

## **The routine as achievement\***

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### **Introduction**

The beginnings of telephone conversations can seem a peculiar object on which to lavish scholarly attention. Being historically shallow products of technological innovation, they may seem parochial when set beside other specific sub-genres of speech such as political oratory, for example, whose occurrence and study have greater historical depth and cross-cultural generality, and whose consequences seem self-evidently potentially substantial.

But the newer genre also has its attractions. First, we must remember, in any examination of talk-in-interaction we are studying *social action*, and we are doing so by looking at actual determinate, singular social actions or acts. This is so for *any* talk-in-interaction, however undignified it may appear. It is equally true whether we are dealing with proposals of marriage which seem to be obviously monumental and consequential in their import for the parties, or whether we are dealing with picking up the telephone and saying 'hello,' which may seem to be as inconsequential and trivial an occurrence as there could be. In a number of significant respects they are equally instances of social actions;

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and although we can't learn all one may wish to about social actions from any one type of them, we can learn some things about social action by examining particular sub-domains of talk. Talk-on-the-telephone can be such a sub-domain of talk and of action.

In examining this sub-domain of action in talk-in-interaction and in conversation in particular, we are focussing on what appears to be the primordial site of sociality – direct interaction with others. Wherever else we might locate '(the) society,' – the economy, the polity, the law, the organized systems for the reproduction of the population and the membership of the society, etc. – the organization of persons dealing with one another in interaction is the vehicle through which those institutions get their work done. On these and other grounds, interaction and talk-in-interaction merit recognition as a strategic locus of the social. It is at the elucidation of this fundamental aspect of social life that inquiries such as this are aimed.

The virtues of talk on the telephone have been reviewed before (Schegloff, 1979: 24-27), and are largely methodological. Although parties to such talk continue to deploy their bodies and body parts – posture, gesture, facial expression, etc., and although such deployments may well repay detailed study, these visually accessible aspects of talk-in-interaction are denied to co-participants in telephone conversation. Investigators are thereby relieved of some exceedingly difficult problems in the analysis and description of these facets of conduct in interaction, while not omitting anything in the interactants' conduct which is a resource for them. These advantages are gained while continuing to insist on the study of naturally occurring behavior which is part of the warp and weft of everyday living.

If talk on the telephone may initially appear unworthy of sustained scrutiny, the beginnings of its episodes may intensify this sense of unworthiness. This segment of the talk may appear vacuous, with nothing of substance or consequence being spoken of at all. In the way in which this sort of talk 'runs off,' it often fosters the impression that it is 'ritual' or even 'merely ritual;' that it is 'virtually automatic' or '(pre-)scripted;' that it is 'routine', indeed that it constitutes '*a* routine.'

I will return to these impressions of the beginnings of telephone conversation in a moment, but it is worth noting first that they are one sub-type of, and one context for, interactional openings in general. This is not the place to review the features of openings in detail, or to touch on the substantial literature concerned with them. Suffice it to note that they are extremely compact, interactionally dense, and avail themselves of relatively few, generally simple resources – for example, ordinarily very brief, largely desyntacticized turns at talk, which are deployed and interpreted with especial subtlety. These features characterize telephone conversation openings as well.

One aspect of the compactness and density of openings is the multiplicity of jobs which regularly get done in them. One of these jobs is the ‘gatekeeping’ one, of working through in some coordinated spate of behavior whether or not some co-present persons are going to engage in a sustained episode of interaction on some incipient occasion or not; if so, of what sort, duration, etc. it will be; and how entry into the episode, or circumvention of it, will be managed on a moment-to-moment, action-to-action basis. Another job that gets done in openings is the constitution or reconstitution of the relationship of the parties for the present occasion, whether the occasion is a first for these parties or involves a next encounter with a history to it.

Another of the opening’s jobs, one which will get special attention below, concerns the ways in which what ends up being talked about gets to be talked about. That is, for co-presences which issue in episodes of talk in interaction, the talk that gets done (as well as that which, though relevant to the parties, does not get done) is arrived at by some orderly practices, practices which can have as their by-product some ordering of that talk and some features of the way in which it is conducted. Not only the occurrence or absence of talk, but its matter, manner and order get worked out, at least in part, in openings. This is the case for openings on the telephone as well; but, as noted earlier, without the resources of the body to accomplish them tacitly, they regularly occupy the talk itself where they are accessible to a different mode of inquiry.

I remarked earlier that a common understanding of the starts of telephone conversation in particular focusses on their apparently perfunctory character, and issues in a sense of their status as routines that the parties ‘go through’ in a virtually automatic or even automated fashion. Although for some investigators this seemingly formulaic character may lead to the judgement of a relative unworthiness for study, for others this character has made ‘routines’ of various sorts (and not just openings) especially attractive for study – for example, in the teaching and learning of second languages and in ‘artificial intelligence’ studies on the production and processing of natural language use.

This impression of routineness and virtual automaticity is not groundless, although I will subsequently argue that it is strategically misleading. One source for the sense of routine is virtually impossible to convey through a written medium, and that is the sound, the lilt or lack of it, or the prosody of routine openings. Here, for example, is the (somewhat simplified) transcript of one such opening:

# 1. (HG)		
	((ring))	01
Nancy :	H'llo:?	02
Hyla :	<u>Hi</u> ;	03
Nancy :	<u>Hi</u> :.	04
Hyla :	Hwaryuhh =	05
Nancy :	= Fi:ne how'r you,	06
Hyla :	Okay: [ y,	07
Nancy :	[ <u>Goo</u> :d,	08
	(0.4)	09
Hyla :	'mkhhh [ hhh	10
Nancy :	[ What's doin,	11

Nothing much seems to be going on here; the participants appear to be 'just going through the motions.' This impression may be especially fostered by the tendency of Nancy to respond slightly early to a number of Hyla's utterances, for example at line 05-06 (where the equal signs mark the 'latching' of the two turns, i.e., the absence between them of the beat of silence which commonly occurs between turns), and at lines 07-08 where she slightly overlaps Hyla's prior turn. Individual openings of particular conversations can, in the manner of their production, foster a sense of routineness and perfunctoriness.

But there are other grounds for a common sense of the routine character of opening talk on the telephone. Consider the materials presented in Table 1, in which I have arrayed the openings of four conversations on a line by line format.

Although other speech-exchange systems such as ceremonies may be distinctively marked by their capacity to engender texts repetitively, there are few other places in ordinary conversation where one can fairly easily locate strings of 8-10 nearly identical turns in four (or more) entirely different conversations with different participants. I have, of course, selected among the 450 or so openings which comprise the data base for this paper to construct this array; but it was relatively easy to do so, in a way that would be far more difficult for virtually any other conversational phenomenon or domain. This is another basis, then, for a sense of the routineness of telephone conversational openings.

Although, as I have tried to suggest, there are grounds for this sense of the opening as a routine, I hope to show this routine (and, by implication subject to empirical conformation, other 'routines' as well) is an achievement out of structured sets of alternative courses or directions which the talk and the interaction can take.<sup>1</sup> One way of seeing this is by reconsidering in a somewhat more detailed way one of the thematic organizational concerns of the opening section.

Table 1.

	123	247a	263	121
0	ring	ring	ring	ring
1 R	Hello::,	Hallo,	Hello,	Hello,
2 C	H'llo, Clara?	Hello Jim?	Hi Ida?	Hi. Susan?
3 R	Yeh,	Yeah,	Yeah	Yes,
4 C	Hi. Bernie.	's Bonnie.	Hi, = This is Carla	This's Janet. Weinstein.
5 R	Hi Bernie.	Hi,	Hi Carla.	Janet!
6 C	How're you.	Hi, how are yuh	How are you.	hhehh Susan.
7 R	I'm awright, How're you.	Fine, how're you,	Okay:.	How <u>are</u> you.
8 C	Okay:?	Oh, okay I guess	Good. =	I'm <u>fine</u> . How're you.
9 R	Good.	Oh okay.	= How about you.	<u>Fine</u> . Back from the wilds of C'lumbia.
10 C	First topic 'Laura there?'	First topic 'Uhm (0.2) what are you doing New Year's Eve.'	Fine. + First topic 'Don wants to know ...'	Yeah. hhhheh
11 R				<u>Crazy</u> .
12 C				hheh heh heh. 'hhh My mo:ther's having a coming out party fer me ...
13				

### **One organizational job of openings**

One of the major organizational issues being worked through during the openings of these conversations is the following. Each party brings to the conversation a complement of interests, topics, business to be done, potential relevancies for self and other, etc. This is not exactly an 'agenda,' for it includes relevant 'talkables' which a party is not oriented to introducing into the talk but which could 'come up' relevantly. It is talk about such things which is ordinarily taken by persons to discriminate 'having a conversation' from a mere exchange of greetings. This complement of 'talkables' which each party has is sensitive to, and substantially shaped by, who the other is. For each party, then, a full grasp of the occasion's relevancies awaits identification of who the other is, and this matter is asymmetrically accessible (more information being available earlier to the caller than is available to the answerer). For each party, on this identification will be contingent not only what their 'talkables' or 'tellables' *are*, but where they should go; what may be a high priority, early item for one interlocutor is a late mentionable, or not relevant at all, for another. The relevant occurrence and placement of various tellables turns not only on the identity of the interlocutor, however; what that interlocutor is bringing to the conversation has a bearing as well, and at the outset neither party ordinarily knows what the other party has. How important some tellable will turn out to be, and accordingly when, how, and how much of it should be told – its priority and manner of delivery – need to be assessed at a point when each party lacks adequate knowledge of what it is being assessed against.

Among other uses it has, the opening is an arena in which this issue can be worked out by the parties. It provides a base position (I will call it the 'anchor position') for the introduction of 'first topic'. That position comes after a fairly standard set of four or so sequences (depending on whether an exchange of 'howareyou's is in point) have been 'run through' – a summons/answer sequence (Schegloff, 1968, 1970), an identification sequence (Schegloff, 1979), a greeting sequence, and, if in order, an exchange of 'howareyou' sequences (Sacks, 1975; Jefferson, 1980). After completion of the second 'howareyou' sequence is the anchor position. Ordinarily, it is the caller (or the initiator of the contact, if an earlier call which failed to contact its target is being returned) who, in the first instance, gets to initiate first topic, initiates it in the anchor position, and regularly uses the opportunity to introduce something overtly announced to be, or readily analyzable (by co-participant and academic analyst) as, the 'reason for the call'. (Schegloff, 1967: Ch. 4; Sacks, 8 May, 1968).

However, getting to the anchor position involves collaborative action by the two parties to coordinate their way through the canonical order of sequences mentioned above, each of which is the vehicle for accomplishing distinctive

other interactional work. In the course of taking up those jobs through those sequences, there are ways in which first topic can 'come up' or be designedly raised before the anchor position, and varying amounts before that position (as there are ways of talking past the anchor position without starting first topic in it). There are ways for the call recipient to initiate first topic instead of, and before, the caller (who, as noted, ordinarily is the one to do so). And there are ways for caller to get to initiate first topic before the anchor position, and before a possible pre-emptive start by call recipient (cf. in conjunction with the analysis below Button and Casey, 1984: esp. 172-174). In fact, at very nearly every position in the developing course of these openings, there is an opportunity for one party or the other to preempt control of first topic, and, with it, potentially the shape of the rest of the conversation.

The opening may be thought, therefore, to supply a metric of sorts for the introduction of various tellables, with the degree of claimed priority or urgency embodied in the degree of preemption before anchor position pursued by the preempting party. 'Routine' openings in which 'nothing happens' need, therefore, to be understood as achievements arrived at out of a welter of possibilities for preemptive moves or claims, rather than a mechanical or automatic playings out of pre-scripted routines.

In what follows, the elements out of which all this is wrought will be described, beginning with a review of the four main sequence types which ordinarily compose full openings, the organizational issues being worked through in each, and, turn by turn, the sorts of orderliness and consequentiality they display. Against this backdrop, the range of preemptive possibilities will be displayed through examination of exemplars of each.

### **Core opening sequences**

The four sequences which recur in these openings, and which appear in full development in the four openings displayed in Table 1, are a summons/answer sequence, an identification sequence, a greeting sequence, and an exchange of 'Howareyou' sequences. Each of these four sequence types is addressed to at least one important organizational issue for the conversation being begun:

*The summons/answer sequence* is overtly addressed to opening, and confirming the openness of, a channel of communication, and the availability of an attentive ear and a mouth ready to speak (neither of which is guaranteed by the availability of the other, or by the openness of a channel);

*the identification (and/or recognition) sequence* is straightforwardly named;

as nearly everything in conversational interaction is sensitive to the individual or categorial identity of the interlocutor, establishing the identity of the other is of major relevance at the very outset. Not being doable, as it ordinarily is in co-present interaction, by visual inspection, it is through the talk that it must be done, or in places for talk that it is done without talk explicitly addressed to it;

the jobs attributed to *greetings* defy listing, let alone description, here; at a minimum, they put the parties into what Goffman (1963: 100) has called a ritual state of ratified mutual participation, and in doing so may accomplish other work for the interaction and its parties as well;

finally, '*howareyou*' sequences, aside from sharing some features of greetings (Sacks, 1975) and their ritual uses, have an overt topic-priority relevance: they provide a formal early opportunity for the other party to make some current state of being a matter of joint priority concern.

Each of these sequences is ordinarily composed of conventional parts with determinate and differential sequential consequences. It is by the deployment of these in the unfolding series of turns organized by these sequences that 'normal' openings get constituted. In what follows, these turns, as displayed in the four openings in Table 1, are taken up in some detail.

#### *Summons/answer sequences*

(Some of the basic points treated in Schegloff, 1968 and 1970, are not treated here.)

At line 0 of Table 1 is represented what is clearly the first intersubjective 'move' in these conversations, what is actually the initiator of the interaction (if it gets a response), but what is commonly omitted not only from analysis but also from the written representation of what transpired. Very likely this is because the ring of the telephone appears to be as mechanical and standardized as possible. If openings are automatized and routine, certainly this is the prototype. And yet this initiating component of telephone conversation openings is not without interest; in various respects, the ringing that results (that, for example, one may hear again on a tape recording) is a socially and interactionally shaped product. This is so in at least three respects.

1. Persons in close proximity to a phone which begins to ring frequently do not answer it immediately, but rather allow it to ring several times before lift-



ing the receiver. Various psychological accounts and motivations may be offered for this behavior, many directed to inferences which the caller may draw from a quicker response. *Interactionally* this takes the form of the vulnerability of quick response to topicalization, as in Excerpt #2 (note the cut off on the word 'ring' to represent an answer before completion of the first ring):

# 2. (208)

ri-  
 Joan : Hello?  
 Cheryl : Hello:.  
 Joan : Hi:.  
 Cheryl : ·hh Y'were you s(h)itting by the pho:ne?  
 Joan : No, I'm (0.3) I'm in the kitchen, but I wz talkin to a friend a mine earlier. I was just putting (0.2) my fried rice on my plate to go eat lunch.

In view of the local, turn-by-turn organization of conversation, topicalization of the quick response sets an initial tack for the conversation – a tack which can develop a dynamic of its own by engendering its own topical developments, and relative to which the parties must take determinate action to reorient the conversation topically.

2. Persons far from a phone which begins to ring regularly go to it with quickened pace, on occasion even running. Once again, a variety of motives and inferences can be invoked here, most obviously the potential inference by caller that 'no one is home' (Schegloff, 1968) and a consequent hanging up before a connection is made. In addition to that interactional consequence, multiple rings are as vulnerable to topicalization as very few rings. Excerpt #3 supplies an instance (but the number of actual rings was not recorded).

# 3. (242)

Jerry : ((Hello))  
 Irene : u- Jerry?  
 Jerry : Yeah,  
 Irene : Irene.  
 Jerry : Oh = hello Irene.  
 Irene : Hi: I j us-  
 Jerry : I w'z just thinking about you.  
 Just this moment.

- Irene : Uh huh. The– the phone rang so lo:ng. I uh was worried.  
 Jerry : Oh?  
 Irene : Mm hmm,  
 Jerry : ·hh Well I jus– I just got i:n oh: not five minutes ago.  
 from the hospital,  
 Irene : mm hmm,  
 Jerry : And uh (0.3) the only thing I can report . . .

Such topicalizations of ‘delayed’ answering of the phone can take the form of inquiries about being outside, being awakened, making dinner, etc. depending on the social time of day and relevant characteristics of the interlocutor.<sup>2</sup>

3. In addition to this orientation to a proper number of rings – not too few, not too many – there is a further orientation by answerers which results in the methodical production of either integral or fractional numbers of rings. Some answerers may be observed to wait, with hand on telephone instrument, either until some current ring ends or until some next ring begins. No topicalization or other interactional contingencies seem to be involved here; it is unclear what ‘meaning’ or ‘use’ is involved, though the conduct in question is clearly observable, and descriptions of it are recognizable. In this respect as well, then, the actually heard rings are not a random or mechanical matter, but are the product of distinct and methodical forms of conduct by the participants.

Much, if not all, of this orderliness is the product of conduct by the answerer, and in the preceding paragraphs I have referred to a person in the presence of a ringing phone. But this underspecifies the relevant organization, because which of several persons present will be involved, and how, is also orderly, and requires various kinds of analyses by the persons in such an environment to find what is sequentially relevant for them.

For example, those who own the phone or ‘belong’ in the place to which the phone is assigned are likely to make initial moves to answer it. Those who do not so belong ordinarily do not so move, even if closer. (Indeed, in some circumstances those who do not ‘belong to’ the setting will make no move to answer, even if they are the only person(s) present, e.g., custodial staff in an office after hours, or guests when their host is out.) At the same time, these ‘non-potential-answerers’, if engaged in interaction with ‘potential answerers’, may hold off next turns or moves in the ongoing conversation, in order to release their interlocutors to deal with telephone’s summons. Alternatively, a glance

or phrase may authorize 'guests' to answer on behalf of 'hosts', in which case the answer is often different from what it would have been had the latter answered themselves. With these observations, we come to line 1 in Table 1, the answer turn which constitutes the first uttered turn in the interaction.

All four conversations represented in Table 1 have 'hello' as the answer form employed. It is one of several forms found in the corpus of materials being reported on,<sup>3</sup> the main others being response tokens such as 'yeah' and self-identification by answerer or self-formulation of the locus of the answered phone (such as 'Internal Revenue Service' or 'Museum of Modern Art'). These forms are type-related; more accurately, they are practices of talking which incipiently constitute types, or classes of types, of conversation. Clearly enough they begin to constitute the talk as 'telephone conversation'; but they begin to enact sub-types as well. Brief discussions of the 'yeah' and self-identification forms will set 'hello' as a response type in the context of the relevant issues (cf. Schegloff, 1970, for more extensive discussion).

The *answer form 'yeah/yes'*, aside from its 'intercom' usage for intra-organizational communications, is used largely when the answerer is 'super-confident' about the identity of the caller. It is used especially in 'call you right back' circumstances, in which two parties conclude one conversation with the agreement that one of them will do some task (e.g., call elsewhere for some information) and then call back. If the phone rings at a later time compatible with the task requirements that were agreed upon, the answerer may then display a super-confidence in the identity of the caller by answering 'yeah'. An alternate to 'yeah' in this context of super-confidence in the identity of the caller is 'Hi'. For example:

# 4. (Friedman, 1979: 56; approximate transcript)

Mom : Terrific, listen, I'll call you back.

Ed : O.K.

Mom : All right, in about one minute.

((ring))

Ed : Hi.

Mom : Hello there. I just got some more coffee. We um went to see the Rhineholts last night.

It is worth noting that 'hi' is a variant (contextually specified) of 'yeah' rather than of 'hello'. That is, on semantic grounds it might be thought that 'hi' is the 'informal' version of the greeting form, of which 'hello' is the more for-

mal, or even unmarked, form. No relationship would be warranted on semantic grounds between ‘hi’ and ‘yeah’.

The actual usage of these forms suggests a different relationship, however. On occasions when a caller warrantably expects answerer to anticipate his/her call, either ‘yeah’ or ‘hi’ can incipiently constitute and display the construction of such a pre-oriented-to, even ‘resumed,’ conversation. Such a mutual understanding can be confirmed, and that type of conversation further constituted, by the parties continuing the talk with the business at hand, omitting other parts of the opening, and especially any further identification work. If, however, caller has no basis for anticipating answerer’s super-confidence in his/her identity, and if answerer is confident about it (for example, because this caller always calls at the same time, and the phone has rung at that time) and answers with ‘hi’ as an intendedly informal version of ‘hello,’ misunderstanding is very likely. For the ‘hi’ is likely to be heard by caller as a response to some sort of pre-arranged call (of the ‘call-you-right-back’ variety) which s/he did not enter into, and feel it necessary to correct a wrong understanding by answerer about who the caller is. ‘Hi’ is, then, ordinarily heard and treated as a variant of ‘yeah’ and not as variant of ‘hello’. (This may be because ‘hello’ in this sequential position is not a greeting term, and therefore it does not take the ‘informal greeting term’ as a variant. It is, instead, an ‘answer to a summons’.)

The use of a *self-identification or self-formulation as a response form* is most conventionally understood as a ‘business’ or ‘office’ form. This convention can operate so robustly that just hearing a different answer-form can suggest to a caller that a wrong number has been reached, as in the following instance (brought to my attention by Gail Jefferson):

(FN: approximate transcript)

Answerer : Hello?

Caller : ‘HeLLO’!?’

Answerer : Yeah. ‘Hello’.

Caller : Wuh– Is this 657-6850?

Answerer : No, this is 657-6855.

Caller : Oh. Well, you have a very lovely voice.

Answerer : Why thank you. Am I supposed to be a business firm?

Caller : Yes that’s right, that’s exactly right. I’m calling my office. They never answer with ‘hello’.

But it is not satisfactory to leave this as an unexplicated conventional relationship between a broad class of contexts and a particular class of response token. Several relevant relationships and interactional issues appear to underlie this ‘convention.’

One of these is whether the answerer is an ‘owner’ or ‘assignee’ of the phone or is answering ‘officially,’ on behalf of another person or entity. A version of this issue appeared relevant in an earlier discussion of the differential consequences of the phone’s ringing for different persons in its immediate environment, depending on their relationship to it in these terms. This issue (answering ‘officially’ on behalf of another) affects not only business/office contexts, but answering ‘domestic/personal’ phones on behalf of an official assignee. Persons who do so often use a place-self-identification form of response (e.g., ‘Smith residence’) instead of the ‘conventional’ form, ‘hello.’ Callers, in turn, may remark ironically about there being a ‘butler’ or ‘maid’, referring this answer form back to its ‘officially, on behalf of another’ origins.

In all these cases, use of the self-identification form, both by businesses and by guests, appears to be related to an *orientation by answerers* of the phone to the *caller’s interest* in, and monitoring for, confirmation of *having reached the right destination*. In domestic contexts, a caller calling a place where familiars may be expected to answer, regularly listens to the initial response to recognize a voice appropriate to that call-target, and which of several persons has answered (if relevant). If caller does not recognize an appropriate voice in the answering response form, s/he may ‘hear’ that they have reached a wrong number, and hang up right away. An ‘answerer-on-behalf-of’ may, accordingly, re-frame the caller’s orientation, and confirm reaching the right destination by formulating the destination reached, rather than relying on voice recognition for that confirmation. In the ‘business’ context, this is the first-order practice, very likely because in the first instance, and in general, recognizability of voices is not expectable and is not relied on for confirmation of reaching right recipient.

It is against the background of these issues that the use of the *most common response form*, ‘hello,’ is to be understood. ‘Hello’ does not only the work of the summons/answer sequence in showing that a channel is open and an ear and mouth are ready. It is also produced with an orientation to the caller’s interest in confirming that the right phone has been reached and in establishing who has answered it. As noted earlier, ‘hello’ provides a voice sample for recognition by those who might recognize it.

Answerers’ orientations to the potential and relevant recognizability of their response token can be seen in the common use of a ‘signature hello,’ that is, a distinctive mode of delivery, more or less standardized across occasions, which provides for ready recognizability (independently remarked on by Gail Jefferson, personal communication). Orientation to a signature and standardized answer can be seen not only by examining a large number of an individual’s answers. It can be observed on single occasions, for example, by noting the shift from the mode of talk in a room just preceding answering the phone,

especially if markedly animated or restrained, to the delivery of the response token. It was once vividly illustrated for me when I had occasion to call a colleague back moments after finishing a very animated conversation, and was struck by the disparity between the voice of a moment before and the composed, and familiar, 'hello' which greeted me but a moment later. Note a by-product of this signature standardization: each conversation is at least partially insulated from the environment and activities the answerer was in at the moment of the call, and each gets to start at roughly the same starting point (e.g., with respect to pitch, amplitude, tenor, etc.) independent of prior conversations; or else the disparity is marked and noteworthy.

Problems can arise with the standard-for-the-person, signature 'hello', and those, like too many or too few rings, can immediately engender a sequence. Although trouble with the signature 'hello' can on occasion seem to impair the recognizability which the signature is designed to allow (as in line 9 of Excerpt # 5 below), more commonly the sequence which is engendered concerns various accounts for anomalies in the sound of the voice, such as mood, illness, and, most commonly, being awakened. This last generally takes the form of a pre-apology sequence, as in Excerpts # 5-7 below.

# 5. (MTRAC-90-2)

Marcia : Hullo?

→ Reah : (Hi.) Did I wake you up?

Marcia : No:.

(0.8)

Reah : Are you sure,

(1.5)

Marcia : (Well,) hhuh huh huh ·hh

(0.5)

Reah : 's this Marcia?

Marcia : Yeah

Reah : (Howayou,)

Marcia : Yeah. You did not wake me up Reah

Reah : Oh your voice sounds different.

# 6. (89)

Marcia : Hello,

Flo : Hello, did I wake ya up?

(0.4)

Marcia : Nuh-uh

(0.5)

Flo : No? =

Marcia : =Not exactly.  
 Flo : Were ya takin' a nap?

# 7. (Wong:NNS,3)

Answerer : Hello,  
 Caller : Tch Hi Mei Fang?

Answerer : (Hmm?)

Caller : This iz Joan Wright.

Answerer : Hi. [ How are you.

→ Caller : [ Did I wake you up?  
 (0.4)

Answerer : No.  
 (0.2)

Caller : Oh: you soun:ded as if [ you might have=  
 Answerer : (no really)

Caller : = been (0.2) resting.  
 (0.2)

Answerer : I have a cold.

Caller : Oh:::  
 (0.4)

The summons/answer sequence by which telephone conversations are begun is overtly addressed to the opening of a channel of communication between the prospective participants and establishing their respective availability to talk. Overwhelmingly this is accomplished by a minimum sized sequence of two parts, each of which appears irreducibly simple. One of them, in fact, has been mechanized and automatized, so that once its agent has set it in motion by dialing, the actual execution of the interactional 'move' (Goffman, 1971) is automatic. Our consideration of these sequence has been partial, and has not focussed on the core of the work the sequence is designed to do. Yet in this apparently most mechanical and routinized part of these openings, I hope it has become clear that interactional contingency is virtually omnipresent, and that socially organized practices shape the actual outcomes in many respects. Even here, what seems routine is a methodically achieved outcome.

### **Identification/recognition and greeting sequences**

It is apparent from the preceding discussion that there is no neat mapping between sequences or sequence types and organizational problems being addressed in the opening. Although summons/answer sequences are in the first

instance addressed, as noted, to channel openness and participant availability, an orientation to both identification of the parties and topic organization informs the management of the sequence and the selection and production of the items that compose its parts. The utterances on line 1 in Table 1 are not only the completions of summons/answer sequences. Representing, as they do, voice samples of the answerer, they are the effective start of identification work in the interaction, although not necessarily of a sequence overtly addressed to doing that work. In Table 1, overt identification sequences *are* present, and are displayed from lines 2 to 5. Since this work and such sequences have been described in some detail elsewhere (Schegloff, 1979), I mean here only to touch on some of the points most relevant to the present discussion.

If caller recognizes answerer from the voice sample in the answering turn, then caller should show (or claim) such recognition in next turn, the second in the call (henceforth, T2). This may be done by a great variety of forms, from a minimal greeting term, to a highly idiosyncratic recipient-designed utterance, to the inclusion of an address term for the person whom the caller believes they have recognized, as in all the calls displayed in Table 1. Indeed, virtually any utterance in T2 will display some position on caller's recognition of answerer, if only caller's treatment of it as not relevant. Asking to speak to another, for example, reveals caller's failure or inability to recognize answerer as that person, or treatment of such a possibility as irrelevant.

Whatever caller does at T2, talk in that position provides answerer a voice sample (and often much more) as a resource for their interest in 'who's calling'. Once again, recognition may not be relevant (i.e., to the participants), but if it is relevant, it appears that parties orient to a preference to be recognized if possible, rather than to self-identify. Briefly put, 'if possible' involves two components: (a) being 'recognizable'; and (b) being a 'potential caller' for this answerer. That is, just as callers with familiars at a number they are calling can orient to a set of 'possible answerers' in determining who has answered, so answerers can inspect utterances at T2 which invite recognition with an orientation to a set of potential callers as the candidates for recognition. Answerers do not entertain as candidate-callers all the persons who are in principle recognizable to them; only a smaller set, the 'potential callers,' appear to be relevant. Persons who are recognizable in principle but are not in the answerer's set of potential callers, who seek to be recognized without self-identifying, thus face the difficulty of not being treated as candidates from their voice samples. Utterances such as 'You'll never guess who this is' seem designed to indicate to answerers that, in the search to recognize the source of a voice sample (perhaps the one delivered by that very utterance), answerer must entertain as candidates 'recognizables' who are not 'potential callers' (frequently, aunts from out of town and long unseen college roommates).



An additional aspect of this preference for recognition if possible appears to be that recognition be achieved from the minimum resources that should be needed by the current interlocutor in view of the current state of the relationship. In providing resources from which to be recognized, accordingly, the caller may be seen to be displaying a stance on that relationship. The strongest claims are made by providing the most minimal resources, for example, a simple 'Hi' or other brief utterance, or one with an address term for answerer, delivered with a downward or 'terminal' intonation contour. Thus, there are many variant realizations of an openings like # 8 (including # 1 cited at the very start of this paper):

- # 8. (TG)  
 Ava : H'llo<sub>2</sub>?  
 Bee : hHi:,  
 Ava : Hi<sub>2</sub>?

And others which include address terms with downward contours, such as #s 9 and 10:

- # 9. (237)  
 Feldman : ((Hell))o,  
 Bonnie : Hello Missiz Feldman,  
 Feldman : Hi Bonnie.

- # 10. (197a)  
 Jan : He:llo:  
 Tom : Hi Jan,  
 Jan : Hi Tom.

Callers' first turns of the sort employed in #s 9 and 10 are a bit more ample than a mere 'Hi' in the amount of voice sample they provide. In addition, they give affirmative evidence (rather than just a claim) of the caller's recognition of the answerer. Most important, however, is that in/by the choice of address term (for example, first name as compared to title + last name), caller may give an increment of information far more significant as a resource for identification or recognition than the additional voice sample. On the other hand, with the downward intonation contour, answerers find themselves, as with a simple 'Hi', with two main types of response: a reciprocal greeting – which will be heard to claim reciprocal recognition, or (ordinarily after a bit of delay) a 'who's this?': an inquiry which confesses inability to recognize one who had claimed recognizability, and claimed it from the offered recognition-resource.

In this regard, the [greeting + address term] form with downward intonation is as uncompromising in its demands as the simple 'hi'.

The same voice sample resources provide a less stringent recognition test when the address term is delivered with an upward intonation, as is the case in the four conversations in Table 1. Several observations may be offered. *First*, the T2 utterances in Table 1, and most such utterances in that position, are not serious identity checks. There is a form of caller's turn, in which the intonation contour is more fully inflected, which does express a serious doubt on caller's part that answerer is who answerer was expected to be. But the more shallow contour in most turns of this composition do not. *Second*, when (as in Table 1) a prototype greeting term ('hello,' 'hi,' 'hiya') begins the turn, it is quite often not being used as a greeting. There is ordinarily a constraint on the use of greetings: one per party per occasion, if reciprocated. As can be seen in Table 1, in each conversation the caller subsequently does a full greeting to answer, suggesting that the greeting term in T2 was not there used as a greeting. *Third*, the [greeting term + address term with upward intonation] form allows, as does the form with downward intonation, reciprocal recognition in next turn, as in #s 11-13.

# 11. (231)

Ilse : Hello;  
Irene : H'llo Ilse?  
Ilse : Yes. Ire:ne.

# 12. (148)

Marty : Hello?  
Charlie : Hiya, Marty?  
Marty : Hi Charlie.

# 13. (122)

Dina : Hello?  
Bernie : H'llo, Dina?  
Dina : hhhHI!

*Fourth*, and most important, however, is that this form of utterance allows answerer another unmarked response type in addition to reciprocal recognition via greeting or a confession of failure – namely a simple confirmation. This response can be, and apparently is, heard as a full and adequate response, and not as a missing reciprocal recognition. Caller having provided an unforced opportunity to be recognized from a voice sample and appropriate address term and having not been recognized, caller ordinarily self-identifies, as in each case

in Table 1. Together with the greetings which are inextricably linked to this sequence, this is ordinarily the fullest form of identification sequence between mutually acquainted interlocutors.

As noted, greetings are not separable from the identification work, for it is with a greeting that each party asserts or claims recognition of the other. When a caller has used a minimal greeting form in T2 and a gap of silence follows, it is not because the answerer does not know, or does not want to do, the appropriate response to a greeting. It is ordinarily because a return greeting would constitute a claim of reciprocal recognition which its prospective speaker may not have achieved. An exchange of greetings is the regular form for the accomplishment and display of reciprocal recognition or satisfactory reciprocal identification (although these can be accomplished by other forms of talk). They put persons, as Goffman put it, into a state of ratified mutual participation. The talk can proceed.

### **'Howareyou' sequences**

Although 'howareyou' can serve in some interactional contexts as what Sacks (1975: 68-69) called a 'greeting substitute,' and when so treated get no response without a response being missing, in the context of the openings of telephone conversations this appears not to be the case. This utterance and its variants (e.g., 'How have you been?', often used as a 'long-time-no-see' variant of the question) address the current state of recipient, and make an answer a relevant next turn.

Furthermore, answers appear to be organized into three sets, positive ('terrific,' 'really good'), negative ('awful,' 'terrible'), and neutral ('fine,' 'O.K.'). These mappings of answer terms into sub-sets is merely illustrative; particular participants may 'know' their interlocutor's 'style,' and know that, for a particular one, 'Okay' is a negative response to 'howareyou.' Answers of different types engender different sequential courses. 'Neutral' responses are closure relevant. They take the tack that talk along those lines is not to be pursued 'now'. Ordinarily talk then proceeds to a next sequence, perhaps after an assessment ('That's good') of the neutral response. 'Positive' and 'negative' responses engender sequence expansion; they take up the opportunity to engage in talk on that topic. Ordinarily, they prompt in their recipient (the asker of the 'howareyou' question) a request for an account of the state they have announced (e.g., 'what happened?'). Indeed, because they make such a request a relevant next action, recipients of a 'howareyou' may withhold a positive/negative response to avoid having to deal with the account-request it ought to produce (ibid.).

In addition to the organization of the lexical responses into three sets or

types, modes of delivery (largely prosody in this context) also seem to be so understood. That is, the responses to 'howareyou' can be delivered in a markedly 'upbeat' manner, in a negative or 'depressed' manner, or in neutral, unmarked prosody. Various combinations of lexical component and prosodic delivery are possible, though not all of the nine obvious combinations seem to turn up empirically. Neutral lexical items occur in all three delivery modes, although neutral delivery is most common. And of the 'ironic' combinations, the positive-lexical in negative-delivery seems most common. In such 'mismatched' combinations, the prosody is treated as the 'true' response; 'wonderful' delivered in a negative tone is likely to prompt a 'what's wrong'.

Finally, Jefferson (1980) has shown that some aspects both of the lexical composition of a response (e.g., qualifying the neutral answer, 'pretty good') and of its delivery (e.g., delay, as in 'Oh pretty good') can mark the possible presence of matters to be talked of, especially 'troubles,' without necessarily engendering the talk then and there, although such developments can also occur.

The 'howareyou' sequence is ordinarily an exchange sequence, that is, after a first such inquiry is answered and the sequence elaborated and/or closed, a reciprocal inquiry by the recipient of the first is relevant, yielding an exchange of 'howareyou' inquiries and sequences. Prosody *may* mark the order of the inquiries. A light stress on the 'you' can characterize either first or second 'howareyou's. A stress on the 'are', however, generally marks a first 'howareyou' (as in #247a, column 2 in Table 1). Although a heavy stress on the 'are' can characterize openings after a long period of no contact (as in #121, column 4 in Table 1), or can display that the asker has had cause to be concerned about recipient, reciprocal 'howareyou's rarely have a stress on the 'are'. 'Howareyou' then shows its speaker to be producing a 'first howareyou', even if such a question has already been asked (cf. below, the discussion of #17 at p. 136).

### **Sequential relationship of the sequences**

The sequences out of which telephone conversation openings are for the most part fashioned come in two turn and three turn 'packages'. That is, they are either minimal adjacency pairs (e.g., the ring and initial utterance which compose the summons/answer sequence; or the greeting exchanges) or are adjacency pairs with sequence-closing third position turns, ordinarily assessments (e.g., Howareyou + Fine + That's good).

These two and three part sequences are sequentially organized relative to one another in one of two ways. In '*serial organization*,' each turn includes one se-

quence part, with the consequence that one sequence follows another, a turn with the last part of one sequence being followed by a turn with the first part of a next sequence. In Table 1, lines 6-10 in call # 263 (column 3) supply an instance of this for the exchange of 'howareyou' sequences. In '*interlocking organization*,' some turns have two (or sometimes three) components, combining in the same turn the last part (the second pair part of an adjacency pair or a sequence-closing third) of one sequence and the first part of a next sequence (Cf. the discussion along these lines in Goffman, 1971: 145-146). In Table 1, lines 5-9 of call # 247a (column 2) exhibit two instances of interlocking organization: one, at line 6, combines the last part of the greeting exchange with the first part of the first 'howareyou' sequence, and the second, at line 7, combines the second part of the first 'howareyou' sequence with the first part of the second 'howareyou' sequence. A more common, and less obtrusive, interlock occurs when a single turn has only a single turn constructional unit in it, but one which accomplishes both the last part of a prior sequence and the first part of a next; in particular, registering recognition of the other party and initiating a greeting exchange, as for example in Table 1 at line 5 in call # 247a (column 2).<sup>4</sup>

Each interlock 'shortens' the potential length of the opening by one turn, changes the assignment of the turn at which subsequent sequences get initiated, who gets to initiate them, and, thereby, eventually the speaker to whom the anchor position turn is assigned. It may be useful to examine the four conversations displayed in Table 1 with respect to the sequential organization of their component sequences.

Note then that # 247a (column 2) is fully serial until line 6, with one unit or move per turn until that point, at which the second part of the greeting and the first part of the first howareyou are combined into a single turn. Compare # 123 (column 1) and # 263 (column 3) both of which are compressed by including a greeting together with the self-identification at line 4, which # 247a does not do. Accordingly, the 'hi' in line 5 of # 123 and of # 263 are second or return greetings, whereas the one in # 247a is a first greeting. The consequence can be seen in the next line, line 6, in which calls # 123 and # 263 have no greeting term but # 247a does. The compression of one turn achieved in #s 123 and 263 is matched in # 247a by the interlock in line 6, so that at that point all three openings have the first 'howareyou' sequence underway, and initiated by the caller.

Compare with these # 121 in column 4. This call opens rather like # 247a, without a greeting term accompanying the caller's self-identification in line 4. Like 247a, greetings are exchanged at lines 5-6, although here they are done by enthusiastic delivery of address terms rather than with 'hi's. However, the compression which occurs at line 6 in 247a does not occur in # 121. As a result,

the first howareyou 'comes out' in the call-recipient's turn, instead of in the caller's turn, with the further consequence that the call-recipient ends up being the recipient of the second howareyou, and uses it to make a first move on the direction the talk should take, at line 9.

This outcome is not idiosyncratic. As will be seen below, of the places for preemptive moves for first topic, the answer-to-the-second howareyou is the most minimal and least 'demanding.' There is a methodical procedure for having that 'slot,' and that is by being recipient of the second howareyou, an outcome which can be achieved by initiating the *first* howareyou. We may then appreciate a possible strategic import of line 6 in call #247a, where caller extends her turn so as to include in it the first howareyou. And we may note about line 4 in calls 123 and 263 that, in initiating the greeting sequence there (an option not taken in #247a), the callers make it possible for recipients to 'get' the first howareyou which they will be able to interlock with the greeting-return in next turn. Compressing or stretching out the opening by serial or interlocking placement of the component sequences, therefore, has potential interactional consequences.

These consequences include the way in which the opening concludes and is articulated with the entry into topic talk or interactional 'business'. In the next section, we will see that this entry can be managed at various points in the developmental course of the openings. But when the opening is not cut short for early starts of topic or 'business' talk, there are still different ways the articulation can be managed. Note that in Table 1, calls 123 and 247a have been so organized as to have the anchor position in a turn which by alternation 'naturally comes out' to be caller's – the participant who ordinarily initiates first topic. This is the turn after the second howareyou sequence is closed with a sequence closing third position assessment. In both cases, this comes out at the tenth turn of the conversation. In #263, first topic is also initiated by the caller and in the tenth turn. But this opening is 'running behind' the others by two turns; the second howareyou is not interlocked to the answer to the first as it is at line 7 in #s 123 and 247a; instead that response and an assessment of it at line 8 pass before the reciprocal question occurs at line 9 in #263. First topic must then be 'taken' by caller by getting it into the same turn as her response to the second howareyou, if she is to avoid the possibility, for example, that answerer might interlock onto a sequence closing assessment at line 11 (were that to be permitted by caller) some pre-emptive move into topic talk.

The main other type of outcome is that the natural alternation of turns together with an actual array of serial and interlocking sequence relations brings the anchor position (after a sequence closure for the reciprocal howareyou sequence) into a turn assigned to the call recipient. Call recipients sometimes use such turns to initiate topic talk. Ordinarily, however, if they had a topic worthy

of preempting caller's ordinary right to first topic, it would have been introduced preemptively. Accordingly, recipients with anchor position turn ordinarily return it to caller with utterances of the form 'what's up?', 'What's new?', 'What's happening?', or in 'business' contexts, 'What can I do for you?' In response to such inquiries, as well as in the circumstances in which the anchor position turn comes out as caller's, there are ways in which caller can talk past this position without initiating first topic, and there can be grounds for doing so. But these cannot be taken up here.

### **Preemption**

Many openings are built up by the participants to include all the component sequences reviewed in the preceding pages. Some openings are rather more compressed than the ones displayed in Table 1. Sometimes this is achieved by more interlocking of sequences than is displayed in those instances; in other cases it is achieved by the achievement of mutual recognition without an overt identification sequence, but by voice recognition in the greeting exchange.

Some openings, however, are shortened not by the compacting of the same set of sequences and their parts into fewer turns or by the 'more efficient' accomplishment of some job that needs to be accomplished in the opening. Some are shortened by a preemptive move by one of the participants to initiate first topic or some initial action sequence before the opening has worked itself out in full.

In the first instance, the structural motivation for such preemption is the answerer's, for ordinarily it is the caller who initiates first topic in the anchor position. Answerers who have a 'tellable' or 'doable' for which some priority is to be claimed may then have an interest in initiating it before that anchor position turn arrives and is assigned to caller.

'Priority' may be claimed on various grounds – its bearing on what 'other' might properly do in the conversation, urgency or importance relative to general standards about such things to which the participants may mutually orient, being first to initiate something one expects the other to address as well, etc. Rather than enumerating such a list, it is more in point to note that the participants may examine such preemptions, each case in its own terms and by reference to its own particularities, to find what may have prompted a party who has preempted to preempt on *that* occasion, and to preempt to some particular degree, where 'degree' refers to the amount of ordinary opening business that has been preempted by initiating first topic or action sequence at a given point.

Although, as noted, call recipient may have the first-order structural basis for preemption because in the first instance there is a (weak) prerogative assigning first topic to caller, callers may orient to this very possibility and thereby have

a basis for preemption as well. Of course, there may be other bases for them as well – for example, calling just after an extended encounter with answerer during which something has been ‘forgotten’. With respect to callers, as with answerers, it is not fruitful to enumerate grounds for preemption. The parties tailor their production and understanding of such foreshortening to the particularities of their circumstances, and these may include grounds other than topic priority. Indeed, the talk which starts the early move to first topic may be built to indicate the warrant for dispensing with a more expansive opening (as in ‘The whole weekend I forgot to tell you . . .’).

In fact, instances are readily at hand in which both recipients and callers move preemptively into first topic/action-sequence, and do so in positions which exhibit varying degrees of preemption. These range from the weakest, which work through the second howareyou or replace it, to the strongest, which preempt not only the howareyous but the greetings as well, requiring that voice recognition be accomplished from an utterance which has already initiated some topic or action sequence. The ensuing fragments display something of this range, first for recipient preemptions, starting with the most minimal and ending with the strongest, and then for callers, in the same progression.

### *Recipient preemption*

The weakest call-recipient preemption is at the answer to the second howareyou. In a sense, this is hardly a preemption at all, for the howareyou question appears designed precisely to allow its recipient a place to initiate a topic. Still, when used by call-recipient, it has the effect of making that topic preempt what would otherwise have been slated to happen next, namely, a first topic initiation by caller – ordinarily, the ‘reason for the call.’

# 14. (115)

Agnes : ((Hello))

Portia : ((Hello))

Agnes : Hi honey, how are [ yuh.

Portia : [ Fine, how’re you.

Agnes : ‘hhhhhhhOh, I’m pretty goo::d, I hadda liddle operation on my toe this week, I hadtuh have– toenail taken off.



## # 15. (268)

Marylin : Hello,  
 Irene : Hello, Marylin?  
 Marylin : Yes it is. =  
 Irene : = Oh this is Irene.  
 Marylin : Oh HI. = How're you do:in.  
 Irene : Heh okay. = How about you.  
 Marylin : Okay, pretty goo:d. I've been busy: bu(h)t, 'hh  
 Irene : [ other  
           : [ Are you tea:ching?,

Several points may be noted (and cf. Jefferson, op. cit. on 'pretty good' as a trouble-premonitory answer form). First, in these instances the answerer is recipient of the second howareyou by having moved to be the speaker of the first. Second, that 'move' is represented by the interlocking of the first howareyou with a greeting term, rather than leaving it for the other to do. Third, the move to get first howareyou is especially notable in # 15, where it is rushed into a turn (at the fifth line) which otherwise includes a *first* greeting, and has therefore preempted the return greeting in order to do the first howareyou, which results in receiving the second howareyou, which is used to preempt a topical direction, with which, to be sure, caller collaborates in next turn.

In # 16, the answerer introduces a possible first topic 'earlier'.<sup>5</sup>

## # 16. (95)

Marcia : Hello,  
 Tony : Hi Marcia,  
 Marcia : yeah?  
 Tony : This is Tony  
 Marcia : HI Tony.  
 Tony : How are you,  
 Marcia : OHhhh hh I've got a paper b- (0.2) the yearly paper  
           due tomorrow,  
 Tony : How about that.  
 Marcia : heheheh 'hh I can tell you a lot ab(h)out th(h)at . . .

Note first that Marcia does not (as Marylin did in # 15) add a first howareyou to her greeting, as a way of being recipient of the second howareyou. Note next that, although a return greeting appears to be relevant in next turn, no ordinary greeting term is used, and Tony uses a first howareyou (which can serve as a 'greeting substitute' as noted by Sacks, op. cit.) in its place, thereby himself being the likely recipient of the second. It is in answer to this possibly preemp-

tive move that Marcia uses the answer turn to introduce a first topic. Preemptions need not, therefore, be unilateral moves; they can be strategically induced by moves the other may seem to be making.

In # 17, the answerer appears to make a preemptive move to first topic in the same sequential position as was the case in # 16, namely, in the answer turn to the first howareyou. However, although speaking in the turn after the first 'howareyou', the utterance is not so constructed as to sustain a characterization as 'answer turn to the first howareyou'. Unlike # 16, here the recipient of the call does not use the 'answer' to introduce a first topic or action sequence. Rather, her utterance by-passes the howareyou altogether, and thus in effect sequentially deletes it and preempts its position for the new topic.

# 17. (122)

Dina : Hello?

Bernie : H'llo, Dina?

Dina : hhhHI!

Bernie : Hi, how're you.

Dina : I CAlledju las' night.

Bernie : You di:d,

Dina : yea:h.

Bernie : Wha' tj:me.

Dina : Uh::: about seven uh'clock, or was it e- tch! Oh I- I don't remember b- but I calledju.

Bernie : Yeah.

Dina : N- nobuddy was home.

Bernie : hhhh [ hhhh

Dina : [ Gee I was just th- n- that's very funny. How are you.

Bernie : Okay.

Dina : That's good.

Bernie : Tch! hhh I think I was home last night.

That the preempting speaker is oriented not so much to answering the howareyou at line 4 as to preempting it can be seen several turns later when the sequence which she has initiated is brought to a close. After her '... that's very funny,' she returns the talk to the howareyou sequences which were in progress when she 'interrupted.' Note that she does not do a second, or reciprocal, howareyou. By placing her stress on the second syllable, she marks hers as a first howareyou, as if the one on line 4 had never occurred (thus, 'sequential deletion').

A further degree of preemption occurs when answerers begin a first topic or

sequence in a manner which preempts not only the howareyou sequences but the return greeting as well. #s 18 and 19 provide instances.

# 18. (266a)

Prior : Hello?  
 Irene : Doctor Prior?  
 Prior : Yes,  
 Irene : Irene Davis.  
 Prior : Yes Irene.  
 Irene : Good morning. =  
 Prior : = 'hh I am sorry about the other day:,  
 Irene : [ <sup>I-</sup> Yes, so am I,

# 19. (278)

Harris : Hello:,  
 Irene : H'llo, Doctor Harris?  
 Harris : Yes.  
 Irene : Irene.  
 Harris : Oh hi Irene. = I just saw the m(h)ess(h)age I was s'pposed to call you.

In # 18, the call answerer is the recipient of the first greeting. In the next turn, he preempts the position for a reciprocal or return greeting on behalf of a first bit of business, the initiation of an apology sequence. In # 19, the answerer is the one to *do* the first greeting; he preempts the second greeting in a different way, that is, by compressing into the same turn another turn-constructural unit which makes relevant quite a different sort of response, thereby preempting the position in which caller might do a responsive second greeting.

In #s 20 and 21, call recipients preemptively move into a first topic/sequence in what is, in one sense, the same sequence-structural position as was the case in #s 18 and 19 – in the position for second greeting. However, in these calls that position is also the answerer's first turn after having the opportunity to recognize who the caller is. It therefore appears more relevant to characterize this preemption position as the 'first possible opportunity' to preempt first topic/sequence.

# 20. (113)

Anna : ((Hello))  
 Betty : (... uhning.)  
 Anna : WELL WHERE'VE YOU BEEN.

- Betty : Oh I've been down here,  
 Anna : I was down there over:: Memorial Day en you  
 weren't the:re.  
 Betty : Oh I wasn't here Memorial, no bah– Bud hadtuh  
work Fridee.

## # 21. (141)

- Charlie : Hello.  
 Naomi : 'allo,  
 Charlie : G'yo– your roommate talks forever? or is it you.  
 Naomi : The roommate . . .

It may be worth noting here that the five fragments so far examined in which more than the answer turns to howareyous are preempted appear to involve apologies (# 19 appears to be, if not an apology, then a pre-apology) or complaints, and are contact related. Their predominant theme appears to be some problem about the answerer being the answerer; that is, the answerers' preempting talk makes or implies a claim that the one who has answered only 'happens to be' the answerer for this conversation; they have tried to initiate the contact without success because of no answer or a (persistent) busy signal, or were about to do so, or had some previous effort to make contact come to grief. This then constitutes a special class of action types on whose behalf preemption to this degree appears to be undertaken. It is undertaken by *call recipients*, and is undertaken in closest possible proximity to that which the action (whether complaint or apology) concerns, namely, the making of contact and who initiated it and who received it. What primarily differentiates the positioning of these preemptions is whether or not a full identification sequence is necessary for recognition, or whether that is accomplished by voice recognition from caller's first turn.

Above, I characterized preemptions in the third turn as 'first possible opportunity,' but that is not quite correct. It is only the first opportunity for a *recipient-designed* preemption. It is possible for answerers to 'cast the first die' even earlier. In one opening I have heard but cannot provide a detailed transcription of, the answerer answers the phone with a teary voice. Immediately, even before the caller has self-identified or otherwise talked in the conversation, the initial direction of the talk has been committed. Although strictly speaking this is the 'first possible opportunity' for preemption out of a 'routine' opening, the one previously identified is the primary interactionally sensitive one.

### *Caller preemptions*

Callers also can and do preemptively move into first topics or first action sequences before the anchor position, and their preemptions range, as do those of answerers, from minimal to radical. Perhaps the slightest preemption is displayed by #263 (column 3) in Table 1. Note that at line 10, the caller combines into a single turn her answer to the second *howareyou* and her initiation of first topic. A more fully played out version might have had the second *howareyou* sequence take a sequence-closing assessment after the answer, as is the case in the first two columns of the table, at line 9. Had call #263 developed in that manner, the caller would have ended the turn at line 10 with 'Fine,' answerer would have offered an assessment at line 11 (something like 'That's good'), and at line 12, in the anchor position, caller would have done the first topic/sequence initiation which is found at line 10. The slight preemption invoked here is like the weakest one described for answerers – it is a preemption at the answer turn to the second *howareyou* (cf. #s 14 and 15 above and the discussion of those fragments).

Fragment #22 displays a somewhat 'stronger' preemption.

# 22. (250a)

Bonnie : Hello:.

Marlene : Hello Bonnie?

Bonnie : Yes.

Marlene : Hi. This is Marlene:

Bonnie : Hi,

Marlene : How are you,

Bonnie : I'm fi:ne,

Marlene : Okay. ·hh D'you have Marina's telephone number?

Up to the last line presented in #22 this opening is virtually identical with the first eight lines of #263 in Table 1, just discussed. In #263, the caller receives the call recipient's response to the first *howareyou* with a sequence closing assessment, after which recipient produces the reciprocal *howareyou*. In #22 above, no such reciprocal is produced directly after the sequence-closing assessment, nor in the inbreath which follows, which can be heard as preparatory to further talk by caller. Caller does not wait for the reciprocal; instead, she uses this position, otherwise the place for a return *howareyou*, to begin what appears to be the reason for the call.

In #s 23 and 24, caller introduces first topic in a turn which preempts both *howareyou* sequences.

## # 23. (273)

Schultz : Hello,

Irene : uh Dr. Schultz?

Schultz : Yes.

Irene : Irene. Hi. =

Schultz : = Hi Irene.

Irene : Listen. Have you been able to hh figure out whether you have any time or when you have time?

## # 24. (289a)

Bonnie : Hello,

Cathy : Bonnie?,

Bonnie : Yeah,

Cathy : Good morning, this is Cathy Clark,

Bonnie : Oh hi.

Cathy : Hi:. = I called to remind you 'bout the meeting to-  
day:, = y'know 'bout it don't yuh,  
(1.4)

Bonnie : No I do:n't.

In both these openings, callers move directly from the greeting exchange into first topic/sequence. A possibility not considered until now is raised by these two openings, and to some degree by #s 18 and 19 as well.

Recall that one issue potentially addressed in conversation openings is the constitution of the parties' relationship – who they are to one another, the current state of the relationship, and the relationship between the current, incipient occasion of interaction and prior one(s). The identification sequence is one site for the addressing of these issues, because in it the parties regularly have occasion to address one another, and the selection of address and self-identification terms can not only *indicate* the nature and state of the relationship, but can in substantial measure (re-)constitute it.

Note then the forms of address and self-identification in the fragments mentioned above. In #s 18, 19, and 23 a woman graduate student in her late 40s or early 50s is calling members of the faculty. Although some might characterize the relationships as relatively informal, it can still be noted that she addresses them by title + last name but identifies herself by first name (in one case by first + last name, suggesting a lesser reliance on recognizability and perhaps a less established relationship), and is addressed by them by first name. In the remaining case, # 24, the caller addresses the teenaged answerer by first name alone, but self-identifies by first + last name, whether for recognizability or formality or some other end we cannot say.

The possibility not so far considered is that the relevance of howareyous is contingent on, and can be an instrument in the constituting of, the relationship of the parties and the ‘kind of conversation this is going to be’ given the terms of the relationship. On this view, howareyous are not relevant or appropriate for some pairs of interlocutors under some characterization of their relevant identities and relationship on that occasion of talk. If correctly applied to # 23 or # 24 above, there would properly speaking be no preemption at all. Movement to first topic after the greeting exchange would be the way the parties have of continuing to build the conversation as an instance of the type they have so far built it to be – a conversation between teacher and student, though a somewhat familiar one in view of the mildly challenging character of its first post-opening turn. In the case of # s 18 and 19, *some* preemption would still be involved because in both cases return greetings are displaced by the introduction of first topic/action, but this would be a much lesser degree of preemption than would be involved if both howareyou sequences were also understood to have been by-passed.

This possibility is a real one. What constitutes a canonical opening set of sequences is an empirical question, and not to be settled by stipulation. What is most crucial is evidence that the parties understand something special to be involved in starting first topics or action sequences in various positions. A clustering of action-types, such as apologies or complaints, at a position characterized as pre-mature is some evidence that something special is going on, especially when a pertinent interactional issue (such as who ‘owes’ whom a call) can be seen to be involved. So also are other evidences given by the parties that the claimedly preemptive moves are understood to involve special import, urgency, etc. The issue of the relevance of howareyous, in the end, affects only a few cases: those in which no howareyous are undertaken, in which everything but howareyous is undertaken (i.e., there is a full greeting exchange), and in which there is evidence that, for the parties, their relevant relationship is such that howareyous are not in point. In some cases, no determinate conclusion may be possible. That should not affect our understanding of the underlying organization of the openings.

Just as answerers can preempt both howareyous and a greeting return (as in # s 18 and 19), so can callers, as in # s 25 and 26:

# 25. (MDE)

Marcia : Hello?

Donny : 'lo Marcia. [ (It's) D ] onny.

Marcia : [ Yea [ :h ]

Marcia : Hi Donny.

Donny : Guess what.hh

Marcia : What.

Donny : 'hh My ca:r is sta:lled.

# 26. (248a)

Bonnie : Hello?

Yvonne : Bonnie?,

Bonnie : Yeah.

Yvonne : It's Yvonne.

Bonnie : 'hh Hi, =

Yvonne : = I wanted to apologize to you for (0.6) Sunday . . .

In both cases, the caller, talking in the turn after a first greeting, bypasses a second greeting and moves directly to a first bit of business. In # 25, various other signs of urgency are part of this same preempting package – the compression of an overt self-identification into T2 and to a recipient who can be expected to recognize caller, an out-of-breathness which appears in the transcript only as the aspiration after 'Guess what,' and a compressed pace of talk not represented in the transcript at all. In # 26, the caller accomplishes the preemption not only by not including a return greeting when she talks after having received a first greeting; but, by starting that next turn without allowing the passage of any silence at all, she interdicts the possibility of Bonnie adding to her turn, the most likely candidate being a first howareyou.

Note finally, that # 25 reveals the urgency of its preempting topic in the course of describing it – a non-starting car by a bank officer responsible for opening a bank branch in a few minutes: the topic is meant to reveal the basis for its high degree of preemption. Note that # 26 is an apology, as were #s 18 and 19, which involved preemptions of exactly the same degree – at the return greeting position. The convergence of apologies as an action type at this preemption position suggests something about the priority they can be taken to have, and the strategic nature of their positioning within the conversations in which they occur.

The most radical preemption by callers can be characterized in a fashion similar to that for answerers – at the first possible opportunity. For answerers this is at the third turn – the first after a caller's turn allows recognition of who caller is. For callers the cognate position is in second turn, after the answerer's 'hello' allows callers to confirm by voice recognition that they have reached the intended party. Fragments # 27 and # 28 are instances of such maximum caller preemptions.



## # 27. (105)

- Portia : Hello::,  
 → Agnes : Are you awa:ke?  
 Portia : YEA:H. I [ dis got up.  
 Agnes : [ I-  
 Agnes : Oh didjeh?  
 Portia : Yeah.  
 Agnes : ·hh Weh goo:d.  
 → Agnes : I'm alo:ne.  
 (0.4)  
 Portia : [ mvh-  
 → Agnes : [ Guy left me las' night.  
 (1.0)

## # 28. (108)

- Martha : He:llo::?  
 → Agnes : ·hh I'd like tuh wish you a happy Thanksgiving from  
 Balboa,  
 Martha : Oh thank you dea [ h  
 Agnes : [ hheh ·hhhh [hh  
 Martha : [ hnh  
 Agnes : Ah didju [ getchor paper this morning =  
 Martha : [ I-  
 Agnes : = ih w'z out [ 'n front'v ar place.  
 Martha : [ Mh-  
 Martha : Yes dear I did.  
 → Agnes : Guy took it over on the porch. He didn't know  
 → whether you were up.  
 Martha : Well thank you. Yes I did. I'm just up a liddle while  
 en doing the- ·hh chores, . . .

In each of these calls, the caller displays in her very first turn that a non-canonical opening is under way, and that a move is being made to initiate a first topic or first action immediately. In each case, the basis for the preemption is not overtly displayed in the turn which initiates it. In # 27, Agnes is calling with an announcement of bad news – her husband has left her. In # 28, she is calling (a different recipient) with good news – her husband is back. The preemption is begun at the first arrow in the two transcripts respectively; the news is provided at the second two arrows.

Although the news, and the basis for preemption, is not delivered at the second turn, what *is* done there serves as a harbinger of what is to come. Unlike

the caller's first turns in #s 3 and 4 above ('Did I wake you up?'), the caller's first turn in #27, 'Are you awake?' does not appear to be a pre-apology. It reflects rather a pre-calling orientation by the caller to withhold a pressing motivation to call because the intended recipient would not yet be awake, and a decision finally to risk that the answerer would be awake. Beginning immediately with 'Are you awake?' displays that the caller was willing to risk that answerer might not be, and thus has something of sufficient import to 'self-consciously' take that risk (cf. Sacks, 1984: 427-428; originally in Sacks, 1970: Winter Lecture 2). The manner of delivery may indicate whether the pressing matter is positive or negative. Here, 'are you awake' serves as a harbinger of bad news. The 'pressingness' of that news is displayed by the caller's incipient delivery as soon as her query has been answered ('I-'), although she yields the turn when answerer continues with a display of how well-measured the caller's risk had been ('I just got up') and collaborates in the canonical development and completion of the announcement sequence thereby set off. On completion of the assessment of the announcement of awakeness ('well good'), the bad news is delivered.

In #28, the harbinger is of good news, and is displayed in good wishes. Note that the early time of day is dealt with quite differently (this call was held off and the issue not mentioned at its start with regard to *it*; when mentioned with regard to Guy, it is reported that he withheld initiating a contact, etc.), and that the good news is not formatted as an announcement, but is 'leaked' into the conversation by an *en passant* reference to Guy in the course of an explanation of an event which would very likely have gone unnoticed (the paper being on the porch) were its account not the vehicle for mentioning Guy's presence. The overt reason for the call, not reproduced here, is an invitation to visit.

Such maximum preemptions are not common and it is unclear whether it is characteristic that what prompts them is itself introduced by some form of preparatory sequence. In the limited data available, it is striking that the maximum preemptions by answerers are all contact-related complaints, and those complaints compose the preempting utterance, whereas the maximum preemptions by callers are all extrinsic matters of urgency, and are introduced by harbingers which do the work of preempting.

The array of data reviewed in the preceding pages may be taken to display that at virtually any point in the developing course of an opening, either party can interrupt its development in order to introduce preemptively a first item of concern for the conversation – whether a focus of topical talk or an action prosecuted through talk. 'Routine' openings must, therefore, be understood as outcomes jointly achieved by the participants out of a field full of alternative possibilities, including ones (i.e., the howareyous) which are specifically designed to allow topic initiation.

## Scope

What is the range over which this account holds? Some writers (e.g., Godard, 1977; Wolfson, 1983) have claimed considerable variation between cultures with respect to their practices of telephone talk, as part of a more general stance, characteristic of the 'ethnography of communication' approach introduced by Hymes, and perhaps of anthropological perspectives more generally. The balance between what is common across group or cultural boundaries and what varies is, of course, largely an empirical question. The actual empirical foundations of the claims and counter-claims is, however, not always clear. Thus, it is not clear that Godard's account of how French telephone conversation differs from American is based on recordings of either; the 'citations' suggest *post-hoc* note-taking or recollection. When, in 1978-79, I undertook with some Dutch colleagues the collection of some tape-recorded Dutch telephone conversations, my colleagues who began with the belief that Dutch calls were quite different from American ones were quite surprised by what they heard on the tapes.

This not the place to present and analyze such comparative materials extensively. It may be useful, however, to offer some evidence of the direction more systematic analysis may take.

In an unpublished paper, Schmidt (1975) presented an instance of the opening of an Egyptian telephone conversation (which he characterized as '... a typical Cairene telephone call'). I shall omit the Egyptian transcript and provide only the English gloss, as presented by Schmidt:

# 29. (Schmidt:1975)	
A : Hello	01
C : Hello	02
A : Hello	03
C : Who's speaking?	04
A : Who are you?	05
C : Is Abu el-Magd there?	06
A : I'm Abu el-Magd. Mohammed?	07
C : Yes. How are you, Bey?	08
A : Fine. And you?	09
C : Fine. ((Literally: praise God.))	10
A : You're welcome.	11
C : Hey, brother, I want to ask you something.	12

Schmidt proposes a number of respects in which this opening embodies a pattern different from the American, and is 'surprising ... to an outsider', for

example, '... the caller's *hello* in response to the *hello* of the answerer.' In fact, such a pattern is not at all unusual, especially (as here) between intimates (cf. Schegloff, 1979). At the same time, Schmidt (1975: 31) does describe a number of commonalities between the American and Cairene practices. Wolfson (1983), however, in describing Schmidt's analysis, mentions only the respects in which the settings are claimed to vary. It may be useful to compare this opening with the four presented in Table 1.

Note *first* that the opening contains the four sequence types we have been discussing for American calls – summons-answer, identification/recognition, greetings, and an exchange of howareyous. It also contains other sequence types not included in the opening pattern exemplified in Table 1, but not uncommon in American openings, e.g., the request to speak to another (cf. Schegloff, 1979). *Second*, as Schmidt noted, the opening begins with a summons-answer sequence in which answerer speaks first and with an answer type like the American, and it ends with caller initiating first topic. (It might be added that the topic begins with what appears to be a 'pre-pre', cf. Schegloff, 1980). *Third*, the opening ends with an exchange of howareyous, lines 8-11 being direct cognates of lines 6-9 in Table 1, columns 1 and 2. *Fourth*, at T2 the identification/recognition work is undertaken under the cover of an exchange of greetings. This is different from the four calls in Table 1, but is the common mode of mutual identification for intimates in the U.S. It fails. It also sometimes fails in the U.S. Here is an example of a failed American instance:

# 30. (10)

A : Hello?

C : Hello:,  
(1.0)

C : Hello?

A : Hello,  
(0.3)

C : Oh I ke- u- c'n you speak a little  
louheh [ heh heh heh- =

A : [ (mm)

C : = ·HHHH who's this.

A : Robin?

C : u- Hi:, it's Evelyn.

A : HI:::..

C : Uh- I gotta getta

A : [ I ( - ) I didn' recognize yer voj:ce.

C : Oh really? =

A : Yea:h

(0.4)

A : (            )

C : Ah:, same ol' me [ heh heh heh heh

A :                            [ Yeah really What'r ya doin,

There are differences certainly between the two calls, some of them where Schmidt argued that there were similarities between the two cultures. For example, whereas in the Egyptian case the answerer resists the 'who are you?' question by caller with a challenge in response, in this American case the answerer responds, even timidly so. But the development of this opening does not suggest that there are strong inter-cultural differences in the underlying organizations here.

It may well be that such openings are typical for Cairo, exceptional for Los Angeles. And if persons from the two societies report surprise and distress at what seem to them strange or rude practices, these certainly invite investigation. But careful comparison of recorded instances of the practices actually employed (not thought to be employed, even by natives) may show that the underlying organization of conduct, and the interactional issues to which it is addressed, are not that remote from one another. Indeed, Godard appears to believe that there are canonical parts of openings on the telephone in France, but thinks that they are different. For example, she thinks that an apology-for-intrusion is part of the canon in France, but that there is an exemption where intimates are involved. If there *are* differences, that is important to know, and to investigate – either for what else in the organization of conduct may motivate those differences, or for what yet more general account of the organization of conduct will allow us to treat the varying practices as orderly alternatives. The differences may evidence the operation of the same underlying organizational concerns: for example, the same recipient design considerations which may involve the absence of howareyou sequences in American openings may also bear on the occurrence of intrusion-apologies in France.

Much of the literature in the anthropological and linguistic traditions, from which the work cited above is drawn, focusses almost automatically on that which varies between cultures and speech communities. But underlying that which varies, we can often find themes of interactional organization to which participants are oriented whatever their milieu,<sup>6</sup> and these have no lesser analytic status. Indeed, they may contribute to the sense of significance which analysts attribute to what appears to vary. In any case, 'positions' here – whether committed to that which varies or to that which is held in common – should be the product of empirical inquiry, not merely disciplinary commitment. The range of settings over which the account offered here holds remains to be specified, but it is not necessarily limited (even for this historically shallow, techno-

logical innovation) by the conventional cultural boundaries which have been proposed.

A different question of scope concerns the variety of types of activity which appear to be accomplished through the operation of such 'routines.' For each of these, it remains to work through the range of contingencies open at various points in the development of the activity, the better to understand both what sort of achievement an 'uneventful' joint production of the episode is, and how a sense of its routine character is fostered.

## Notes

1. For another discussion along related lines, cf. Douglas W. Maynard, *Inside Plea Bargaining* (New York: Plenum Press, 1984), pp. 104-107. The theme of 'routine as achievement' is, of course, one major component of Garfinkel's problematics for ethnomethodology, although formulated somewhat differently (cf. Garfinkel, 1967). The authors in Coulmas' (ed. 1981) volume on *Conversational Routine* do not generally deal with units larger than a single utterance, but if they did, the product might be what I am cautioning against. Schank and Abelson's 'scripts' come close to this.
2. If the phone is not answered 'in time,' this topicalization can carry over to the next occasion on which the parties talk. Thus, in a conversation between two women, one reports having tried to reach the other. Then:

Martha : Oh I'll tell you uhm:: 'hh I uhm · heard the phone I w'z watching  
 television, by the time I got out he re it's stopped =  
 Agnes : └ Yah.  
 Martha : = ringing.  
 Agnes : Yeah well I let it ring about ten times ah thought WELL NOW MAYBE  
 YER 'N └TH'BATHTUB.

So inferences generated by 'no answer' and by many rings can be related and both are topicalizeable on that occasion or a subsequent one.

3. I am working here with the same corpus of some 450 telephone calls as in Schegloff 1979, supplemented by a few other sources, such as Friedman (1979). For the possible bearing on the findings of the composition of the corpus, cf. the discussion of fragments #23 and #24 at pp. 140-141 on the bearing of the relationship between the parties, and the final section, pp. 145ff. on 'cultural' variation.
4. Recipients *can* register recognition of a caller's self-identification with less than a greeting. When they do so, it appears that no greeting may occur at all, except perhaps the sort which Sacks referred to as 'greeting substitutes'. Thus:

# A. (45)  
 Mark : Heylo.  
 Pete : Ma:rk?  
 Mark : Yea:h.  
 Pete : Thisiz Pete from down at the drum corps.

Mark : Oh yeah.  
 Pete : How are ya. =  
 Mark : = Pretty good. =  
 Pete : = You gonna be down in the mornin?

## # B. (MTRAC: 60-1)

Marcia : Hello?  
 Maria : (Hi Marcia.)  
 (0.8)  
 Maria : It's Marja.  
 Marcia : Oh Marja.  
 Maria : Howyadoin.  
 Marcia : Fi:ne.  
 Maria : Did I wake you up.

Commonly, this registering of the identity of caller or recognition of caller with other than a greeting occurs when no extended conversation between the two seems projected on this occasion, as when caller has asked, or is about to ask, to speak to another, or arrangements are being made for another imminent conversation, as in the following fragments:

## # C. (233)

Irene : Hello:  
 JM : Hello. i- This is Jan's mother.  
 Irene : Oh yes.  
 JM : Is Jan there by any chance?

## # D. (217)

M : Hello,  
 Ba : Hello. 's Bonnie there?  
 M : No she's no:t.  
 (0.5)  
 M : She's out. Who is this.  
 Ba : Barbara.  
 M : Oh Barbara. (0.4) She went downto:wn.

## # E. (63)

Florence : Hello:  
 Pam : Florence  
 Florence : Yea:h.  
 Pam : Pam  
 Florence : 'hh ye:s. ah ha  
 Pam : If I left now would it be alri:ght.

5. The term 'earlier' raises the issue of the appropriate metric to use here. For some purposes, e.g., the organization of repair (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977), a 'turn' metric seems most appropriate. Were that metric used here, this introduction of possible first topic might be 'located' at turn 7, and this is 'later' than is the case in # 14, where the movement into first topic is at turn 5. But this does not appear to be the relevant metric. I am using, because I take it that the participants use, the canonical component sequences as a structuring device for the

opening. Move to first topic is 'earlier' in # 16 than in # 14 because it is in answer to the *first* howareyou rather than in answer to the second.

6. Irvine's (1974) account of Wolof greetings, for example, claims that similarly 'routinized' openings are more contingent than may initially seem to be the case, and are subject to manipulations including foreshortening or preemption, directed at status discrepancies and their exchange value. Only inspection of the juxtaposed respective bodies of data can decide whether cognate practices are involved here, but that possibility is not to be set aside because of differences in the culture, values, etc.

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