

FRAMING / UNFRAMING SPACES IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

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Strategic positioning within the normative institutional environment of Westminster



1 . Breaking the rules as a strategy

◆ Game theory (F.G Bailey, 1969) includes:

➡ **Normative rules** : formal, official rules of the game

➡ **Pragmatic rules** : informal rules, tactics and manoeuvre

Exemple of strategies to escape sanctions:

unmitigated : Cameron to Ed Balls : **muttering idiot**, 05/23/2021

mitigated : David Cameron (to Ed Miliband) : The issue for the right hon. Gentleman is why he is in favour in opposition of things he never did in government. Some might call it opposition ; some people might call it **hypocrisy**, 01/02/12

HOWEVER insults are **deliberate and rewarded** (Sandra Harris, 2001)

↳ Gain: greater **VISIBILITY AND PUBLICITY**

2 . Behaviour constrained by social norms

- ◆ Attacks as instances of rule-breaking :
 - ⇒ tolerated (S. Pérez de Ayala, 2001)
 - ⇒ the appropriate action = impoliteness is the **norm** in specific contexts and situations (J. Culpeper, 2008)
- ◆ The House of Commons = a **community of practice** (S. Harris 2001)
 - ↳ breaking the rules has become an **act of conformity**

3. Reaching out to voters

- ◆ Escalation of violence is possible (Culpeper, 2008) but checked by public opinion
 - ↳ **the public** is the true umpire of the game

Ex: Cameron in 2011 to Angela Eagle (Lab) : *Calm down dear!*

The game has therefore extended beyond the House of Commons = **supra-frame**

↳ As a result leaders address the voters more directly = **inside-out communication**

How? Creating a more intimate/direct communication with the audience through the emotional force of the attacks, insults and soundbites.

4. Between rebellion and status quo

- ◆ Informal rules constitute a **sub-system** embedded within the larger frame of normative rules
 - ↳ have become the norm
- ◆ Aggressive adversarialism has become the **moral order** of PMQs (P. Bull & M. Waddle, 2019)
 - ↳ As a consequence breaching informal rules (the norms) is tantamount to an **act of rebellion**

Ex: Jeremy Corbyn's crowdsourced questions during PMQs

BUT not an act of rebellion but of conformity

5. No intention of destroying the game

- ◆ In spite of calls for reforms : Procedure Committee's 1995 report / political figures like Cameron (in 2005, Ed Miliband (in 2014), Labour MP Paul Flynn (in 2015).

Everyone is intent on keeping the structure of the game intact

↳ Reference to P. Bourdieu: *Collusion originaire*

↳ More conservative than disruptive attitude

The difference between parties remains on the surface (R. Rose, 1984)

Need to create differences to the form of the speech = for more visibility

➡ one strategy = getting suspended from the House

👉 Rule breaking provides indications of the leaders' attitude towards the institution

The case of Ian Blackford

❖ Leader of the **Scottish National Party** (SNP) in the House of Commons since 2017

Only leader to get expelled from the House + extensive use of FTAs (ex: *Are you a liar, Prime Minister?* 04/28/21; *The PM and his friends, a parcel of rogues*, 09/09/20)

↳ Ian Blackford is the epitome of **the rule-breaker**

Uses strategy of rule breaking to put specific message across

➡ rejection of the Westminster system (10/30/19; 01/22/20; 11/18/20; 04/14/21; 02/24/21)

➡ promotion of Scottish independence (03/20/19; 07/03/19; 10/30/19; 02/05/20; 01/05/20; 12/16/20; 11/18/20)

👉 His attitude signals a will to leave the game, to get out of the system