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Opening up Closings*

Our aim in this paper is to report in a preliminary fashion on analyses we have been developing of closings of conversation. Although it may be apparent to intuition that the unit 'a single conversation' does not simply end, but is brought to a close, our initial task is to develop a technical basis for a closing problem. This we try to derive from a consideration of some features of the most basic sequential organization of conversation we know of — the organization of speaker turns. A partial solution of this problem is developed, employing resources drawn from the same order of organization. The incompleteness of that solution is shown, and leads to an elaboration of the problem, which requires reference to quite different orders of sequential organization in conversation — in particular, the organization of topic talk, and the overall structural organization of the unit 'a single conversation'. The reformulated problem is used to locate a much broader range of data as relevant to the problem of closings, and some of that data is discussed in detail. Finally, an attempt is made to specify the domain for which the closing problems, as we have posed them, seem apposite.

This project is part of a program of work undertaken several years ago to explore the possibility of achieving a naturalistic observational discipline that could deal with the details of social action(s) rigorously,

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empirically, and formally.¹ For a variety of reasons that need not be spelled out here, our attention has focused on conversational materials; suffice it to say that this is not because of a special interest in language, or any theoretical primacy we accord conversation. Nonetheless, the character of our materials as conversational has attracted our attention to the study of conversation as an activity in its own right, and thereby to the ways in which any actions accomplished in conversation require reference to the properties and organization of conversation for their understanding and analysis, both by participants and by professional investigators. This last phrase requires emphasis and explication.²

We have proceeded under the assumption (an assumption borne out by our research) that insofar as the materials we worked with exhibited orderliness, they did so not only for us, indeed not in the first place for us, but for the coparticipants who had produced them. If the materials (records of natural conversations) were orderly, they were so because they had been methodically produced by members of the society for one another, and it was a feature of the conversations that we treated as data that they were produced so as to allow the display by the coparticipants to each other of their orderliness, and to allow the participants to display to each other their analysis, appreciation, and use of that orderliness. Accordingly, our analysis has sought to explicate the ways in which the materials are produced by members in orderly ways that exhibit their orderliness, have their orderliness appreciated and used, and have that appreciation displayed and treated as the basis for subsequent action. In the ensuing discussion, therefore, it should be clearly understood that the 'closing problem' we are discussing is proposed as a problem for conversationalists; we are not interested in it as a problem for analysts except insofar as, and in the ways, it is a problem for participants. (By 'problem' we do not intend puzzle, in the sense that participants need to ponder the matter of how to close a conversation. We mean that closings are to be seen as achievements, as solutions to certain problems of conversational organization. While, for many people, closing a conversation may be a practical problem in the sense that they find it difficult to get out of a conversation they are in, that problem is different from the problem of closing that we are concerned with. The problem we are

¹ Products of that effort already published or in press or preparation include: Sacks (1972a; 1972b; forthcoming), Schegloff (1968; 1972; forthcoming), Jefferson (1972), Schenkein (forthcoming), Moerman (1967; 1970).

² Here our debts to the work of Harold Garfinkel surface. Elsewhere, though they cannot be pinpointed, they are pervasive.

concerned with sets up the possibilities of a practical problem but does not require that such practical problems occur. Our discussion should then be able to furnish bases for the existence of practical problems of closing conversations.)

The materials with which we have worked are audiotapes and transcripts of naturally occurring interactions (i.e., ones not produced by research intervention such as experiment or interview) with differing numbers of participants and different combinations of participant attributes.³ There is a danger attending this way of characterizing our materials, namely, that we be heard as proposing the assured relevance of numbers, attributes of participants, etc., to the way the data are produced, interpreted, or analyzed by investigators or by the participants themselves. Such a view carries considerable plausibility, but for precisely that reason it should be treated with extreme caution, and be introduced only where warrant can be offered for the relevance of such characterizations of the data from the data themselves.⁴ We offer some such warranted characteri-

³ Considerations of space preclude the extensive citation of data in the text. Nonetheless, we intend our analysis to be thoroughly empirical; throughout it characterizes and analyzes conversational materials we have collected over the last several years, and we invite its assessment on natural conversational materials readers may collect.

A further reason for limitations on data citation may be mentioned, which reflects on the nature of the problem with which we are dealing. Investigations of greetings (Sacks, ms.) or summons-answer sequences (Schegloff, 1968) appear to satisfy data citation requirements with a few cases, such as "hello", "hello". It would be redundant to cite multiple instances of such exchanges, or minor variants of them (though some variants would require separate treatment). Failure to do such multiple citation would not represent as paucity of empirical evidence. But, while conversational openings regularly employ a common starting point — with greetings, etc. — and then diverge over a range of particular conversations, conversational closings converge from a diverse range of conversations-in-their-course to a regular common closure with "bye bye" or its variants. Multiple citations of "bye bye" would be as redundant as multiple citations of "hello". However, as will be seen below, we find analysis of terminal "bye bye" exchanges inadequate as an analysis of closings, in a way that greeting exchanges or summons-answer sequences are not inadequate for openings. Consequently, we find we have to deal with the divergent sources out of which conversationalists, in their respective conversations, collaborate in arriving at farewell exchanges. While a single "hello" citation can stand proxy for a host of actual occurrences because of its standardized usage, the same is not true for the range of goings-on from which conversationalists may undertake to move toward closing. It is here that space limitations preclude reproduction of the range of materials we hope to be giving an account of. (Joan Sacks brought some of these points to our attention.)

⁴ For example, that all the conversations are in 'American English' is no warrant for so characterizing them. For there are many other characterizations which are equally 'true', e.g., that they are 'adult', 'spoken' (not yelled or whispered), etc. That the materials are all 'American English' does not entail that they are RELEVANTLY 'American English', or relevantly in any larger or smaller domain that might be invoked to characterize them. All such characterizations must be warranted, and except for the

zation of our material at the end of this paper. The considerations just adduced, however, restrain us from further characterizing it here.

In addressing the problem of closings, we are dealing with one part of what might be termed the overall structural organization of single conversations. While one can certainly address other closing or completion loci, e.g., utterance completion, topic closure, etc., the unit whose closing is of concern here is 'a single conversation'. While therefore in one sense we are dealing with closing, in another we are dealing with one aspect of the structure of the unit 'a single conversation', other aspects of which include 'openings', and topical structure. As we shall see, dealing with the one aspect of the overall structural organization of conversation will require reference to other orders of conversation's organization. And because an adequate account of the order of organization, 'overall structural organization', would require space far beyond that available to us, and knowledge beyond that in hand (as well as reference to other orders of organization, such as the organization of the unit 'a topic', about which not enough is now known), our account will remain in many respects indicative rather than complete. It is in that sense a preliminary account of how to deal with 'closings', and an even more rudimentary account of overall structure in general.

Not all conversational activity is bounded and collected into cases of the unit 'a single conversation'. That unit, and the structure that characterizes and constitutes it, is therefore not necessarily relevant wherever conversational activity occurs. On the other hand, other orders of organization, most notably those organizing utterances and the speaker turns in which they occur, are coterminous with, and indeed may be taken as defining, conversational activity (though not all talk; not, for example, formal lecturing). On that account, they may be regarded as fundamental (for more compelling reasons for so regarding them, see Sacks, forthcoming). We will return to the theme of conversational activity that does not seem to constitute instances of the unit 'a single conversation' at the end of this paper. In view of the preceding argument, however, it seems useful to begin by formulating the problem of closing technically in terms of the more fundamental order of organization, that of turns. Else-

account we offer in the final section of the paper, we cannot warrant them now. Ethnic, national, or language identifications differ from many others only in their *prima facie* plausibility, especially to those in the tradition of anthropological linguistics. The basis for this position may be found in Sacks (1972a); a discussion of unwarranted ethnic characterizations of materials and findings may be found in Moerman (1967).

I

where (Sacks, forthcoming), two basic features of conversation are proposed to be: (1) at least, and no more than, one party speaks at a time in a single conversation; and (2) speaker change recurs. The achievement of these features singly, and especially the achievement of their cooccurrence, is accomplished by coconversationalists through the use of a 'machinery' for ordering speaker turns sequentially in conversation. The turn-taking machinery includes as one component a set of procedures for organizing the selection of 'next speakers', and, as another, a set of procedures for locating the occasions on which transition to a next speaker may or should occur. The turn-taking machinery operates utterance by utterance. That is to say: in contrast to conceivable alternative organizations (e.g., in which the occasions of speaker transition and the mode or outcome of next speaker selections would be predetermined for the whole conversation, from its outset, by mappings into other attributes of the parties; see Albert, 1965), it is within any current utterance that possible next speaker selection is accomplished, and upon possible completion of any current utterance that such selection takes effect and transition to a next speaker becomes relevant. We shall speak of this as the 'transition relevance' of possible utterance completion. It is in part the consequence of an orientation to the feature, 'speaker change RECURS', which provides for the RECURRENT relevance of transition to a next speaker at any possible utterance completion point (except where special techniques have been employed to modify that relevance).

These basic features of conversation, the problem of achieving their cooccurrence, and the turn-taking machinery addressed to the solution of that problem are intended, in this account, not as analysts' constructs, but as descriptions of the orientations of conversationalists in producing proper conversation. Conversationalists construct conversations in their course, and in doing so they are oriented to achieving the cooccurrence of the features cited above, and employ the turn-taking machinery to do so. We cannot here present a detailed demonstration of this claim (cf. Sacks, forthcoming), but an indication of one direction in which such a demonstration might be pursued may be offered. If the features are normative, i.e., are oriented to by conversationalists, then the machinery for achieving their cooccurrence should include procedures for dealing with violations, and indeed should locate failure to achieve the features, singly and jointly, as 'violations', as in need of repair. A minimal requirement for this would be that the machinery locates as 'events' cases of the nonachievement of

the features. That it does so may be suggested by such matters as the occurrence of conversationalists' observations about 'someone's silence' when no one in a setting is talking. The noticeability of silence reflects an orientation by conversationalists to the 'at least ... one at a time' feature; the feature must be oriented to by conversationalists, and not merely be an analytic construct, if conversationalists do accomplish and report the noticing. The attributability of the silence reflects an orientation to the next-speaker-selection component of the turn-taking machinery that can have generated a 'some speaker's turn' at a given point in the course of the conversation, so that a silence at that point may be attributable to that 'speaker'.

E: He hadtuh come out tuh San Francisco. So he called hhh from their place, out here to the professors, en set up, the, time, and hh asked them to hh- if they'd make a reservation for him which they did cuz they paid for iz room en etcetera en he asked them tuh:: make a reservation for iz parents. En there was a deep silence she said at the other end 'e sez "Oh well they'll pay for their own uh" — hhh — "room and' accommodations."

(What is reported seems to involve that the silence that was noted was dealt with by appending a clarification to the request, the silence being heard by the speaker as not his, and then being transformed into his own pause by his producing such a continuation as they might then reply to appropriately. That the silence is heard as the other's, but treated as one's own for talk purposes is a delicately interesting matter.)

Similarly, there are available and employed devices for locating cases of 'more than one at a time' as events, and for resolving them, or warrantably treating them as violations. Again, that such devices are available to, and employed by, conversationalists requires treatment of the feature 'no more than one at a time' as normative, as oriented to by conversationalists, rather than as theorists' devices for imposing order on the materials.

It may be noted that whereas these basic features with which we began (especially the feature of speaker change recurrence), and the utterance by utterance operation of the turn-taking machinery as a fundamental generating feature of conversation, deal with a conversation's ongoing orderliness, they make no provision for the closing of conversation. A machinery that includes the transition relevance of possible utterance completion recurrently for any utterance in the conversation generates an indefinitely extendable string of turns to talk. Then, an initial problem concerning closings may be formulated: HOW TO ORGANIZE THE SIMULTANEOUS ARRIVAL OF THE COCONVERSATIONALISTS AT A POINT

WHERE ONE SPEAKER'S COMPLETION WILL NOT OCCASION ANOTHER SPEAKER'S TALK, AND THAT WILL NOT BE HEARD AS SOME SPEAKER'S SILENCE. The last qualification is necessary to differentiate closings from other places in conversation where one speaker's completion is not followed by a possible next speaker's talk, but where, given the continuing relevance of the basic features and the turn-taking machinery, what is heard is not termination but attributable silence, a pause in the last speaker's utterance, etc. It should suggest why simply to stop talking is not a solution to the closing problem: any first prospective speaker to do so would be hearable as 'being silent' in terms of the turn-taking machinery, rather than as having suspended its relevance. Attempts to 'close' in this way would be interpretable as an 'event-in-the-conversation', rather than as outside, or marking, its boundaries, and would be analyzed for actions being accomplished in the conversation, e.g., anger, brusqueness, pique, etc. Again, the problem is HOW TO COORDINATE THE SUSPENSION OF THE TRANSITION RELEVANCE OF POSSIBLE UTTERANCE COMPLETION, NOT HOW TO DEAL WITH ITS NONOPERATION WHILE STILL RELEVANT.

II

How is the transition relevance of possible utterance completion lifted? A proximate solution involves the use of a 'terminal exchange' composed of conventional parts, e.g., an exchange of 'good-byes'. In describing how a terminal exchange can serve to lift the transition relevance of possible utterance completions, we note first that the terminal exchange is a case of a class of utterance sequences which we have been studying for some years, namely, the utterance pair, or, as we shall refer to it henceforth, the adjacency pair.⁵

While this class of sequences is widely operative in conversation, our concern here is with the work they do in terminations, and our discussion will be limited to those aspects of adjacency pairs that fit them for this work. Briefly, then, adjacency pairs consist of sequences which properly have the following features: (1) two utterance length, (2) adjacent positioning of component utterances, (3) different speakers producing each utterance.

The component utterances of such sequences have an achieved related-

⁵ Erving Goffman has given attention to a range of members of this class from a somewhat different perspective, most recently in his chapters on "Supportive Interchanges" and "Remedial Interchanges" in *Relations in Public* (1971).

ness beyond that which may otherwise obtain between adjacent utterances. That relatedness is partially the product of the operation of a typology in the speakers' production of the sequences. The typology operates in two ways: it partitions utterance types into 'first pair parts' (i.e., first parts of pairs) and second pair parts; and it affiliates a first pair part and a second pair part to form a 'pair type'. 'Question-answer', 'greeting-greeting', 'offer-acceptance/refusal' are instances of pair types. A given sequence will thus be composed of an utterance that is a first pair part produced by one speaker directly followed by the production by a different speaker of an utterance which is (a) a second pair part, and (b) is from the same pair type as the first utterance in the sequence is a member of. Adjacency pair sequences, then, exhibit the further features (4) relative ordering of parts (i.e., first pair parts precede second pair parts) and (5) discriminative relations (i.e., the pair type of which a first pair part is a member is relevant to the selection among second pair parts).

The achievement of such orderliness in adjacency pair sequences requires the recognizability of first pair part status for some utterances. That problem is handled in various ways; constructionally, as when the syntax of an utterance can be used to recognize that a question is being produced, or through the use of conventional components, as when "hello" or "hi" is used to indicate partially that a greeting is being produced, to cite but two procedures.

A basic rule of adjacency pair operation is: given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion its speaker should stop and a next speaker should start and produce a second pair part from the pair type of which the first is recognizably a member.

Two sorts of uses of adjacency pairs may be noticed. We are interested in only one of them here, and mention the other for flavor. First, for flavor: wherever one party to a conversation is specifically concerned with the close order sequential implicativeness of an utterance he has a chance to produce, the use of a first pair part is a way he has of methodically providing for such implicativeness.⁶ So, if he is concerned to have another talk directly about some matter he is about to talk about, he may form his own utterance as a question, a next speaker being thereby induced to employ the chance to talk to produce what is appreciable as an answer. Such uses of adjacency pairs occur freely in conversation.

⁶ By 'sequential implicativeness' is meant that an utterance projects for the sequentially following turn(s) the relevance of a determinate range of occurrences (be they utterance types, activities, speaker selections, etc.). It thus has sequentially organized implications.

Secondly, wherever, for the operation of some TYPE OF ORGANIZATION, close ordering of utterances is useful or required, we find that adjacency pairs are employed to achieve such close ordering. So, in the case of that type of organization which we are calling 'overall structural organization', it may be noted that at least initial sequences (e.g., greeting exchanges), and ending sequences (i.e., terminal exchanges) employ adjacency pair formats. It is the recurrent, institutionalized use of adjacency pairs for such types of organization problems that suggests that these problems have, in part, a common character, and that adjacency pair organization is specially fitted to the solution of problems of that character. (Lifting the transition relevance of possible utterance completion being that sort of problem, adjacency pair organization would be specially adapted to its solution, in the form of the terminal exchange.)

The type of problem adjacency pairs are specially fitted for, and the way they are specially suited for its solution, may very briefly be characterized as follows. Given the utterance by utterance organization of turn-taking, unless close ordering is attempted there can be no methodic assurance that a more or less eventually aimed-for successive utterance or utterance type will ever be produced. If a next speaker does not do it, that speaker may provide for a further next that should not do it (or should do something that is not it); and, if what follows that next is 'free' and does not do the originally aimed-for utterance, it (i.e., the utterance placed there) may provide for a yet further next that does not do it, etc. Close ordering is, then, the basic generalized means for assuring that some desired event will ever happen. If it cannot be made to happen next, its happening is not merely delayed, but may never come about. The adjacency pair technique, in providing a determinate 'when' for it to happen, i.e., 'next', has then means for handling the close order problem, where that problem has its import, through its control of the assurance that some relevant event will be made to occur.

But, it may be wondered, why are two utterances required for either opening or closing? It is plain, perhaps, why adjacency pairs are relevant to getting answers to ever happen for questions; for one thing, the parts of question-answer pairs are rather different sorts of objects. It might appear, however, that the problem of closing could be handled with just one utterance. That is, if two utterances are needed, then a pair format is understandable; but why are two utterances needed?

What two utterances produced by different speakers can do that one utterance cannot do is: by an adjacently positioned second, a speaker can show that he understood what a prior aimed at, and that he is

willing to go along with that. Also, by virtue of the occurrence of an adjacently produced second, the doer of a first can see that what he intended was indeed understood, and that it was or was not accepted. Also, of course, a second can assert his failure to understand, or disagreement, and inspection of a second by a first can allow the first speaker to see that while the second thought he understood, indeed he misunderstood. It is then through the use of adjacent positioning that appreciations, failures, corrections, etcetera can be themselves understandably attempted. Wherever, then, there is reason to bring attention to the appreciation of some implicativeness, 'next utterance' is the proper place to do that, and a two-utterance sequence can be employed as a means for doing and checking some intendedly sequentially implicative occurrence in a way that a one-utterance sequence can not.

(The foregoing is not at all exclusive, though it is sufficient. For example, in the case of initial sequences, their paired status also permits the use of their assertion to be inspected, in the case of telephone calls in particular, for who is talking or whether who is talking is recognizable from just that presentation.)

We are then proposing: If WHERE transition relevance is to be lifted is a systematic problem, an adjacency pair solution can work because: by providing that transition relevance is to be lifted after the second pair part's occurrence, the occurrence of the second pair part can then reveal an appreciation of, and agreement to, the intention of closing NOW which a first part of a terminal exchange reveals its speaker to propose. Now, given the institutionalization of that solution, a range of ways of assuring that it be employed have been developed, which make drastic difference between one party saying "good-bye" and not leaving a slot for the other to reply, and one party saying "good-bye" and leaving a slot for the other to reply. The former becomes a distinct sort of activity, expressing anger, brusqueness, and the like, and available to such a use by contrast with the latter. It is this consequentiality of alternatives that is the hallmark of an institutionalized solution. The terminal exchange is no longer a matter of personal choices; but one cannot explain the use of a two-utterance sequence by referring to the way that single utterance closings are violative, for the question of why they are made to be violative is then left unexamined.

In referring to the components of terminal exchanges, we have so far employed "good-bye" as an exclusive instance. But, it plainly is not exclusively used. Such other components as "ok", "see you", "thank you", "you're welcome", and the like are also used. Since the latter items are

used in other ways as well, the mere fact of their use does not mark them as unequivocal parts of terminal exchanges. This fact, that possible terminal exchanges do not necessarily, by their components alone, indicate their terminal exchange status, is one source for our proposal that the use of terminal exchanges is but a proximate solution to the initially posed problem of this paper. We turn now to a second problem, whose examination will supply some required additions.

III

In the last section we focused on one type of placing consideration relevant to closing conversation: the close order organization of terminal exchanges. By the use of an adjacency pair format, a place could be marked in a string of utterances in such a way that on its completion the transition relevance of utterance completion might be lifted. The second part of a terminal exchange was proposed to be such a place. The second part of a terminal exchange had its positioned occurrence provided for by the occurrence of a first part of such an exchange. No discussion was offered about the placement of the first part of terminal exchanges. Here we begin to take up that issue, and to develop what sorts of problems are involved in its usage.

While it should be experientially obvious that first parts of terminal exchanges are not freely occurrent, we shall here try to develop a consideration of the sorts of placing problems their use does involve. First, two preliminary comments are in order. (1) Past and current work has indicated that placement considerations are general for utterances. That is: a pervasively relevant issue (for participants) about utterances in conversation is 'why that now', a question whose analysis may (2) also be relevant to finding what 'that' is. That is to say, some utterances may derive their character as actions entirely from placement considerations. For example, there do not seem to be criteria other than placement (i.e., sequential) ones that will sufficiently discriminate the status of an utterance as a statement, assertion, declarative, proposition, etc., from its status as an answer. Finding an utterance to be an answer, to be accomplishing answering, cannot be achieved by reference to phonological, syntactic, semantic, or logical features of the utterance itself, but only by consulting its sequential placement, e.g., its placement after a question. If terminal exchanges are not necessarily marked as such by their components (as was suggested above), we are well advised to consider the contribution of their placement to their achievement of that status.

Addressing considerations of placement raises the issue: what order of organization of conversation is the relevant one, by reference to which placement is to be considered. We dealt earlier with one kind of placement issue, i.e., the placement of *SECOND* parts of terminal exchanges, and there the order of organization by reference to which placement was done and analyzed was the adjacency pair, which is one kind of 'local', i.e., utterance, organization. It does NOT appear that *FIRST* parts of terminal exchanges, which is what we are now concerned with, are placed by reference to that order of organization. While they, of course, occur after some utterance, they are not placed by reference to a location that might be formulated as 'next' after some 'last' utterance or class of utterances'. Rather, their placement seems to be organized by reference to a properly initiated closing *SECTION*, and it is by virtue of the lack of a properly initiated closing section that the unilateral dropping in of the first part of a terminal exchange is only part of the solution to the closing problem. We shall need, therefore, to concern ourselves with the proper initiation of closing sections. To do so adequately, and to understand the basis for this order of organization as the relevant one for closing, we will explore some aspects of overall conversational organization as the background for a subsequent consideration of the placement issue. In view of the background character of our purpose, the discussion is necessarily minimal and somewhat schematic.

The aspect of overall conversational organization directly relevant to the present problem concerns the organization of topic talk. (The last phrase is ambiguous, being understandable both as the organization of the unit 'a topic', and as the organization of a set of such units within the larger unit 'a single conversation'. While the former of these is also relevant to closings, it is the latter that we intend in the present context.) If we may refer to what gets talked about in a conversation as 'mentionables', then we can note that there are considerations relevant for conversationalists in ordering and distributing their talk about mentionables in a single conversation. There is, for example, a position in a single conversation for 'first topic'. We intend to mark by this term not the simple serial fact that some topic gets talked about temporally prior to others, for some temporally prior topics such as, for example, ones prefaced by "First, I just want to say...", or topics that are minor developments by the receiver of the conversational opening of "how are you" inquiries, are not heard or treated as 'first topics'. Rather, we want to note that to make of a topic a 'first topic' is to accord it a certain special status in the conversation. Thus, for example, to make a topic 'first

topic' may provide for its analyzability (by coparticipants) as 'the reason for' the conversation, that being, furthermore, a preservable and reportable feature of the conversation.⁷ In addition, making a topic 'first topic' may accord it a special importance on the part of its initiator (a feature which may, but need not, combine with its being a 'reason for the conversation').

These features of 'first topics' may pose a problem for conversationalists who may not wish to have special importance accorded some 'mentionable', and who may not want it preserved as 'the reason for the conversation'. It is by reference to such problems affiliated with the use of first topic position that we may appreciate such exchanges at the beginnings of conversations in which news is later reported, as:

- A: What's up.
 B: Not much. What's up with you?
 A: Nothing.

Conversationalists, then, can have mentionables they do not want to put in first topic position, and there are ways of talking past first topic position without putting them in.

A further feature of the organization of topic talk seems to involve 'fitting' as a preferred procedure. That is, it appears that a preferred way of getting mentionables mentioned is to employ the resources of the local organization of utterances in the course of the conversation. That involves holding off the mention of a mentionable until it can 'occur naturally', that is, until it can be fitted to another conversationalist's prior utterance, allowing his utterance to serve as a sufficient source for the mentioning of the mentionable (thereby achieving a solution to the placement question, the 'why that now', whose pervasive relevance was noted earlier, for the introduction of the topic).

(At 56 minutes into the conversation)

(15.0)

- Ken: Well, we were on a discussion uh before Easter that we never finished on uh on why these guys are racing on the street ?

(1) (3.0)

- Ken: You know. D'you remember that ?

- Roger: Oh, I was in a bad accident last night. My legs are all cut up.
 I was uh- speakina racing on the streets, picking up the subject.

⁷ By "preservable and reportable" we mean that in a subsequent conversation, this feature, having been analyzed out of the earlier conversation and preserved, may be reported as "he called to tell me that ...". We think that such references to prior conversation are orderly, and can be made available for criterial use, but the argument cannot be developed here.

We were doin th'Mulholland stretch again and one guy made a gross error an' we landed in-in the wrong si(hh)de of the mountain hehh I was wearin a belt but my knees an' everything got all banged up.

(at one hour, 13 minutes into conversation)

((Ken is talking about people liking to do things, but having to work hard at making it happen))

Ken: Al likes to uh t- to ride sailboats or-or something / / ()

Roger: Not any more hah hehhh ah hah heh

Ken: Why? What happened?

Roger: She's gone hehh

(2) Al: She is sold. She's gonna be sold.

Ken: Oh. Well, he used to.

Al: Mm hm,

Ken: Or-he-he still does in-in the back of his mind probly.

Roger: Now he / / likes to drive / / fast Austin Healey's now.*

Ken: Or-

Ken: Or he-he/ /he

Al: NOT ANY MORE.

Roger: What happened?

Al: IT BLEW UP.

Roger: Didju really?!

(1.0)

Roger: Whadju *do* to it?

Al: The uh engine blew- — I don't know, the valves an' everything went — phooh!

(1.0)

Roger: Are you kidding?

Al: There's three hundred an' fifty dollars worth of work to be done on the engine now.

*Roger has sold Al the Austin Healey.

What we have, then, is that some mentionables ought not or need not be placed in first topic position, and may or are to be held off in the ensuing conversation until they can be fitted to some last utterance. There is, however, no guarantee that the course of the conversation will provide the occasion for any particular mentionable to 'come up naturally'.⁸ Thus, the elements of topical organization so far discussed leave

⁸ This is so even when the occasion for the conversation was arranged in the interests of that topic. For example, there was a report several years ago in the student newspaper of the School of Engineering at Columbia University about a meeting arranged with the Dean to air student complaints. No complaints were aired. In answer to a reporter's question about why this happened, a student who had been at the meeting replied, "The conversation never got around to that."

open the possibility that for some mentionable which a conversationalist brings to the conversation, no place for its occurrence will have been found at any point in the developing course of that conversation. This can be serious because some mentionables, if not mentioned in some 'this conversation', will lose their status as mentionables, or as the kind of mentionable they are, e.g., they may lose their status as 'news.'

- B: I saw you with your uh filling out a thing for the U. of——book-store. Does that mean you're going there?
 A: Oh yes. Sorry. I didn't know I hadn't told you.
 B: Well, oh you never tell me anything. When well / /
 A: Well I tell you if I talk to you when something has just happened.
 B: I su—pose
 A: But I don't always remember how long it's been since I've seen people

This being the case, it would appear that an important virtue for a closing structure designed for this kind of topical structure would involve the provision for placement of hitherto unmentioned mentionables. The terminal exchange by itself makes no such provision. By exploiting the close organization resource of adjacency pairs, it provides for an immediate (i.e., next turn) closing of the conversation. That this close-ordering technique for terminating not exclude the possibility of inserting unmentioned mentionables can be achieved by placement restrictions on the first part of terminal exchanges, for example, by requiring 'advance notice' or some form of foreshadowing.

These considerations about topical structure lead us back to one element of the placement considerations for closings mentioned before, to wit, the notion of a properly initiated closing section. One central feature of proper initiations of closing sections is their relationship to hitherto unmentioned mentionables, and some methods for initiating closings seem designed precisely for such problems as we have been discussing.

IV

The first proper way of initiating a closing section that we will discuss is one kind of (what we will call) 'pre-closing'. The kind of pre-closing we have in mind takes one of the following forms, "We-ell...", "O.K...", "So-oo", etc. (with downward intonation contours), these forms constituting the entire utterance. These pre-closings should properly be called 'POSSIBLE pre-closing', because providing the relevance of the initiation of a closing section is only one of the uses they have. One feature of their

operation is that they occupy the floor for a speaker's turn without using it to produce either a topically coherent utterance or the initiation of a new topic. With them a speaker takes a turn whose business seems to be to 'pass,' i.e., to indicate that he has not now anything more or new to say, and also to give a 'free' turn to a next, who, because such an utterance can be treated as having broken with any prior topic, can without violating topical coherence take the occasion to introduce a new topic, e.g., some heretofore unmentioned mentionable. AFTER such a possible pre-closing is specifically a place for new topic beginnings.

When this opportunity, provided by possible pre-closings of the sort we are discussing, is exploited, that is, when another thereupon mentions a hitherto unmentioned mentionable, then the local organization otherwise operative in conversation, including the fitting of topical talk, allows the same possibilities which obtain in any topical talk. The opening that a possible pre-closing makes for an unmentioned mentionable may thus result in much more ensuing talk than the initial mentionable that is inserted; for that may provide the occasion for the 'natural occurrence' of someone else's mentionables in a fitted manner. It is thus not negative evidence for the status of utterances such as "We-ell", etc. as possible pre-closings that extensive conversational developments may follow them. (In one two-party conversation of which we have a transcript running too eighty-five pages, the first possible pre-closing occurs on page twenty.) The extendability of conversation to great lengths past a possible pre-closing is not a sign of the latter's defects with respect to initiating closings, but of its virtues in providing opportunities for further topic talk that is fitted to the topical structure of conversation.

We have considered the case in which the possible pre-closing's provision for further topic talk is exploited. The other possibility is that coconversationalists decline an opportunity to insert unmentioned mentionables. In that circumstance, the pre-closing may be answered with an acknowledgement, a return 'pass' yielding a sequence such as:

- A: O.K.
B: O.K.

thereby setting up the relevance of further collaborating on a closing section. When the possible pre-closing is responded to in this manner, it may constitute the first part of the closing section.

We have referred to utterances of the form "O.K.", "We-ell", etc. as possible pre-closings, intending by that term to point to the use of such utterances not only possibly to initiate a closing section, but also, by

inviting the insertion of unmentioned mentionables, to provide for the reopening of topic talk. On their occurrence, they are only POSSIBLE pre-closings because of this specific alternative they provide for.⁹ But there is another sense in which they are only POSSIBLE pre-closings. Clearly, utterances such as "*O.K.*", "*We-ell*", etc. (where those forms are the whole of the utterance), occur in conversation in capacities other than that of 'pre-closing'. It is only on some occasions of use that these utterances are treated as pre-closings, as we have been using that term. To recommend that the terminal exchange solution initially sketched must be supplemented by an analysis of the placement of terminal exchanges; that the placement be seen in terms of properly initiated closing sections; that closing sections can be properly initiated by possible pre-closings; and that utterances of the form "*We-ell*" can be pre-closings is not of great help unless it can either be shown (1) that utterances of the form "*we-ell*" are invariably pre-closings, which is patently not the case, or (2) some indication can be given of the analysis that can yield utterances of the form "*we-ell*" to be possible pre-closings. One consideration relevant to such a finding (by participants in the conversation; it is their procedures we seek to describe) is the placement of utterances of the form "*we-ell*" in the conversation.

One way of discriminating the occasions on which such utterances are found to constitute possible pre-closings turns on their placement with respect to topical organization (not in the sense of the organization of mentionables over the course of the conversation which we have hitherto intended, but in the sense of 'the organization of talk on a single topic'). In brief, utterances of the form "*we-ell*", "*O.K.*", etc., operate as possible pre-closings when placed at the analyzable (once again, TO PARTICIPANTS) end of a topic.

To do justice to a discussion of this placement would require an analysis of the organization of 'talk about a topic' which cannot be developed here (work on such analysis is in progress). But we can at least note the following. Not all topics have an analyzable end. One procedure whereby talk moves off a topic might be called 'topic shading', in that it involves no specific attention to ending a topic at all, but rather the fitting of differently focused but related talk to some last utterance in a topic's development. But coconversationalists may specifically attend to accomplishing a topic boundary, and there are various mechanisms for doing so; these may yield what we have referred to above as 'analyzable ends,'

⁹ We return to the idea of 'specific alternatives' in section VI, where it is more fully discussed.

their analyzability to participants being displayed in the effective collaboration required to achieve them.

For example, there is a technique for 'closing down a topic' that seems to be a formal technique for a class of topic types, in the sense that for topics that are of the types that are members of the class, the technique operates without regard to what the particular topic is. It does not, then, operate by the determinate, substantively fitted development of the ongoing topic talk as a way of bringing that topic talk to an end, but it is usable independent of whatever other technique would be topic specific. We have in mind such exchanges as:

A: Okay?

B: Alright.

Such an exchange can serve, if completed, to accomplish a collaboration on the shutting down of a topic, and may thus mark the next slot in the conversational sequence as one in which, if an utterance of the form "We-ell", "O.K.", etc. should occur, it may be heard as a possible pre-closing.¹⁰

Another 'topic-bounding' technique (which we can here merely gloss) involves one party's offering of a proverbial or aphoristic formulation of conventional wisdom which can be heard as the 'moral' or 'lesson' of the topic being thereby possibly closed. Such formulations are 'agreeable with'. When such a formulation is offered by one party and agreed to by another, a topic may be seen (by them) to have been brought to a close.

¹⁰ Although, as argued in the text, this kind of 'shutting down a topic' operates independent of the particular topic talk in progress, it cannot be used at any place in that topic talk without, once again, being seen to accomplish other activities as well, such as 'avoiding the issue', embarrassment, brusqueness, etc. Which is to say that there may be a placement issue for topic closing, as there is for conversational closing. That issue properly belongs in the analysis of topical organization, however, and cannot yet be developed here.

While 'shutting down a topic' operates in a manner independent of the particular topic in progress, it is not the 'normal', i.e., unmarked, way for talk to move off any topic whatsoever. We mentioned earlier that talk may be moved off a topic without special attention to ending it. To undertake the shutting down of a topic by the sort of exchange discussed in the text may mark that topic as a possibly last one, that marking conferring upon the following conversational slot its distinctive relevance for possible pre-closings. Such a view is supported by noting that the class of types of topics for which the technique operates formally includes 'making arrangements's' as a topic type, and that topic type we independently find to be 'closing-relevant' (see section VII). Other types that are members of the class appear to be 'request-satisfaction topics', and 'complaint-remedy topics'. For topics of these types, "O.K. . . O.K." can operate as a shutting down technique formally. Both may have some special relationship to 'expectably monotopical' conversation, discussed below.

Again, an immediately following “We-ell” or “O.K.” may be analyzed by its placement as doing the alternative tasks a possible pre-closing can do.

- Dorrinne: Uh-you know, it's just like bringin the- blood up.
 Theresa: Yeah well, THINGS UH ALWAYS WORK OUT FOR THE / / BEST
 Dorrinne: Oh certainly. Alright / / Tess.
 (1) Theresa: Uh huh,
 Theresa: Okay,
 Dorrinne: G'bye.
 Theresa: Goodnight,
 (2) Johnson: ... and uh, uh we're gonna see if we can't uh tie in our plans
 a little better.
 Baldwin: Okay / / fine.
 Johnson: ALRIGHT?
 Baldwin: RIGHT.
 Johnson: Okay boy,
 Baldwin: Okay
 Johnson: Bye / / bye
 Baldwin: G'night.

There is a type of overall conversational organization in which bounding a topic (rather than ‘topic shading’) is especially relevant, and in which a sequence made up of a topic closing exchange followed by a possible pre-closing is specially prominent, which we shall call ‘monotopical conversation’. With the term ‘monotopical’ we intend not an *ex post facto* finding that a single topic was talked about, especially in view of the complexity with which topic talk is done, wherein each successive utterance can revise what the topic has been ‘all along’. We have in mind, rather, conversations produced from their beginnings with an orientation to their expectable monotopicality.¹¹ That such conversations do occur can be seen in the techniques conversationalists employ to adapt to that structure or circumvent it while retaining its relevance. Thus, conversations whose initiator begins with the announcement “Two things: ...” (as a student might say as he seats himself during an instructor’s office hours) may serve to counter an otherwise expectable construction of the conversation around one topic, i.e. ‘the reason’ for his appearance (a construction possibly involving on the part of the other a finding

¹¹ This is not the place to elaborate on the bases for expectations of monotopicality. It appears to be related to the articulation of the unit ‘a single conversation’ to features ‘external’ to that unit, such as compositional features of the interaction, analysis of relative interactional states of the participants (e.g., involvement in other courses of action of competing priority), and the placement of the conversation in the course of a history of interaction of the parties, and in the interactional occasion on which it occurs. The last of these we return to briefly at the end of this paper.

as to where he is in the structure of the conversation by finding where he is in the developing structure of the first topic). Other devices may make room for some talk about matters other than a single topic while preserving an orientation to monotopicality, for example, "Before I come to what I called about ...". If by 'monotopical' we mean, procedurally, the use of a first topic end as the occasion for initiating a closing section, then the use of some preface like this last may serve to exempt that which it prefates from being counted as initial topic.

For conversations produced by reference to expectable monotopicality, the close of the topic (or the first nonexempted topic) properly serves as the occasion for the initiation of the closing section. In such circumstances, topics will regularly be bounded, rather than being shaded into other topics. Topic bounding may be accomplished by any of the range of techniques available, including the aphoristic technique and the 'shutting down' technique glossed earlier, and an analyzable possible pre-closing by the initiator, when placed where a topic closing technique might be placed, may itself show the satisfactory (to the party so acting) resolution of the topic, a resolution (and closing) which may thus not have to be separately accomplished. Conversely, where a closing initiation attempt by a called-upon party fails to achieve collaboration from an initiator of a conversation, this may indicate dissatisfaction by the initiator with the putative resolution of the topic.

The discussion in this section, it should be noted, has dealt with only one kind of possible pre-closing, and the suggestions we have offered concerning the placement that allows the analysis of an utterance as a possible pre-closing has reference only to that form. We will deal with others shortly. In regard to the form we have been concerned with, we should note that the techniques of topic bounding we have discussed are not specified for the place of a topic in the serial organization of topics. They are not techniques for first topic, fifth topic, intendedly last topic,^{1, 12} etc., but for any topic (in terms of serial organization). That makes all the more fitting the character of possible pre-closings as specifically inviting the reopening of topic talk. For, given that the use of an "O.K.," or a "we-ell" after the close of a topic can be analyzed (by coparticipants) as a possible pre-closing without regard to which serial topic in a conversation has been closed, the absence of the reopening alternative might

¹² The relationship between 'shutting down' techniques and a class of topic types is no exception. For while 'shutting down' may be specially usable with the topic type 'making arrangements', and that topic type may be closing-relevant, it is not by virtue of the latter feature of 'making arrangements' that 'shutting down' is specially usable to end it.

have the consequence of systematically excluding from possible use in the present conversation the whole range of unmentioned mentionables which the participants might have to contribute. In their use of the etiquette of invitation, that is, the offering of the floor to another, possible pre-closings operate to allow a distribution of the opportunities and responsibilities for initiating topic talk and using unmentioned mentionables among various participants in the conversation. It is when the participants to a conversation lay no further claim to these opportunities and responsibilities that the potential of the possible pre-closing for initiating a closing section may be realized.

V

What the preceding discussion suggests is that a closing section is initiated, i.e., turns out to have begun, when none of the parties to a conversation care or choose to continue it. Now that is a WARRANT for closing the conversation, and we may now be in a position to appreciate that the issue of placement, for the initiation of closing sections as for terminal exchanges, is the issue of warranting the placement of such items as will initiate the closing at some 'here and now' in the conversation.¹³ The kind of possible pre-closing we have been discussing — "*O.K.*", "*we-ell*", etc. — is a way of establishing one kind of warrant for undertaking to close a conversation. Its effectiveness can be seen in the feature noted above, that if the floor offering is declined, if the "*O.K.*" is answered by another, then together these two utterances can constitute not a possible, but an actual first exchange of the closing section. The pre-closing ceases to be 'pre-' if accepted, for the acceptance establishes the warrant for undertaking a closing of the conversation at some 'here'.

Having seen that this kind of pre-closing establishes a particular warrant for undertaking the closing of a conversation, we may now examine other kinds of pre-closings and the kinds of warrants they may invoke for initiating the beginning of a closing section. To provide a contrast with the ensuing discussion, let us make one further observation on the kind of pre-closing we have just been discussing. The floor-offering-exchange device is one that can be initiated by any party to a conversation. In contrast to this, there are some possible pre-closing devices whose use

¹³ The earlier noted attributions of brusqueness, anger, pique, etc. can now be appreciated as alternative possible warrants for closing attempts, when a closing initiation has not availed itself of the sequentially organized possibilities for warrants.

is restricted to particular parties. The terms in which such parties may be formulated varies with conversational context.¹⁴ For now, we can offer some observations about telephone contacts, where the formulation of the parties can be specified in terms of the specific conversation, i.e., caller — called.¹⁵ What we find is that there are, so to speak, 'caller's techniques' and 'called's techniques' for inviting the initiation of closing sections. Before detailing these, we may make the general point (in pursuit of the claim at the beginning of this paper about the relationship of closings to overall structural organization) that it is of interest that closing sections of such conversations may be produced in ways which specifically employ, as relevant, features of their beginnings (namely, who initiated them), thus giving support to the proposal that the unit 'a single conversation' is one to which participants orient THROUGHOUT its course.

While there are specific components whose use may be restricted to callers or called parties in inviting the initiation of conversational closings, we may note one feature that many of them have in common, namely, that they employ as their warrant for initiating the closing at some 'here' the interests of the other party. It is in the specification of those interests that the techniques become assigned to one or another party. Thus, the following invitation to a closing is caller-specific and makes reference to the interests of the other.

A discussion about a possible luncheon has been proceeding:

A: Uhm livers 'n an gizzards 'n stuff lke that makes it real yumny. Makes it too rich for *me* but: makes it yumny.

A: *Well* I'll letchu go. I don't wanna tie up your phone.

And, on the other hand, there are such called-specific techniques, also making reference to the other's interests, as

A: This is costing you a lot of money.

There are, of course, devices usable by either party which do not make reference to the other's interests, most familiarly, "I gotta go".

One feature common to the possible pre-closings so far discussed is that they make no reference to the particulars of the conversation in which they occur. While some of them retain and employ some elements of the conversation's beginning, such as who called, no conversationally developed materials are referred to in warranting the closing of the conversation. There are, in addition, devices which DO make use of conversationally developed materials. Near the beginning of the conversa-

¹⁴ For explication of the problem this sentence alludes to see Sacks, 1972, and Schegloff, 1972.

¹⁵ For justification, see Schegloff, forthcoming: Chap. 2.

tion we will cite, the called (the receiver of the call) says:

- B: Are you watching Dakta:ri/
 A: N:no
 B: Oh my gosh Officer Henry is ul-locked in the cage wi- (0.4) wi' the lion,
 hheh

And several minutes later, the caller initiates the closing with

- A: Okay, I letcha go back tuh watch yer Daktari.

Such devices again reinforce our understanding of the orientation of conversationalists to 'a single conversation' as a unit, and to 'THIS single conversation' as an instance, in which ITS development to some point may be employed as a resource in accomplishing its further development as a specific, particularized occurrence. Such materials can be picked up any place in a conversation and seemingly be preserved for use in the conversation's closing. One place they systematically can occur is in the beginnings of conversations (not only in the beginnings of telephone conversations but in face-to-face interactions as well). The 'routine' questions employed at the beginnings of conversations, e.g., "what are you doing?", "where are you going?", "how are you feeling?", etc., can elicit those kinds of materials that will have a use at the ending of the conversation in warranting its closing, e.g., "Well, I'll let you get back to your books", "why don't you lie down and take a nap?", etc.¹⁶ By contrast with our earlier discussion of such possible pre-closings as "O.K." or "We-ell", which may be said to accomplish or embody a warrant for closing, these may be said to announce it. That they do so may be related to the possible places in which they may be used.

Insofar as the possible pre-closings which announce a warrant for closing draw upon materials particular to the conversations in which they occur, it is not feasible to specify exhaustively their privileges of occurrence. One technique which announces its warrant, but does not make reference to materials derived from the conversation, and which is generally usable (i.e., not restricted to particular users) can be briefly discussed, namely "I gotta go" (and its variants and expansions, such as "The baby is crying, I gotta go", "I gotta go, my dinner is burning", etc.).

¹⁶ Such a use of materials gathered earlier in the conversation need not be restricted to materials about the other's circumstances or interests. An initiator of a conversation may insert at its beginning materials for his own use at its closing e.g., "I'm just leaving to see the doctor, but I wanted to ask you ...". This technique may also allow the caller to provide for a conversation's monotopicality when, for the conversationalists involved, it would not otherwise be expectable.

We noted before that the possible pre-closings which accomplish a warrant without announcing it are placed after the close, or the closing down, of a topic (indeed, such placement may be required for their recognition as possible pre-closings). The overt announcement we are now considering can be used to interrupt a topic. While exchanges such as "*O.K.*; *O.K.*" respect in their placement certain local orders of organization, such as the organization of talk on a topic or adjacency pairs (the first "*O.K.*" not being placed after the first part of an adjacency pair, or not being recognizable as a possible pre-closing if it is), the overt announcement, "I gotta go" need not respect such boundaries, and can even interrupt not-yet-possibly-completed utterances. That is not to say that "I gotta go" may not be placed with a respect for such local organization. It can be placed after a topic close, and we can speculate on reasons for its being used at such a place in preference to the "*O.K.*" which could also be used there. While "I gotta go" cannot prohibit further talk, while others may insert an unmentioned mentionable after it, it does not specifically invite such a sequel, as "*O.K.*" does. For the initiation of a closing section in a way that discourages the specific alternative of re-opening topic talk, this pre-closing may be more effective.

One implication of the preceding discussion which we can but hint at now is that from the inventory of possible pre-closing devices, one criterion of selection may be the placement that the item is to be given. That is, the availability of alternative mechanisms for accomplishing the invitation or initiation of a closing section affords us (as analysts) an interesting problem: how can some actually employed mechanism or component be selected? Investigation of this problem can be expected to show that such a selected item operates not only to initiate or invite the initiation of the closing of a conversation (which any of the other available components might do also, and which therefore will not account for the use of the particular component employed), but accomplishes other interactionally relevant activities as well. What we have suggested above is that one such consideration in the selection among components to invite or initiate the closing section is the placement it will be given in terms of the local (utterance-to-utterance) and topical organization.

Another implication should be noted. It is the import of some of the preceding discussion that there are slots in conversation 'ripe' for the initiation of closing, such that utterances inserted there may be inspected for their closing relevance. To cite an example used earlier, "why don't you lie down and take a nap" properly placed will be heard as an initiation of a closing section, not as a question to be answered with a "Because ...".

(although, of course, a coparticipant can seek to decline the closing offering by treating it as a question). To cite actual data:

B has called to invite C, but has been told C is going out to dinner:

- B: Yeah. Well get on your clothes and get out and collect some of that free food and we'll make it some other time Judy then.
 C: Okay then Jack
 B: Bye bye
 C: Bye bye

While B's initial utterance in this excerpt might be grammatically characterized as an imperative or a command, and C's "Okay" as a submission or accession to it, in no sense but a technical syntactic one would those be anything but whimsical characterizations. While B's utterance has certain imperative aspects in its language form, those are not ones that count; his utterance is a closing initiation; and C's utterance agrees not to a command to get dressed (nor would she be inconsistent if she failed to get dressed after the conversation), but to an invitation to close the conversation. The point is that no analysis — grammatical, semantic, pragmatic, etc. — of these utterances taken singly and out of sequence, will yield their import in use, will show what coparticipants might make of them and do about them. That B's utterance here accomplishes a form of closing initiation, and C's accepts the closing form and not what seems to be proposed in it, turns on the placement of these utterances in the conversation. Investigations which fail to attend to such considerations are bound to be misled.

VI

We have been considering the problem of the placement of the initiation of closing sections, and have found that this problem and the selection of a technique to accomplish initiation of the closing are related to the issue of warranting the initiation of a conversation's closing. That issue, it may be recalled, concerned how to warrant undertaking, at some 'here and now' in a conversation, a procedure that would achieve a solution to the problem of coordinating a stop to the relevance of the transition rule and that would at the same time respect the interests of the parties in getting their mentionables into the conversation. One such warrant could be found when the specific alternative to closing — reopening topic talk — had no interest displayed in it by any of the participants. It should be noted that the use of a possible pre-closing of the form "O.K.", or "we-ell" can set

up 'proceeding to close' as the central possibility, and the use of unmentioned mentionables by coparticipants as specific alternatives. That is to say, the alternatives made relevant by an utterance of that form are not symmetrical. Closing is the central possibility, further talk is alternative to it; the reverse is not the case (an asymmetry hopefully captured by the term 'possible pre-closing'; 'possible topic reopener' would not do). Unless the alternative is invoked, the central possibility is to be realized.

There is another form of the warranting problem, with concomitant contrasts in placement and utterance type, which reverses this asymmetry. We will refer to it as 'pre-topic closing offerings'. We have in mind data such as the following:

- (1) A: Allo
 B: Did I wake you/
 A: Who's it.
 B: Nancy
 A: Oh hi
 B: → Hi, did I wake you
 A: Uh no no, not at all hh/ /h
 B: () hh after a while it started ringin I kept thinkin maybe I should hang up (but I) you know hh
 A: No no no, it's O.K. / / I was just uh rushing a little that's all hh
 B: Oh good.
 B: hh Umm don't bring any sausage because ... etc.
- (2) A: Hello/
 B: Good morning.
 A: Oh hi / / how are you hhh
 B: Lisa
 B: → Fine. Did I wake you up/
 A: No no no, I was reading ... etc.
- (3) A: Buh nobody fought with huh like *I* fought with huh.
 (1.4)
 A: Uhb-uh fer example, uh d-oh about two weeks before she u_h died I hh I don' know what possessed me. I really don't. I found myself in my car, driving ovuh tuh see her *alone*.
 (1.3)
 A: An' I uh;;; it *koo- took* me about oh I don't know how long t'find a parking space in that area there,
 (0.4)
 B: yeah
 A: → About a *half* hour. Are yih busy/
 B: Uh *no*. My liddle gran'daughter is here.
 A: Oh. Oh so it's hard f'you to / / uh,
 B: That's *alright*

- A: -to uh :, to listen. Then uh, look, enjoy yer gran' daughter, hh
 B: I'll be taking her home soon,
 A: An' I'll try to uh :: uh to see you / / on-
 B: Yeah, it could be-would / / be (nice).
 A: -on Thursday. (etc. to closing)
- (4) B: Hello
 A: Vera/
 B: Ye:s
 A: Well you know, I had a little difficulty getting you. ((short discussion of the difficulty))
 A: → Am I taking you away from yer dinner/
 B: No: :, no, I haven't even started tuh get it yet.
 A: Oh, you (h)have / / n't.
 B: hhheh heh
 A: Well I- I never am certain, I didn't know whether I'd be too early or too late / / or ri- etc.
- (5) A: ... (Karen Sweet)
 B: Well, howarya(h)
 A: Fine, how are you.
 B: Well just fine.
 A: → Were you eating,
 (1.0)
 B: Some grapes, eh / / heh heh
 A: heh, I was just lookin at mine.

Such questions as "Did I wake you", "Are you busy", "Am I taking you away from your dinner", and others (e.g., "Is this long distance?", "Are you in the middle of something?", etc.) are placed not at the analyzable close of some unit, such as a topic, but at, or near, the beginning of one. One consequence of this is that, instead of some activity such as topic talk being a specific alternative to the closing they otherwise prefigure, the central possibility is an undertaking, or continuation, of the unit at the beginning of which they are placed (be it a 'topic', a 'conversation', or a 'silence' as when about to 'hold' in a telephone conversation), and closing is the specific alternative to that. When such pre-topic closing offerings are declined, then the offering or some component of the declining utterance may be topically elaborated in its own right, or the offering becomes a pre-sequence for the offerer's topic talk. If the pre-topic closing offering is accepted, there follows a closing section, one component of which routinely is making arrangements for resumption of the conversation (as in the data from (3) above).¹⁷

¹⁷ These features of pre-topic closing offerings seem to be related in their capacity not only to prefigure the undertaking of some conversational unit in the absence of a

Of special interest here are what might be called 'pre-first-topic closing-offerings', of which all but one of the data citations above are instances (the exception being the data from (3)). These are not simply special cases of pre-topic closing offerings, specifying the 'topic' as 'first topic'. Rather, by virtue of the special status of 'first topic' discussed earlier, inquiries such as "Are you busy?", "Are you eating?", etc., placed before first topic are more importantly seen as placed before 'the conversation'. The bases for the insertion of such inquiries before 'first topic' cannot be discussed at length here, but two may be briefly indicated. First, such inquiries may be heard (by participants) to be warranted (i.e., to have the 'why that now' explained) by features of the contact to that point (e.g., by the 'number of rings before answering', as in the data from (1) above) or by assumedly mutually oriented-to features of the interaction such as its time and place (on the mutual orientation to the time and place of a conversation by participants, see Schegloff, 1972),¹⁸ e.g., the orientation to the social time of day displayed by "Am I taking you away from your dinner", in the data above. Secondly, such inquiries may be heard as attentive to the 'priorities assessment' that may be relevant in initiating a conversation. Where the initiator of a conversation is unable to assess the comparative priorities of possibly ongoing activities of the other and the prospective conversation (for a fuller discussion of this issue concerning openings, see Schegloff, forthcoming: Chap. 2), as when first coming upon the scene (e.g., knocking at the door) or calling on the telephone, an inquiry concerning possibly ongoing priority activities may be introduced, as a way of finding whether an initiated conversation shall be prosecuted. Since the subject of the inquiry is thus selected as one which might have priority over the proposed conversation, an affirmative answer may have the consequence of accepting what turns out to be a closing offering.

Pre-first-topic closing offerings have been introduced here to suggest that, just as possible pre-closings do not foreclose the possibility of

reason to the contrary, but also to project a certain contour or length for the unit, such that, if the offer to close is not accepted on the occasion of the offering, no opportunity to close will soon present itself which respects the organization of that unit (for example, it may require an interruption).

¹⁸ These alternatives may shade into each other. "Did I wake you?" may be heard as displaying its speaker's orientation to the time of the conversation if asked at a time the speaker might know the other to have possibly been sleeping; i.e., it can be heard as referring to time if it is the right time for such a question. If not, it can be heard as picking up on a feature of the interaction to that point, e.g., number of rings before answering, voice quality leading to talk about 'colds', etc.

further topic talk in the conversation (i.e., raising the possibility of closing does not ensure it), so does the opening of a conversation not preclude the possibility of immediately closing it. When the latter possibility is actualized, although by reference to the basic features discussed at the beginning of this paper, 'conversation' may technically be said to have taken place, the participants may find that 'no conversation occurred'. The possibilities for both conversational continuation and for conversational closing are thus present, if appropriate techniques are used, from the very beginning of a conversation to its end.

VII

After initial formulation of the closing problem for conversation in terms of the suspension of the transition property of utterance completions, a technique was described which is used to come to terms with that problem — the terminal exchange. It was found that that exchange by itself was insufficient and that an adequate description of closing would have to provide for the proper placement of terminal exchanges which do not have unrestricted privileges of occurrence. The needed supplement was found to consist in properly initiated closing sections, and we described a variety of techniques for properly initiating closing sections, their placement, and the warrant they establish for closing a conversation.

Once properly initiated, a closing section may contain nothing but a terminal exchange and accomplish a proper closing thereby. Thus, a proper closing can be accomplished by:

- A: O.K.
B: O.K.
A: Bye Bye
B: Bye

Closing sections may, however, include much more. There is a collection of possible component parts for closing sections which we cannot describe in the space available here. Among others, closings may include 'making arrangements', with varieties such as giving directions, arranging later meetings, invitations, and the like; reinvocation of certain sorts of materials talked of earlier in the conversation, in particular, reinvocations of earlier-made arrangements (e.g., "See you Wednesday") and reinvocations of the reason for initiating the conversation (e.g., "Well, I just wanted to find out how Bob was"), not to repeat here the earlier discussion of materials from earlier parts of the conversation to do

possible pre-closings; and components that seem to give a 'signature' of sorts to the type of conversation, using the closing section as a place where recognition of the type of conversation can be displayed (e.g., "Thank you"). Collections of these and other components can be combined to yield extended closing sections, of which the following is but a modest example:

- B: Well that's why I *said* "I'm not gonna say anything, I'm not making *any comments* / / about anybody"
- C: Hmh
- C: Ehyeah
- B: Yeah
- C: Yeah
- B: *Alrighty*. Well *I'll* give you a call before we decide to come down. O.K.?
- C: O.K.
- B: *Alrighty*
- C: O.K.
- B: We'll see you then
- C: O.K.
- B: *Bye* bye
- C: Bye

However extensive the collection of components that are introduced, the two crucial components (FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PROPER CLOSING; other components may be important for other reasons, but not for closing *per se*) are the terminal exchange which achieves the collaborative termination of the transition rule, and the proper initiation of the closing section which warrants the undertaking of the routine whose termination in the terminal exchange properly closes the conversation. It should be noted again, however, that at any point in the development of the collection of components which may occur between a proper initiation of a closing up to and including the terminal exchange, and even the moments immediately following it, there are procedures for reopening the conversation to topic talk. A necessarily brief description of some procedures for doing so may indicate why we have referred to this conversational part as a closing SECTION, thereby ascribing to it the status of an oriented-to conversational unit.

One way topic talk may be reopened at any point has already been discussed in another context. We noted earlier that some possible pre-closings specifically invite the insertion of unmentioned mentionables and if that invitation is accepted by a coparticipant, then considerable topic talk may ensue, since other participants may find in the talk about

the newly introduced mentionable occasions for the natural fitting of a topic of their own. The same procedure of fitting, of topics 'naturally' coming up, can arise from any of the proper components of closing sections. If one component of a closing section can be reinvocation of earlier talked-about materials, then on any occasion of such an invocation, occasions for fitting new topics to that reinvocation may arise. The same is true for other components of closings, each of which may 'lead to' some fitted other topic 'coming up naturally'. Since most closing components have their roots in the body of the conversation, it appears that 'new' topics can enter into a closing section only by their fit to, or their coming up 'naturally' from 'old' materials. This character of closing sections as 'not a place for new things to come up' is consistent with techniques for initiating them such as possible pre-closings, whose warrant (when their closing options are accepted) is that none of parties has further mentionables to introduce.

The suggestion above that there are procedures at any point in a closing section for reopening topic talk was not, however, intended primarily to refer to this process whereby new materials are introduced by 'hooking' them onto old materials properly appearing as reinvocations. There are also ways in which new materials may be introduced, so to speak, in their own right, and these reflect the sectional character of closings. When such new materials are inserted into a closing, they are specially 'marked'; we can here discuss only two forms of such marking.

One form of marking, used elsewhere in conversation and not only in closings, we can refer to as 'misplacement marking'. Classes of utterances or activities which have a proper place in a conversation but are to be done in some particular conversation in other than their proper place, or an utterance (type) which has no particular proper place but is nonetheless 'out of place' where it is to be done, may have their occurrence misplacement marked. As an example of the former: 'introductions' are properly done at or near the beginnings of conversations. On occasion, however, they may not occur until well into the conversation, as may happen in conversations between adjacently seated passengers in an airplane or train. Such introductions may be prefaced with a misplacement marker, e.g., "By the way, my name is ...". As an example of the latter sort of occasion alluded to above, we may note that interruptions of an organizational unit for utterances, such as an adjacency pair, may be similarly misplacement marked. Thus, an utterance inserted after a question has been asked but before it has been answered, may begin with "By the way ...".

Misplacement markers, thus, display an orientation by their user to the proper sequential-organizational character of a particular place in a conversation, and a recognition that an utterance that is thereby prefaced may not fit, and that the recipient should not attempt to use this placement in understanding their occurrence. The display of such orientation and recognition apparently entitles the user to place an item outside its proper place. In the case of closings, we find that utterances introducing new materials may be misplacement marked when those utterances do not occur between the parts of an adjacency pair and do not accomplish an activity which has a proper place elsewhere in the conversation. That such utterances, but not ones which use proper closing components, are misplacement marked suggests an orientation by conversationalists to the status of 'closings' as an organizational unit — what we have referred to as a 'section' — with a proper character with which the misplacement marked utterance is not consistent.

- Caller^o: You don't know w- uh what that would be, how much it costs.
 Crandall: I would think probably, about twenty five dollars.
 Caller^o: Oh boy hehh hhh!
 Caller^o: Okay, thank you.
 Crandall: Okay dear.
 Caller^o: OH BY THE WAY. I'd just like tuh say thet uh, I *DO* like the new programming. I've been listening, it's uh / /
 ()
 Crandall: *Good girl!*
 Crandall: Hey listen do me a favor wouldja write Mister Fairchild 'n tell im that, I think that'll s-shi-break up his whole day for im.
 Caller^o: eh hh heh heh hhh!
 Crandall: Okay?
 Caller^o: Okay,
 Crandall: Thank you.
 Caller^o: II bye bye,
 Crandall: Mm buh(h) bye.

A second form of marking which displays an orientation to a closing section as 'not a place for new materials' we may refer to as 'contrast marking'. It is best discussed in connection with data:

A, who is visiting the city, and B, who lives there, have been engaged in an extensive making of arrangements to see each other.

- A: I mean b'cause I-eh you're going to this meeting at twelve thirty, en I don't want to uh inconvenience *you*,
 B: Well, even if you get here et abayout eh ten thirty, or eleven uh' clock, we still have en hour en a haf,
 A: O.K., *Al*right,

- The data of particular interest here are in A's seventh utterance in the segment, "I *did* wanna tell you." While there are various interesting issues raised by this data, we want briefly only to indicate one of them. The stress (as well as the verb form employed which allows the stress) accomplishes one half a contrast whose other half is not explicit (the rest of the utterance does not supply it), and whose paraphrase might be, "There *is* something else I wanted to tell you". A stress on the second part of a contrast pair whose first part is not explicit can nonetheless serve to display the relevance of the first part. Thus, to cite another example, a particularly clear display of what is 'going through someone's mind' though it is not spoken or gesturally, etc., conveyed, is provided by a person waiting to take an elevator down, who is told upon its arrival that the elevator is going up, pauses a moment, and then says, "I guess I *will* wait". The contrast accent displays his prior, now abandoned, decision to 'go along for the ride'. In the case of "I *did* wanna tell you", the presumptive character of closing sections as 'not the place for new materials' can be seen to be here prospectively overruled by new materials, which however are specially marked.

The insertion of misplacement marked new materials into closing sec-

tions, it may be added, marks the new materials themselves in a distinctive way. While in the case of the data just discussed, this appears to be 'deferred bad news', regularly the placing of new materials in closing sections is a way of achieving for them the status of 'afterthoughts'.

Having offered some suggestions about the status of closings as sectional units, we think it is in point to suggest several virtues of a sectional solution to the problems we have formulated as the problems of closing.

One aspect of the problem of closing, formulated by reference to the organization of speaker turns, it may be recalled, was that that organization generates an indefinitely extendable, but internally undifferentiated, string of turns. We noted earlier the importance of having a marked place for a problem whose focus was coordination in terminating the transition rules, and described the contribution that a terminal exchange, employing adjacency pair organization, made to the solution of that problem. That contribution was limited, however, by the placement problem for terminal exchanges, i.e., the impropriety of a closing produced by an 'unprepared' terminal exchange. That placement problem is solved by the use of properly initiated closing sections. It is the closing section which, through its terminal exchange, marks a place at which collaboration on termination of the transition rule can be located. An important part of the solution to the closing problem thus involves locating the solution to the initial problem we formulated not so much in the conversation as a whole, but in a closing section; one can close a conversation by closing a section which has as its business closing a conversation. When an initiated closing is aborted by reopening topic talk, a next effort to close does not proceed by simple insertion of a terminal exchange, but by the initiation of another closing section, again providing a unit within which the terminal exchange can be located.

A second virtue of a sectional solution can be mentioned again here briefly. Given the feature of closing sections as 'porous', i.e., the availability at any point of procedures for reopening topic talk, sectional solution has the virtue of possibly providing multiple opportunities for the introduction of unmentioned mentionables, a virtue whose importance vis-à-vis this conversational system's topical organization should be evident from the earlier discussion.

One final virtue of a sectional solution to the closing problem may be suggested, concerning the articulation of conversations (i.e., the unit 'a single conversation') with the interaction episodes, occasions, or streams of behavior in which they occur. One order of relevance termination can

have, and one basis for the importance of the clarity of terminal exchanges, is that other actions by the participants may be geared to, or properly occasioned by, the occurrence of conversational termination. In telephone conversations, hanging up and breaking the communication medium properly awaits termination, and properly follows its occurrence. In face-to-face interaction, a whole range of physical doings and positionings, ruled out by the proprieties of maintaining a show of attention and interest,¹⁹ become available and/or required upon termination, for example, those related to leave-taking. Insofar as the actions that may be occasioned by termination of the conversation require preparation, there is use for a place in the conversation to prepare for actions that should follow its termination in close order.²⁰ Closing sections, in foreshadowing the imminent occurrence of termination, allow such a possibility. Indeed, topics may be improvised for insertion into a closing sequence to extend the time available for such preparations, as when visitors gather their belongings before departure (thus yielding a derivative problem when such improvised topics assume a 'life of their own' and cannot easily be brought to a close when the preparations they were to accom-

¹⁹ Cf. Goffman, 1961; 1963; 1967.

²⁰ One reader of this paper in manuscript understood it to claim that closing can be accomplished by 'verbal means' alone, and that 'non-verbal accompaniments' are not involved. Thus, for example, 'taking leave' or breaking copresence is not explicitly mentioned, yet closing would not appear to have been effected if the parties remain in copresence after having gone through such sequences as we describe. Nothing in this paper, however, denies the possible relevance of 'non-verbal behavior' to conversational closing, e.g., the possibility of doing the work of possible pre-closings in face-to-face interaction by posture shifts, extended eye scans, increasing inter-participant space, edging toward an exit, etc. However, we have not studied these phenomena yet, and we do not have the empirical materials that would allow assertions that, and how, they work. Informal observation does not suggest that they are incompatible with our analysis. Still, it should be pointed out that 'purely verbal means' do work for at least one class of conversations, i.e., those on the telephone. Furthermore, they work fully or partially in others, though not necessarily in all others. That is: there may be some conversations whose closing is accomplished solely by 'non-verbal means' (as when one of the parties has become involved in a side conversation, and his erstwhile coparticipant seeks to depart without interrupting). But in a range of others, conversational resources such as we have sought to describe supply some parts of the closing; and in still others, while there are 'non-verbal accompaniments' and consequences, the effective and strategic points in accomplishing the closing are managed by the use of practices like those with which we deal. Clearly, our analysis does not deal with all possible cases; but its relevance should not be over-restricted.

It will be noted in the above that we have set off the distinction between 'verbal' and 'non-verbal' in quotes. This is not the place to review the history and application of that distinction, or its usefulness. We use the terms here because of their use by the reader to whose comments we are reacting, and because of their status as common parlance in this area; we do not, however, thereby endorse the distinction.

modate have been completed). The sectional organization of closings thus provides a resource for managing the articulation between the conversation and the interaction occasion in which it occurs.

The source of many of these virtues resides in the potential for reopening topic talk at any point in the course of a closing section. This invites our understanding that to capture the phenomenon of closings, one cannot treat it as the natural history of some particular conversation; one cannot treat it as a routine to be run through, inevitable in its course once initiated. Rather, it must be viewed, as must conversation as a whole, as a set of prospective possibilities opening up at various points in the conversation's course; there are possibilities throughout a closing, including the moments after a 'final' good-bye, for reopening the conversation.²¹ Getting to a termination, therefore, involves work at various points in the course of the conversation and of the closing section; it requires accomplishing. For the analyst, it requires a description of the prospects and possibilities available at the various points, how they work, what the resources are, etc., from which the participants produce what turns out to be the finally accomplished closing.

VIII

A few concluding remarks will be in point to try to specify the domain for which our analysis is relevant. What we are really dealing with is the problem of closing a conversation that ends a state of talk. It does not hold for members of a household in their living room, employees who

²¹ To cite but one example of this possibility:

B: So uh, gimme a ring sometime

A: yeah. *Alright.*

B: Whatchu c'n do

A: Yeah

B: Tch! 'Kay?

A: O.K.

B: A'right. Bye bye

(1.0)

A: Mnnuh *Hello?*

P: Yeah?

(1.0)

A: Uhm:::

(1.8)

A: Tch! hhehh hhh I didn't have anything in particular tuh say, I- I jus' fer a sekiin' didn't feel like hanging up.

etc.

share an office, passengers together in an automobile, etc., that is, persons who could be said to be in a 'continuing state of incipient talk'. In such circumstances, there can be lapses of the operation of what we earlier called the basic features; for example, there can be silence after a speaker's utterance which is neither an attributable silence nor a termination, which is seen as neither the suspension nor the violation of the basic features. These are adjournments, and seem to be done in a manner different from closings. Persons in such a continuing state of incipient talk need not begin new segments of conversation with exchanges of greetings, and need not close segments with closing sections and terminal exchanges. Much else would appear to be different in their conversational circumstances as compared to those in which a conversation is specifically 'started up', which we cannot detail here.

These considerations suggest that how a conversation is carried on in its course is sensitive to the placement of the conversation in an interaction episode or occasion, and that how an upcoming lapse in the operation of the basic features is attended to and dealt with by participants is sensitive to, and/or can accomplish, the placement of the conversation in its occasion. As it has been proposed that the problem of closing a conversation be shifted to ending its closing section, so ending an occasion (or interaction) can be seen to be located in some conversational episode. That participants attend as a task or as a piece of business to bringing the conversation to a close may have less to do with the character, organization, structure, etc., of conversation *per se*, than with that of occasions or interactions; or, rather, it has to do with the organization of conversation as a constituent part of an occasion or interaction.

This kind of consideration can be overlooked if much of the data one is looking at is, as in the case of this paper, made up of telephone conversations, because there especially the occasion is more or less coterminous with the conversation; the occasion is constructed to contain the conversation and is shaped by its contingencies. Since, typically, the occasion ends when the conversation does, it appears that it is the conversation's closing that one is dealing with. But even in telephone conversations, in those cases in which the occasion has an extension beyond a single conversation, one may find that only that conversation which ends the occasion is brought to a close with the forms we have described (we have in mind situations in which a caller talks seriatim to several members of a family, for example).²²

²² A simple distinction between face-to-face and telephone interaction will not do. We do not yet have any adequate technical account of these notions, which would

If these observations are correct and in point, then the observations we offered earlier about the articulation between conversation and ensuing actions, i.e., the preparation of actions geared to termination, are not passing observations. That there are geared actions required, and the possible need for preparing them, has to do with the OCCASION's ending, and it is as a part of conversation that the occasion may be ended. It is by way of the use of closing the conversation for ending the occasion that the use of a section to end the conversation may be appreciated, in a way similar to our appreciation of the use of a snack to end an evening or a get-together.

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specify the analytic dimensions of significant distinction. A variety of intuitive, plausible distinctions do not hold up. It should not be taken, from the text, that whereas face-to-face conversation can be either continuously sustained or have the character of a continuing state of incipient talk, telephone conversation invariably has the former character. That does not appear to be the case. And even if it were, it would be the distinction between these two modes, rather than that between face-to-face and telephonic, which would be relevant.

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Symbols Used in Transcriptions

/	— indicates upward intonation
//	— indicates point at which following line interrupts
(n.0)	— indicates pause of n.0 seconds
()	— indicates something said but not transcribable
(word)	— indicates probable, but not certain, transcription
<i>but</i>	— indicates accent
EMPLOYEE	— indicates heavy accent
<i>DO</i>	— indicates very heavy accent
:::	— indicates stretching of sound immediately preceding, in proportion to number of colons inserted
becau-	— indicates broken word

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