Beginning to Respond: *Well*-Prefaced Responses to *Wh*-Questions

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This article reports on the occurrence of *well* within an analytically delimited sequential environment: turn-initial position in the second pair-part position of adjacency pair sequences launched by a *wh*-question. We show that these *well*-prefaces operate as general alerts that indicate nonstraightforwardness in responding, and we compare this form of alert to others that operate in talk-in-interaction. We conclude by addressing the relationship of answering to responding, and by considering the relationship of *well*-prefacing to preference organization.

The work reported here began as part of a larger project aimed to develop an inventory of things that occur in turns that respond to a *wh*-question in addition to, and/or instead of, an answer to that question. The characterization of the focus as "turns that respond to a *wh*-question" served as a resource for shaping the task of data collection for a pedagogic/training undertaking; it did not, and does not, serve as an adequate account of the data for analytic purposes. In the next section of the article and thereafter, data are formulated by reference to the action(s) being accomplished, and not simply by their grammatical form, however important the latter may also be in its contribution to action formation.

The particular line we are pursuing here is addressed to the occurrence of *well* in turn-initial position in the second pair-part positions in these sequences. That is to say, our attention is focused not on *well* per se, but on *well* that is positioned in its turn as turn-initial (or, more precisely, what

Heritage [1998] termed "*effective* turn-initial position," as it may not be literally the first item in the turn), where that turn is positioned as a second pair-part to a preceding *wh*-question.

The not insubstantial literature on *well* has, on the whole, aimed for the broadest possible (if not exhaustive) coverage of usages of *well*, as for example in Jucker (1993), Schiffrin (1985, 1987, 2001), and, most recently, Schourup (2001); indeed, Greasley (1994) extended the contexts of coverage to include commentaries on games of snooker. At the other end of the spectrum is the focused attention to case-specific usages of *well* in Local and Kelly (1986, pp. 189–192). By contrast, the target phenomenon here is, then, constituted not only by its lexical composition, but also by its position—in its turn-constructional unit (TCU), in its turn, in its sequence, that is, in its position specified by reference to three distinct orders of organization.

There will be four major parts to the article: In the first we present the target of inquiry by exhibiting 10 specimens that exemplify it, with analytic glosses; in the second we offer an initial statement of the outcome of the undertaking, first characterizing the form of practice this is, and then working through the ways in which each of the specimens embodies and exhibits the result we arrived at; in the third part, we consider *well*-prefaced responses to *wh*-questions that do more than questioning and ones that are not grammatical *wh*-questions; and then in the fourth part, we show that not all *well*-prefaced responses are doing answering. We then conclude by briefly characterizing some of the more general import of the undertaking and its outcome, including its bearing on a tendency in the literature to treat virtually any turn-initial usage of *well* in second pair-part turns as ipso facto an indication of upcoming dispreferred response.

TEN EXEMPLARS OF *WELL*-PREFACED RESPONSES TO *WH*-QUESTIONS[1]

In what follows we provide brief contextual and analytic glosses of an initial set of specimens with which our claims can be exemplified.

In Extract 1 Guy has called Jon about the possibility of playing golf that afternoon. They have discussed a number of different golf courses they might play at—in some instances finding that they lacked the phone number to call about possible tee times, in others problematizing what the course charges to play or its distance from one or the other of their homes. In lines 1–2, Jon returns to the golf course that Guy had initially proposed, but for which they lacked a phone number. At line 12, Jon asks what time Guy wants to go; Guy's response—that they would need to call the course to find out the available times—is *well*-prefaced.

(Extract 1) NB 1:1:6

```
01   Jon:      Well I'm s:↑ure we c'get on et San Juan
02             ↑Hi:lls ↑that's ni:ce course ah only played it ↑o↓:nce.
03   Guy:      °Uh huh?°
04             (0.6)
05   Guy:      .hhh °↑It's not↑ too bad,°
06             (0.4)
```

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[1]Digitized audio or video clips of data discussed in this article may be accessed at: http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/

```
07   Jon:          Hu:h?
08   Guy:          'S not too ba:d,
09                 (.)
10   Jon:          No:.
11                 (1.0)
12   Jon:    ->    What time yih wanna ↑go↓:.
13   Guy:    ->>   We:ll?
14                 (0.5)
15   Guy:    ->>   hWe'd haftuh call'n find o:ut
16                 (0.9)
17   Guy:    ->>   yihknow (.) whe:n
18   Jon:          .hhh.t Well? ah'll ↑tellyih. Call Infer↑ma↓tion.
19                 (1.4)
20   Jon:          We c'n call Infermation find ou:t?
21                 (2.3)
22   Guy:          .t.hhhh We::ll let's ↓see.I ah wz (.) 'm iss startina
23                 look in ruh boo:k
```

Clearly there are other turn-initial *well*s in this data segment—at lines 01, 18 and 22, but these turns are not responses to *wh*-questions and are therefore not instances of the class of practices being addressed in this article. Our restriction of analysis to the environment of "responses to *wh*-questions" is without prejudice to the possibility that our findings will hold for other *well*s as well, and we will, in fact, briefly examine one such possible extension later in the article. Still, the only *well*s targeted by our analysis here are ones in TCU-initial position, in first TCUs in their turns, in turns built to be responsive to *wh*-questions.

Extract 2 is one of several drawn from a video recording of a family dinner near an air force base in South Carolina in the early 1980s. The table is presided over by the mater familias. The meal is being recorded by Beth, a student at a local college who is recording it for a course and minimizes her participation. The other participants are her 14-year-old sister Virginia (just to Mom's left), her older brother Wesley in his twenties (just to Mom's right), and Wesley's girlfriend, Prudence. In the talk just preceding Extract 2 Virginia's age has figured centrally, attracting teasing about whether or not she could be considered a child. For our purposes the key exchange is at lines 5–6. Wesley's question at line 1 raises the issue of how Virginia managed to get into a local nightspot several nights before given her age, as can be seen from his follow-up question at line 5.[2] Virginia's answer is that she went in the entrance for the underaged, but then joined the other line to sit with those 21 and over; her response is *well*-prefaced.

(Extract 2) Virginia, 6

```
01   Wes:          (Dih')/('n) they letchya in Friday's the othuh night?
02                 (1.0)  ((Virginia nods))
03   Wes:          They did.
04                 (0.3)  ((Virginia nods))
```

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[2]For those who may be unfamiliar with this aspect of American culture, in clubs that serve alcohol, it is a common practice to separate the underaged, who cannot legally be served alcohol, from those who can be served by checking their identification and directing them to separate parts of the club.

```
05   Wes:   ->     W:hich side 'juh go in.
06   Vir:   ->>    (mt) Wull we wen' in the eighteen °you know° but we
07                 walked (under) the twenny one.
08   Wes:          (           )
09                 (1.7)
10   ???:          hhh!
11                 (0.3)
12   P/B:          Who'dja go with.
13                 (0.6)
14   Vir:          (mm) (0.3) Beth and Legette.
15                 (0.3)
16   P/B:          ↑O:h.
17                 (2.0)
18   Wes:          Well what- d:'ju have a fake ID card? or they didn'
19                 check it.
20   Mo?:          (Mm::!)/(Mmooh!) [I didn' get a roll. Could I have a roll.
21   Vir:                          [They didn' ask me for'it.
22   Mo?:          <°Good.
```

The *wh*-question being responded to here in Extract 2 is a follow-up question, and not the initiation of the larger sequence of which it is a part—a specification that does not appear to qualify the analysis being pursued. A number of the exemplars to be taken up in what follows have such specifying features: In Extract 3 the *wh*-question starts a new sequence after a lull in the conversation; in Extracts 4 and 5 the *wh*-questions being responded to are themselves *well*-prefaced, the former reviving its addressee's proffered topic, the latter seemingly marking an acerbic or aggressive quality of the question; in Extract 6 the *well*-prefaced response turn is resisting the question's project; in Extract 7 it is backing down in the face of the question's project, and is implicated in overlap with the question turn to which it is responding; in Extract 8 the *wh*-question pursues the delivery of news, and so forth. None of these specifying features appear to qualify the robustness of the practice we end up describing; indeed, they can be seen as evidence for it.

Extract 3 was recorded in the dining room of a senior living complex in Southern California. Hank, Betty, Rich, and Tom are sitting and having coffee. A brief lull has set in, and is ended by Hank's question at line 2. He has noticed the video camera being used to make the recording that is our data source. Betty explains how it came to be set up, and prefaces her response with *well*.

(Extract 3) Coffee Chat, 8

```
01                 (0.5)
02   Han:   ->     Wut is that cam:era set up for?
03   Bet:   ->>    Well they- she came over and she ask'd if we minded if
04                 she took (.) our conversation=they're jist doing it for
05                 a school proj:ect.
06   Han:          Mm hm.=
07   Bet:          =And we said we didn't mi:nd<and we all sign:ed it.
08                 (ap)proving we didn't mind so(h)=
09   Tom:          =heh=heh=
```

```
10   Bet:        =heh heh .hh hh
11               (1.6)
```

Extract 4 finds us back at the dinner table with Virginia et al. One of many rounds of argument about her allowance has just wound down, and Wesley has asked for some more iced tea. Virginia resumes her sporadic teasing of sister Beth (who seems to be disabled from responding in kind because of an injunction to minimize her participation while taping). After Virginia presents her complaint about Beth to Mom, Prudence intervenes with another story about Beth's odd behavior, which is omitted in the transcript but can be accessed in the videoclip. When that is over, Mom returns her attention to Virginia and asks her (at line 17) to elaborate on her complaint. This Virginia does at lines 18–19 with a broad, dramatized representation of Beth's behavior—in a turn that begins with *well*.

```
(Extract 4) Virginia, 23-24

01   Vir:        Um(>binwin<) (.) Mom, (.hh) w'd you talk t'Beth,
02               becuz (0.8) every mornin', .hh she will not turn off
03               her alarm clock. An' she comes in there an' tells me
04               her alarm clock is singin' Mom.She's drivin' me cra:zy.
05   Mom:        (                    )
06   Pru:        (Mm        n(h)ot)
07   Mom:        huh huh
08   Pr?:        mm hm [hm .hh hh .hh
09   Vir:              [Mom I(s)- I swear she's flippin' out.
10   ???:        (She really i:s)
11               (0.2)
12   Pur:        £Whaddya mean she said it was singin'?
13               (0.4)
14               .
15               . [14 lines deleted]
16               .
17   Mom:  ->    Well what's this about her ala:rm clock singin'=
18   Vir:  ->>   =Wul every morning (she-) (0.4) ((nasal)) MY ALA::RM
19               CLOCK IS ((very loud)) SINGING!
20   Vir:        (Swear.)
21   Pur:        e[h heh heh huh
22   Vir:         [You are weird.
23               (.)
24   Vir:        I prom[ise. She's weird. hm!
25   Pr?          [ˈhhh
```

Extract 5 is taken from the Heritage corpus of British telephone conversations. Ilene, a woman of substantial social standing, has called Lisa—who grooms and mates dogs—shortly after the New Year to inquire after her dog Kizzy, and to arrange to get her back from the kennel. There has been some conversation about the difficulties of getting the dog properly groomed, and Lisa promises to give Ilene chapter and verse. Given ordinary business practice and the relative social standing of the two women, one must assume that Ilene's offer (at lines 3–4) to fetch the dog her-

self is not serious. Lisa replies that she had planned to bring the dog back, but when Ilene asks (at lines 8–9) when she was going to do that, Lisa's response takes the form of a defense more than that of an answer, and it is *well*-prefaced.

(Extract 5) Heritage I:3:2

```
01   Lis:          ↑ehh heh heh[heh he- ]hh=
02   Ile:                       [U h : m]
03   Ile:          =Well now look d'you want me
04                 ti [h come over'n get her? Or wha:t.=
05   Lis:             [°(          )°
06   Lis:          =↑( ) please yerself dear we'll we were g'nna t-bring'er
07                 ↑back b't chor very wel[come
08   Ile:    ->                          [No well when'r you when'r you going
09                 to bring her ↓ba:ck.=
10   Lis:    ->>   =.hhh Uh well you said wait til ah:fter the New ↑Yea:r.
11                 (0.2)
12   Ile:          Yeh.well ah mean you-you:- you choose the da:y.
13                 (0.2)
14   Lis:          Oh:ah°mean°t'morrow will do ez far ez I'm [concerned]=
15   Ile:                                                    [T'morrow]=
16   Ile:          =That's fi[:ne.
17   Lis:                    [She gets me up et six evry morning she-
18                 p- (.) welcome tih go::?
19                 (.)
```

In Extract 6, again from the Virginia dinner, the talk has turned to a local boy and what bad word he called Beth and/or Virginia. Wesley intervenes with a teasing question to Mom, accusing her of reading the girls' mail, an accusation that she vociferously denies. But at lines 2–4, she allows that she has some knowledge of the matter from another mother who has indeed read *her* daughter's mail. Virginia's curiosity about what was in that letter surfaces at line 13, but Mom withholds that information at line 15, in a turn which seems to begin with *well*.

(Extract 6) Virginia, 32

```
             (1.4)
01   Mom:    No, I=hhh (0.4) Donna's muthuh.told me.(.) somethin'
02           that she ((volume escalation through cutoff)) read in a
03           letter that-˙hh ((rhythmic)) he wrote tuh Donna.
04           (0.7)
05   Wes:    [O:::h!
06   Pru:    [>Oh that was (s)o long (a)go::.<*
07           (.)
08   ???:    (tch-km)/((non-spoken noise))        (( * to * = (0.8) ))
09           (.)
10   Mom:    *Well: I: tol' Beth >I didn' like that< bo:y, >°I didn'
```

```
11                    wan' her havin' 'nything tuh do with him.<
12                    (0.2)
13   Vir:    ->       °Whattid it say.
14                    (0.4)
15   Mom: ->>         °(ull) I really [can't tell yuh.
16   ???:                            [ekhh!
17   Be?:             [( [          )]  ((loud))
18   Mo?:             [( [          ]is mart)
19   ???:               [mghm hgm
20                    (0.8)
21   Vir:             °(Y'all) know. .hh
22                    (0.5)
23   Vir:             Tell me, plea::se?
24   Pru:             uh[h!
25   Bet:               [Yuh not old £enough. ↑huh hah!
26                    (.)
27   Bet:             [uh huh |HEH HEH  HAH  HAH ] HAH HAH=
28   Vir:             [(Oh,   |you're          ::[     )]
29   Mom:                                       [ehhh!
30   Bet:             =hah [hah hah hah hah [˙HHHHHHHhhhhhh]
31   Mom:                  [hih  hih  hih    |
32   Vir:                               [(That's)   re a:l ] fu:nn[y,
33   Bet:                                                       [hah hih hih
34                    [hih  |hih |hih |hih |hih |huh ] ˙mhhh
35   Pr?:             [(bu) |huh |huh |huh |huh |huh ]
36   Mom:             ˙hhhh £The:::re the::re Vuhginia.
37                    (.)
38   Vi?:             °°(      god)
39                    (4.5)
```

The conversation between Debbie and Shelley from which Extract 7 is taken is given over virtu-
ally exclusively to Debbie's charge that Shelley has dropped out of a group excursion to a football
game because her boyfriend isn't going; Debbie is outraged that Shelley is (as she puts it) "blow[ing]
off girlfriends for guys," with the barely veiled implication that she does so regularly. At lines 1–3,
Shelley is completing one part of her defense—why she has dropped out of the football weekend. At
line 5 she addresses herself to the charge that she "blows off her girlfriends" regularly, challenging
Debbie to specify other occasions. Debbie's response at lines 6–9 is *well*-prefaced.

(Extract 7) Debbie & Shelley, 4

```
01   Shl:             So: I mean its not becuz he's- he's- I mean its not
02                    becuz he:s not going its becuz (0.5) his money's not¿
03                    (0.5) funding me.
04   Deb:             okay¿
05   Shl:    ->       So an ↑when other time have I ever [done that?]   ((rising pitch))
06   Deb:    ->>                                        [.hhh well ]  I'm jus
07                    say:in it jus seems you- you base a lot of things on-on
08                    guy:s.(.) I do'know:, it just- a couple times I don- I
```

```
09              don- .hh its not a big deal.
10              (.)
11   Deb:       it's [rea:lly.    ]
12   Shl:            [°thats no ]t true Debbie [the onl-] the only time=
13   Deb:                                     [ its not ]
14   Shel:      =I t- ↑N-Now your talkin about like (.) me not goin to
15              your party because of Jay an you're right that wuz
16              becuz of him..hh and that wuz pro[bly
17   Deb:                                        [↑NO I understood
18              tha:t, I don'care 'bout tha:t.=
```

Extracts 5, 6, and 7 appear to support a common understanding of turn-initial *well*—namely, that it is an indicator of incipient disaffiliation, rejection, misalignment, and the like, and this surely does seem to hold for a number of the specimens that we have examined. But equally surely not all of them—not Extracts 2 or 4, for example. And not the one to follow.

Here in Extract 8 are Ilene and Lisa again, later on in their conversation. They have been working out arrangements for the return of the dog, and Ilene has mentioned that she has a volunteer obligation to fulfill at the local hospital, the mention of which appears to touch off Lisa's report at line 8, "I think I've broken me ankle." When Ilene asks how it happened (but less charitably, making Lisa the agent of her own distress with "what have you done"), Lisa responds by telling her at lines 11–14, prefacing the telling with *well*.

(Extract 8) Heritage I:3:4

```
01                  (0.3)
02   Ile:           Oh well no we:h ↓one'v us'd be here anywa:y,↓
03                  (0.4)
04   Ile:           No cz I'd like t'see ↓you:.
05   Lis:           ↓Yes.
06   Ile:           A:nd um then I've just got tih go tih the hospital trolley,
07                  .hh uh: fro:[m two:
08   Lis:                       [I think I've broken me a:nkle.
09   Ile:   ->      ((nasal)) Oh:: w't'v you do:ne,°
10                  (0.2)
11   Lis:   ->>     We:ll I fell down the step- eh e-haa ↑as (.) a matter of
12                  fact it wasn' any'ing tih do with Kizzy, .hhhh I: came ou:t
13                  of the bah:throom en down those two little steps in
14                  (the [hall) 'n kicked meself on my a:nkle.
15   Ile:                [Mm::,
16   Ile:           Oh:. [(        ).
17   Lis:                [↑Very badly [e n I - ]    [I t h : o u ]:ght=
18   Ile:                             [It's prob]a'ly [a ↓brui:se]
19   Ile:           =°Yeh,°=
20   Lis:           =↑No it's ↑(not I think it'll be sprained)=
21   Lis:           =.hh The do[ctor says he wozn't worried so that's alri[:ght=
22   Ile:                      [°Oh°                                      [°Yeh°
23   Lis:           =I'm: glad eez not worried I'm the one ooz living with it.
24   Ile:           ehhh Yheh-heh-heh-[hh-hh=
```

And one more contribution from Virginia in Extract 9. Mom has just opined that Virginia should not be going to the parties Beth goes to, because Beth is 18 and Virginia is only 14, and is, as Mom puts it, "not mature enough to make the right decisions." Virginia's retort is at line 1. At this point, Wesley takes over from Mom and raises the prospect to Virginia of older people taking advantage of her (at line 13). Mom (who, one might have thought, knows exactly what he means, because of course she meant the same thing) then asks Wesley what he meant by that question, and Wesley's response at lines 24–27 is prefaced with *well*.

```
(Extract 9) Virginia, 16

01   Vir:        I'm mature enough ta pick my frien:ds.
02              (3.0)
03   Wes:        Well uhm
04              (0.2)
05   Pr?:        (hh [.hh)
06   Wes:            [what- all these young people yer own age. You don't
07              Like tuh (1.0) do thuh same things they do?
08              (0.9)
09   Vir:        >No I hang around [some people my age< but they hang around=
10   Wes:                          [(That's enough.)
11   Vir:        =older ↑people.
12              (2.0)
13   Wes:        You're not worried about'um takin' advantage of yuh?
14              (1.5)
15   Vir:        W [ho.
16   ???:          [ehkhhh! ((sneeze) m[ghm (hm hm)
17   Vir:                             [N:UH-(h)O::!
18   Ws?:        °(huh huh .hh)
19              (3.5)
20   Vir:        >Thuh only time any [body (          )
21   Mom:  ->                        [Whaddya mean by tha:t.
22   Pru:        Mm hm hm!
23              (0.6)
24   Wes:  ->>   Wull 'ey just- (.) the [y'll say thin:]gs, an' (1.4) they'll=
25   Pru:                               [(          ) ]
26   Wes:        =lie to yuh, 'n you won't know when they're tellin' you thuh
27              truth,
28              (.)
29   Vir:        °Buh° yes I will:.
30              (2.0)
```

Finally, in Extract 10, Mark and Kim, who are expecting a baby, are talking about how to set up the rooms in their house, something that has been under discussion since they moved in. At issue at the moment is where to put the TV. Mark wants to put it in the living room (see line 1), and Kim does not—at lines 3, 5, and 9, for starters. Mark asks at line 10 how often Kim has sat in the living room since they have lived there. Kim's response at lines 13–14 starts with a *well*.

(Extract 10) Ravioli Dinner, 12

```
01   Mar:        Eventually the tv'll be in the living room(,)/(.)
02               (2.0)
03   Kim:        I(h) don't th(h)ink s(h)o(h) (.) ((sniff:))
04               (0.2)
05   Kim:        uhhh=(h)It's (h)not gonna g(h)o in(h) th(h)uh
06               l(h)iv(h)ing r(h)oom(h).
07   Kim:        .hhh
08               (0.4)
09   Kim:        Honey I don't want it in the living room.
10   Mak:  ->    How many times you sat in the living room: since we'(ve)
11               moved in here.
12               (.)
13   Kim:  ->>   Well:, I'll go in there tonight?
14               -Uhh hu huh ↑huh huh huh huh,
15   Kim:        .sshh
16               (3.0)
17   Mar:        .mhhhh I- think it'd be [best- ]
18   Kim:                                [That' ]s for people for guests
19               'n stuff.
20               (1.5)
21   Mar:        So. (1.0) We have uh room.
22               (0.4)
23   Kim:        (°Mm hm°,)
24               (1.5)
25   Mar:        just for guests.
26   Kim:        (Yeah?)/(Yep?)
27               (2.0)
28   Mar:        M:kay¿,
29               (6.0)
```

So those are the data. What is to be made of them? How can we characterize the practice of prefacing turns responding to *wh*-questions with *well*?

WHAT FORM OF PRACTICE DOES *WELL*-PREFACING PUT INTO ACTION?

One general form of practice that one finds in various incarnations in conversation and other forms of talk-in-interaction takes the following form: give an alert of a general or formal sort and leave it to other(s)/recipient(s) to figure it out in situ. Before explicating the practice of this form that pertains to our data on *well*-prefaced responses to *wh*-questions, we briefly review three past findings addressed to quite different empirical materials that nonetheless can be understood to exemplify practices that take this form.

Cut-Offs

The use of the cut-off as a practice for same-turn repair initiation serves as an alert to the recipient that what follows may not be more of what had immediately preceded; it does not indicate what form of repair may be being initiated (replacement, insertion, restart, etc.); it is not even necessarily followed by a repair, for speakers can turn out to have continued what was in progress after all. It is an alert to the recipient of the possibility of discontinuity, and leaves it for the recipient to figure out whether there was one or not, and, if there was one, what it was doing, and, if initiating repair, what sort of repair operation has been carried out.

Other Initiations of Repair

The employment of some other initiations of repair (for example, *huh* or *what*) operate in a similar fashion; these indicate that there has been trouble with the just-preceding turn of another, but they leave unspecified what in the preceding turn was the source of the trouble and what the nature of the trouble is/was—hearing, understanding, alignment, etc. On the occurrence of such a repair initiation, it is the business of the addressed prior speaker to figure out what the trouble was and what in the trouble-source turn was its source. Again, then, a general alert, requiring situated figuring out by its recipient.

Oh-Prefaces

Heritage's (1998) account of *oh*-prefaced response to inquiry states that *oh*-prefacing serves to mark the preceding question as problematic or inapposite in terms of its relevance, presuppositions, or context. These are very broad categories indeed, and there is reason to believe that they may not be exhaustive. In any case, they have the same feature we have been concerned to draw attention to: They deliver an alert about the problematicalness of the question and leave it to the recipient to examine the targeted item to figure out what the issue is/was.

WHAT ARE THESE *WELL*S BEING USED TO DO?

In keeping with this form of practice, we are proposing that *well*-prefacing in response turns to *wh*-questions serves as an alert to the questioner and others that the response will be in some respect not straightforward, and that it should therefore not be parsed as such, but rather requires attention to the way(s) in which it is not straightforward to allow a proper understanding.

To revert for a moment to our earlier observation that *well* is regularly treated (by analysts) ipso facto as an indicator of dispreferred response, *well* may well serve as an indicator of incipient disaffiliation, rejection, misalignment, and the like in some sequential environments (Pomerantz, 1984), but these do not exhaust the forms of nonstraightforwardness. Returning to our 10 specimens, let us ground our proposed understanding of *well*-prefacing in the data by briefly describing what is accomplished in each of the *well*-prefaced turns, and then after this overview we examine several cases in more detail in the next section in order to clarify the relationship of *well*-prefaced response turns to the preceding *wh*-question.

In Extract 1, the turn in question is designed to deliver not an answer to the question, but rather a procedure for pursuing one.

In Extract 2, the question asked about "which side," but the answer will include more than one side.

In Extract 3, the answer is not delivered straightaway; a story is told to deliver it.

In Extract 4, the answer to the question is not recounted, it is performed, and in a parodied fashion at that.

In Extract 5, the prior turn is understood not only as a question but also as a complaint, and the response is not an answer but a justification.

In Extract 6, the recipient knows the answer but refuses to disclose it.[3]

In Extract 7, the prior turn is understood not only as a question but as a challenge, and the response first backs down in epistemic strength in the face of the challenge and then delivers a weak and minimal answer to the question—or more precisely the response turn has embedded within it a component that acknowledges the question, while not actually answering it.

Extract 8 is especially telling because the first turn-constructional unit would, unless otherwise provided for, be hearable as a simple straightforward answer: "What have you done," "I fell down the step." The *well* alerts the recipient not to analyze it that way, that the response will not be straightforward. And, indeed, it is not, for Lisa goes on, first, to absolve Ilene's dog Kizzy of any blame, and then to give a more detailed account of the incident, one that leads to a downgrading of its seriousness by Ilene and then by Lisa herself.

In Extract 9, Wesley finds himself pressed to say what he means by Virginia being "taken advantage of," and engages in some circumlocution to avoid the delicateness of the matter.

And in Extract 10, Kim evades an explicit answer that would have subverted her position and discloses a plan to create a new fact on the ground, so to speak, which amounts in the end to a joke—witness the extended laughter on her part that follows it.

We might register here an obvious relationship between our *well*-prefaced responses to *wh*-questions and Heritage's *oh*-prefaced responses to inquiry mentioned in the previous section. *Oh*-prefaced responses to inquiry exhibit inappositeness of the question—they are backward looking; *well*-prefaced responses to *wh*-questions exhibit an alert to the nonstraightforwardness of the response turn to follow—they are forward looking. Both are formal—in the sense that they do not specify that which they may come to be seen as targeting; but their targeting is, in a fashion, thematic—the one's theme concerning appositeness, the other's concerning straightforwardness. Other of the practices of this sort, which we mentioned earlier in this section, are also formal and thematic: same-turn cut-offs raising an alert about continuity versus disjunction, other-initiations of repair of the *huh/what* variety thematizing possible trouble, without specifying its source or character.

BEYOND THE GRAMMAR OF *WH*-QUESTIONS

In the first part of this section we examine sequence-initiating actions that take the form of *wh*-questions but that do more than questioning, and then in the second part of the section we

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[3]An anonymous referee points out that, as this single TCU turn shows, nonstraightforwardness can be quite straightforward in form. This is an important observation because it shows that a *well*-prefaced response need not be an indicator of trouble in answering. Also, see Extract 12 for a case of straightforward responding where there is some trouble in answering.

examine sequence-initiating actions that do not take the grammatical form of *wh*-questions but that nonetheless appear to accomplish *wh*-questioning. In both cases we show that *well* is used to preface nonstraightforward responses.

Some Actions *Wh*-Questions Implement Besides Questioning

How are we to understand responding in nonstraightforward ways? How is it understood by coparticipants? One basic way of understanding such conduct hinges on recognizing that questions (although not questions alone) can serve as vehicles for other actions whose implementation they format. That is, in addition to or instead of the request for information that is commonly the overt action being done, some other action(s) may be implicated, and/or may be understood by the recipient to be implicated. Their recipient, in such cases, inherits two sets of contingencies to manage: One is dealing with the action that has been implemented, the other is the format through which it has been formatted (Schegloff, 2007, pp. 73–78). In the episodes we are concerned with, the latter is some form of *wh*-question.

Before examining such episodes, however, it is worth making clear that in a great many instances the *wh*-question is straightforwardly requesting some information or some action. For example, in instances of other-initiated repair, the recipient is being asked to figure out what the trouble is and to fix it. In the Extract 11, Frieda and Reuben have just arrived as guests for dinner at the home of old friends, Kathy and Dave. They notice a handcrafted rug, and, knowing that Kathy is herself active in crafts, remark on it.

(Extract 11) KC-4, 2

```
01   Fda:            =This is nice did you make this?
02   Kat:            No Samu made that
03   Fda:    ->      Who?
04   Kat:    ->>     Samu
05                   (1.0)
06   Kat:            (Sh) You remember my [aunt?   ]
07   Dav:                                 [Aunt S ]amu
08   Kat:            [From Czechoslovakia?
09   Fda:            [Yyeeah
10   Fda:            Oh she's really something
11   Kat:            Yeah
```

Kathy has recipient-designed her reference to the maker of the rug and referred to her by name; Frieda fails to recognize the reference and asks for it to be redone or amplified; and that is what Kathy does in her responsive next turn.[4]

---

[4]We examined some 150 other-initiations of repair that took or included the form of a *wh*-question; not a single one met with a *well*-prefaced response. However, of other-initiations that took the form "*What do you mean*," "*What do you mean by that*," or "*What do you mean* + [element of prior turn]," roughly half received *well*-prefaced responses. We cannot take this matter up here; the curious reader might have a look at Schegloff, 1997b, pp. 522–524, and note 3, p. 543, where the use of this format to do "challenging" is taken up.

A few minutes later, the guests turn their attention to a mutual friend who has been taken ill, and seriously so, and whom they visited on the way from work to their hosts' home (Extract 12).

(Extract 12) KC-4, 5

```
01   Rbn:         You're gonna haveta pardon us for not bringing
02                you anything [(                    )
03   Kat:                      [I- I will pardon you [I- I do
04   Rbn:                                            [Okay (            )
05   Rbn:         We went straight to ah: visit Ted,
06                (1.0)
07   Rbn:         from the office.
08                (1.0)
09   Rbn:         An: [d uh
10   Kat:    ->       [What time didju get there.
11   Rbn:    ->>  We got there about uh: (1.8) somewhere ( )(1.4) 'bout
12                Four thirty I guess. And  ahm, (.) I hadda park the car
13                y'know?=so she went shooting up=an then as I went up,
14                (1.8) an I'm approaching the door, (1.0) I push the door
15                in very quiet[ly,
16   Dav:                     [mmhm
17                (.)
18   Rbn:         an I heard talk,
19                (0.2)
```

Here Kathy's question is not initiating repair, but it is not apparently designed to do other than requesting information (in this case, we learn from later talk, in order to assess the likelihood that the guests have information more recent than what she had learned from an earlier telephone conversation with the patient). Here again, although the answer to the question takes some figuring and is delivered as approximate, it is treated by its speaker as straightforward; trouble in producing a response is not the same as producing a nonstraightforward response. This is displayed not only by the absence of *well*-prefacing, but also by formatting the answer turn with elements of the question turn: "what time did you get there," "we got there. . ." There is no indication either in the production or in the uptake of this *wh*-question that it is doing anything but the transparent action of a request for information.

Let us now turn to the other end of the spectrum. In Extract 13, the recipient is so strongly oriented to the action she understands to be implemented by the *wh*-question, one quite different from a request for information, that the response is geared to that action with little evidence of orientation to the question format through which it was implemented.

(Extract 13) Heritage 1:3:2 (previously Extract 5)

```
01   Lis:    ↑ehh heh heh [heh he- ]hh=
02   Ile:                 [U h : m ]
03   Ile:    =Well now look d'you want me ti    [h come over'n get=
04   Lis:                                       [°(            )°
05   Ile:    =her? or wha:t.
```

```
06   Lis:           ↑Just please yerself she:’ll be we were g’nna t-bring’er
07                  ↑back b’t chor very wel[come
08   Ile:   ->                           [No well when’r you when’r you
09          ->      going to bring her ↓ba:ck.=
10   Lis:   ->>     =.hhh Uh well you said wait til ah:fter the New ↑Yea:r.
11                  (0.2)
12   Ile:           Yeh.well ah mean you-you:- you choose the da:y.
13                  (0.2)
14   Lis:           Oh:ah°mean°t’morrow will do ez far ez I’m [concerned ]=
15   Ile:                                                     [T’morrow ]=
16   Ile:           =That’s fi[:ne.
17   Lis:                     [She gets me up et six evry morning she-
18                  p- (.) welcome tih go::?
19                  (.)
```

The question on its face asks about the time of return of the dog, but it is understood by recipient as an impatient complaint about delay, and it is to this action that recipient responds, laying at the feet of the client the responsibility for the withholding until now of the return of the dog. There is little sign in this response turn of the question that inhabited the preceding turn and gave it its form; it is in that sense not a straightforward response (i.e., not straightforwardly answering the *wh*-question, which has projected a specific type of formulation for the response), and it is *well*-prefaced.

Somewhat less egregious is the previously examined Extract 14. This is the episode in which husband and wife are negotiating the rearrangement of their house in expectation of the birth of their first child—not for the first time. One might say that they have quite different priorities, and different senses of the proprieties to be observed in the arrangement and use of space.

(Extract 14) Ravioli Dinner, 15   (previously Extract 10)

```
01   Mar:           Eventually the tv‘ll be in the living room(,)/(.)
02                  (2.0)
03   Kim:           I(h) don’t th(h)ink s(h)o(h) (.) ((sniff:))
04                  (0.2)
05   Kim:           uhhh= (h)It’s (h)not gonna g(h)o in(h) th(h)uh
06                  l(h)iv(h)ing r(h)oom(h).
07   Kim:           .hhh
08                  (0.4)
09   Kim:           Honey I don’t want it in the living room.
10   Mar:   ->      How many times you sat in the living room: since
11          ->      we’(ve) moved in here.
12                  (.)
13   Kim:   ->>     Well:, I’ll go in there tonight?
14          ->>     -Uhh hu huh ↑huh huh huh huh,
15   Kim:           .sshh
16                  (3.0)
17   Mar:           .mhhhh I- think it’d be [best- ]
```

```
18   Kim:                          [That’ ]s for people for
19                guests ‘n stuff.
20                (1.5)
21   Mar:    So. (1.0) We have uh room.
22                (0.4)
23   Kim:    (°Mm hm°,)
24                (1.5)
25   Mar:    just for guests.
26   Kim:    (Yep?)
27                (2.0)
28   Mar:    M:kay¿,
29                (6.0)
```

In the face of Mark's apparent insistence on having the TV in the living room, Kim is adamant in her resistance, twice qualifying it by infiltrating laugh tokens into its delivery, but finally and seriously reasserting her position. The tack Mark then takes is to have displayed the wastefulness of Kim's preference by eliciting the actual use now made of that room—a result that he means to turn to good effect for his own plan. The question he asks—"how many times you sat in the living room"—is asked already knowing that the answer is "none," an answer that will serve as the basis for his claim to make better use of it. And it is to this strategic import that Kim responds, rather than to the *wh*-question that has served as its vehicle. Her "I'll go in there tonight" is a way of avoiding saying "none"; there is scarcely a nod to the "*How many times*" question. The response is not straightforward, and it is so marked by its *well*-prefacing.

Having taken up two cases of clear straightforwardness and two of its opposite, we turn to a less extreme instance. Consider the previously examined episode from the seniors' residence (Extract 15).

(Extract 15) Coffee Chat, 6(previously Extract 3)

```
01                (0.5)
02   Hnk:  ->   Wut is that cam:era set up for?
03   Bet:  ->>  Well they- she came over and she ask'd if we minded if
04                she took (.) our conversation they're jist doing it for
05                a school proj:ect
06   Hnk:    Mm hm.=
07   Bet:    =And we said we didn't mi:nd<and we all sign:ed it.
08                (ap)proving we didn't mind so(h)=
09   Tom:    =heh=heh=
10   Bet:    =heh heh .hh hh
11                (1.6)
```

Although Hank's question may well be innocent, its target is potentially trouble. People "snooping" is complainable, and Betty apparently understands the possibility of this question leading in that direction.[5] Instead of simply delivering the answer that ends up being embedded in her

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[5]This data extract is taken up in Schegloff, 2005, pp. 451–452.

response—"they're just doing it for a school project," she builds a story that provides for the potential complaint-targets having made an appropriate inquiry to the people then seated at the table, having secured the agreement of the people being videotaped, including their signed testament to their agreement. Here, then, the respondent does deal with the incipient line of action that she spots as potential trouble, but does so in a way that includes an answer to the question asked, even though embedded in a nonstraightforward response turn. And, at the end, she triumphantly returns the turn to Hank, virtually defying him to make trouble now that she has detoxified the situation (with her "so" at line 8; see Raymond, 2004), and Tom joins her in a slight giggle.

What Counts as a *Wh*-Question?

What has been said so far may seem to lodge the special constraining power of these first pair-parts in their grammatical form, and so it is worth dislodging this appearance, at least in part. There are forms of question that appear to be *yes/no* questions, and yet are conversationally and interactionally treated as *wh*-questions. Extract 16 is taken from a conversation between two middle-aged women who several decades earlier had known each other in New York; Fanny now lives in Los Angeles and Betty—in town to visit relatives—has called her, and they are bringing one another up to date; they are just finishing talking about a mutual friend from New York days who recently died.

(Extract 16) Death Announcement, 15

01	Bet:	Yuhknow, it's uh eh i-its <u>a</u> way of life.
02		It's just one a' those things, we uh::: uh
03		d-un- unfortunately, in the interim th-uh
04		several of our dear friends uh yihknow passed
05		away end uh
06	Fny: ->	Anyone I know?
07	Bet: ->>	Uh well I don'know whether you knew uh:::
08		well you remember Ellen Fisher, don't you?
09	Fny:	Yes,
10	Bet:	Yihknow, huh husbin died.
11		(1.2)
12	Bet:	.hhh uh::, d-eh a <u>couple</u> of other people that uh::
13	Fny:	Y'know we're uh we're in that generation
14		[Betty,
15	Bet:	[Right.

Vernacularly (at least), "Anyone I know?" is a *yes/no* question. Yet here it seems clearly to be deployed and understood as a *wh*-question, at least if there *is* someone that she knows. So sheer grammatical form may not be decisive.

In fact, there are utterances that are not grammatically (or prosodically) interrogative themselves and yet clearly operate as questions. Here we offer just two exemplars.

In Extract 17, Rose and Bea are both private-care nurses, and Rose has been trying to get Bea to take over a shift caring for a patient whose nurse is leaving. Bea has resisted and the conversation is now winding down when Rose (at line 3) invites Bea to visit her.

(Extract 17) SBL:1:1:10:R:15

```
01   Ros:              You know I have [a hou:se a big gahd'n=
02   Bea:                             [↓Ye:s.
03   Ros:              =.hh ↑Why ↑dont'chu come'n ↑↑see [me ↓so:me [ti:m e s.↓]
04   Bea:                                              [˙hh        [I would li]:ke
05                     ↓to:.
06   Ros:              I would like [ih to e <let m [e jst ]
07   Bea:    ->                     [˙hh         [I: do]n't know jus' whe:re
08           ->        thi-ih th:is address ↑i [:s.
09   Ros:    ->>                            [Well u-↑whe:re d-uh which part'v
10                     town dih you ↓l [ive.
11   Bea:                             [˙hh
12   Bea:              I live et fhi:ve twelve East Is↓ley.
13                     (1.0)
14   Ros:              ˙t hh We:ll<you don't ↓live very fa:r ↓from me.↓
15                     (0.2)
16   Ros:              If ↑you go on the Sta:te (0.8) u-High (0.6) u-No: if
17                     you go out past th'mission,
18   Bea:              Yeah.=
19   Ros:              =Foo:thill.
20                     (·)
21   Ros:              O [↑kay?
22   Bea:                [Yes.=
23   Ros:              =Go ↑tuh ↓Foothill... ((continues giving directions))
```

Bea's utterance—"I don't know just where this address is"—declarative as it may be gram-
matically speaking, is designed and is understood as a request for directions. It is in effect
asking "Where is this place?" or "How do I get there?," although neither of these is equiva-
lent to the actual utterance. Bea did it the way she did it, and not either of these other ways,
and we cannot undertake here an analysis of what is accomplished by doing it the way she
did it.[6] Still we can register that this is not a simple assertion of ignorance; its recipient ad-
dresses it as recipients always do—for the question "why that now," and Bea can rely on her
recipient to do so. That Rose understands it to be a request for directions is made evident
not only in her eventual delivery of directions, but in her immediate question about Bea's
whereabouts; this is not relevant for just giving the geographical location of her home ad-
dress, but it *is* relevant for giving directions; one needs to know where the other will be
starting from.

Here is another case in point. Extract 18 is taken from a conversation between two college
women who once attended the same school, before Bee transferred to another. They have appar-
ently not talked for quite a while; the extract begins some 10 min into the conversation, which has
been mostly about their current courses.

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[6]This sequence is taken up in greater detail in Schegloff 1972, pp. 106–114. The usage here and in Extract 18 de-
clares explicitly what Heritage describes as the "epistemic gradient" embodied in question formats (see Heritage,
2007).

(Extract 18) TG, 11

```
01   Bee:         Mm, tch! I wz gonnuh call you. last week someti(h)me
02               ˙hhh[hh!
03   Ava:            [Yeh my mother a:sked mih I siz I don'know I haven't
04               hea:rd from her.I didn' know what day:s you had.˙h[hh
05   Bee:                                                        [eh
06               en I[: didn' know w-]
07   Ava:            [cla:sses 'r    ] a[nything,
08   Bee:   ->                          [I didn'know when you were hh[ome=
09   Ava:                                                            [Tch!
10   Bee:   ->   =[or-I wz gunnuh k-]
11   Ava:   ->>    [We l l   M o n d a ] y:::,
12               (0.2)
13   Ava:   ->>  Lemme think. ˙hhh Monday::: Wednesday, (0.5) and
14          ->>  Friday(s). I'm home by one ten.
15   Bee:        One ten¿
16   Ava:        Two uh'clock. My class ends one ten.
17   Bee:        Mm hm,
18   Ava:        An:d Wednesdays I go back in the evening(.)/(,)
19               (0.5)
20   Ava:        [(n) I  ] take the ca:r so I     ] le ]ave about five uh'clock,
21   Bee:        [ Tch! ] Oh you come ho:me? ] n- ]
22   Bee:        <Oh that's not ba[d,   ]
23   Ava:                         [Yeh] en then I go back in again.
24   Bee:        (Well ya sh'd)/(Eh least yih) get parking down there that
25               t[i-
26   Ava:         [Yeh[at that time there's no prob-=Well lately in the=
27   Bee:             [at that time
28   Ava:        =morning Rosemary's been picking me up. yihknow so I
29               (haven' been) even takin a train in [(the morning).
30   Bee:                                            [hhOh that's grea:t!
31   Ava:        Yeah, t! .hhh End uhm, (0.7) Tch! °What else. ˙hhh Oh en-
32               Tuesdeh- like Tuesdays I don't go in until two thirdy,
33               (0.5)
34   Ava:   ->>  E[n I'm home by fi:ve.
35   Bee:         [hm hmm
36               (0.3)
37   Ava:        I have- th'class is two thirdy tuh fouh.
38               (0.5)
39   Bee:        Mm
40   Ava:        En then, the same thing is (uh) jus' tihday is like a
41               long day cuz I have a break,
```

Here, the "I don't/didn't know..." is taken to be not a declaration of ignorance, but one practice for asking the embedded *wh*-question. In Extract 17 the embedded question was "where is this address"; here it is "when are you home." In Extract 17, the placement of this utterance after an invitation has been tendered and has been accepted makes it appear likely that Bea designed the

utterance to do just this job. In Extract 18, it seems less likely that Bee was using it this way; rather she appears to have been using it as an excuse for not having called (especially relevant after Ava has reported an exchange with her mother—at lines 3–4—in which "not hearing from Bee" had figured). But the point of referring to the "*I don't know* + [embedded question]" as a practice is that it can be understood as doing that action, even if its speaker had not deployed it to that end. And that is the way Ava has treated it; she responds by delivering an answer to the embedded question "when are you home," and Bee collaborates in carrying through this way of responding. In both cases, a *well*-prefaced turn figures in the production of a nonstraightforward response, evidencing thereby that the answerer is treating the preceding talk in the same manner as a *wh*-question.

IS THE RECIPIENT OF A *WH*-QUESTION DOING ANSWERING?

We now turn to the *well*-prefaced response turn itself. So far we have, in effect, left open the matter of whether or not the talk in these *well*-prefaced turns is an answer.[7] In this section we address the issue of whether these turns (which are responsive to the turn that is the locus of a *wh*-question) do answering or not. This will allow us to address the question of whether or not *well*-prefacing is exclusively an answering practice.

Of all the utterance formats that can serve to initiate a sequence, questions seem to have the most specified capacity to project the character that a response should have. All first pair-parts

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[7]Moreover, we have left unquestioned the matter of whether it is a response. However, the following extract suggests that a recipient can be confronted with the question, Is the talk by a recipient that follows a turn-initial *well* in the next turn after a *wh*-question "doing responding" to it? In this extract Louise is a roughly 12-year-old girl, whose bedtime routine with her mother is to lie together in her bed and talk about the day's events, or anything else.

```
Super Seedy (Schegloff, 1997a)

01   Lou:   a->    I read a very interesting story today.
02   Mom:   b->    Uhm what's that.
03   Lou:   +a->   W'll not today, maybe yesterday, aw who knows
04                 when hu-it's called Dragon Stew.
```

At line 3 we have a next turn that is from its outset not a response to the prior turn; indeed, it is not a response to the prior turn, which is a *wh*-question, and this is something that its recipient will have to figure out in making sense of the *well*. The *well* with which it starts is only incidentally after a *wh*-question, and is not operating sequence organizationally; sequence organizationally Mom's *wh*-question at line 2 implements a "go-ahead" response to Louise's *pre*-telling at line 1, but Louise's turn at line 3 does not progress the sequence that her prior turn had projected and with which Mom's turn had aligned. Rather, Louise first makes a pass at doing a third turn repair (Schegloff, 1997a) on "today."

As this extract shows, recipients can design next turns after questions not only as nonanswers but as nonresponses. The proper scope for analyzing and assessing what *well*-prefaced turns are doing with respect to the prior turns that they follow entails that we need first (because recipients need first) to establish that the target turn is designed to do responding to the prior. However, as all of our initial 10 specimens do have ensuing turns that do responding, as do virtually all of the other 40 specimens that we have examined, we will leave this undertaking for another occasion, and in this section we turn directly to the issue of whether the turns that are responsive to the turn that is the locus of a *wh*-question do answering or not.

make relevant next a restricted set of action types that will show appropriate understanding and responsiveness to the prior turn. But questions project the relevance of the form that a response should take. The terms of this projection vary with the type of question. The so-called *yes/no* question is so called because it specifies that an appropriately fitted response should be an answer, and the answer should take the form of—or at least begin with—either a *yes* or a *no*. How serious, precise, and effective this constraint and its enforcement can be has been made clear by Raymond's work (2000, 2003) on type-conformity in *yes/no* question sequences; the projected constraint goes to the very words.

So-called *wh*-questions are different. Rather than specifying the very words that will constitute a type-conforming answer, they project the type of formulation an appropriate answer should deliver. In the first instance, the type of formulation is given by the question word that keys the question, one of the question words whose initial sounds (and letters) give us the vernacular term *wh-questions*: e.g., *who* for person references, *where* for place references, *when* for time references, *how* for manner references, *why* for reason,[8] or motive or causal references, *what* for object references but also to combine with other elements for a range of other sorts of things—*what time*, *what side*, *what for*, and so forth. Of course, there are others: *how long* for duration, *how many* for number, *how old* for age, and so forth. While *wh*-questions project what type of formulation should come next, we should note that simply producing such an adjacency pair type-conforming response is not by itself sufficient for answering. A type-conforming formulation must also provide the appropriate sort of thing for its circumstances; it must be fitted to the particulars of the local context.

Of our initial 10 specimens, 5 get responses in which answering is done—that is, in which the sequence-responding action conforms to the terms of the sequence-initiating *wh*-question—while 5 get responses in which there is no answering—that is, in which the sequence-responding action does not conform to the formulation implicated by the sequence-initiating *wh*-question.

Sequence-Conforming Responses

In Extract 2, "which side" implicates a location formulation and the response furnishes it, albeit a formulation that is not straightforward.

In Extract 3, the form of "what is that camera set up for" implicates an explanation, while the possible complaint it implements contours the response as a possible justification and the response furnishes it, albeit as a story.

In Extract 4, "well what's this about her alarm clock singing?" implicates a recounting of what Beth did and the response furnishes it, albeit as a performance.

In Extract 8, "oh, what have you done?" implicates an account of what happened and the response furnishes it, albeit in a manner that backs down from the original announcement and absolves Ilene's dog of any culpability that may have been conveyed by the placement of the announcement.

---

[8]Arguably *why* has a type-conformity response token—namely *because*, but this will remain a conjecture until empirical analysis establishes the import of its presence or absence in a responsive turn (if there is, in fact, an import). Nevertheless, as with *yes* and *no*, an answerer can claim to be launching a type-conforming answer with a turn-initial *because*.

In Extract 9, "What do you mean by that?" implicates a more explicit formulation of "taken advantage of" and the response furnishes it, albeit in a roundabout manner to deal with the delicateness of the topic.

Sequence-Nonconforming Responses

In Extract 1, "what time do you want to go?" implicates a temporal formulation, but the response does not furnish one; rather it furnishes a method for determining an answer.

In Extract 5, "no well when are you going to bring her back?" is formed up as a question that implicates a temporal formulation as an answer, but the response does not furnish one; rather it treats the *wh*-question as implementing a complaint and furnishes a justification.

In Extract 6, "what did it say?" implicates a report of what was written in a letter, but the response is a refusal to deliver the report.

In Extract 7, "so and when other time have I ever done that?" implicates a report of an (exemplary) occasion on which she has snubbed her girlfriends, but the response does not furnish it; rather it treats the *wh*-question as implementing a challenge, and it is this challenge that is taken up in the response—for the most part.[9]

In Extract 10, "how many times you sat in the living room …" implicates the formulation of an amount (e.g., a frequency) of past usage, but the response does not furnish this; rather it treats the *wh*-question as implementing an evidentiary claim (in favor of the other party to the dispute) and produces a counterclaim of sorts (albeit a not-so-serious claim that seems to concede her opponent's claim).

In all 10 instances the responding turns begin with *well*. Clearly, then, alerting a recipient to the "not straightforwardness" of a response is not restricted to answering but extends to nonconforming responses as well. In fact, we might suggest that responses that do not do answering may constitute a "domain of not-straightforwardness" and thus a natural home for *well*-prefaced responses.

TWO FINAL REFLECTIONS

We conclude with brief discussions of the relationship of the work reported here to other analytic themes in past and current conversation analysis.

First, regarding preference and its alternatives: Although, as Pomerantz (1984) has shown, *well* can be employed as a feature in the design of turns that constitute dispreferred second assessments, the reader may have noticed that we have not invoked preference organization in our discussion of *well*-prefaced responses to *wh*-questions. In few, if any, of our target specimens would one want to have characterized the responses as "dispreferred"—not because they are preferred, but because that language seems ill-suited to the kind of departure from what might be normative in these turns in these sequences.

The relevance of preference organization for the design of second assessments and other adjacency pair-organized second pair-parts (Sacks, 1987; Schegloff, 1988, pp. 453–455; 2007, pp. 58–96) hinges on the type of sequence launched by the first pair-part: Preference organization

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[9]See the discussion of Extract 7 on p. 102 of this article.

becomes relevant when the first makes conditionally relevant distinct alternative types of responding actions. Thus, a first assessment makes agreeing or disagreeing second assessments relevant, an invitation makes acceptance or rejection relevant, and so forth. That is, both preferred and dispreferred responses are made conditionally relevant, and practices such as *well*-prefacing contribute to the differential design of such responses in these sequence-organizational environments. Certainly preference organization can have relevance for some adjacency pairs begun with *wh*-questions, as may be the case in Extracts 7 and 10 where the questions themselves are not doing simple questioning, but implement other sequence-initiating actions in what are already ongoing disputing sequences. However, with many *wh*-questions (e.g., most clearly with Extract 2's "Which side did you go in on?" or Extract 4's "What's this about her alarm clock singing," but arguably for many of the other data extracts we have examined), there do *not* seem to be alternative types of actions implicated by the first pair-part, one of which might be compellingly characterized as "preferred," the other as "dispreferred."

On the one hand, the preference terminology does not always require contrasting pairs; for example, the preference for recognitionals in referring to persons (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996) does not rest on such an explicit contrast. On the other hand, a line of analysis that preceded that of preference in the development of conversation analysis may well be more suited to the feature of nonstraightforwardness that figures centrally in the topic of this article, namely, the treatment of "asymmetrical alternatives" (see Sacks, 1992, Vol. 2, pp. 456; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, pp. 313–317; and see Lerner, 1996, pp. 304–306 for a review). This line of analysis turns not on preformulated opposing pairs of action types (like agree/disagree, accept/reject, and the like), but on a normative or preferred form of conduct and a variety of departures from it— in the present context, straightforward and nonstraightforward. Whereas turn-initial *well* in response turns in bipolar sequence types serves to alert recipients to monitor for the possible dispreferredness of the response, the upshot of the present article is that turn-initial *well* in response turns in unipolar or asymmetrical alternatives sequence types alerts the recipient to monitor for the way in which it will or may be nonstraightforward. It is, of course, possible that both of these can be simultaneously relevant, as when an apparently unipolar First Pair Part serves as the vehicle for a bipolar action type (as in Extracts 7 and 10), and a turn-initial *well* can alert its recipient to monitor for both the nonstraightforwardness of the response and the way in which that serves the dispreferredness of that response. We are not prepared to develop this line further at present, but offer it for consideration in place of the diction of preferred/dispreferred.

Finally, one enduring challenge for work on the organization of interaction has to do with reconciling the organizations of practice for interaction (like turn taking, sequence organization, repair organization, etc.) with the detailed particularity of actual, singular occasions of interaction (see for example, Lerner, 2003). The organizations of practice, we must figure, are organizations of interaction for the species, and are, therefore, at some level of describable abstraction transcultural, translinguistic, and transcontextual (Schegloff, 2006). How are such organizations to be reconciled with an experiential world of unanticipatable and unspecifiable particularity? The machineries of interaction that we describe work in operating theaters and coal mines, on Arctic ice and in Brazilian jungles, in New York, London, Rome, and in Thai and Lao isolated villages. How is this possible?

One of the key resources must surely be that the machineries—the organizations of practice— are quite formal in character, and rely on their users to serve as the practicing interface between their formal and general character, on the one hand, and the local, here-and-now circumstances in

which ordinary people bring them to bear, on the other. Both the organizational formality and the contextual specificity are real and invite sustained inquiry, but it is the former that at present may require our most urgent attention if we are to maintain a thriving discipline.

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