On Complainability

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Two common components of social problems are their grounding in the differential categorization of people and the treatment of some forms of conduct as "complainable." This article begins by introducing some ways in which the categorization of people and the complainability of conduct are problematic—both in the conduct of ordinary interaction and in social scientific analysis of ordinary interaction. It then addresses this problematicity by examining how ordinary conduct in interaction can display participants' tacit orientation to the relevance of unspoken categories and to the complainability of one's own or others' conduct. It concludes by inviting attention to recent work on well-recognized topics of inquiry in the social problems literature, and encourages the advancement of such work by combining new analytic resources with longstanding social problems themes and topics.

There are two ways that general knowledge of social processes can contribute to the study and understanding of social problems. In many instances, understanding of general social processes is pursued by directly addressing settings that can be characterized by reference to social problems. A striking case in point is the work of Erving Goffman, some of whose contributions to the understanding of interaction were developed in the context of accounts of certain forms of "deviancy," as in works like *Stigma* (1963a), or on settings that were officially dedicated to dealing with problems of deviancy and, at the same time, embodied problems of their own; I have in mind, of course, his work on "total institutions" and related topics reported in *Asylums* (1961).

This is not to say, of course, that Goffman's work on interaction elsewhere—in *Behavior in Public Places* (1963b) or *Relations in Public* (1971)—did not contribute to our understanding of social problems. They exemplify the other way of doing so. By furnishing analytic tools for understanding a much broader range of human conduct than that implicated in the subject matter of social problems, they nonetheless contribute to the advancement of our understanding in this more delimited area; the classic article by Robert M. Emerson and Sheldon F. Messinger (1977) on the "micro-politics of trouble" is but one notable example. Indeed, Douglas W. Maynard's (1988) lead article in the previous special issue of *Social Problems* devoted to language, social interaction, and social problems focused on just this theme: that studies of ordinary interaction have a built-in affinity to social problems concerns.

This article aims to make a contribution of this second sort. It starts from two observations:

(1) that a very substantial proportion of what get termed "social problems"—whether characterized by structural relationships of inequality and oppression (such as poverty, racism, sexism, age-ism, weight-ism, etc.) or by behavioral or situational criteria (such as addiction, mental illness, homelessness, incarceration, etc.)—involve segments of the population defined by category membership. Understanding the processes and practices by which members of a society get categorized by others in the course of ordinary interaction engages one of the key analytical "sites" in which the daily generation of social problems is to be found.

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Because more often than not the categories that are at work in an episode of conduct are not articulated overtly, ways of locating and empirically demonstrating the effects of tacit orientation to categories provide important and relevant tools of analysis;

(2) that a key component of social problems is to be found in the *stance* taken up by members of a society toward various types of persons and various types of conduct. At least as far back as Richard C. Fuller and Richard R. Myers's "Natural History of a Social Problem" (1941), students of social problems have understood that part of "the problem" was the stance that members of the society took up (Fuller and Myers termed it "cultural values") toward the setting, toward the people, or toward the conduct that was treated as problematic. But of course such a stance can be traced further back—for example, to Charles Horton Cooley (1964 [1922]), to George H. Mead (1934), and to W. I. Thomas's well known but often misunderstood (and misattributed) dictum that "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928:571–72)—and traced forward to societal reaction theory (Lemert 1951, 1963) and labelling theory (Becker 1963), in all of which interaction between individuals in ordinary settings of daily life figure centrally. "Stance" is one way in which values are embodied in interaction; understanding how stance comes to be deployed is, then, one place to look if we are to understand the moment-to-moment development of problematic situations.

As it happens, how persons categorize persons was one of the initial lines of inquiry in conversation analysis (Sacks 1972a, 1972b, 1992; see also Schegloff forthcoming b for a secondary account) and, after a relatively quiet period during which attention has been focussed on other aspects of the organization of interaction, efforts are underway to take up again issues of categorization, now supported by what has been learned on other fronts in the intervening period. Indeed, among the stimuli to this reinvigoration has been the interest shown by students of ethnic and nationalist conflict in the roots of such conflict in the way categorization plays itself out in ordinary scenes of interaction (e.g., Bailey 1997; Brubaker 2002; Jenkins 1994). Although ordinarily thought of as political or macro-sociology, this set of concerns could as easily be considered part of the domain invoked by the term "social problems," and the interest in studies of categorization in interaction by students of ethnic and nationalistic conflict augurs well for the potential usefulness of this line of inquiry to those who work in the field of social problems.

A second object of substantial interest in recent years in conversation analysis has been the ways in which various sorts of conduct in interaction are understood, and how that understanding can engender distinctive courses of action as its consequence. One type of action—and one set of related action sequences—has featured complaints and doing complaining, and varieties of moves to circumvent or preempt doing complaining. Indeed, complaining is one central focus of a major cross-national study of Language and Social Action sponsored by the European Science Foundation, informed centrally by conversation-analytic initiatives.

Complaining about something is, of course, one way of taking up a stance toward it, and a negative stance at that. Therein lies one promise of studying this property of some conduct—conduct that is, so to speak, complainable—and the sorts of actions and activities that it can engender for understanding social problems, for the very term "social problems" invokes the complainability of what it is used to refer to.

Another (and more salient) linkage of relevance between complaining and social problems was highlighted in the contribution of Paul Drew and Elizabeth Holt (1988) to the previous special issue of *Social Problems* on language and social interaction. They noted (1988) that, about a decade earlier, Emerson and Messenger (1977) had "pointed to the crucial role complaints have in the process of transforming the initially privately experienced and sustained nature of personal troubles into openly acknowledged interpersonal difficulties. They suggested that complaints may be made after other more implicit (and perhaps less morally implicative) means of remedying the trouble have been unsuccessfully pursued" (p. 399). In reviewing and extending the Emerson and Messenger article, Drew and Holt (1988) noted

that complaints may be "the first such remedial action in which the nature of a trouble is given explicit formulation in language . . . Making a complaint is the stage at which sometimes vague perceptions of something being wrong are cast into the public domain" (p. 399). It is this as-yet-unarticulated aspect of what may or may not come to overt expression in a complaint that is a central focus of the present article.

Complaints and Complainability

Referring to "complainability" rather than to "complaints" brings attention to the fact that complaining and the possibility of complaining can inform ordinary interaction without an actual complaint ever being articulated or otherwise made manifest in the conduct of the participants. Consider the following exchange among three elderly but robust residents in a retirement home, sitting at a table having afternoon coffee. Though Hank has been at the table for a while, he was the last to join the group.[1]

(01) [Coffee Chat, 8]

```
 1              (0.5)
 2   Hank:-->   Wut is that cam:era set up for?
 3  Betty:->>   Well they- she came over and she ask'd* if we minded if
 4              she took (.) our conversation_they're jist doing it for
 5              a school proj:ect.
 6   Hank:      Mm hm.=
 7  Betty:      =And we said we _didn't mi:nd<and we all sign:ed it.
 8              (ap)proving we didn't mind so(h)=
 9    Tom:      =heh=heh=
10  Betty:      =heh heh .hh hh
11              (1.6)
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Hank has noticed the video camera recording the table's activity, and at line 2 asks what might appear to be an innocuous enough question, "What is that camera set up for?" But Betty does not take it to be so innocuous. Two features of her answer at lines 3–5 are noteworthy: (1) starting with "well" in this kind of context (responses to so-called "WH-questions"; that is, questions starting with "who," "where," etc.; here "what for") regularly is used to alert recipients that the response will not be straightforward, and the recipient should not treat it as such, but should examine it to find in what respect it is not straightforward, and why it has been shaped in this way (Schegloff and Lerner 2004); and (2) Betty's response in fact contains a straightforward answer embedded in it—"they're just doing it for a school project," but Betty does not deliver it in a straightforward way. She embeds it in a little story; in fact, she appears to have started saying it straight out with her "Well they-" at line 3, but she interrupts that to turn it into a little story. The story tells how the young woman who is videotaping came to their table, apparently before Hank had joined them, and asked if they minded—that is, asked their permission—then how they gave their permission and signed Informed Consent forms. She ends the little story with a "so," with no sequel other than a bit of laughter in which the other gentleman at the table joins. So what has happened here?

It appears that Betty has heard in Hank's question the possibility of a forthcoming complaint. Cameras "snooping" on people is a complainable, and Hank's question can be heard as preparing the grounds for a complaint. The way Betty structures her response shows that she

1. Digitized audio clips for most or all of the data cited are available at my Web site: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/> under the title of this article. Data were collected over a 40-year period (1965–2005) by, or under the aegis of, various organizations and individuals, including the author, friends, colleagues, students, and corpora available at various Web sites. Guides to the transcription notational conventions can be found in the appendix to this special section. See also Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974:731–34; Jefferson 2004:13–31 or see my Web tutorial on transcription at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/TranscriptionProject/index.html>.

has heard it this way. The little story gets on the table that the young woman has explained what she is doing, has asked if they mind, has been reassured that they do not, and has secured signed documents to attest that she has their permission. The "so" with which she ends is what Raymond (2004) refers to as a "stand-alone 'so'"; Raymond describes one of the uses to which it can be put as being "designed to close off that larger course of action" (p. 206). And so it appears here. Betty has responded to Hank's question in a fashion that thoroughly blocks him from proceeding to doing the complaint for which she has heard him to be preparing; her "so" is an unspoken and unanswerable challenge to proceed in the face of what she has reported. And her success is celebrated by a collaborative bit of laughter in which Tom, her audience for the exchange, joins.

The point of taking up this exchange here is to register that parties to an interaction can understand some ostensibly innocent talk, especially questions, as possibly pre-figuring a recognizable course of action, and can respond in a fashion designed to interdict the move to engage in that course of action. Here the anticipation was of a complaint "on the way," and that anticipation traded in part on an orientation to the camera as a possible complainable. Complainability, then, is recognizable (by other than the potential complainer) in advance of a complaint, and can result in the non-surfacing of the complaint itself. If "social problems" are complainables, then getting a handle on how complainables get recognized and dealt with in interaction before any actual complaint is done is worthy of our pursuit.

Complainability and Identity

The complainability of some form of conduct can be contingent on the identity of the agents and the recipients of the conduct—identities often grounded in category memberships. For example, whether the onset of overlapping talk by another constitutes an infringement on the rights of the already-speaking; that is, whether it is taken to be "an interruption" depends on a variety of aspects of the occurrence, not the least of which are the category memberships of the participants. A substantial body of literature concerns men interrupting women, doctors interrupting patients, adults interrupting children, and so forth; much less concerns the opposite direction (particularly astonishing in the case of adults and children). The issue here may be less the actual incidence of the events of overlapping talk than it is that members of the "subordinate" categories may treat the onset of overlapping talk as activating the relevance of those categories, taking the overlap to be complainable—and thus "interruption"—by virtue of its agent and patient being cast by reference to categories that are hierarchically ordered (Schegloff 2002a).

But the case of "interruption," although among the most commonly treated of the intersections of complainability and categorization, is by no means the only one. Consider the following exchange between members of a rock group. Tom is their agent/manager, and Nole is the leader of the band. Tom has called, they have talked about preparations for a big block party appearance, and Tom then turns to what he has been up to while the band is preparing.

(02) [Tom and Nole]

```
 1  Tom:      Well we met with Stu yesterda:y
 2  Nol:      Oka:y¿
 3  Tom:      Alright.<everything went good <and he's gonna go over
 4            and we're layin out the appropriate game plan
 5            .hhh Now were you guys gonna send him some pictures¿
 6  Nol:      Yeah man w- w- w- we're working on that <this guys is
 7            is being really hard to work with [ma]n, this guy Tim.
 8  Tom:                                        [w-]
 9  Tom:      why.
10  Nol:->    He's just like hhh he's really touchy about like (.)
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11              sending out his pictures hh (.) (.)like
12              (1.0)
13  Nol:        umm
14              (0.5)
15  Nol:        unle- unless he like approves of 'em or som- <we're
16              gonna hafta get another person is what it is:.
17              (0.8)
18  Tom:        why wh- I don unnerstand why is he bein' so difficult?
19  Nol:        Well he just um
20  Tom:->>     .hhHH [HE'S JUSTA] student ri::ght?=
21  Nol:              [he's just ]
22  Nol:        =yeah he's a yeah he's a student yeah
23  Tom:->>     Aspiring to be the next photojournalist of any
24      ->>     major trade magazine in the world or what(h)?
25  Nol:->>     Right. Right. that kinda thing <an he's he's worried
26              about sending out his work whe- if he doesn' think it's
27              up to par
28  Tom:        mmm:
29  Nol:        >but he's suppost to be getting us< the contac sheets
30              toda:y.
31              (0.5)
32  Nol:        to send to Stu <just so they can look at 'em <cuz there
33              are some good shots on them.
34  Tom:        Rea:lly:.
35  Nol:        but we we have a but we'r- scheduled to take more
36              photo:s:.
37              (.)
38  Nol:        but he he cancelled out on us for today <we were
39              supposed to work with him today on it.=
40  Tom:        =Rea:lly.
41  Nol:        yeah.
```

At lines 6–16 Nole describes the difficulty in getting the pictures of the band that were to have been forwarded to a publicity agent, and specifically the reluctance of the photographer to provide pictures that do not meet his standards of excellence. This complaint is underscored, and the complained-of conduct further questioned, by Tom's observation that the photographer is "just a student"; the complainability of the conduct is thus aggravated by reference to the category membership of its agent. And in virtually the next breath the same speaker renders understandable the conduct in question (and by implication less complainable) by reference to the category *ambitions* of the photographer. There can, then, be a link between the complainability of the conduct and the category membership of those implicated in it—whether amplifying or qualifying that complainability.

What this article is concerned with, then, is the tracking of complainability and orientation to category membership—either or both of which can be quite overt on the one hand, or tacitly informing the conduct of the interaction on the other hand. The next section presents a bare outline of some central points in understanding person categorization in conversation analysis. With that as background, the remainder of the article explores various aspects of complainability—more or less overt.

Categorization in Quotidian Interaction and in Social Science Inquiry

Among the very first undertakings in conversation analysis some 40 years ago was Sacks's work (1972a, 1972b) on how members of a society describe—indeed, grasp—persons by reference to *categories* of persons—what he referred to as "membership categorization devices."

At the heart of membership categorization devices are collections of categories used by ordinary persons in ordinary occasions of interaction to refer to people with terms of reference for kinds or categories of people. These are categories like male/female in the collection we can call sex; *n* year olds, or child/adolescent/adult/senior, and other sets of category terms that can compose the collection "age"; and sets of categories we might call occupation, sign (Leo, Sagittarius, etc.), ethnicity (Chicano, Italian, Polish, Jewish, etc.), as well as more restricted collections like "freshman/ sophomore . . .," or "pitcher/catcher/shortstop . . ."; and so on. Some of these go together, others don't. I have presented them here to preserve their grouped-ness; male/female, Chicano/Jewish/Irish . . . are empirically correct for this society; male/female/Irish . . . would be incorrect; "Irish" is not a member of that set of categories in this culture.

A key point is the observation that there are at least two such collections of categories that will apply correctly to any member of any society we know about: sex and age. In fact, of course, there are many more, however much the categories and their collections may vary from one society or culture to another. One consequence of this is the following. One cannot understand the act of referring to someone as a "woman" because they are, in fact, a "woman"; they are also, in fact, an "adult." And, of course, they are also lots of other things as well. So actual membership in a category is by itself no grounds for using that category to refer to them, or to bring to bear on them whatever the culture takes to be "known" about members of that category. Something else underlies and underwrites the use of that category as a, or as *the*, relevant one to be used in any particular here and now. This issue underlies many lines of inquiry in studying talk-in-interaction, but one methodological—or meta-methodological—issue for investigators has special relevance in the present context.

If we cannot adequately understand why someone in conversation refers to another as a "dog-person" (yes, that is a category too) because they are in fact a lover of dogs, because they are in fact other things too, does not that issue face researchers who may refer to those being studied as men, or bilinguals, or cognitively challenged, or non-native speakers, or felons (corporate or otherwise), or lefties (either politically or handedly), or gays, or welfare mothers, or homeless people, or any other category because they are in fact members of that category? What relevancies underlie the use of those terms of reference as pivotal terms of analysis? What do they tell us about the underlying auspices of the inquiry? Without some non-arbitrary grounding of their relevance, is not inquiry rendered profoundly equivocal by their *en passant* invocation? What might constitute a defensible and stable way of grounding the use of some categories to refer to the people whose conduct in interaction supplies the grist for our analytic mills?

One way of addressing this issue has been that the most satisfactory grounding of the terminology of inquiry is the orientations which the participants themselves treat as relevant at that juncture of the interaction which we are analyzing (Schegloff 1988a, 1991, 1997a). The way to warrant our characterizing them as men or women is by showing that they are themselves oriented to such categories as sex/gender at that point in the interaction. This has sometimes been understood as a challenge to the use of such categories in analysis except when the parties say very explicit things like "speaking as a woman . . .," as if that proved that the speaker was in fact speaking as a woman, or that it was by virtue of that category membership that what followed was in fact being said. Of course, no such restriction is entailed, or intended. And "there's the rub," as Shakespeare said. How can we as analysts detect and show that parties to an interaction are oriented to this or that set of categories as relevant, without their saying so in so many words, which they, for the most part, do not do, and which would not necessarily constitute such evidence even if they did. That is one of the issues that underlies the present undertaking, though it will not surface again until the end of the article.

One way of working in this area is to look elsewhere than just person-categorizing terms to show that we as analysts can see and can show that some bit of conduct gives us access to

the orientations informing the interaction at that point, just as it gives such access to the participants in the interaction. The following discussion is in the service of progress on this very general issue by showing that some bit of conduct can be seen to be oriented to by participants in interaction as "complainable," even when no complaining has been done or mentioned. If successful, this should encourage us in our efforts to show the same for categorical aspects of persons in the talk among the participants, and in the methodological robustness of our analytic practices themselves.

Complainability

Here are five specimens of the sort of thing I have in mind by an orientation to complainability. The first two I have selected share a common sort of complainability—calling on the telephone too early or too late. I should remark to begin with that "too *x*" (where *x* is a descriptor) is a common element of a complaint and a common ingredient of complainability; and "not too *x*" is a way of invoking the possibility of complainability, while denying its achievement (or its exploitation) in the matter being characterized (as in "not too bad").

(03) [#21 MS Openings, #5]

```
 1  Grandma:     Hello:,
 2  Michael:     Hello Nanny?
 3  Grandma:     Yes Mike
 4  Michael:     Hi(y'),
 5  Grandma:     °Okay,
 6  Michael:     •hh Can I please speak ta Lisa,
 7  Grandma:->   •hh why su::re, she wuz gonna call you but
 8           ->  •I w's afraid it was too early.
 9  Michael:     Too early, I told her to come over here at ten o'clock.
10  Grandma:     Oh didju?
11  Michael:     Y[eah
12  Grandma:      [Michael told you ta come over at te:n honey? ((aside))
13               (0.7)
14  Grandma:     Alright, t- she didn't know. Alright, here she is.
```

(04) [#35 ID Openings, #212-212a]

```
 1  Answ:        Hello:,
 2  Bonnie:      Hello.=May I speak to Linda please.
 3  Answ:        Uh huh,
 4  Answ:        ((off phone)) °Linda.
 5               (9.0)
 6  Linda:       Hello,
 7  Bonnie:      Hi Linda,
 8               (•)
 9  Bonnie:      's Bonnie.=
10  Linda:       =Yeh I know.=I've been trying to call you a- all
11          ->   afternoon.=I got this message last night about a
12          ->   quarter to 'leven.=So I thought I'm not gonna call
13               you. •hh [(    )]
14  Bonnie:->             [Oh you] should have because (    ) I told
15          ->   'er not- it doesn't matter wh- how late.
16               (0.2)
```

In these two specimens (at lines 7–8 and at lines 11–13, respectively), one party reports to another the withholding of a phone call by reference to its too-earliness or too-lateness and their attendant complainability; in the second of these, this is countered by a claim that complainability had in fact been surrendered or neutralized in advance (at lines 14–16).

In the third of these specimens, 14-year-old Bonnie calls her father (now married to other-than-her-mother) innocent of any suspicion of complainability, and is mortifiedly apologetic at line 19 when informed that they have already gone to bed—not implausibly understandable as the complaint which complainability underwrites.

(05) [#41 ID Openings, #253]

```
 1  Norm:       Hello:,
 2  Bonnie:     H'llo Daddy?
 3  Norm:       How're you doin.
 4  Bonnie:     •h Okay. [hh
 5  Norm:                [Goo:d. How w'z your uh (0.3) camp.
 6  Bonnie:     •h Oh. 't w'z fun.
 7  Norm:       Good. When didyih get back.
 8  Bonnie:     •hh u:hm. Yesterday afternoon, hh (0.3)
 9              [not afternoon, it w'z more evening.
10  Norm:       [(          )
11  Norm:       Oh yeah. How long were you away,
12  Bonnie:     tch •h for: four days, hh
13  Norm:       Is that right.
14  Bonnie:     Yeah.
15              (0.7)
16  Bonnie:     •hh[h
17  Norm:  ->     [We were uh I- I wasn't sure you're gonna call,
18         ->   so we were in bed (         ) yihknow (        .)
19  Bonnie:->   •hh Oh I'm sorry.=
20  Norm:       =Oh that's alright, we'd just gone to bed a few
21              minutes ago. No problem.
22  Bonnie:     uhh •hh [(    )
23  Norm:               [except y'know when the phone rings late
24              at night you kinda wonder (what you think      )
25              something is wrong somewhere.y'know.
26  Bonnie:     Yeah.
27  Norm:       Always a kind of a startle thing, y'know.
28  Bonnie:     Yeah. Tch I"m: sorry 'bout that.
```

In the fourth specimen, a physician begins by apologizing for the wait which the patient has had to endure, and then expresses the hope that "it hasn't been too long" (lines 10–11, 13) making explicit the complainability to which the apology was alluding and which it was pre-empting, and extracting the denial that it was not only not "too too long" (line 10), or "too long" (line 13), it was "not long at all" (lines 16–17). I mean with this only to provide a real-life exemplar of the point about "too" made earlier by mere claim alone.

(06) [Robinson, P3:18-04]

```
 1  DOC:     ((Knock Knock Knock))
 2           (0.2)
 3  PAT:     He[llo: ]
 4  DOC:       [Hello:]:
 5  PAT:     Hello:,
 6  DOC:->    [Hi: ('e:re,) I apologize] [for thuh wa:i]t.
 7  PAT:      [(huh huh huh)           ] [•hhh         ]
 8  PAT:->   Oh that's alright. I'm=in=
 9  PAT:     =n:[o rush tonight.          ]
10  DOC:->      [I hope it hasn't been too]: too
11           long. [for y]a?
12  PAT:           [Huh? ]
13  DOC:->   I hope it< ha[sn't been too long]
14  PAT:                  [ No:      no      ]
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```
15  DOC:     [for [ya (has it),]
16  PAT:->   [no  [it    hasn't] been
17       ->  l[o:ng, (at all/no)   ]
18  DOC:      [I  like your  hair  ] cut.
19  PAT:     Oh.
```

Finally in this introduction to complainability, the fifth specimen is of a different sort. In it (at lines 6, 7–10; 33–44) a family tries to figure out whether a neighbor's "report" about their dog constitutes a complaint or not and, if so, on whose behalf the complaint has been entered—the dog's or the neighbor's. But the discussion is informed by the understanding that the dog's behavior is complainable, and if the report is to be treated as a complaint, various responses can be entertained, such as rejection (line 47) or remedy (lines 48–49).

(07) [Capps, Dinner 3:3]

```
(Stuart/father;Carrie/mother; Elissa, age 11; Ben, age 6;
talking re: Agnes [the dog] who has been caught on the couch)
 1  Stu:     Don't [leave her in when you're not]
 2  Ben:           [M:::O:::::::?VE             ] O::VER BU>TTER?<=
 3  Stu:     =You c(hh)an't trust her=
 4  Car:->   Clarence told me to[da:y
 5  Ben:                         [M:O:::?VE O:VER BU>[TTER
 6  Car:->                                          [I don't know
 7       ->  if this was in the nature of a complaint or not.but
 8           [that she-
 9  Ben:     [Mo::?ve o::ver [>butter<
10  Car:->                   [that she cri:es a lot when we're not
11             home.
12             (0.4)
13  Stu:     Well she did.I [told you what she ↓did that one ↑mor↓ning]
14  Ben:                    [M::O:::::::::::::?VE O:::V            ER]
15           BU>TTER<
16           (0.3)
17  Car:     What.
18           (0.3)      ((sound of knife against plate))
19  Car:     Agnes?
20  Stu:     Umhhm:
21           (0.2)
22  Stu:     How- [how- how
23  Ben:          [M::O::::::?VE   [O:::V:ER                  ]>BUTTER<
24  Stu:                           [a little ho:w:ling action?]
25           (0.3)
26  Car:        Oh ↓ye:ah
27  .
28  .        ((11 unrelated lines omitted; dog shakes collar))
29  .
30  Eli:     YOU KNOW FRANKLY? (0.3) I THINK CLARENCE IS AN OLD
31           ↓SOURPUSS=
32  Car:     =SHhh Be careful the walls are thin.
33  Eli:     Mo::m,
34  Car:->   Yea:h you know he has a way of telling you things th't
35           (0.4) it's kind of like he's- he wants to complain but
36           he- doesn't (0.2) come right out and tell you.
37  (.)
38  Stu:     Well you [know?
39  Car:->            [He was saying it as if you know he wanted me to
40           know that she was lone:ly
41  (.)
```

```
42  Car:->  but at the same time (0.4) [I think he wanted to]-e:ya
43  Stu:->                             [H e  w a s  c o m p-]
44          is complain' about
45  Car:->  EY↓:ah: (0.3) the ↓noi:se
46  Stu:->  Well I'll tell ya (0.2)
47  Eli:->  Well le- just let 'im SUFFER
48  Stu:->  Maybe uhm (0.5) maybe we are gonna haveta get another
49          (0.8) m(hh)- (0.3) partner for her: eventually
50          (0.2)
51          ((continues on topic, in sequence))
```

I hope it is clear here that the family can be considering what to do by reference to the complainability of the dog's conduct in some independence of the finding about the neighbor's talk being an actual complaint or not.[2] And that the physician in Extract 6 is dealing with the complainability of the delay without respect to there being an actual complaint—indeed, his conduct is a move to preempt such a complaint if it is the works. And it is on complaint preemption that I want to focus.

Complaint Preemption: "Sorry"

As an introduction to "sorry" and its kindred expressions as registering awareness of some untoward occurrence (error, violation, impropriety, disruption, and the like) and taking responsibility for its occurrence by apologizing for it, let us examine two small incidents taken from the course of a rehearsal by a string quartet composed of professional calibre musicians, and being held at the home of one of them.

In the first, Extract 8, the quartet is working on a passage from a Haydn quartet; Sheryl is playing first violin, conventionally the "head honcho" in preparing a musical piece. She has called for the repetition of a certain passage (lines 1–3), and the quartet members work out together what the starting point of the replaying should be (lines 6–13; the numbers mentioned in the talk mark distinct places in the score). After playing for some eight seconds, Sheryl stops (that is, she self-interrupts) and marks the occurrence of some problematic playing in the preceding moments. She starts with the trouble-marker "oops!" (this is commonly the doer's trouble-marker; a discoverer's trouble-marker is "uh-oh"), and this is followed by the apology-term "sorry."

(08) [Quartet, 4/19/94, 12-13]

```
 1  Sher:     we should do that again.
 2  Marg:     yeah.
 3  Sher:     ('cuz it's) not too familiar,
 4            (0.5)
 5  Bob:      heh heh [heh heh
 6  Marg:             [let's j's the second move u::h same place.
 7            sixty:: whatever that was.
 8  Mike:     one?
 9            (0.8)
10  Sher:     I think c'n even j's start sixty s- s:- seven.
11            (0.5)
12  Marg:     mm kay,
13  Sher:     okay.
14            (3.0)
15             ((quartet 5.0, mm. 67-70))
16  Sher:->   oops, sorry.
17  Bob:      are you doing it a little bit ((c. demonstrates m. 69))=
```

2. Carrie here (lines 34–45) shows herself to be as astute a monitor for possible complaints, as was Betty in Extract 1.

```
18  Sher:     =I'm not s:-
19            no I'm not meaning to do that,
20             ((v1 demonstrating 1.2, m. 68))
21  Sher:     I'm jus' trying to,
22             ((v1 and c practising, 1.2))
```

Here the "oops" displays that Sheryl is aware that she has misplayed (i.e., that she has noticed it—or noticed it as well), and, in case the others have not, as the doer of the trouble (and, for now, as the head honcho), she calls attention to it; and, with the apology term, she takes responsibility for its consequences for the joint activity—that is, the need to start the passage yet again.

In the second of these problematic moments, Extract 9, someone knocks on the front door just a little while later, about a minute and a half into the playing of this passage.

(09) [Quartet 4/19/94 #1, 26-27]

```
 1  Sher:     w' b'tter go o:n.
 2            (0.6)
 3  Mike:     °I guess so.
 4            (3.5)
 5            ((quartet 109.0, 2nd movement, mm. 1-21 + 4.0 ))
 6  Marg:->                                    [sorry. (        )
 7            [((knocking sound))
 8  Marg:     COME ON I:N.
 9            (1.0)
10  Sher:     COME I:N.
11            (1.0)
12  Manny:    COME ON IN.
13             ((sound of door opening))
14  X:        It [sound]ed too nice out here.
15  Sher:        [ hi  ]
16  Sher:     eh hh huh huh
17  X    ->   Hi: sorry to interrupt you.
18  Sher:->   that's okay.
19            (0.4)
20  Bob:      sounds better out there.[(        )
21  Sher:->                           [she w's expect[ing yu- hhh hah
22                                                   [((c practicing))
23  X:        (I thought it sounded better)
24  Marg:     Hi=
25  X:   ->   =Hi. sorry to interrupt.
26  Marg:->   no: problem.
27             ((inaudible talking,78.0, v1,va, c practicing))
28  Marg:     I love him. He makes my [life so easy?,
29  Mike:                             [°right here.
30            (1.0)
31  Mike:     what d'z he do for you Margaret?
32             [((va tuning, then v2 and c))
33  Marg:      [everything,?
34  Sher:     huh huh huh
35  Marg:     pays my bills,
36            (1.0)
37  Marg:     (   )
38            (5.0)
39  Sher:->   kay since- (0.4) since we stopped, (.)we're gonna' have
40            to do the whole thing again.[but j'st- .hhh I wonder if=
41  Mike:                               [yeah.
42  Sher:->   =we could(.) avoid the temptation (.) to: slow do:wn (.)
43            in the fourth bar.
44            (1.0)
```

I mentioned before that this rehearsal is being held in the home of one of the quartet members. Examination of the video record and the transcript makes clear whose home it is—Margaret's, of course. As soon as Margaret hears the knock on the door (line 6), she says, "sorry." The knocking prompts an interruption of the rehearsal, one that is consequential for the group (as is underlined by the wording of Sheryl's mobilization of the restart at lines 39–43, and 39–40 in particular, in the "we're gonna have to do the whole thing again"). In part this may be prompted by Margaret's role as hostess of the occasion, who will now have to stop participation in the quartet's work to attend to the summons at the door.[3] But as likely, I think, is that Margaret has prompted the appearance of the person she figures is at the door; it is her business manager or personal assistant, and she has arranged for him to come by. The others know this, and when the intruder (at line 17) apologizes for interrupting, Sheryl accepts the apology and adds (line 21), "she was expecting you," which, by characterizing his arrival as "expected," proposes to attenuate its intrusiveness and perhaps its offensiveness. Whereas in Extract 8 the trouble may have gone undetected had not its doer called attention to it and apologized, in Extract 9 the trouble can hardly be missed or ignored. And its proximate doer *does* apologize, but it is Margaret—visibly connected only remotely to the event—whose apology at the very first knock on the door (line 6) volunteers her responsibility for it.

But are these really complaint preemptions? How do they show tacit orientation to complainability? How can we address such questions? Perhaps along the following lines.

When not done in response to a complaint, and when doing apologizing and not regretting,[4] apology terms are "retro" objects (Schegloff forthcoming a). That is, they mark that there is something that is, or will have been, their source. Technically speaking, they initiate a sequence which can—and most often does—retroactively locate something else as the first element of the sequence of which the retro-object is the second, although it was not such a "source" until the retro-object targeted it as such. So for example, other-initiation of repair (Drew 1997; Schegloff 1997b, 2000a, 2004; Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977) is a retro-object; it locates some otherwise unmarked aspect of what has preceded as a trouble-source, activating a potential (for problematicity) which any item in the talk (or other conduct) has, but which was not a relevant aspect of that juncture in the talk until it was so targeted.

Some occurrences of laughter operate the same way. Only *some* laughter because some laughter is produced in response to a preceding action by another designed to occasion laughter; laughter is then like a second pair part, as for example in a joke-laughter sequence. But some laughter is not occasioned by a joke; or some participant may fail to have registered the "joke-ness" of the preceding talk, and so the laughter will not appear to them to have been an appropriate, indeed, a preferred response to that preceding talk. A search may thereby be prompted—in particular for the just-prior speaker of an utterance that was not designedly funny—for what the source of the laughter has been: something in their utterance? In their conduct or demeanor? In their appearance or clothing? In the environment that they had not noticed? In some juxtaposition of these elements that has been grasped by others as funny? And so on. Here again, then, something that was done but not designed—or previously taken—as a laugh-source is now retro-targeted as such by laughter, with potential consequences in the ensuing moments of the interaction. This is quite like an element of the preceding turn which had not been grasped as a trouble-source being sought out or transparently located as the now-recognized trouble-source which makes repair of the trouble relevant next.

It is this sort of object—a retro-acting object—that an apology can constitute, the source element which it brings into relevance being a complaint-source, or complainable, just like an other-initiation-of-repair brings into relevance the status of some prior item as a trouble-source or as repairable. Of course, just as laughter after a joke locates the joke as its source

3. Hosts regularly apologize for virtually anything that happens while they are hosting. In data from Southern California in the 1960s, an earthquake occurs while a dinner with guests is in progress. After the shaking stops, the hosts apologize for the disruption and inconvenience!

4. For one account of the difference, see Robinson 2004:316–17.

and does not prompt a search for other possible laughables, so an apology after a complaint locates the complaint as its source, and does not prompt a search for a complainable other than the one the complaint complained of. But an apology that is not after a complaint makes relevant a search for the complainable that was its source.

So an apology like "sorry" does an action which takes up the position: "I noticed that something untoward or problematic has happened, or is happening or is about to happen, which affects you (the recipient[s]) which could be taken to warrant a complaint; I take responsibility; and I apologize." And a complaint may be done (among other occasions) when the "victim" or "patient" of what they take to be such an untoward occurrence suspects that it was not noticed by its claimable agent, that it has not been oriented to as a complainable, or that a, or the, "responsible" person has not taken responsibility for it, and has not . . . what? Registered it as complainable? Apologized for it? Remedied or rectified it? Offered to remedy or rectify it? And so on—that is, the whole gamut of occasion-relevant responses to this particular complaint.

But isn't an apology like "sorry" overt? In what sense does it invoke and display an inexplicit orientation to a relevancy? When articulated, the apology is surely made overt, but the complainable is often not formulated overtly. For example, in the two quartet extracts (8 and 9, above) with which this part of the discussion began, the utterances in question were, respectively, "sorry" (Extract 9, line 6) and "oops. Sorry" (Extract 8, line 16). Note that in neither case does the speaker's action or turn say what is being apologized for; it relies on recipients to have been oriented to it already, to find it readily for themselves once alerted, or to have registered it as immediately transparent, as, for example is also the case in Extract 10:

(10) [#91a Openings, 18, LL]

```
 1  M1:     Hello?
 2  M2:     Hello?    ((intonation echo))
 3  M1:     Hi:
 4  M2:     Hi, how are you
 5  M1:     Okay how are you
 6  M2:     I'm just fine, thank you.
 7  M1:     Did you get the note?
 8  M2:     What note.
 9          (0.8)
10  M1:     Oh (it's)/(this's) Gary,
11  M2:     Yeah,
12  M1:->   Oh I'm sorry
13  M2:->   (    ) that's okay.
```

It seems transparent that the failure to recognize a friend or well-known acquaintance is the complainable here for which the "I'm sorry" is apologizing. But this is an achieved transparency. How? Well, they have each relied on voice recognition to accomplish the mutual recognitions, and have each required that of the other.[5] Thereby, each has displayed an entitlement

5. Specifically: M1 answers the phone with the virtually canonical (for American home phones) "Hello?" and hears in return a virtual echo of his just preceding turn—a form of "cleverness" by which callers could challenge the answerer to recognize the caller, together with the "clues" that the caller takes the answerer to be readily able to do this, and that the caller is someone who plays this sort of game (as compared to other callers who enact the same challenge with a simple "hi"). At line 3 the caller's greeting (and the form of the greeting) convey the achievement of such recognition, and this is accepted by the responsive "hi." This is followed by an exchange of "howaryou" sequences, which potentially bring the opening to a close. The opening's construction has taken a course which leaves the next turn—the default place for a reason for the call—for the answerer (M1), not the caller (M2) who has initiated the contact. Answerers commonly act accordingly with questions of the form "What's up," but it is not uncommon for them to use this turn for an initiative of their own. And that is what M1 does here. His recipient-designed turn at line 7 is built for someone who would know what "the note" referred to, and that is the person M1"recognized" M2 to be. When M2 shows himself to have failed to understand the reference to "the note" by initiating repair at line 8, M1 is prompted to review his "recognition outcome" with the result displayed at line 10. The analytic resources underlying this account are found in Schegloff 1979, 1986.

to such recognizability, and an orientation to such a relationship as the auspices under which this conversation is being launched. And the disappointment of this entitlement is the complainable; it is registered as such by the apology and is recognized as doing so.

There are, of course, occasions in which this kind of recognizability of the complainable is not relied on, as in Extract 11:

(11) [#80b The Telephone Book, 122]

```
 1  Esther:     Hi Leanne.
 2  Leanne:     Hi.
 3  Esther:     Hi.
 4  Leanne:->   Hi, I'm sorry I didn't get back to you.
 5              I've had a mild setback on my physical state.
```

Here (at line 4), where virtually nothing has yet transpired in the conversation except establishing the contact and achieving mutual recognition via greetings, the apology comes packaged with its complainable, which is precisely the lack of intervening contact. Even this early in a conversation, however, an unelaborated "I'm sorry" can be deployed, relying on and invoking the interlocutor's retrieval of a complainable in the previous contact, and thereby interlocutor's orientation to it, whose immanent reality has been traded on.

On occasion, the apology-recipient may inquire about what occasioned the apology. For example, there is a term in Japanese that can be used both to apologize for something untoward by the apologizer on the one hand, and to register receipt of what is being thereby marked as overly generous conduct by the addressee on the other hand. Native Japanese speakers who learn English commonly render this Japanese expression into English as "Sorry," and this can elicit puzzlement from native English speakers untutored in Japanese about what is being apologized for. That is to say, the "sorry" prompts in its addressees a search for what the complainable is, or what the apologizer was apologizing for: that is, what they were treating as their complainable—a search which may find no solution.

There is also, of course, the case in which complainability is contested. The most common environment is that in which the reply to an actual complaint is a denial, and not a denial of attribution to the denier, but a denial of the complainability of what has been complained of ("What's the matter with tha:t?!"). Less common are instances like the one in Extract 12, in which Bonnie has invited Jim to a New Year's Eve party that is being organized at the last minute, his response to which has been hedging. Bonnie is fed up with such responses.

(12) [#16 ID, New Year's Invitation, 6]

```
 1  Bonnie:     Okay (.) ahm (1.7) okay well (.) ya call me tomorrow
 2              so I can think about that tomorrow cuz I- right
 3              now got (a) party on my mind.
 4  Jim:        heh
 5  Bonnie:->        Cuz I'm not even sure if we're gonna have it yet.
 6              Cuz a bu[nch a ]people=
 7  Jim:                  [y e ah]
 8  Bonnie:->   =say may::be: may::be: (.) 's buggin me.
 9              (0.9)
10  Jim:->      Well ah (.) I'm sorry I ah:
11  Bonnie:->   No: that's okay I mean >ya know< I can understand
12              cuz this is just a late idea that me an Barb had
13              (0.6)
14  Bonnie:->   s[a:-
15  Jim:         [yea]h I wuz ast ta go to this party about-
16              (1.1) nuhah it musta ben about (1.0) two
17              weeks before our school got out (.) this one.
18  Bonnie:     So ya should go to that one.
19  Jim:        Why?
```

Jim's apology at line 10 shows he heard a possible complaint in Bonnie's preceding talk (a not implausible understanding, given its construction), and that, as one who has said "maybe," he is among the targets of the complaint. So he apologizes. And then Bonnie denies its complainability (at lines 11–12). That is, she doesn't just accept the apology, and the "no" with which her turn begins is not a rejection of the apology. She is denying or rejecting the complainability of the conduct about which she has complained (so this is a form of complaint retraction). What this shows is that there is not only complainability without complaint; there can also be complaint without complainability, in which the complainer may also participate.

Having proposed complaint-preemption as an action that can make available to analysts as well as to co-participants an orientation to a feature of the talk's environment that has not otherwise been articulated—its complainability—the sections that follow explore how that analytic resource figures in two specific conversational contexts, the first of which we turn to next: complaint preemption in conversational openings.

Complaint Preemption in Openings

One of the most recurrent and familiar forms of utterance which will feature in this section—"Did I wake you?" and its variants—has been taken up at least twice before in the conversation-analytic literature, each time issuing in a different account. The account here will be different again, but largely by virtue of its broader scope; none of these divergences should be understood as a rejection of the others; each takes up a different feature of this form of utterance or its context, and relates it to a distinct order of organization. One account characterized utterances like "Did I wake you?" in the openings of telephone conversations as "pre-first-topic closing offers" (though the characterization applies equally to incipient co-present interactions which start, for example, with co-workers poking heads into an office with "Are you in the middle of something?"). A "yes" answer to such questions can lead to a move to abort the incipient conversation, or can constitute such a move (Schegloff and Sacks 1973:316).

Subsequent accounts (Schegloff 1986, 2002b) characterized questions like "Did I wake you?" as "pre-apologies." This characterization rested on the following observations among others. A positive or confirming reply to this question so often led to the offer of an apology that replying in this way seemed virtually to coerce the apology. Accordingly, recipients of the question often replied in the negative or obliquely, while at the same time indirectly conveying that they had indeed been awakened (for example, "No, it's all right," or "No, I have to get up anyway," or "I don't know, what time is it?"). And if they responded with a simple denial, this was often challenged or doubted by the caller. In other words, the "Did I wake you?" question appeared to be treated by both parties as a preface to an apology—an affirmation advancing the sequence to the apology itself, a denial blocking that advance and allowing the caller an "out," which then could be understood as the basis for the denial rather than a veridical report and hence subject to the sincere caller's questioning. Designed with respect to a possible apology, it was a pre-apology.

Of course, none of this is specific to awakening others. Whatever one party can warrantably treat as a complainable can make such a tack relevant, and all sorts of things can ground the possibility of complainability. With telephone calls, for example, the number of rings of the phone or the sound of the answering voice can make for the complainability of waking the answerer or intruding on some other activity; calling at times that are generally for regularly scheduled events can do so—for example, the time when people ordinarily wake up engenders as a complainable "too early"; the time when they go to bed engenders "too late"; the time when they eat, or hearing an answerer talking with mouth full, engenders "interrupting your dinner"; what's going on in their lives (e.g., knowing in advance that they have

company, or hearing it in the voices or sounds at other end of line) engenders an orientation to the thereby relevant complainable, and so forth. Otherwise "did I wake you" is bizarre at 2:00 p.m. when there is no sleepy voice (unless the called is known to work the night shift).

Of course, that all of this is here exemplified by calling someone on the telephone is entirely incidental. Virtually any situation, any current state or history of a relationship—indeed, virtually anything—can be treated as a complainable.[6] Still, I will continue by focussing on this one common interactional juncture; one point of the accumulation of past work on conversational openings is that we know enough about that environment to use it as a sort of "culture medium" in which to examine other things.

One respect in which "Did I wake you"-type questions seem better understood as complaint preemptions than as pre-apologies is that, although apologizing is the most common concomitant of the inquiry or the most common sequel if affirmed, it is not the invariable one. And if a recipient answers in the affirmative, the alternatives to apologizing are alternative response types to complaints, most notably remedy or the offer of remedy:

(13) [ID #39; Openings, #235]

```
 1  Irene:      Hello:,
 2  Audrey:->   Did I waken you dear,
 3              (0.5)
 4  Irene: ->   nn yeah. hn.
 5  Audrey:->   D'you want to call me back when you're awake?
 6  Irene:      Who is this,
 7  Audrey:     Audrey.
 8  Irene:      Au:drey. Oh: my goo:dness. hh No it's alright,=
 9              are you feeling better?
```

(14) [MDE #29; Openings, #104]

```
 1  Gina:       °Hello
 2  Marcia:     Gina?
 3  Gina:       °uh huh
 4  Marcia:->   WAKE UP!
 5  Gina:       °Hi
 6  Marcia:     Hi: You were gonna stu:dy.
 7  Gina:       °Unh huhn
 8  Marcia:     Huhhuhhuh. ·hh That musta been rou:sing ·hh
 9  Gina:       °mmm
10              (1.0)
11  Marcia:->   You wanta go back to sleep? ·hh
12  Gina:       Mmmm happen ·hh
13  Marcia:     What?
14  Gina:       Tch! I don' know what happened ·hh
15              (0.?)
16  Marcia:     Can I guess?
17  Gina:       Yeah [ t e l l ] me
18  Marcia:          [One guess]
19  Marcia:     Hah I think you fell asl(h)eep.
```

In Extract 13 Audrey's response to Irene's confirmation of having been awakened is not an apology but an offer to end the call immediately and have Irene resume it at her convenience (the aforementioned "pre-first-topic closing offering"); in Extract 14 Marcia offers her daughter Gina the remedy of being allowed to go back to sleep. Adding "remedy" or "offer of remedy" to "apology" as the possible outcomes of a "Did I wake you?"-initiated sequence

6. An entailed conversation-analytically grounded aphorism might be: you cannot avoid complaints by avoiding complainables, for virtually anything can be treated as a complainable.

suggested that such sequences were "satellites," so-to-speak, of an underlying "complaint" sequence structure, and were addressed to the possibility of a complainable being material to the concerns of that part of the conversation. So let us follow that path for a bit.

The canonical trajectory for a complaint sequence would appear to be a complaint or a mention-of-a-complainable by the "aggrieved party," followed by some second pair part that is responsive to it—apology, reply (remedy or offer of remedy, denial, rejection, account, excuse, etc.), and ordinarily some uptake of that response. In the previously examined Extract 5, partially reproduced here, 14-year-old Bonnie has called her father, now divorced and remarried.

(05) [ID #41; Openings, #253]

```
 1  Bonnie:       ·hh[h
 2  Norm:    ->     [We were uh I- I wasn't sure you're gonna call,
 3           ->  so we were in bed (       ) yihknow (          .)
 4  Bonnie:->>   ·hh Oh I'm sorry.=
 5  Norm:        =Oh that's alright, we'd just gone to bed a few
 6               minutes ago. No problem.
 7  Bonnie:      uhh ·hh [( )
 8  Norm:               [except y'know when the phone rings late
 9               at night you kinda wonder (what you think      )
10               something is wrong somewhere.y'know.
11  Bonnie:      Yeah.
12  Norm:        Always a kind of a startle thing, y'know.
13  Bonnie:->>   Yeah. Tch I"m: sorry 'bout that.
```

At lines 17–18 he mentions a complainable—that the call has come after he (or they) had gone to bed, and Bonnie apologizes in next turn (line 19). As it happens, the sequence is then expanded, first with an acceptance of the apology and a mitigation of the complainability (lines 20–21), and then with the addition of another layer (lines 23–25), which gets from Bonnie another apology (line 28). But leaving that "extra kick" aside, the basic unexpanded shape of such a sequence appears to be: complaint + reply (apology, remedy, rejection, etc.) + acceptance/rejection of the reply.

One "degree" or "notch" of preemption is realized when the possible agent of the complainable does not wait for its patient/victim to *do* a complaint or assert/mention a complainable in which the recipient figures as (possible) agent, both of which can be understood to be dispreferred actions. Instead, the potentially "guilty" party takes the initiative and inquires about the possible occurrence of a complainable—some involvement of the call's recipient that has been interrupted or otherwise impinged upon by the call. If the occurrence of the complainable is affirmed, an apology follows, as in Extract 15. Here, the Chief Engineer for the local Office of Civil Defense, who has been involved for quite a long time in dealing with the disastrous effects of a hurricane on the city, takes a moment to call home (he and his wife both in their 60s).

(15) [CDHQ #15; Openings, #328]

```
1              ((telephone rings))
2  Ms. W.:     Hello-o? ((sleepy voice))
3  Mr. W.:->   Yeh did I wake yih up?
4  Ms. W.:->   Yea:h.
5  Mr. W: ->   Sorry gal.
6  Ms. W.:     That's- [(O.K. Doll),
```

His wife's answer to the phone's ring (line 1) gives evidence of the complainability of what has happened and prompts the caller's "one degree" preemption. Rather than wait for the answerer to complain or mention the complainable (or withhold the complaint by reference to its dispreferedness), he formulates in a turn of his own of what he made of her first utterance

for its complainability, thereby relieving her of the dispreferred alternative of complaining herself.[7] Now, however, an affirmative response is, in a fashion, itself dispreferred (whatever its truth), as it has the same effect as a complaint, that of virtually forcing an apology. (We shall see in a moment what consequences this dispreference has.) Nonetheless she confirms his suspicion (line 3), and gets his apology (at line 4), which she accepts at line 5. His "Did I wake you up?," then, has moved the introduction of "the trouble" from her mouth to his: hence, "complaint preemption."

A second "degree" or "notch" of preemption is realized when the apology accompanies the registering of the possible complainable (rather than inquiring about it, as in Extract 15) in the first "move" of the sequence, as at the initial arrows in Extracts 16 and 17:

(16) [ID #42; Openings, #259a]

```
1  Prof:       Hello:,
2  Irene:      Doctor H¿ [This is Irene.
3  Prof:                 [Yes,
4  Prof:       Oh hi Irene.
5  Irene:->    I'm sorry to bother you at home,
6              [but I don't know when to reach you at school. (hh)
7  Prof:->     [That's-
8  Prof:       Yeah,
9  Irene:      u Have you had a chance to look at it,
```

(17) [Holt 5/88-2-3,1 #52]

```
1  Les:        Hello::?
2              (0.7)
3  Ste:->      Oh: Leslie sorry to (.) beh to bother you? .h[h
4  Les:->>                                                 [Oh: right.
5  Ste:        ↑Could you a::sk Ski:p if-.hmh[at- when you go: to this=
6  Les:                                      [.p.k
7  Ste:        =meeting tomorrow .hm could'e give Geoff:Haldan's
8              a↓pologies through sickness?
9              (.)
```

In Extract 16, the initial arrowed turn includes other material as well as an apology, including what the complainable is taken to be (calling at home) and a justification. In each case, the apology is accepted or dismissed as unnecessary in the next turn (though in Extract 16 the undertaking is abandoned because of overlap with a continuation of the preceding turn).

Indeed, callers can abort a starting up of the reason for the call in order to deal with the complainability of their undertaking and then resume it, as in Extract 18:

(18) [Charlie #16; Openings, #173]

```
               ((telephone rings))
1  Char:       Hello?
2  Call:       Charlie?
3  Char:       Yeah?
4  Call:->     Hey, listen, I'm sorry if I woke ya.
5  Char:->>    ['s alright.
6  Call:->>>   [Hey-
7  Call:->>>   Hey, listen, uh eh, what's...
```

7. The terms "preferred" and "dispreferred" are primarily used in conversation analysis with respect to responses to initiating actions like questions, invitations, offers, requests, and the like, and refer not to what the speaker desires, but to whether the response advances the sequence and/or aligns with the stance exhibited in the preceding, initiating turn. But the term can also be employed to discriminate between alternative ways of initiating a sequence; for example, offers are "preferred" to requests as a sequence type for conveying objects or information from one party to another. As with the case for responsive actions, preferredness/dispreferredness refers to features of the composition, placement, and featues of the turns or sequences in question. This matter is taken up at greater length in Schegloff forthcoming a.

Here the caller appears to launch first topic, abandons it in favor of the apology, and (in this instance) then does not even leave a place for the answerer to accept the apology. Directly after its completion, and in overlap with the acceptance/dismissal, he resumes with the same sequence-initiating "Hey listen" that he used on the initial, abandoned start.

This preemption of the complaint and apparent compression of the "sequence" to allow both combining the mention of the complainable and apology in a single turn-constructional unit on the one hand and dispensing with a response to the apology on the other still further reduces the basic shape of the complaint sequence with which we began, differing from it only in who initiates dealing with the complainable (though, to be sure, this is not a trivial difference!).

Dispensing with a response to the apology can be effectuated by either of the participants, and bears no necessary relationship to the belated doing of the apology exemplified in Extract 18. In Extract 19 it is the *caller* who dispenses with the reply to the apology (at line 3) by continuing after the apology to give the reason for the call (although the in-breath does provide some opening in which a response could have been launched).

(19) [Holt SO88-2-07, 1 #57]

```
 1  Ser:        He:llo:[:?
 2  Les:->             [.hh Oh I'n (.) I'n sorry to bring you fr'm your
 3     ->>      wo:rk .hhh Serena you ↑↑know what you were telling me
 4  Les:        about your father yesterday an' how he wz: eventually
 5              goin't'look for- a- .hh store manager job
 6              (.)
 7  Ser:        Ye:s,=
 8  Les:        =.hhhhmhhh .t u-We:ll, where my husband works: they're
 9              actually goin' to adver↓tise for one in the near fu↓ture.
10              (0.5)
```

(20) [LL #23; Openings, #31]

```
 1  Laura:      H'llo:,
 2  Briget:     H'llo Laura?
 3  Laura:      Yeah?
 4  Briget:     This' Brigette.
 5              (0.3)
 6  Laura:      Hi.=
 7  Briget: ->  =I'm sorry ta bother you again, ·hh=
 8  Laura:->>   Kirk just left,
 9  Briget:     Kirk just left?
10  Laura:      Yeah
11  Briget:     Okay,
12  Laura:      (h)ok(h)ay?
13  Briget:     Bye bye
14  Laura:      Bye bye.
```

And in Extract 20, Laura (the call recipient) appears to intuit what Bridgette is calling about, dispenses with a response to the apology, and, instead of responding to the apology, preempts the reason for the call and responds to what it was going to be.

In the last several extracts, attention to the complainable is reduced to a single turn. Surely it cannot be reduced any further, at least not with talk in turns. And indeed it cannot; but if complainability can be oriented to without there being a complaint, can it not be oriented to without an apology as well?

One version of such an attenuation is exemplified in Extract 21:

(21) [Friedman, 53 #61]

```
1  Lois:   Hello.
2  Ed:     Hi Lois.
3  Lois:   Hi Ed.
4  Ed:->   I woke you up, didn't I.
5  Lois:   Mmm. That's okay.
```

At line 4, Ed preempts mention of the complainable and, with it, the complaint. And at line 5, Lois both ratifies the complaint and accepts the apology . . . except that there was no apology! Ed's line 4 had mentioned the complainable but had not apologized for it.[8] So here we have the working through of the "trouble" in a virtual complaint sequence—one in which both the complaint and the apology are preempted, neither being said by its appropriate sayer—the whole exchange being underwritten by the complainability of what is remarked on at line 4.

Complaint Preemption in Other-Initiated Repair

"Other-initiated repair" is said to have occurred when a recipient of someone's utterance follows it with an utterance which treats that prior utterance as presenting some sort of problem of uptake for its recipient—a problem of hearing or understanding the talk—which stands in the way of producing a next bit of conduct that would advance or progress the trajectory of talk and action that is underway. There is a variety of turn-constructional forms used to implement such other-initiated repair—that is, repair initiated by someone other than the speaker of the source of the trouble (Drew 1997; Schegloff 1997, 2000b, 2004; Schegloff et al. 1977), along the following lines:

(1) The basic variation among forms of other-initiated repair turns on their power to locate and specify the trouble-source: at one end of the continuum are forms like "huh" and "what?" which locate it in the prior turn but do not specify beyond that; next are category-specifying initiators like "who?" or "where?" which constrain the type of element in the prior turn which is the trouble-source; and so on to the other end of the continuum, where a repeat identifies the trouble-source by quoting what the recipient heard it to be, and understanding checks (like "you mean X?"), which claim to have apperceived what was said and check the recipient's understanding of it by showing they can use it to convey its import in different words. This seems systematic to the most commonly used other-initiations of repair.

(2) Other forms can be located on this continuum, but their use appears to register as well other features of the repair-occasion and its setting. So forms like "I beg your pardon?" appear to mark an element of formality or distance in the interaction. In part they do this by virtue of their introducing a third element and that is the element of responsibility; given that there is "trouble," whose fault is it?

(3) The forms that appear to register a position on fault include not only "I beg your pardon?", but also its reductions to "pardon me?" and "pardon?", as well as "excuse me?" and "sorry?" All these forms share the semantics of apology, and are at the same level of "strength," or, rather, "weakness"; that is, like "huh?" or "what?", they indicate that the trouble-source is in the just prior turn, but they do not further specify its location or identity. Still, they appear to serve as alternatives not only to "huh" or "what" on grounds of strength, but also as alternatives to stronger forms of repair initiation, and are used instead of them (even when the preference for using "the strongest one you can" is violated thereby)[9] to mark formality or distance and to propose acceptance or deflection of fault.

8. Two anonymous referees suggest that "I woke you up" is an apology: one of them on the grounds that "they don't say sorry, but meaning is indexical." On those grounds, an analyst could assert anything plausible on the grounds that meaning is indexical and that is what *they* understood it to index. But there is ample evidence that persons say "sorry" when it is apologizing that they mean to do, and in Extract 22 Ed has not said that. Lois has treated that as a virtual apology and has accepted it, but that is something different from his having apologized. The other of the referees suggests the possibility that "mentioning a complainable [is] a device for apologizing," a formulation that I find more inviting (because it proposes a specific candidate practice, rather than invoking a generic hermeneutic principle), but for which I do not (at least yet) have any evidence.

9. In British data, "sorry" may be used in combination with stronger forms of repair initiation, as in the following:

[Holt I, 1.2.1]

```
1 Har:    Hello Missis Field .hh uhm .t.h Wouldju be available
2         for supply on Thu::rsda:y.=
3 Les:->  =Sorry, Thursda[:y?
4 Har:                    [Thu:rsday this week.
5 Les:    YES: ye:s,=
```

What follows offers a sketch of the way these repair initiations relate to complaint preemption, with a slightly elaborated examination of only a few instances. The general relevance in the context of the theme of this article is that "attribution of fault" is directly related to complainability. "Fault" is relevant when something is complainable; when it is praiseworthy, what is attributed is called "credit," not "fault." To display or claim responsibility for a complainable before it is complained of by others is, in effect, to preempt the complaint.

The first thing to be said is that the preceding points may have suggested that the distribution of fault in episodes of repair is implemented only in the repair-initiating turn, but this is not the case. When repair is initiated by other than the speaker of the trouble-source, either of the participants can accept responsibility for the trouble—both the speaker, for the production of something that is problematic, and the recipient, whose failure of uptake has intruded into the progressivity of the talk. Extracts 22 and 23 present an instance of each.

(22) [#18az1 Adato 2:7]

```
 1  Sy:      Biggest [ smile you ever saw in yer life.
 2  ( ):             [ ((different conversation))
 3  Sy:      I looked aroun'tuh see who she's lookin at,
 4  Jim:     Yeah.
 5  ( ):     ((Different conversation))    (                  )
 6  Jim:     Atchu huh?    (Tough bows.)
 7           ((long pause))
 8  ( ):     ((sigh))
 9           ((pause))    ((Clatter))
10  Sy:      I, saw s:- Tuh Sir with Lo:ve
11           ((pause))
12  Jay:->   HM?
13  Sy:      I saw Tuh Sir With Love.
14           ((pause))
15  Jay:->   I-I-I'm I'm sorry I didn' catch that.
16  Sy:      I saw, To Sir With Love. -a movie,
17  Jay:     To Sir:: With Love. Oh. A movie. Yahm.
18  Jim:     Howdju like it.
19  Sy:      W'z pretty good.
```

Initiation of repair by a recipient of an utterance, especially with a repair initiator of the weakest sort, can be taken to convey that the other is not speaking "right" (loudly enough, accessibly enough [i.e., with correct recipient design], etc.). This becomes especially true after a first repair initiation (here at line 12)—analyzably targeted at the self-repair-disrupted first saying ("I, saw s:- Tuh Sir . . ."')—gets an undisrupted repeat of the trouble-source turn (line 13) which is again not "gotten" (line 15). Note that in the reply to the second repair initiation—at line 16—the speaker of the trouble-source turn first sets *To Sir with Love* apart in virtual quotation marks with the comma intonation after "saw," and adds at the end a category term for the sort of thing his trouble-source turn was referring to—"a movie"—to facilitate the recipient's ability to "get it." After two tries that have failed, the speaker of the trouble-source takes and displays the position that the problem is not (or is no longer) his production of the utterance, but is rather an uptake problem; and that it is not a hearing problem but a "grasping" problem; the recipient needs to know what sort of thing these sounds should be recognizable as (they do not, after all, parse as a recognizable clause or sentence on the face of it). The "I'm sorry" has itself, in effect, conveyed that "this is not your problem in producing, but my problem in grasping," and the third (and successful) try is designed accordingly. The account offered is formulated as a complainable by registering it as something that did not happen (Jacoby and Gonzalez 2002; Schegloff 1988b), that is "I didn' catch that"; the "I'm sorry" accepts responsibility for the trouble by apologizing for it. And it is the *recipient* of the trouble-source talk and the initiator of repair who does this here.

On the other hand, consider an exchange in Extract 23 among the participants in a group therapy sessions for teenagers in the 1960s:

(23) [#222a GTS 3:12]

```
 1  Ken:        What's uh- what's-what' is his name the-the- the
 2              new guy [ (        )
 3  Louise:             [Oh you got a new guy?
 4  Ken:        Ye[ah
 5  Dan: ->       [Jim Reed. Yes he came in last week.
 6  Ken:        Came in late, [too.
 7  Dan:                      [(              ).
 8  Louise:-->  LAST week? You weren't supposed to have a
 9              [session-
10  Dan:-->     [Two wee[ks ago
11  Ken:                [Two weeks ago two weeks two weeks two weeks.
12  Dan ->      I'm sorry,- Last time we met. (You're very efficient
13              this morning.)
```

Louise had missed a session and the previous week's session had been canceled, so when Dan (the therapist) remarks (at line 5) that a new patient had come "last week," Louise is taken aback (lines 8 and 9). Her repair initiation at line 8—a partial repeat of the trouble-source that precisely locates the trouble-source—prompts a self-repair by Dan (at line 10), and then an apology and an account of the misspeaking (at line 12). Here the trouble-source *speaker* accepts responsibility for the trouble—with an apology.

So episodes of other-initiated repair can occasion either party—trouble-source speaker or recipient—to register that they have erred, to register as well that the error is complainable, and to preempt a complaint with an apology. In what follows, the focus is on complaint preemption by those initiating repair. For them, it might be recalled, this serves to absolve the trouble-source speaker of responsibility for the trouble whose repair they are initiating, and to shoulder it themselves.

First, however, it will be useful to differentiate between two apology-displays with quite different sources that might appear in such environments. One exemplar will make the point. It occurs near the beginning of a call to a large department store (Sears) to inquire about a certain kind of paint. Anne appears to be the switchboard operator at the store; however, Bill appears to have been talking to her as one would to a salesperson.

(24) [#113a MC I, Paint 1]

```
 1  Bill:     [Which is the best-
 2  Anne:     [Woudju like-
 3  Anne:-->  Pard'n m'but uh, —uh pardon me? hheh
 4  Bill:     What's the best one y'have.
 5            (1.5)
 6  Anne:     Uh jus' one mom'nt=Wouldju like t'talk to a salesmn?
 7  Bill:     Well that's what I ca:lled, yah.
 8  Anne:     Okay jus' one mo:ment,
```

Anne and Bill start simultaneously at lines 1–2. Both drop out. From the evidence of line 6, where Anne starts a second unit of the turn the same way as line 2 started ("Wouldju like"), Anne was about to say what line 6 says. It appears that that is what Anne was in the process of getting to say at line 3: that "pardon me" was an apology for the simultaneous talk, and was to be followed by the offer. Then Anne stops, and does the "pardon me?" that, by initiating repair and soliciting a repeat of what the other was saying, in effect yields to the other's part in the overlap, rather than insisting on saying again Anne's part in the overlap (Schegloff 2002a). Bill then re-says what was in progress at line 1, for which Anne's offer turns out to be pertinent. The point is to note that we have here two distinct *pardon me*s, one apologizing for the overlap and the other initiating repair by inviting a re-saying by apologizing for the

problematic hearing. In these environments, then, apology-terms need to be examined for what they are apologizing for—even if the same one is used more than once. What can be said about these apology-term implemented initiations of repair?

A first observation is this: of the 30 or so other-initiated repair sequences in my corpus that include an apology term, 23 (over 75 percent) come from conversations in an institutional context.[10] In about half of these, it is the institutional representative who uses the apology term as the repair initiator, as in Extract 24 that we were just examining, in which "A" is the switchboard operator. In the other half, it is the one being "serviced," as in:

(25) [#105a Quake IV: 40-41]

```
 1  Disp:    Have yer name an'= phone number please, [just-
 2  Call:->                                          [I beg yer
 3           pardon?
 4  Disp:    C'd I have yer name an' phone number in case
 5           [ I 'av to call you back,
 6  Call:    [ (       ) my name?
 7           ((pause))
 8  Call:    It's-
 9  Call:->  I:: didn' hear yuh sir,
10  Disp:    C'd I have yer name, an' phone number in case I haf tuh
11           call you back,
```

Whichever it is, "pardon me?" or "Pardon?" or "Excuse me?" is taken to be an assumption of responsibility indicating that it was not the speaking but the hearing that was problematic. In keeping with this, the responses in the vast majority of cases are virtually identical repetitions of the trouble-source or minor modifications of it.

The "institutional" context, in which the parties are overwhelmingly related not by personal ties or relationships but by the job they are getting done together, appears to involve both parties maintaining a "safe distance"; that is, they avoid initiating repair in a fashion that raises the prospect of the interlocutor's failing in talking, and use forms that at once raise the problem and accept the responsibility for it. The commonality of this practice among both servers and clients suggests that this is not a matter of servers' deference to clients, but rather of a proper idiom for this type of interaction, a type of interaction that is instrumentally motivated in the absence of other ties. I should add that some of these segments come from calls to a Suicide Prevention Center, in which very personal and sensitive matters (on one side of the call, at least) are being discussed, so it is not the intimacy of the subject matter or topic that is involved, but the professional and institutional auspices under which it is being taken up, and these call for "distance" between the parties despite (or because of) the intimacy of what they are talking about.

Turning to the remaining 25 percent of other-initiations of repair featuring apology terms—those which occur in non-institutional contexts—it appears cogent to discriminate those which follow the failure of previous efforts at repair from those which implement the initial effort to raise the problem. A specimen of the first of these is already familiar from the discussion of Extract 22 above:

10. The corpus consists of over 1,300 other-initiated repair sequences, collected from audio and video recordings of a broad range of forms and settings of interaction. Part of the collection was systematic (that is, every other-initiated repair in that interaction became part of the corpus); part was opportunistic (that is, other-initiated repairs encountered in data sources being examined for other purposes). The corpus was assembled with the support of the National Science Foundation under grant #BNS 87-20388 for research on other-initiated repair, with no special interest in the use of apology terms in initiating repair. It is hard to say whether the corpus represents a random sample or how it departs from one, because it is impossible to specify the universe being sampled. Suffice it to say that as far as can be established no discernable bias affected the distribution of apology-termed other-initiations of repair in institutional as compared to non-institutional contexts.

(22) [#18az1 Adato 2:7]

```
 1  Sy:      Biggest [ smile you ever saw in yer life.
 2  ( ):             [ ((different conversation))
 3  Sy:      I looked aroun'tuh see who she's lookin at,
 4  Jim:     Yeah.
 5  ( ):     ((Different conversation))   (               )
 6  Jim:     Atchu huh?    (Tough bows.)
 7           ((long pause))
 8  ( ):     ((sigh))
 9           ((pause)) ((Clatter))
10  Sy:      I, saw s:- Tuh Sir with Lo:ve
11           ((pause))
12  Jay:->   HM?
13  Sy:      I saw Tuh Sir With Love.
14           ((pause))
15  Jay:->   I-I-I'm I'm sorry I didn' catch that.
16  Sy:      I saw, To Sir With Love.  -a movie,
17  Jay:     To Sir:: With Love. Oh. A movie. Yahm.
18  Jim:     Howdju like it.
19  Sy:      W'z pretty good.
```

The "I'm sorry" (at line 15) is, here, not the appeal of first resort but of last resort. The initial repair effort took a form more common among familiars: "Hm?" A number of exemplars of apology-forms of repair initiation occur in this context—after other efforts at repair have failed. They appear to exonerate the trouble-source speaker from responsibility for the continuing trouble, and apologize to the trouble-source speaker for the additional effort they are made to expend on getting this utterance taken up successfully.

More problematic are apology-forms used as the initial or only form for initiating repair in a context which lends itself to the use of more vernacular forms like "huh?" or "what?" These occurrences invite special attention for what is being done by the use of an apology term—attention both by recipients and by academic analysts. We can briefly examine only one exemplar here. In Extract 26, Betty, a woman in her 50s visiting Los Angeles from New York, has called Fanny, an old acquaintance from New York now living in Los Angeles. They have not been in touch for quite a long time, and the talk has turned to the possibility of getting together. A friend of Betty's will be providing the transportation, and Betty is trying to get directions to Fanny's home.

(26) [#106 DA, 6]

```
 1  Betty:    Where d'you live.
 2            (1.6)
 3  Fanny:    Uh ten fawty two, Et-I-uh-If yer frien'
 4            c'd cawl me, I w'd tell'er exactly where it is
 5            un[less she knows the street.
 6  Betty:      [ Yeah, well when she gets here.
 7            (1.0)
 8  Betty:    When she gets [hih-
 9  Fanny:                  [But you don' know what time she'll be
10            [(there).
11  Betty:    [I'm gonna ask her to come here in the uh::, in the
12            morning.
13  Fanny:    Aw[right,
14  Betty:      [An' she's an early riser I [know. So-,
15  Fanny:                                  [Awright, now you take the
16            address, en if she doesn' know ha'tuh get here, then she
17            c'n uh- call me.
18  Betty:    Yah.
```

```
19  Fanny:     Awright,
20  Betty:     Ten fawty two what.
21             (0.4)
22  Fanny:->   I beg yer pard'n?
23  Betty:     Ten fawty two what.
24  Fanny:     Eh-uh-right, Uh-eh South Shendandoah,
25             (2.0)
26  Betty:     Ten fawty two, s-South Shenandoah.
27  Fanny:     Yes,
```

Here, the trouble-source turn (at line 20) shows in its grammatical form that it is a Turn Constructional Unit only by virtue of its relationship to its sequential context. It is not a recognizably grammatical free-standing Turn Constructional Unit. Fanny had been giving her address at line 3, but aborted it for an alternative line of action. At lines 15–16 she has returned the talk to the earlier project ("now you take the address"), and Betty has aligned with that proposal (line 16, "yah"). But rather than allowing Fanny to continue the address-giving which she had started at line 3, Betty (at line 20) takes control and preempts the starting of the resumption. She does this by prompting the resumption by repeating the part of it which Fanny had already produced before abandoning it (cf. Koshik 2002 on such "prompting"), but the "repeat + Q-word" form of the prompt targets an utterance-part now sequentially remote from the current turn, and has it coming out of a different mouth than had articulated it before. Thus shorn of context and identity, Fanny does not recognize it for what it is, and initiates the repair at line 22. With the repeat of the trouble-source turn she achieves the recognition and marks that recognition with "eh-uh-right" before taking up the prompt and resuming the turn at precisely the point at which it had been abandoned at line 3.

Various particulars of this exchange may be noted. It has a problematic parse-ability of grammatical form not unlike that displayed in the previously cited segment by "I saw *To Sir with Love*." There is present the possibility of distance between the parties (even if not as well defined as the distance in institutional contexts) which this formal form can index. There is a certain aggressiveness in Betty's pre-emption of the giving of Fanny's address that clearly takes Fanny aback, and that can introduce an element of disaffiliation and reserve into the moment. Indeed, the full-form "I beg your pardon?" is the vehicle by which we come to entertain the possibility that Fanny has been "taken aback."

Once entertained, however, there is more to this than can be taken up here. Let me exemplify it with something taken from the Sunday's comics several years ago. The comic strip, called *Get Fuzzy*, features a man and his talking pets: one dog and one cat. In the first panel, we see the man just arriving home, and the cat addressing him in what can only be called a peremptory and high-handed manner. The cat, sitting in a closet, says, "Man, where have you been? Go get me my bowl, Robbo." To which the man replies, "Excuse me?" The cat: "I said, get my bowl! How many times do I have to say it? I am Bucky Katt! Master of all I survey!" The man closes the closet door. "Survey that," he says. The cartoonist has put in the cat's mouth an "upstart-y" thing for a cat to say. The man's "Excuse me?" reply is here not only a repair-initiation, and it is far from accepting responsibility for a problem in uptake. It prefigures a disaffiliation here—not only a likely rejection of the request/command, but a challenge to the tone in which it was delivered. If indeed these forms can not only accept blame but also begin to direct it, then the more accurate finding may be that "Excuse me" and its kindred expressions introduce complainability into the interaction, with its ultimate disposition remaining to be worked out.

Closing

To review briefly what has preceded, this article was introduced as being of the sort whose contribution to the understanding of social problems is pursued "by furnishing analytic tools

for understanding a much broader range of human conduct than that implicated in the subject matter of social problems." The analytic tools that have been at the center of concern are ones that can advance our understanding of two matters that have a prima facie relevance to social problems concerns: (a) the relevance of person categorization to the understanding and assessment of conduct, and the consequent importance of understanding how categories are made relevant, even if tacit, in ordinary conduct of interaction, as, for example, when the onset of overlapping talk is taken as an assertion of higher standing and therefore as "interruptive"—whether involving gender (Schegloff 2002a), organizational status, or professional prerogative (West 1984, 1990), or when ethnicity gradually is seen to infiltrate a public planning meeting concerning "the merits of a proposed charter school" (Hansen 2005); and (b) beginning to get access to the inchoate and often unspoken stirring of discontent prompted by actions that are oriented to as complainable, as when another's comment on your affairs or associates is heard as a claim of more authoritative access than your own (Heritage and Raymond 2005) or when ordinary talk displays an orientation to conventional heterosexual gender relations in its simple use of pronouns when one of the participants is gay or lesbian (Kitzinger 2005; Land and Kitzinger forthcoming).

Second, categorization of societal members by societal members seems to present problems for at least some social sciences whose characterizations of the persons they are studying, in the occasions in which they are studying them, are not demonstrably related to the characterizations informing the conduct of those participants themselves in those occasions (see pp. 453–55, above). To deal with this problem, we need to get access to the orientations informing participants' activities while those activities are in progress. Because the relevance of categories of person can be intimately connected to characterizations of actions (Sacks 1972b), we should not let our pursuit of one of them wander too far from our pursuit of the other. This issue is relevant wherever a concern with social problems implicates categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, handicap of any sort, legal violation current or past, and so forth—that is to say, a very high proportion of social problems concerns. The limited setting out of the problematics of categorization is to be understood in this light.

A third point: the more sustained focus of the article has been on a feature of actions to which parties to interaction can be oriented even though they have not been made explicit—their possible complainability. In particular, the effort has been to see if we could zero in on interactional participants' orientation to the complainability of what they themselves or another participant has done without benefit of an overt complaint in the interaction in which to ground the claim. It is not enough for analysts to suppose that the parties "can infer it from the context or observe or hear it happening";[11] what is needed is not supposition, but analysis of the data that ground such a claim in the observable conduct of the parties.

Fourth, the result-so-far is that it appears to be possible, at least some of the time. We have looked at two sites of complainability: (a) when callers have reason to think they have intruded on those whom they have called (and note that I have built the complainability right into the characterization "intruded"), and (b) in some occasions of repair (I discussed only other-initiated repair, but it is relevant as well to self-initiated repair). In these two sites persons can display an orientation to the complainability of something they or others have done without that having been articulated in, or occasioned by, any overt complaint.

A fifth point: if it is possible to get at such orientations because participants do things which display them, we should get at them. Because there is regularly a premium on not doing them transparently, this will take a lot of work, and it will take openness to looking in places in which we are not accustomed to looking (e.g., Schegloff forthcoming a) for things we know not yet to look for or at, and to seeing in utterly familiar things the utterly unfamiliar things they can let us learn.

Finally, although no familiar social problems have been directly addressed here, the ambition stated at the outset was to help develop tools that could be turned to good advan-

11. As suggested by an anonymous referee.

tage by other scholars whose detailed familiarity with particular social problems would empower them to use these tools to best advantage, as has happened in the past. The matters touched on in this article have invoked such conversational practices as turn-taking (e.g., interruption), sequence organization (e.g., complaining), repair (e.g., apology sequences for problematic uptake), person-reference (e.g., all the invocations of categories of persons), and others which have not been explicitly introduced but that have necessarily informed any engagement with data that has been explicitly introduced.

This promissory note can only be "cashed in" if and when social problems scholars decide to master the analytic tools on which serious conversation-analytic work rests. In the past, such mastery has fairly quickly yielded results on the social problems front, results that have been cited in this article. Such a development in the future might vindicate the view that studies of ordinary interaction have a built-in affinity to social problems concerns (Maynard 1988), but the work that will convert the "affinity" to payoff will need to be undertaken by properly trained students of social problems.

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