dispute between two neighbors with very specific motivations. Also, 911 caller deception and deflection become evident in the Police/Incident Report when the real context of the situation is established.


In this 911 event, multiple callers called it to report teenagers who were breaking windows, throwing rocks, and threatening tenants at this apartment complex. The incident was ongoing for about 8 hours. In all three 911 event documents, the basic details are consistent. However, the real
context of the situation is absent from the 911 call conversations and the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports. Multiple callers called in to report the event but hung up immediately when asked for more information or refused to answer the 911 Call Taker call backs. In some cases, fake phone numbers were provided. The police responded to this ongoing event several times, although some 911 callers denied this. Two 911 callers stated that the police did not respond at all. The events that transpired were the result of an ongoing argument between two tenants. Apparently, one tenant had intervened when she heard a fight at another apartment. She confronted the male suspects who were arguing with and physically abusing an unknown female and attempted to break up the fight. The intervening female victim reported she had been beaten and knocked unconscious by one of the suspects at some point during this interaction. Apparently, the victims and perpetrators in both apartments and husbands and boyfriends became involved in this ongoing dispute that escalated into the throwing of objects and breaking of windows. The tenants at apartment #126 threw beer bottles and metal chairs that broke the windows at apartment #201 in retaliation for acts perpetrated against the female victim who had been punched in the face and knocked unconscious. Police ordered the suspects in apartment #201 to leave the apartment complex and not return. The suspects complied. It is not clear who actually lived at apartment #201. Ultimately, the 911 callers and victims left no reliable contact information and have not come forward to positively identify suspects for the purposes of prosecution. The callers from the two 911 calls for this incident that I transcribed claimed they did not know the suspects and that the attack was without motive. The Police/Incident report contradicts that information. The original information that the perpetrators were juveniles was never clearly established.

This next 911 event is indicative of deception on the part of the victim and hidden motives behind the commission of this crime. Initially victims and suspects were not clearly defined, and
the actual crime occurred at a location other than the location from where the 911 event was reported.

**911 Event P2020E102588: Stabbing – Police Report 2020R017085:**

In this 911 event, the caller called in to report that a customer at Ebenezer’s Pub and Grub had been stabbed in the shoulder by an unknown assailant. There is an inconsistency between the information in the 911 emergency call conversation, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report, and the Police/Incident report. In this 911 event, a third party (bystander), who did not know the victim, called in to report the crime. The victim did not provide any details and stated that he did not know who had stabbed him. All interested parties assumed that the stabbing had occurred at Ebenezer’s Pub and Grub. In the Police/Incident report, police officers stated that a witness was found after Forensics went to a nearby motel, based on a bystander tip, and found blood on a motel room wall and blood on a female subject’s wrist and shirt. Initially, police believed that the female subject was a suspect in this 911 event. As it turned out, the female was not a suspect but a witness to the fight between two male subjects engaged in the drug dispute. According to the witness, the victim had been stabbed in a room at the nearby Express Inn while attempting to buy Methamphetamine. During the transaction, the victim had handed $15 over to the drug dealer for payment of a new order of Methamphetamine. They argued over $5.00 that the victim still owed from a previous drug transaction. Then, the drug dealer yanked the money out of the victim’s hand and stabbed him in the shoulder while refusing to hand over the drugs. The drug dealer, who was later positively identified by police, had already fled the scene. This call was initially assigned a priority 1 code by the Call Taker – meaning that an “immediate threat to life” existed (City of Garland, 2021).
In this case, the Call Taker worked diligently to draw out more information, to no avail. The victim initially refused to provide the real story for obvious reasons. After relating the eyewitness account of the incident to the victim, police officers pressed the victim to acknowledge the accounting of events that the witness provided. The 911 Call Taker did not accept the initial narrative at face value, but the reporting party was merely a passing stranger who was unable to obtain specific details from the victim.

During the 911 call conversation, the Call Taker was able to determine that the stabbing had happened a while ago and that the victim’s shoulder wound was not life threatening. I can only assume that the Call Taker, not being privy to the information later revealed in the Police/Incident report, presumed that the suspect could still be in the vicinity and that the situation could escalate.

Through an examination of this Police/Incident report for this 911 event, I learned that police officers must possess a certain intellectual curiosity and view and/or interpret a 911 event through a cogitative process while looking beyond surface meaning. Police officers must be able to draw out nuanced information, notice seemingly innocuous details, and follow up through diligent investigation. Based on the content of the Police/Incident report in this case, the police officers were prudent and performed with due diligence. Within the scope of my research, I was not able to identify deficiencies in police officer response.

The next 911 event reveals another nuanced and fluid situation in which the context remains unknown until police identify a suspect vehicle, locate the suspect, and perform an on-scene evaluation of the situation. As it turns out, one of the victims is also a suspect in a gang dispute.
911 Event 2020E095508: Police Reports 2020R015903 and 2020R015913:

I transcribed and analyzed multiple calls for this 911 shooting event. The calls ranged from rather vague to highly detailed. However, these 911 callers all provided information based upon their speculations. They did not have any real contextual information regarding what was happening. They provided 911 Call Takers with varying accounts of the number of shots fired and various accounts of the source of those shots. One woman, whose vehicle was hit by the grey/blue Ford Mustang, called in to report the damage. One 911 caller claimed to have seen 3 young men running by his apartment. Another 911 caller believed that his son’s friend’s sister was the target and that he had witnessed a shooter pull a gun on her. What is rather curious is that the primary victim, whose car, and apartment were shot up by some unknown suspect, never called the police. Police came to him because his vehicle was identified in the related hit and run. The primary victim’s vehicle, a gray/blue Ford Mustang, was riddled with bullets from a shooter witnesses claim was driving a white Ford Fusion. However, the primary victim was also a suspect in the same shooting event and a black Ford Focus in the same apartment complex was also riddled with bullets. In the police report, a witness is stated as having seen someone shoot multiple rounds from the Ford Mustang. After the incident occurred, the primary victim and owner of the Ford Mustang, (name redacted), gave the suspect vehicle to his friends and told them to drive to North Garland High School presumably to avoid police discovery. Police eventually found the suspect’s friends parked in the suspect vehicle at North Garland High School, searched the vehicle, and retrieved shell casings. Police also searched the primary victim/suspect’s apartment and found multiple shell casings, live rounds for many types of guns, and a bag of marijuana. They did not have enough evidence to arrest the suspect for the shootings, apparently. The suspect was ultimately arrested for an outstanding warrant with the Dallas Police Department. The information in the 911 calls,
the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and the Police/Incident reports was consistent. The contextual framework of the police/incident report was totally different. What sounded like a random shooting turned out to be a drug dispute between heavily armed individuals, one who went to great lengths to deceive police. The amount in dispute was $500. What I recognized from all three 911 documents — the 911 call audio/transcript, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report, and the Police/Incident report was that some of the 911 callers appeared to be responding to habitual shooting in the area. They attributed this 911 event to many possible causes — all apparently routine for that neighborhood. Also, in most other 911 calls I analyzed, the victims themselves call in to report a 911 event. In this 911 event, witnesses and bystanders called the 911 emergency response center while the victim attempted to avoid any police encounter.

911 caller deception and/or misinformation had no effect on final event outcomes because sufficient evidentiary information was obtained through the 911 caller and Call Taker rhetorical exchange. While all the relevant details were not necessarily expressed through the 911 emergency call conversation or documented in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report, responding police officers had enough evidentiary information to move forward with an investigation because 911 Call Takers provided a conceptual framework viable enough to facilitate the elicitation of more information. After reviewing 911 events that generated three documents — the 911 call, the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report, and the Police/Incident report, I did not identify any possible case of confirmation bias that resulted in the generation of a Police/Incident report and an arrest.

The question of communication and miscommunication in the context of the rhetorical exchange between the 911 caller and Call Taker is cleared up through the Call Taker’s consistent
application of the scientific method. Yes, there can be differences in perception, variations in philosophical perspective (as with the victim’s attitude in the physical abuse case), and simply misunderstandings due to accents, hearing challenges (primarily background noise), the rapid pace of the dialogue, and/or disorganized information. However, the Call Taker’s fielding of repeated elicitation and clarification questions throughout the 911 call was effective in verifying information, establishing consistency, and drawing out patterns of thinking and patterns of behavior. In other words, Call Takers worked to establish cognitive and empirical consensus. In our empirical epistemology, consensus provides a path to truth. On the other hand, those who reject empiricism for another epistemology might argue that the scientific method itself is highly biased. There are those who believe that the concept of consensus itself is biased in nature.

**CONCLUDING CONVERSATION WITH EXISTING 911 EMERGENCY RESPONSE SCHOLARSHIP:**

In the next section, I place my findings in conversation with Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis theory and 911 emergency response scholarship.

Fairclough (1995, 2003) contends that most institutional communication is non-dialogic in nature as he expands on Foucault’s (1970) belief that all institutional communication mediums are designed as instruments of power and control. In my research, I explored the question of whether 911 emergency response documents in the Garland, Texas Police Department were non-dialogic in nature. I would answer both yes and no. The Garland Police Department 911 Call Takers faithfully follow 911 emergency response protocols and procedures that are inherently non-dialogic. However, the process used to implement those protocols is dialogic in nature. In order to implement the process of 911 emergency response, the 911 Call Takers used non-dialogic questioning frameworks that facilitated dialogic exchange in the establishment of context, detailed description, identification of roles and motivations, communication of logistical information, and
verification of status through location questions, elicitation questions, process explanations, directives, clarification questions and statements, and status/disposition questions, among others.

I also recognized the non-dialogic nature of the 911 emergency response structure to the extent that “distinct segments” (being 911 Caller and Call Taker Strategies and rhetorical relationship/situation categories) of the process were definitive and functional (Zimmerman, 1984, p. 211). However, the distinct segments never functioned in isolation but worked collectively as dialogic tools to facilitate dialogue that would provide clarification and nuanced detail.

Imbens-Bailey and McCabe (2000) observe, “the level of elaboration” in a 911 emergency call narrative is significantly diminished in comparison to a narrative exchange in everyday life (Imbens-Bailey & McCabe, 2000, p. 279). However, the 911 emergency calls from the Garland, Texas data sample were indicative of a high level of elaboration in most cases and of an illumination of the complex and nuanced to the extent that 911 caller and 911 Call Taker interactions expanded far beyond the prescriptive.

The 911 emergency response protocol was prescriptive in that 911 Call Takers were obliged to ask certain questions in a sequence and the nature of further elicitation questions was contingent upon 911 caller responses to prior questions and directives. While most 911 callers complied with the 911 Call Takers requests to some extent, many became confused during the process, exhibiting little understanding of the dynamic of the ongoing moment, and forcing the call beyond the prescriptive. 911 callers also often expressed a sense of angst and urgency and seemed committed to offering the information they believed was relevant and would garner the most expedient police response even when 911 Call Takers prompted them to stop talking and wait for instructions. 911 callers struggled to obtain control of the situation while displaying a certain sense of citizen entitlement to services. This rhetorical sense of entitlement was most often ignored.
by 911 Call Takers. These Call Takers let the evidence determine the assignment of classification and priority codes that would ultimately inform worthiness of service. Emotional qualifiers were considered as non-starters or irrelevant.

911 caller entitlement, expressed through emotional qualifiers, could also suggest the implicit non-dialogic nature of the 911 emergency response process. Larson (2013), Drew & Walker (2010), Imbens-Bailey & McCabe (2000), Tracy (1997) Whalen & Zimmerman (1990), and Kent & Antaki (2019) articulate how 911 caller request formats, informed by tone, sentence structure, and rhetorical approach communicate either a high level of entitlement or a low level of entitlement and influence the 911 Call Taker’s reaction. In most cases, the Garland 911 Call Takers seemed uninfluenced by 911 callers rhetorical strategies and posturing attempts. They persistently fielded elicitation question in search of evidentiary information that would qualify their response. Few 911 Call Takers accepted anything at face value, and they dismissed emotionally charged rhetoric. The only notable exception was the (Disturbance/Weapon in Progress/Crazy Man with A Machete) call.

Raymond & Zimmerman (2016) claim that most 911 calls are “processed routinely” (Raymond & Zimmerman, 2016, p. 34). They testify to the “monofocal character of calls” and emphasize the brevity of these 911 calls (p. 35). Their descriptions implicitly portray a non-dialogic system. In my experience, 911 calls were not brief. Some calls lasted 15 minutes or more. Due to the 911 Call Takers persistent and repetitive process of questioning and verifying, these calls were often nuanced and complex in nature. The 911 emergency response process was also very fluid in nature as 911 Call Takers drew out more detail that often changed the entire context within seconds. During this fluid and evolving process, 911 Call Takers would constantly update police officers as they received more information. Thus, the process was never monofocal.
Raymond & Zimmerman (2016) also propose that successful 911 calls, in which police response is promised, are contingent upon an “alignment of identities” (p. 36). This “alignment of identities” occurs when both the 911 caller and Call Taker acknowledge something familiar and proper in the other. This acknowledgment of the familiar and proper, whether direct or implicit, informs the degree of entitlement held by the 911 caller that can be a bartering tool through which a social negotiation can be forged (Raymond, 2014, p. 33). I would argue that an “alignment of identities” is rare, and the notion of entitlement is elusive; however, what I have seen is an alignment of the narrative. The alignment of the narrative is what convinces 911 Call Takers to send police officers to the scene. 911 Call Takers verify this alignment in the narrative by asking the same questions over and over again at intermittent points in the 911 call in order to check for truthfulness, accuracy, and consistency. When there is some degree of all three, police are dispatched to the scene of the 911 event.

Fairclough (2003) contends that most social communication and particularly institutional communication is assumption based and designed to obfuscate difference and ambiguity. According to Fairclough, most common-sense assumptions are articulated within a society through non-dialogic language – language that is vague, symbolic, highly generalized, and ambiguous – only to be understood by those with privileged cultural knowledge (Fairclough, 2003, p. 46-47). While I did identify the currency of assumption-based statements in Garland 911 emergency response interactions, this currency was low and negligible in most cases. Fairclough contends that the institutions of government barter is assumption-based statements and non-dialogic language. I found that during the rhetorical interaction between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker, the 911 caller sometimes used assumption-based statements to negotiate police response. In most cases, 911 Call Takers engaged in an extended line of questioning before making any decisions. Of
course, the 911 Call Takers transferred information to the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports that included institutional codes and acronyms as non-dialogic language; however, description was often detailed enough that anyone reading the reports could obtain a general sense of the 911 event.

Wodak (1997) articulates institutional relationships as power struggles and argues that they are fixed in nature and thus inherently non-dialogic. She contends that members of the institution know what is expected by implication, insinuation, or abstraction, and yet the occasion for exposition is obfuscated by the institutional processes themselves. The 911 emergency response institution in Garland, Texas is somewhat different. Implicit relationships exist, but they appear to be negligible in most cases. Protocol overrides innuendo and any subtle rhetoric of entitlement. Also, the protocol itself, while non-dialogic only because of its structural nature, is designed to facilitate exposition that will draw out evidentiary information. In my research, ironically, I discovered that the 911 Call Taker strives for exposition. However, the impatient and scared 911 caller attempts to gain control of the situation by obfuscating the need for detail through the use of non-dialogic language. The 911 Call Taker attempts to gain control over the situation through the use of dialogic elicitation questions in order to obtain evidentiary detail. For the 911 caller, control is obtained when the Call Taker agrees to send the police to the scene of the 911 event. That is the power struggle.

Seawright (2017) contends that police report writing is highly non-dialogic and formulaic, with little exposition, thereby facilitating institutional efficiency. In my comparative analysis of three 911 emergency response documents, I found that the Police/Incident reports contained highly detailed descriptions of the related 911 events. Rather than sounding vague and formulaic, I felt that many of those police reports added more nuanced and context specific information that might
have been absent from the 911 emergency call conversation and the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports. The question of whether this level of accuracy and nuance had any currency in a court of law remains unexplored. The Police/Incident reports I was given access to were, in most cases, closed out and not under litigation. The other Police/Incident reports that were obtained as part of my second data set involved cases that were settled out of court.

**Convergence of the Data Sets**

The Call Taker strategy statements such as **Process Explanation, Directive/Instruction, Promise of Service** informed the elements and characteristics of the 911 caller and Call Taker exchange in the category of attitude and the rhetorical situation component category of level of responsiveness and improved the quality of 911 emergency communication through expressions of empathy, civility, persistence, responsiveness, and patience. The 911 caller strategy of **Process Explanation** (The 911 caller assumes the role of citizen watchdog and explains his or her actions or intended actions in monitoring a suspect, following a suspect, or intervening to subdue a suspect) informed citizen cooperation and improved 911 emergency response communication between the 911 caller and Call Taker. The 911 caller’s **Process Explanation** also informed the rhetorical situation component of implicit cultural understandings by revealing the non-dialogic assumed values of citizen watchdog and vigilante justice. The 911 caller’s strategy of **Affirming the Urgency of the Situation** informed the rhetorical situation component of Implicit Cultural Understandings as he often used **predictive/evaluative language and/or representational meaning** in the hopes of instigating police dispatch. The evaluative language often contained a moral judgment about the suspect, the crime, or the overall situation. The predictive language often communicated the potential for an escalation of the 911 event and/or the potential for death or serious harm. Overall, the rhetorical relationship element/characteristic
of attitude was qualified through the 911 caller and Call Taker strategies of promise of service, process explanation, directives, and acknowledgement statements implemented by both 911 caller and Call Taker that informed attitudes of politeness, empathy, responsiveness and understanding. The Call Taker’s use of the strategy of elicitation questions and the repetition of clarification questions informed the attitudes of patience, persistence, and understanding in the 911 emergency response process. The 911 caller’s attitudes of patience, listening, and understanding were informed by the use of description statements and acknowledgment statements. The mutual 911 caller and Call Taker strategies of descriptions statements and process explanation informed the attitude of cooperation and positively impacted the 911 emergency response process, in most cases.

Dialogic negotiation strategies such as Call Taker statements and questions helped expedite the 911 emergency information transfer process. Questions and statements were dialogic because they provided detail, invited exposition, accommodated difference, established context, and clarified information (Fairclough, 1995, 2003).

911 Call Takers used Elicitation questions and Clarification questions to solicit evidentiary information that would qualify the nature of the 911 event and expedite the 911 emergency response process. Elicitation questions do the following: identify, sort through, verify and evaluate existing evidentiary information, draw out more information, inform the need for police dispatch and qualify the assigned 911 event priority and classification codes. There are two types of elicitation questions: suspect description questions and status/disposition questions. The suspect description question example below helped the Call Taker draw out more information, helped the 911 caller organize her thought process, sort through information, and jog her memory.
Through the Call Taker’s repeated suspect/vehicle description question the 911 caller was able to remember that juveniles were driving the suspect vehicle and, ultimately, she remembers that her daughter’s ex-boyfriend drove a vehicle that fit the description of the suspect vehicle. Through the process, they were able to obtain the identification of a potential suspect. In the dialogue below, the 911 caller reports that male subjects in a vehicle drove by her home, stopped outside of her door, displayed a shotgun and chambered a round.

Call Taker: “Did they have any kind of rams that would be noticeable?” (Refers to the hydraulic suspension device on low rider and gang style vehicles)

Caller: “No. It was just younger kids who were driving.”

Call Taker: “And so, you all didn’t know him or anything? Did you see any kind of rams they had special on it or anything to identify it with?”

Caller: “No. No.”

Caller: “Yes. I am thinking now that it was probably my daughter’s boyfriend who she got into a fight with, and I now remember they have one like that.”

Call Taker: “Ok. So, you think it’s gonna be your daughter’s ex?

Caller: “Probably so. Yes. Yes. I remember seeing that ...that Suburban or whatever. He’s dropped her off a few times.”

The status/disposition question helped the Call Taker determine if the suspect was on the scene at that moment and holding a weapon and engaging in a criminal act while the 911 call was in progress. This information would inform the classification and priority code of the 911 call. In the example below, the Call Taker learns that the delinquents are not throwing rocks, bottles, and chairs at that moment and that the crime occurred at an earlier time:
Call Taker: “Did they have the beer bottles and the chair earlier this morning?”

Caller: “Ah, yeah, they do.”

Call Taker: “They still have it in their hand right now?”

Caller: “Oh. Not right now. I believe. Not right now.”

The dialogic clarification questions helped the Call Taker to identify suspects and witnesses, establish context, sort through information, determine/clarify the suspect’s disposition and determine/clarify the disposition of participating parties. In the example below, a mentally ill man is in a rage, walking down the street behind his father while holding a butcher knife and threatening his father and others. Witnesses are attempting to subdue him. The 911 Call Taker is attempting to clarify the suspect’s disposition and the role of witnesses and bystanders.

Caller: “He’s following his dad with a knife down the street. And he threatened my dad, and he threatened my brother too.”

Call Taker: “Alright. He’s following his own father. Is that right?

Caller: “His own father. Yes.”

This dialogue was followed by a series of elicitation and clarification questions designed to determine the roles of the 911 caller’s father and brother at the scene of the 911 event.

911 Call Taker’s dialogic Elicitation and Clarification Questions improved the quality of 911 information transfer. Elicitation Questions invite exposition and accommodates difference. In the following example the Call Taker invites exposition in efforts to obtain more detailed information about the white Dodge Charger that is believed to be the suspect vehicle.

Call Taker: “Ok. You’re sayin now there’s a white Charger and what’s happening with the white Charger?”
Information about the white Charger will help identify suspects, locate suspects, and possibly connect them to the crime. If the Call Taker is able to obtain a license plate number, she will be able to connect that number to the owner of the vehicle and his home address.

The following elicitation question accommodates difference. The Call Taker seeks distinctions that will qualify the nature and degree of the crime. She wants to know if the 911 caller actually saw the suspect holding a weapon, if the suspect actually fired the weapon, and if the caller can provide an approximate number of shots fired.

Call Taker: “Did you hear gunshots sir?”

Caller: “Yeah. We saw it.”

Call Taker: “Oh Ok. You heard how many shots?”

Caller: “Four or five. I saw them shoot the ground four- or five-times man like it pissed me off…. my kids sleep here… I just can’t say anything because every time someone calls the cops on these kids……”

The rhetorical situation components of Believability of the 911 Caller, Reliability of the Information, and Description of the 911 Event were informed by repeated dialogic elicitation and clarification questions that helped 911 Call Takers to determine and evaluate the following: degree of coherent speech, logical thought patterns, timely and relevant evidentiary information – suspect description, vehicle description, witnesses, victim, disposition of people on scene, weapons used and weapons descriptions and any other information qualifying the nature and degree of the crime, context, logistical proximity to 911 event and consistency.
Dialogic Call Taker Statements also helped expedite the 911 emergency response process. Call Takers statements such as the Process Explanation and Directive Instruction helped the Call Takers to manage the 911 call, ensure 911 caller safety, mitigate the situation, and enlist 911 caller cooperation. Through the Process Explanation and the Directive Instruction the Call Taker explains his/her job and the 911 caller’s job in order to manage the 911 call and/or enlist 911 caller cooperation. 911 Call Taker Explains his/her job through the **Process Explanation** and does this in one of several possible ways:

**Description of the process:** She informs the 911 caller of the procedures she needs to follow.

**Reasons for the process:** She explains why she is asking the questions she is asking and what information she needs from the 911 caller. She also explains the steps she is taking to mitigate danger and ensure victim/911 caller safety.

**Her role in working with the 911 caller:**

Call Taker: “Ok. I’m going to keep you on the line as long as you are able to see him ah, just so I can give my officers an updated location of where he’s at.”

Call Taker Explains the 911 caller’s job through the **Directive Instruction** and does this in one of several possible ways:

**Communicates the importance of 911 caller cooperation:** Call Taker: “Give us some information so nobody gets hurt there.”

**Advises of next steps that the 911 caller can take to ensure safety and/or mitigate the situation:**

Call Taker: “Please stay on the line with me until the police arrive.” “Please stay inside your home and do not confront the suspect.”
Thinking processes: Call Taker helps the 911 caller to sort through information and organize the 911 event narrative:

In the example below, a disoriented 911 caller reports a fight at a hotel room. The caller is inside the room. The suspect is outside the room banging on the door and threatening the caller. The suspect is accusing the caller of something that is unknown at this point.

Call Taker: “Forget about what you see.” “Tell me what she is saying.” In this 911 call, the Call Taker instructed the 911 caller to listen to the suspect’s accusations and repeat back to her. Through this process, the Call Taker learned that this 911 event was a possible drug dispute between two drug users.

The 911 caller non-dialogic strategies of Pleading for Service and Affirming the Urgency of the Situation impeded the 911 emergency response information transfer process. When using the Pleading for Service strategy, the 911 caller would express emotions – feelings of fear, sadness, anger, outrage, and/or disgust – sometimes directed at the criminal suspect and/or the crime itself. When using the Affirming the Urgency of the Situation strategy, the 911 caller would defer to cultural assumptions about drug use, suspicious behavior, and/or threatening/criminal behavior, attack the character of the suspect, emphasize the potential for escalation and/or state the possibility for injury or death. These strategies were articulated to make the 911 event appear more urgent than it was or more worthy of service than it was.

The 911 caller’s use of non-dialogic language in social negotiation diminished the quality of 911 information transfer. Non-Dialogic Language invoked cultural assumptions that obfuscated the need for exposition and context, failed to accommodate difference, and bypassed the need for evidentiary information.
911 callers would use Representational Meanings: Abstract ideas/words that indirectly represent other ideas about social practices that have culturally specific meaning. They also would defer to the Logic of Appearances -descriptions of the situation articulated through ubiquitous cultural knowledge. They would make Predictions -statements that foretell what the suspect will do in the future or ways in which a situation might escalate/culturally based speculative cause/effect statements. They would also make Evaluations -statements that convey the undesirable nature of a person, place, or thing/ attacking the character of the suspect (Fairclough, 1995, 2003).

The rhetorical situation component of Implicit Cultural Understandings was informed by non-dialogic language strategies. 911 Callers used non-dialogic strategies in the following examples to Affirm the Urgency of the Situation: The example below is from a 911 call in which the 911 caller reports gang members pointing guns as other gang members and shooting guns at the ground.

**Representational Meaning: Abstract Ideas About a Social Practice** -- Could compel the 911 Call Taker to make assumptions about the types of negative activities occurring at the neighbor’s residence.

Caller: “but, they constantly have traffic next door like in an out all the time.” (The word traffic implies sustained felony criminal activity - drug trade or sex trade activity.)

**Predictive Statement: States the possibility for injury or death** – Could cause the Call Taker to believe that the situation is more urgent than it really is. In the example below, the 911 caller is implying that his children could have been injured or killed by stray gunshots. This information is provided in conjunction with information about the logistical proximity of the townhomes to each other.
Caller: “Yeah. We good. I don’t know who they was shootin at but I got a house full of kids. They could have shot through my house.”

In the example below, a mentally ill man is walking down the street while in a bipolar induced rage. He is still holding a butcher knife in his hand. His girlfriend is holding his hand. The 911 caller believes the situation could escalate.

Caller: “Now his girlfriend is holding his hand, but he has the knife in his hand. He has hit her before, so I’m scared he’ll do something to her.” (Culturally based cause/effect prediction – past behaviors a sign of future behaviors.)

In the examples below, the 911 callers use evaluative language to emphasize the Worthiness of Service of the 911 call.

**Evaluative Statement:** These statements could make the Call Taker think that the 911 event is more worthy of police intervention than it actually is. These excerpts are from the one of the 911 calls in which the 911 caller reports gang members shooting guns at the ground.

Caller: “you can all roll up on them looking like they always do.” (This statement indicates habitual practice and that they deserve to be apprehended and punished by the police and their physical appearance is a symbol of their criminal behavior.)

Caller to third party: “Dang. They’re not supposed to have pot. They’re not supposed to be here. (Undesirable nature)And after like I talked to the maintenance guy everybody yells, you know, after all the commotion’s stopped “they’re not supposed to be here.” They’re not supposed to be on the property. (Undesirable nature) They’ve been in and out of jail, bothering people.” (Attacks character)
Non-Dialogic language strategies informed one possible case of confirmation bias. A 911 call was classified as a Disturbance/Weapon in Progress, priority code 1: immediate threat to life. The call was a false alarm. No police report was filed, and no arrests were made. The following is a breakdown of the Implicit Cultural Understandings that may have been mutually understood appreciated between the 911 caller and Call Taker.

**Representational Meaning: Abstract idea about a social practice.**

Caller: “has a machete. He looks like he’s high.”

A man, presumed to be homeless and holding a machete, is wandering aimlessly and on drugs. Drug use, violence, and poverty are factors that work together as a triple threat.

**Logic of Appearances: Cultural assumptions about suspicious behaviors.**

Caller: “ like he was chasing somebody” -Chasing somebody: Bad intentions

“walking like swinging it with his leg.” - Plans to use the machete.

“there was a black lady who looked like she was homeless” -Vulnerable person present.

“looked like he was looking for her…he looked left and right and tried to chase her around the building,”…. “He keeps looking over his shoulder – left and right and back. He’s kind of walking fast.” – Volatility of the unexplained.

How might implicit cultural understandings between the 911 caller and Call Taker inform ideas about threat levels? Why did the Call Taker assign a priority code of 1? What does this mean for responding police officers? When a police officer receives a priority code of 1 – immediate threat to life – he is preparing to draw his gun and save someone’s life. In this case, the police officers were prudent. They did not find a machete and it was noted in the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report that the suspect and the potential victim knew each other and there was no altercation.
OVERALL SUMMARY OF DATA ANALYSIS

Through my initial and focused coding processes, I identified the 911 Caller and Call Taker strategies that either enhanced or thwarted the 911 emergency response information transfer process. The strategies that facilitated the efficient transfer of 911 emergency response information were the Call Taker strategies that belong to the category of questions – elicitation questions and clarification questions. Through these strategies, Call Takers solicited evidentiary information that would expedite the 911 emergency response process. 911 Call Takers strived for accuracy and consistency by fielding elicitation questions to identify, sort through, verify and evaluate evidentiary information. Elicitation questions and the answers retrieved helped inform the need for police dispatch. Call Takers repeated clarification questions intermittently throughout 911 calls in order to verify information and check for accuracy and consistency. The Call Taker strategies that belong to the classification of statements also helped expedite the 911 emergency response process. Through Process Explanation statements the Call Taker explained why he is asking the questions and explains what he needs to know about the situation. Through the Directive/Instruction the Call Taker advised the 911 caller of next steps to ensure safety while waiting for police to arrive. Through these statements, the 911 Call Taker improved communication by enhancing the 911 caller’s understanding of the situation and reassuring the 911 caller that his 911 narrative is being considered as valid. The 911 Call Taker also used these strategies to enlist citizen cooperation. The strategies that sometimes thwarted the 911 emergency response information transfer process were the 911 caller strategies of Pleading for Service and Affirming the Urgency of the Situation. Sometimes, the 911 caller would thwart the communication process by ignoring the 911 Call Taker’s questions by pleading for service and/or affirming the urgency of the situation with emotionally charged language and/or editorializing.
When applying the strategy of Pleading for Service, a 911 caller would use emotionally charged language through which he expressed his anxiousness, fear, or sadness. When using the strategy of Affirming the Urgency of the Situation would provide specific evidentiary information that would qualify the 911 event as a real emergency. When unable to provide specific evidentiary information, he or she would defer to common-sense assumptions in the hopes of obtaining Call Taker acknowledgment. He or she might also offer moral commentary or value judgment statements about the suspect, the crime that had been committed, or predictions about a potential escalation and the possibility for injury or death. Citizen cooperation was obtained through the mutual 911 caller and Call Taker strategies of Description Statements and Questions and Process Explanation Statements. In 911 Call and Call Taker Description Statements, the 911 caller would provide description statements to obtain police response. The 911 Call Taker would repeat the 911 caller’s description for verification purposes and appropriate the information as a segue for elicitation questions in order to sort and verify evidentiary information and/or draw out hidden information. Through the Process Explanation Statements, the 911 caller would convey information about his or her actions when monitoring a suspect or situation and assuming the role of citizen watchdog.

Through my provisional coding and componential analysis, I learned that the believability of the caller and the reliability of the information were the most consequential rhetorical situation categories that were informed by an objective process of 911 Call Taker elicitation questions. The most important behavioral qualities between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker were empathy and civility, persistence, responsiveness, and patience. The successful 911 Call Takers were persistent in their line of questioning when addressing the 911 callers with civility and empathy. Civility might be defined as listening when someone is speaking, acknowledging what is said, and
acknowledging the value of the information given and the value of the individual on the other end of the phone through vocal tone, language used, and overall demeanor. Empathy might be defined as a certain level of vicariously understanding a situation. Empathy became evident when a 911 Call Taker provided an advisory in which he counseled the 911 caller regarding how to handle the situation and/or explained his process and the reasoning behind his process when 911 callers became confused. Empathy also became evident with recognition of the validity of the 911 caller’s narrative through a 911 Call Taker’s process of listening, understanding, and verbal acknowledgement which all ultimately led to a promise of service.

Empathy became evident more critically when a 911 Call Taker gave the 911 caller a directive designed to ensure his or her safety and/or inform him or her of police officer dispositions. Directives that informed 911 callers of police officer dispositions provided a certain level of comfort and reassurance, whether real or imagined.

Patience was perhaps the most important characteristic in 911 emergency response encounters. 911 Call Takers were often obliged to negotiate with 911 callers who were nervous, confused, impatient, and uncooperative. Frustration levels on both sides were high. The potential for confusion and panic was great. Call Takers survived these encounters by exhibiting extreme patience while persistently asking the same questions over and over again in an authoritative and yet empathetic manner. This patience also became evident when 911 Call Takers, who were under great pressure themselves, proceeded to coach the 911 callers and provide directives designed to mitigate the emotional reactions and calm fears.

Through the componential analysis process, I examine the agency of dialogic and non-dialogic language in the rhetorical situation components. Non-Dialogic language most significantly informed the rhetorical situation category of Implicit Cultural Understandings. The
most prevalent types of non-dialogic language were predictions and evaluations, representational meanings, and assumed values. Assumed values had the most agency in the 911 emergency response process in the implicit roles of citizen watchdog and vigilante justice – both of which were automatically accepted by Call Takers and never questioned. Dialogic language had the most agency in the rhetorical situation component of Description of the 911 Event. The Call Taker used dialogic elicitation questions for the purpose of gathering evidentiary information. The Call Taker sought context, time frame, status/disposition, victim, suspect, and witness information, and variations in expected dynamics and nuanced distinctions about the crime that had occurred or was in progress. Both the 911 caller and Call Taker used the dialogic narrative description. The 911 Caller would provide a narrative description of the 911 event. The 911 Call Taker would repeat the narrative description and field elicitation questions in order to verify, sort, and qualify evidentiary information.

Dialogic and non-dialogic language often had a combined agency in the strategies of the 911 caller. Sometimes the 911 caller would provide a dialogic, narrative description that includes contextual information – the history of the issue, patterns of behavior, suspect description, suspect location, time sequence of the 911 event, information qualifying the nature and degree of the crime. Other times, the 911 caller would offer value judgement statements about the morality of the situation and/or the morality of the suspect, and/or invoke the currency of non-dialogic assumed values and representational meanings when providing a narrative of the 911 event.

After having completed my in-depth study of all three sections of the data set, I concluded that the Call Taker uses the western narrative form to manage the 911 call. The Call Taker also guides the 911 caller in the use of this narrative form by helping the 911 caller to identify a clear beginning, middle, and end to the 911 event story, by affirming the cultural and social norms of
society in the qualification of the 911 story as a justified or unjustified complaint and by helping the 911 caller sort out evidentiary information and organize the 911 call narrative in a logical way. Most importantly the Call Taker qualifies the Protagonist/Antagonist model by helping the 911 caller identify and describe the respective roles of victim, suspect, and witness. Finally, the Call Taker seeks a resolution that is required of the western narrative form by dispatching police to the scene of the 911 event.

After evaluating all three 911 emergency response documents with a particular focus on the Police/Incident reports, I concluded that the logical, linear structure and the protagonist/antagonist model of the narrative form evident in the initial 911 call sometimes breaks down at the scene of the 911 event. After reviewing the Police/Incident reports, I found that the roles of victim and perpetrator were not always clearly defined, and in some cases, there was a bleed between these two roles. Situations were nuanced and ambiguities abounded. Also, in spite of the efforts of 911 Call Takers, motives sometimes remained hidden and/or later were determined to be something other than what was immediately apparent. Sometimes 911 callers were deceptive or not completely forthcoming. Furthermore, situations were often found to be highly fluid and evolving. In some cases, initial eyewitnesses failed to corroborate earlier statements in the Police/Incident reports, thereby thwarting any potential prosecution. Call Takers expedited the 911 emergency information transfer process through elicitation and clarification questions. Call Takers managed the 911 call and enlisted citizen cooperation through the process explanation and directive instruction. 911 Callers used non-dialogic language in the rhetorical situation component of Implicit Cultural Understandings shared with the Call Taker in attempts to expedite police dispatch. Non-dialogic language was ineffective in most cases. In the next section, I qualify the research questions that were interrogated in the data sample through my methodology.
DATA ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

1. There was an overall consistency in information transfer between 911 calls, Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Reports, and Police/Incident Reports.

2. The rhetorical relationship between the 911 caller and 911 Call Taker facilitated the effective and efficient transfer of information in all but one case.

3. Non-DIALOGIC Language had no significant influence on information transfer and miscommunication events in all but one case.

4. Call Takers managed the 911 call and provided barriers to the currency of non-dialogic language through elicitation questions and clarification questions.

5. Discrepancies were negligible - Information was sometimes incomplete – missing information was not critical.

6. Crime was accurately reported in every 911 event except one.

7. Context and motivations sometimes were unknown in the 911 call and the Computer Aided Dispatch Event Chronology Report but became clear in the Police/Incident report.

8. The Call Taker’s use of dialogic language was effective in qualifying a justified or unjustified complaint but did not always prepare the police officers for 911 event on scene ambiguity.

An understanding of the rhetorical relationship between 911 caller and Call Taker can help solve problems associated with the following: Clarifying context, managing ambiguous situations, identifying and qualifying nuanced distinctions, organizing complexities, and evaluating threat levels. To that aim, I believe that 911 Call Takers could benefit from programs that would provide more knowledge of the community they serve and the cultural and socioeconomic context of the people who seek police intervention. Currently, 911 Call Takers are trained through work in
simulated 911 calls. They are provided with various high stress and ambiguous scenarios and instructed on how to apply problem-solving strategies. 911 Call Takers must also complete several certificate courses starting with the basic Telecommunicator Certification course and ending with the Master Telecommunicator Certification course (Rocha, 2021). I have not been able to obtain any documentation that specifically identifies, names, and defines 911 Call Taker strategies. A focus on specific 911 Call Taker strategies that have been named and defined through this study might be useful for training purposes. Also, the identification, naming, and defining of 911 caller strategies completed through this study might be useful for educating 911 Call Takers about the sentiments and needs of the community they serve.

In most cases, Garland, Texas, 911 Call Takers go to extreme lengths to verify what they are hearing in faithful allegiance to the 911 emergency response protocols and the practice of eliciting more information. Some 911 Call Takers are better at eliciting information than others. Some 911 Call Takers are more patient and understanding than others. Some 911 Call Takers are more perceptive than others. However, I believe there is a basic level of efficiency and a general consistency in the process of 911 emergency response in Garland, Texas, based on upon the findings in my limited study.
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In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Discourse Analysis*. Sage.


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Appendix A: Garland, Texas Crime Statistics

August 2020 Crime Watch Report (PDF)

December 2019 Uniform Crime Report (PDF)
Appendix B: 911 Event Classification Codes, Status Codes, and Event Notes:

Event Notes
Terminology.pdf

Event Type List -
DIST, SHO, STA (3).pdf

Status Codes.pdf
Appendix C: Data Sample Documents

911 Audio CD
Call Taker: Garland 911. What’s the address of your emergency?
Dallas 911: Garland, this is Dallas. They’re giving 1933 Northwest Highway in Garland.
Call Taker: Ok. And what’s goin on there.
Dallas 911: Go ahead, sir. Talk to Garland.
Caller: Ah yes. This is ah... I’m at 1933 Northwest Highway, Garland at Ebony’s Pub and Grub. A man has been stabbed in the shoulder and I’m calling 911 for him.
Call Taker: Ok. Can you hear me?
Caller: Yes sir.
Call Taker: You say he was stabbed in the shoulder. Do you know who stabbed him?
Caller: I do not know. Ah, I’m just a bystander calling 911 for him because he asked me to.
Call Taker: Ok. So where is he. Is he inside the Ebenezer’s right now?
Caller: No, he’s outside in the front parking lot.
Call Taker: Like next to the vehicle or right in front of the location?
Caller: Right in front of Ebenezer’s.
Call Taker: Ok. Did you... did you, ah... Could you ask him if he has someone... Do they know who’s the one that stabbed him?
Caller: I didn’t ask him, no. (Turns and asks the victim) Do you know who stabbed you sir?
(Victim in background) Ah, no. I just need them to hurry up and get here.
Caller: He just says they need to hurry up and get here.
Call Taker: Ok. They’re on the way.
Call Taker: The person that stabbed... Is he white, black, or Hispanic?
Caller: I can’t understand you. What are you saying?
Call Taker: The person that was stabbed... Is he white, black or Hispanic?
Caller: He is black.
Call Taker: Do you know what color shirt he has on?
Caller: Ah yes. He does not have a shirt on. He has a shirt over his shoulder to cover his stab wound. It’s a white shirt to cover his shoulder the stab wound – his left shoulder.
Call Taker: Ok. Do you know if anybody there saw the person that stabbed him or anything or if anybody saw the incident at all?
Caller to victim: Do you know if anybody saw it or anything?
Caller: He says no.
Call Taker: Is it just you all two out there?
Caller: Ah, ah, well yeah. Just us...and uh, us two ah, well, people are walking... people are coming in and out of the bar... it’s just mostly us two.
Caller: Well, he’s got another man helping him put pressure on the wound so it’s three of us.
Call Taker: So, did the person just blind side him, stab him, and left, or?
Caller: I have no idea. I don’t know. The person who did this is obviously not here.
Call Taker: What’s the phone number you are calling me from?
Caller: Redacted.
Call Taker: Can you ask... The guy that’s there on the floor... Can you ask him how old he is?
Caller: Do what now?
Call Taker: Can you ask him how old he is?
Caller to victim: sir, they wanna know how old you are.
Caller: Ah, 29.
Call Taker: Ok. Give me just a moment. They are on there way over there, ok.
Call Taker: Ok. I’m just trying to get information for them.
Caller: Thank you.
Call Taker: Ok. And is he clear and alert, correct?
Caller: Yeah, what now?
Call Taker: He’s completely alert?
Caller: Yes, he’s up and walking and breathing and talking. Yeah, he’s completely alert. Yeah.
Call Taker: Ok. It’s a shoulder. (Talking to himself)
Call Taker: Is there more than one wound?
Caller: I don’t think so, ah ah. As far as I can tell, it’s only one wound. It appears to be only one wound.
He’s got a shirt over it.
Call Taker: Ok. Ok.
Incident Sheet

Title: PUBLIC Narrative Type: PUBLIC NARRATIVE Entered On: 02/09/2020 11:27

Narrative:

A 2010 Red Ford F-150, registered to Nata Pinto, was seen at the 830 Rockledge address. When investigating further, Officers were able to determine the identity of the man who answered the door. Officers believe him to be Carvento.

The 2006 Silver GMC Sierra 1500 truck parked in front of the house was registered to Alfonso Martinez, at 1353 Walnut St, Garland.

Upon further investigation Officers were able to positively locate the identity of the suspect. An Alfonso Martinez, could be found in the WEBMIS records, with a photo matching the suspect. Upon recovering Martinez’s .45 caliber handgun, Officer Kuenzle asked the victim if they were in any trouble and told him to get their males arrested. Officer Kuenzle asked the victim if they were in any trouble and told him to get their males arrested.

Interviews were conducted on Officer’s BWC.

Narrative:

On July 24, 2010 Detective spoke with victims and witnesses in reference to the incident. Both stated that they couldn’t identify the suspect if seen again. Detective contacted the registered owner and was told that he has no longer been identified to the address. After speaking with the father, he said that his vehicle was still parked at the residence. Detective believes that the suspect resides at the residence and has not registered the vehicle in his name.
Appendix D: Methodology Charts

Methodology Chart 1.docx

Methodology Chart 2 1.docx
Vita

Originally from Alexandria, Virginia, I came to El Paso as a U.S. Army recruit in May of 1983. I was trained as an aircraft armament specialist but worked as a helicopter mechanic during my tour of duty, having been assigned to a combat support unit. Fort Bliss was my only duty station and I stayed after the end of my tour of duty in 1986. I met my husband, also a veteran and El Paso native and we have been married for 36 years with two daughters, ages 34 and 25, who are middle school music teachers. For the past 8 years, I have been working as an adjunct instructor of English at Park University, Fort Bliss and El Paso Campus Centers teaching First Year Composition and Business English. I completed my graduate and undergraduate education later in life as a returning student. I earned my master’s degree in English and American Literature in 2010 from the University of Texas at El Paso. In January of 2018, I decided to go back to school again and pursue a doctorate after my youngest daughter graduated from college with her bachelor’s degree and found full time employment as a teacher. In my capacity as an adjunct instructor at Park University, Fort Bliss Campus Center, I have conducted the student preparation sessions for the Writing Competency Exam and proctored exams for online courses. I also hold instructional certifications for the Pirate Patch instructional format and the Canvas Classroom Instructional format. I recently published a book in Amazon Kindle entitled College Freshman English Survival Guide. This book includes over 200 pages of course materials that I have created and tested over the duration of my teaching here at Park University. I currently have three scholarly articles under review with the College Communication and Composition and Rhetoric Review journals respectively: “The Language of Manifest Destiny in the Declaration of Independence”, “Saint Augustine’s Ontology of Conscience and Modern Legal Reasoning,” and “Freire and the Pedagogy of Humility.”