



# From Oral Hearing to Opinion in The U.S. Supreme Court

Latifa Al-Abdulkarim, Katie Atkinson, Trevor Bench-Capon

Department of Computer Science, University of Liverpool

The 26th International Conference on Legal Knowledge and Information Systems

11-13 December 2013, Bologna-Italy



# Overview

- Introduction.
- Supreme Court Process
  - Oral Hearings Dialogues
- Reasoning Model.
- Oral Hearing Dialogues
  - Speech Acts.
  - Argument Components Tree.
- Case Study: California v. Carney
  - Oral Hearing ACTs.
  - Opinion Analysis.
- Conclusion and Future work.

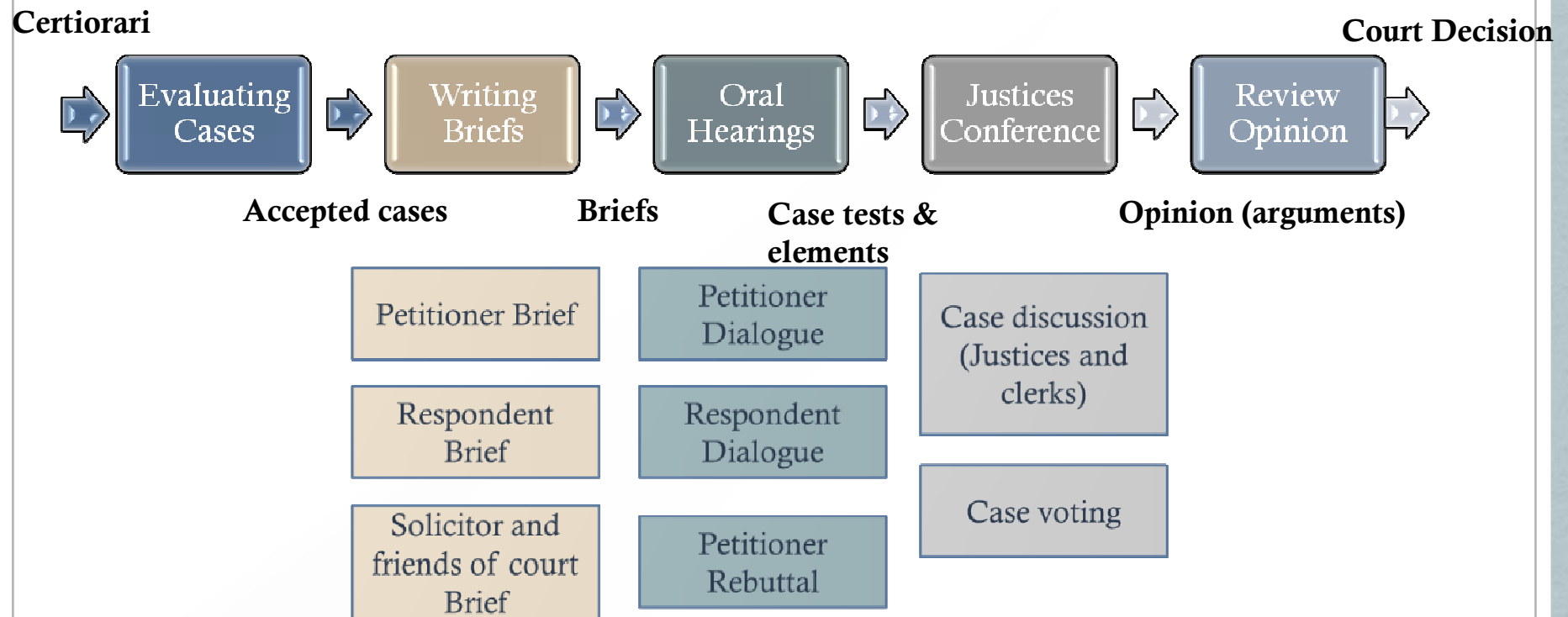
# Introduction

This work..

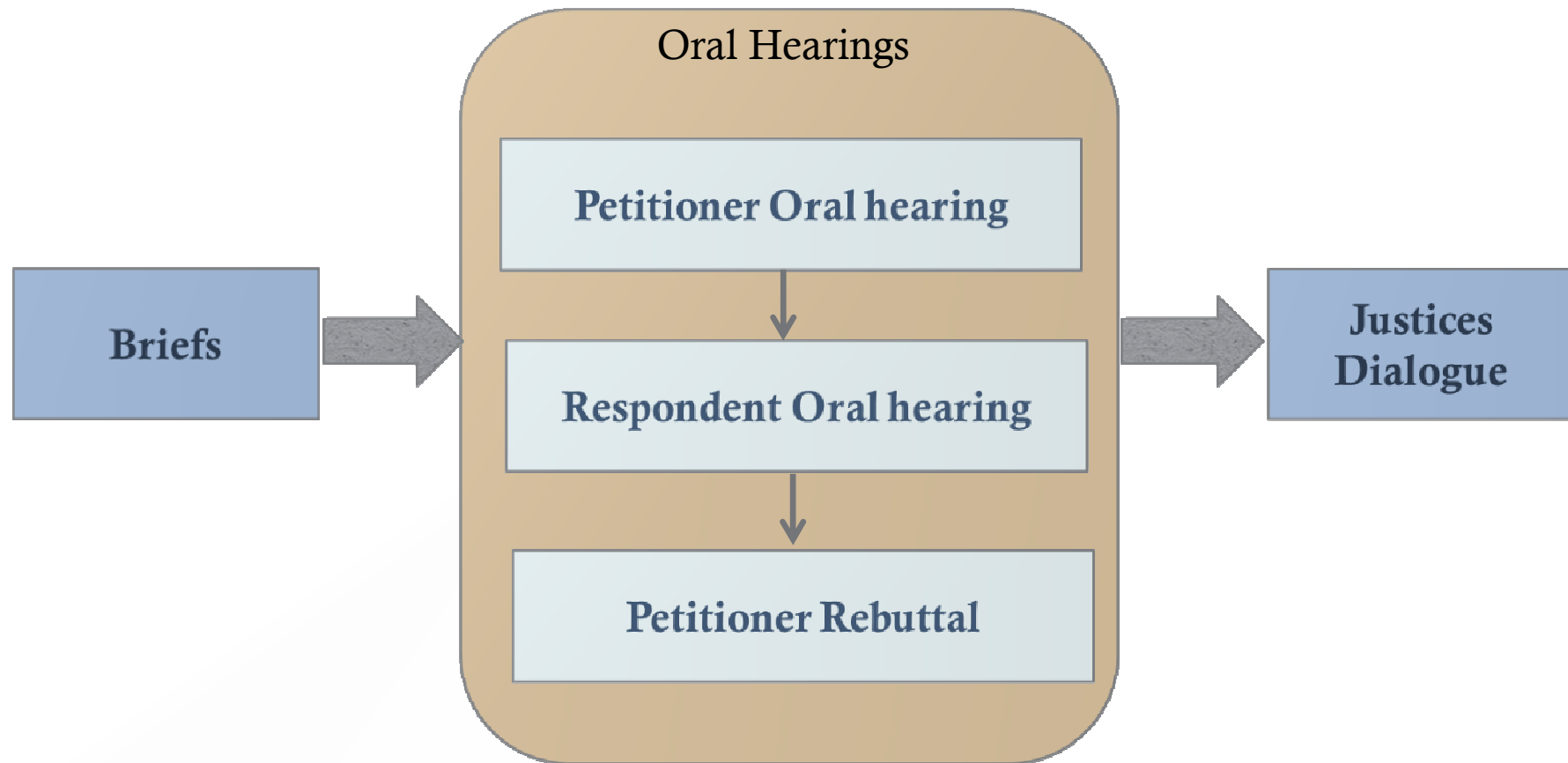
Provide a structured analysis of US Supreme Court Oral Hearings to enable identification of the argument components that is used to resolve the case by constructing the opinion argument.

- Investigate the *legal dialogues* of the oral hearing.
- Define the *reasoning model* as a series of argument components.
- Present a set of *speech acts* to assert the arguments components.
- Produce a *tree of arguments components (ACT)* from which arguments about the case can be constructed.
- Illustrate this analysis by relating the majority and minority opinion of *California v Carney (1985)*.

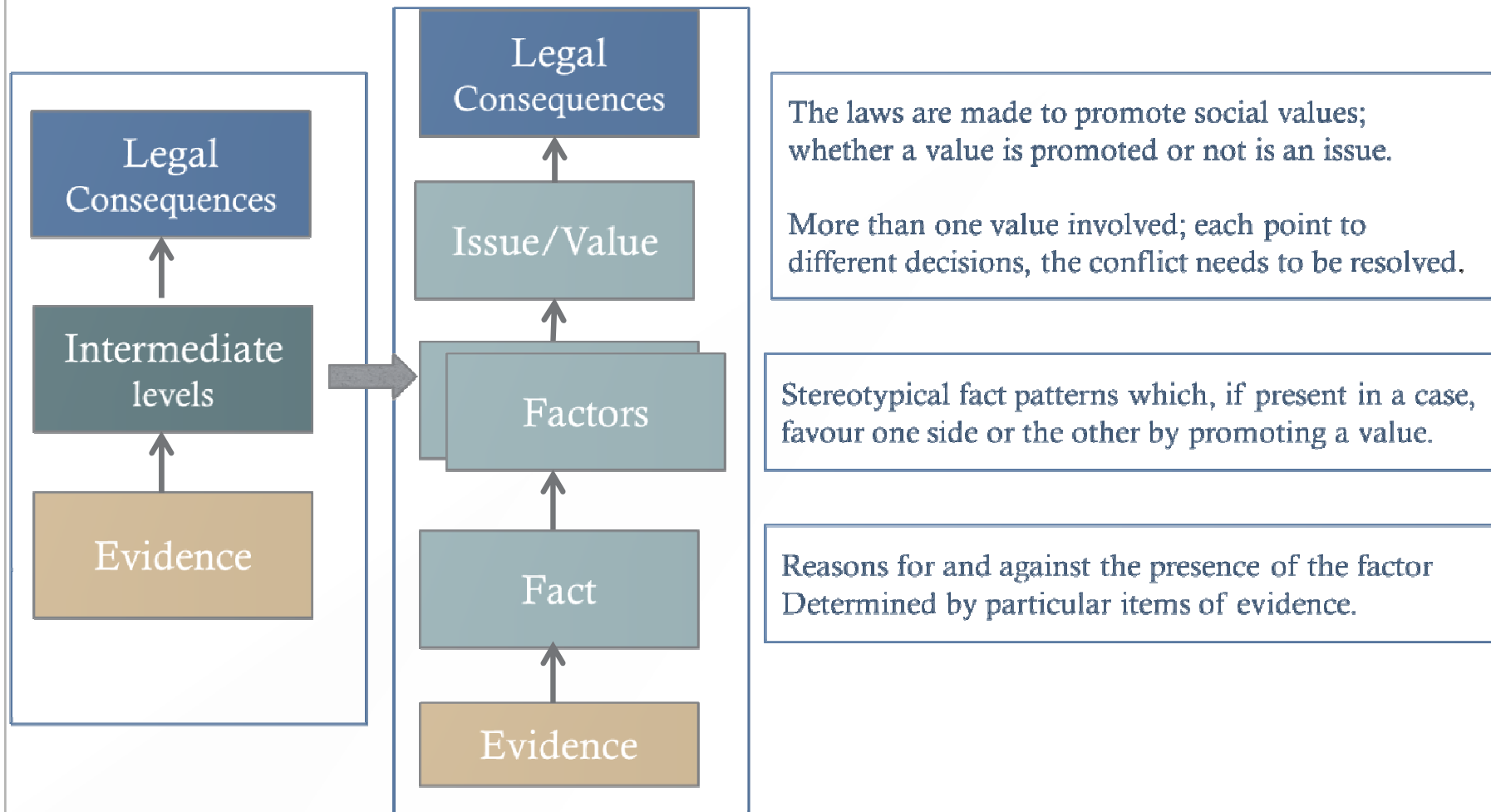
# U.S. Supreme Court Process



# Oral Hearings Dialogues



# Reasoning Models



# Oral Hearing Speech Acts

To construct the opinion argument from trees of components, we defined the following assertions on each dialogue in the oral hearing.

Values Assertions

Issues Assertions

Issues Linkage Assertions

*Assert Value (Value1)*

*Assert Issue (Sufficient Issue1, promote Value1)*

*Combine Issues ( Issue1, and/or/+, Issue 2)*

Factors to Issue Assertions

Factor Linkage Assertions

*Assert Factor (Factor1, promote Issue1)*

*Combine Factors (Factor1, and/or, Factor 2)*

Fact to Factors Assertions

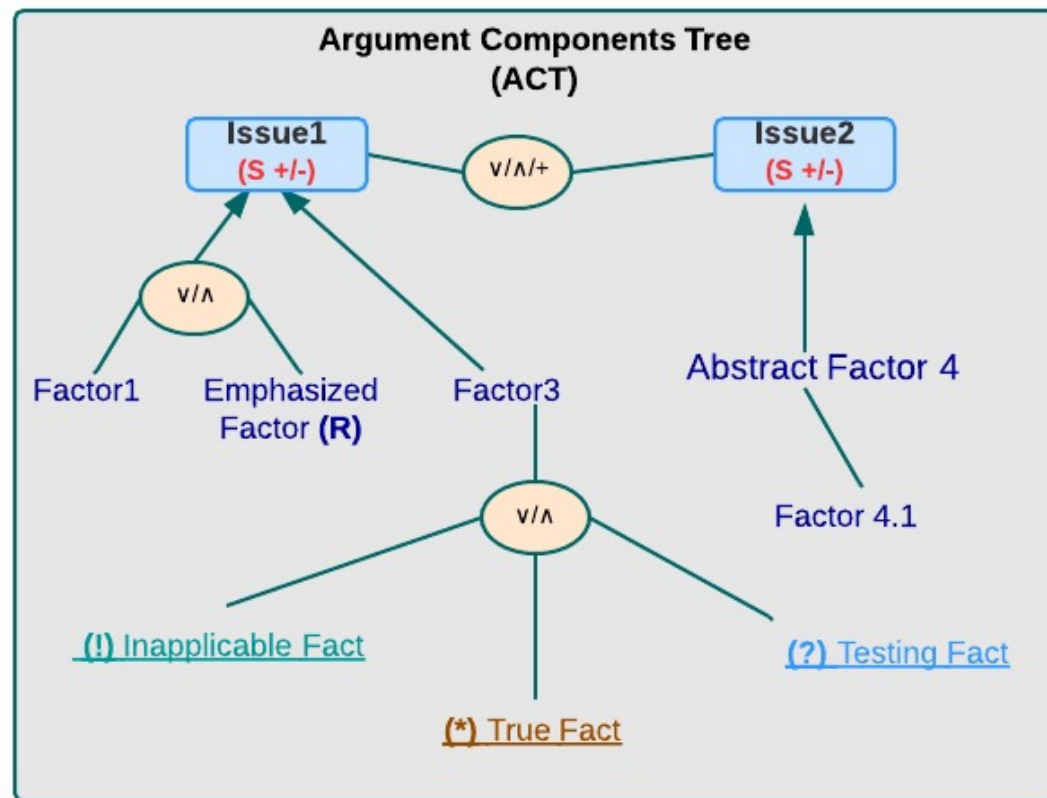
Fact Linkage Assertions

*Assert (Fact1, promote Factor 5)*

*Combine Facts(Fact1, and/or, Fact2)*

# Argument Components Tree (ACT)

For each dialogue in the oral hearing we form one ACT for the counsel and one for the Justices.





# Case Study: California v. Carney

- This case is concerned with whether the exception for automobiles to the protection against unreasonable search provided by the **Fourth Amendment** applies to mobile homes (*motor homes in which the living area is an integral part of the vehicle*).

*The Fourth Amendment protects the “right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures.”*

- California v Carney has often been used in AI and Law to explore Supreme Court oral argument, and to consider the interaction of two competing values:

- *Enforceability of the law (Exigency)*
- *Citizens' rights (Privacy)*

# Case Study: California v. Carney

## Case Facts<sup>1</sup>:

Carney was distributing marijuana from inside a *motor home* parked in a *public parking* lot in the *downtown of San Diego* for *unknown period of time*. Drug agent officers entering the motor home, *without first obtaining a warrant*, and arresting Carney after observing marijuana.

This motor home was an *integral vehicle* with wheels, engine, back portion and registered as a house car which requires a special driving license.

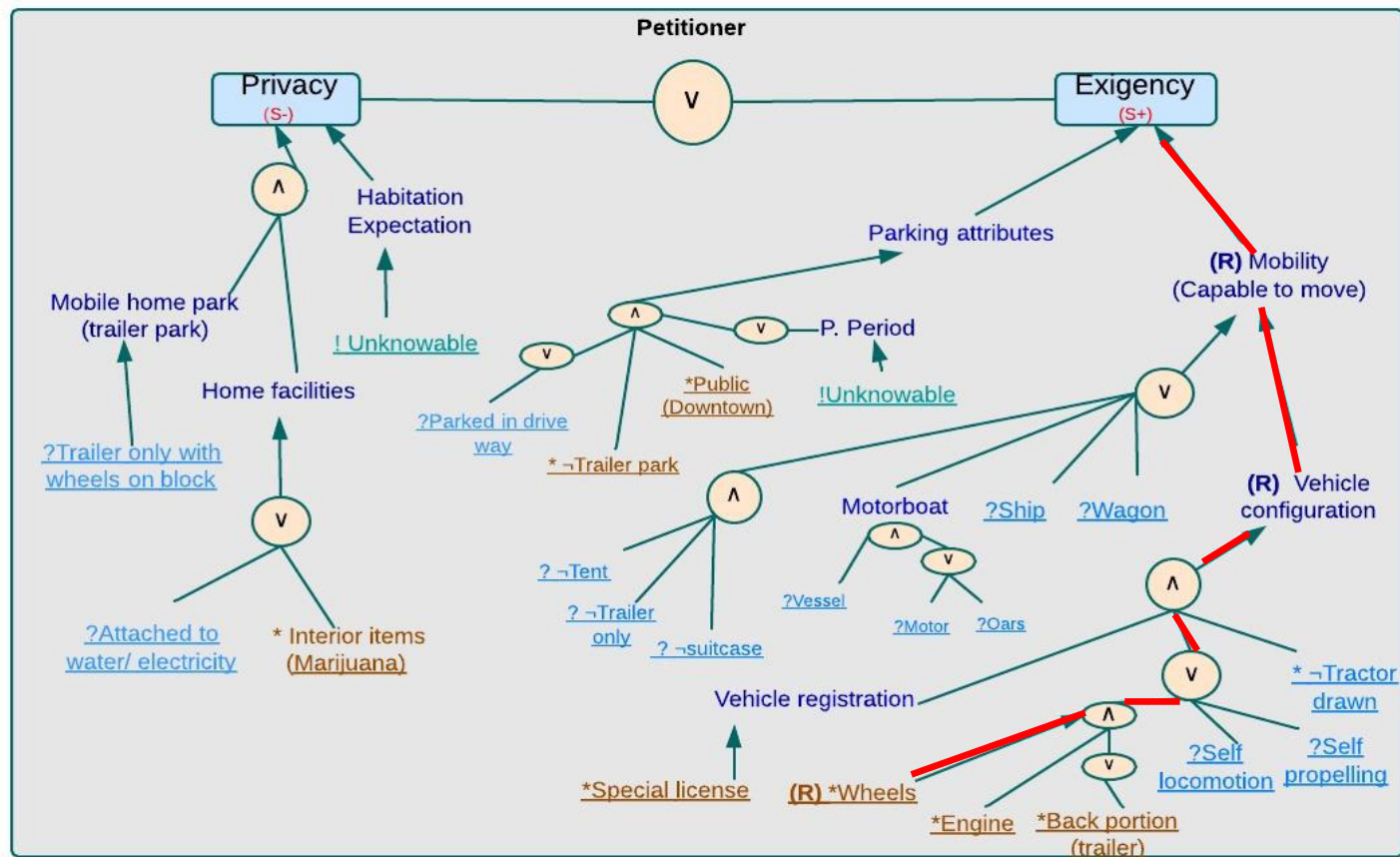
On the other hand, it has some *interior home attributes* such as refrigerator, cupboard, table, bag and curtains covering all the windows.

*The question was whether warrantless search was permissible in this under the exception to the fourth amendment for automobiles.*

<sup>1</sup> The full transcript of the Oral Hearing is available at [holmes.oyez.org/cases/1980-1989/1984/1984\\_83\\_859](http://holmes.oyez.org/cases/1980-1989/1984/1984_83_859).

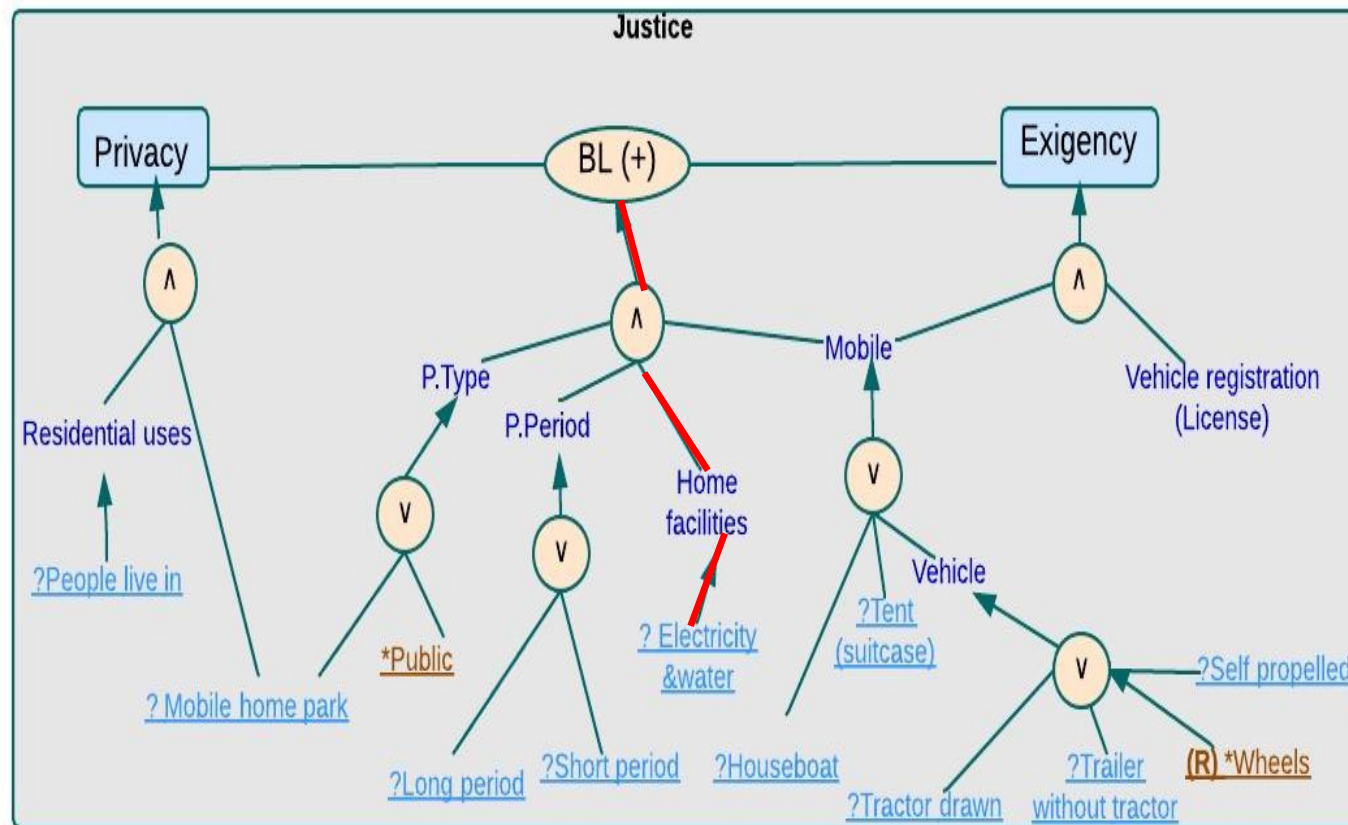
# C v. C – Petitioner Dialogue

## Petitioner ACT

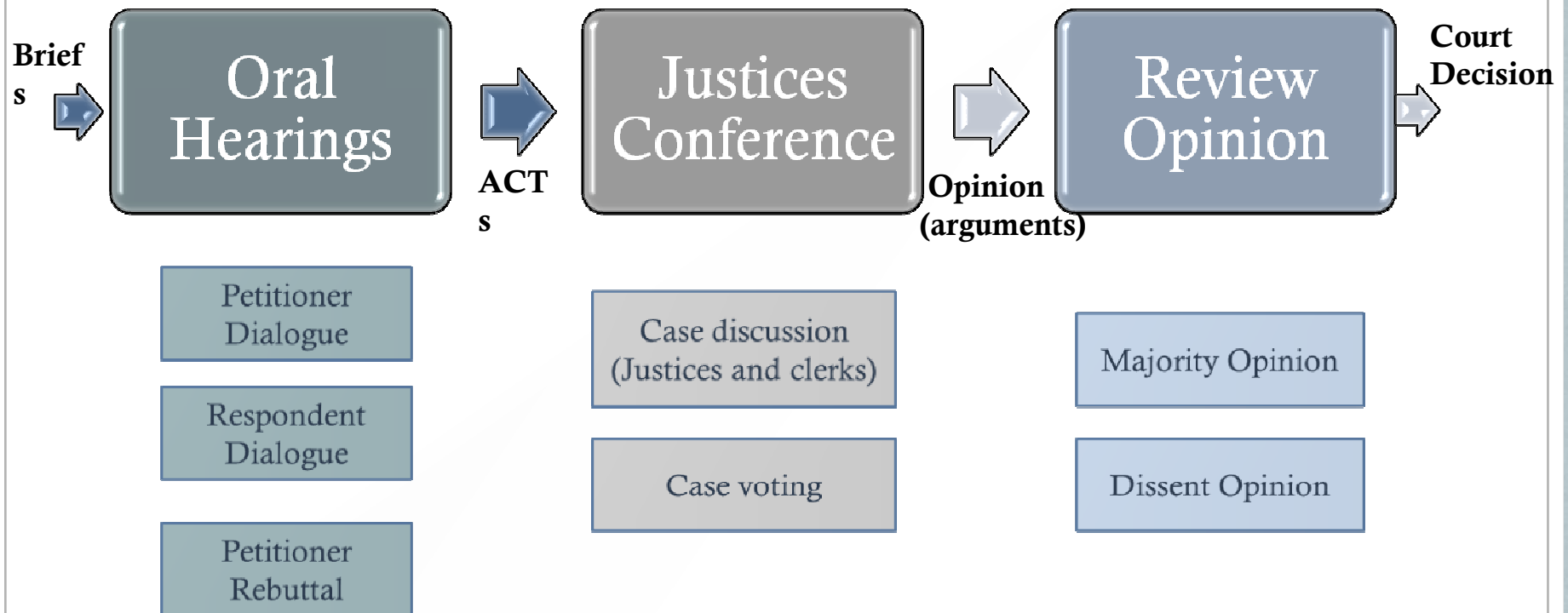


# C v. C – Petitioner Dialogue

## Justice ACT

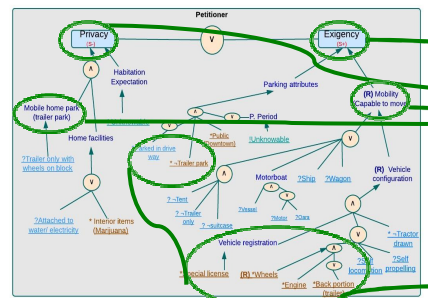
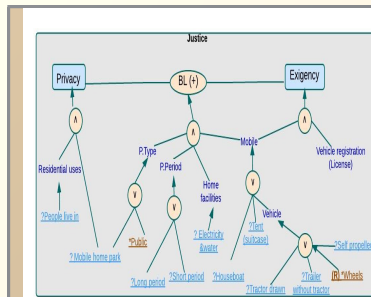


# From Oral Hearing to Opinion

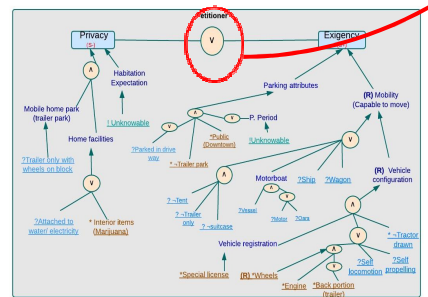
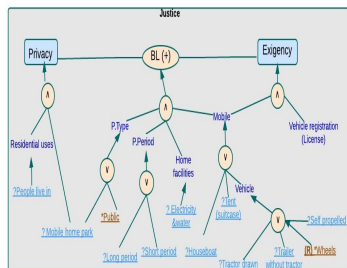




# From Oral Hearing to Opinion



## Petitioner hearing and Rebuttal Dialogues



## Respondent Dialogue

### Majority Argument

**Argument:**  
The majority opinion in *Carney* held that the warrantless search was **reasonable** and **did not violate** the Fourth Amendment rule that protects privacy.

#### Issues:

Exigency and Privacy (Respondent ACT)  
Exigency (S+) (Petitioner ACT)  
Privacy (S-) (Petitioner ACT)

#### Factors:

Exigency (S+): Mobility (automobile exception) (Petitioner ACT)  
Privacy (S-): Parking location (ready to move) (Petitioner ACT)

#### Facts (Carney):

Mobility: Mobile home used as vehicle & capable to move (Petitioner ACT)  
Parking Location: Public parking in the downtown (not mobile home park) (Petitioner ACT)

### Dissent Argument

**Argument:**  
Factors declared by the majority **extend** the automobile exception by applying it to **parked** vehicles capable of use as **dwellings**.

#### Issues:

Exigency (S-) and Privacy (S+) (Respondent ACT)

#### Factors:

Exigency (S-): Obtaining warrant was possible:  
Parked vehicle (not ready to move) & location (distance from court) (Respondent ACT)  
Privacy (S+): Mobile home used as dwelling & container of personal items (Respondent ACT)

#### Facts (Carney):

Obtaining warrant: Vehicle parked away from highway & close to courthouse (Respondent ACT)  
Used as dwelling: Inoperable vehicle: Curtains down (not visible) (Respondent ACT)

# C v. C – Majority Opinion

## Majority Argument

### **Argument:**

*The majority opinion in Carney held that the warrantless search was **reasonable** and **did not violate** the Fourth Amendment rule that protects privacy.*

### **Issues:**

*Exigency and Privacy (Respondent ACT)*

*Exigency (S+) (Petitioner ACT)*

*Privacy (S-) (Petitioner ACT)*

### **Factors:**

**Exigency (S+):** *Mobility (automobile exception) (Petitioner ACT)*

**Privacy (S-):** *Parking location (ready to move) (Petitioner ACT)*

### **Facts (Carney):**

**Mobility:** *Mobile home used as vehicle & capable to move (Petitioner ACT)*

**Parking Location:** *Public parking in the downtown (not mobile home park) (Petitioner ACT)*

# C v. C – Dissent Opinion

## Dissent Argument

### **Argument:**

Factors declared by the majority **extend** the automobile exception by applying it to **parked** vehicles capable of use as **dwellings**.

### **Issues:**

Exigency (S-) and Privacy (S+) (Respondent ACT)

### **Factors:**

**Exigency (S-):** Obtaining warrant was possible:

*Parked vehicle ( not ready to move) & location (distance from court) (Respondent ACT)*

**Privacy (S+):** Mobile home used as dwelling & container of personal items (Respondent ACT)

### **Facts (Carney):**

**Obtaining warrant:** Vehicle parked away from highway & close to courthouse (Respondent ACT)

**Used as dwelling:** Inoperable vehicle : Curtains down ( not visible) (Respondent ACT)



# Conclusion

In Summary..

We have provided a *framework* for conducting the analysis of US Supreme Court *Oral Hearings* whereby we move from the transcripts to ACT, through the use of a set of defined *speech acts*, and *navigate* through these trees to reflect the reasoning of the various legal parties.

- *Oral Hearing Dialogues.*
- *Reasoning model (Evidence → Fact → Factor → Issue → Value → decision)*
- *Dialogue speech acts → assertions of the arguments components*
- *Argument Components Tree (ACT) → Opinion Argument*
- *California v Carney (1985).*

# Current and Future Work

In future work, we are providing automated support for

- Defining a precise *grammar* setting out the rules for how the components of the ACTs can be combined to construct the trees.
- Building a legal case *ontology* from annotated transcript to provide the knowledge base for the arguments components in the oral hearing.
- Using the *ontologies and grammar* to develop *software* to automatically support the process of constructing and traversing the ACTs when applied to new cases.
- Generalising the framework to *other Supreme Court cases*, to decisions in *other jurisdictions*, and also to deliberation dialogues in general, *non-legal contexts*.

# Thank You..

*“The important thing is not to stop questioning.”* Albert Einstein