On the Sequential Organization of Troubles-Talk in Ordinary Conversation

Gail Jefferson

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This paper is an investigation of conversations in which people talk about their troubles. I describe a series of recurrent, positioned elements as comprising a "candidate" troubles telling sequence. That is, the collection of troubles tellings showed a shape and a trajectory that was well-formed in some conversations and distorted in others. Thus, the array of elements in the sequence could be characterized as "vaguely orderly." I consider whether this is due to a "rough" ordering of "big packages" in conversation (i.e., relatively long sequences of talk), or due to problematic local and general contingencies that disrupt an otherwise tight overall design.

The Sequence that Wasn't There

In an investigation of conversations in which people talk about their troubles, the possibility emerged that troubles talk is a socially organized "package" with standard components in a standard order of occurrence. Although many of the conversations in the corpus of troubles-tellings were long and multifaceted, they were not amorphous; that is, there seemed to be a shape that recurred across the range of conversations, a shape that was rather well-formed in some of the conversations and distorted or incomplete in others. Furthermore, a series of utterance-types, found regularly across the corpus, appeared to "belong" in various positions within that as yet dimly defined shape. Thus, I began to get a strong sense of troubles telling as a sequential phenomenon, and I started a seed collection of elements which might constitute the components out of which a troubles-telling "sequence" is constructed.

While the analysis of conversation which I practice tends to focus on very small, crystalline bits of the conversational machinery, I also have an ongoing interest in the analysis of what Harvey Sacks has discussed as the "big packages" or relatively long sequences of talk. As Sacks notes (April 12, 1971:1-3), the ways we tend to work with talk, i.e., by "characterizing some two or three utterance sequence which occurs in some larger fragment, completely ignores how the sequence fits into that fragment, or how it is part of the analytic package that is being developed." For the investigation of troubles-talk as a big package, my sense was to seek an overall design and function, by reference to which the various discrete elements could be operating. And indeed a scan of the troubles-talk corpus yielded a gross sense of such a design and function. A series of recurrent, positioned elements were found which could be grouped into a rough segmental order, which is outlined in this paper. That order could be characterized in terms of (1) a trajectory that involves participants' alignment to the trouble vis-à-vis attention to routine conversational requirements and proprieties, and (2) a correlated alignment of interactants vis-à-vis each other.

In an earlier part of this research, I proposed that a central feature of troubles-talk was the constant tension between attending to the trouble and attending to business as usual (Jefferson, 1980a:20-123). The troubles-talk package seemed to me specifically designed to move elegantly and fluently between those polar relevancies. I could begin to array the segments and their elements, and to characterize their work by reference to such a function. The basic design seemed to me utterly simple. There is a trajectory which starts out attending to business as usual, moves gradually towards an attention to the trouble, and then moves back to an attending to business as usual. Interactionally as well, a simple corresponding design seemed apparent. The parties start out at an interactional distance appropriate to their routine conversation, become gradually closer, arrive an an intense intimacy as the trouble is focused upon, and then return to a more distant relationship as they re-engage with business as usual.

However, these considerations were based on a template or model of the troubles-telling sequence constructed out of extracts of the materials. Specifically, a detailed examination of the materials did not yield a single instance of troubles-talk in which the candidate sequence was present, element by element, or even segment by segment, in order. Instead, it showed the actual instances of troubles-telling to comprise very messy versions of the candidate sequence, to say the least. For the various candidates I had located, described, and analyzed, I found misshapen, incomplete, variously problematic instances. Nevertheless, the array of elements in actual trouble-tellings can be characterized as "vaguely orderly" insofar as interactants employ a constrained set of elements for producing the talk, and there is a very gross sequential order in the occurrence of the elements. So it was at least conceivable that, while there is an existing elegant, efficient design to carry out a particular function, it just so happens that on nearly every occasion of its relevance and use the "template" sequence described below is being distorted.

Thus, troubles-talk does not occur as a consecutive sequence of ordered elements. The question was, is that an inbuilt feature of the troubles-talk package (perhaps a feature of "big packages" in general); i.e., is the sequence by design gross and flexible and thus well able to handle a range of contingencies it might, perhaps predictably, encounter over a long stretch of interaction? Or is the observed gross ordering a by-product of recurrent incidentals; i.e., is it that the package is by design tight and elegant, but that on any given occasion of its use something is happening in that interaction which is producing a "disordering" of the sequence? That is, was I looking at something gross but strong, or something elegant but weak? On any given occasion of its occurrence would it be most apt to say that the package is going alright, or that it is going awry? One further possibility was that while the consecutive unfolding of the package might be a design feature, its observably disordered occurrence is not accountable in terms of a particular conversation with its particular events, but is an artifact of troubles-talk in its relationship to other types of activities. That is, that the "disordered" occurrence is accountable by reference to a problem or some rather general problems that troubles-talk encounters and/or generates.

Coming to terms with these possibilities required close analysis of troubles-talk on a single instance by single instance basis. The results of this analysis (Jefferson, 1980b:Section II) suggest that we are seeing a potentially tight sequence that goes awry. Further, it appears that the problems encountered by the sequence are not incidental, are not best characterized by reference to a particular interaction and its events, but are general problem-types which recur across the corpus of troubles-talk.

However, in this paper I shall only be describing the standard candidate troubles-telling package—the one which does not occur in just this order, in its entirety, in any actual case of troubles-telling. Hence I present utterances taken from troubles talk, arrayed as an ordered series of components of the candidate sequence, and consider the topical/interactional work such a design *can* accomplish. Other papers consider, from more extensive and detailed single-instance analyses of larger fragments of troubles talk, the kinds of problems which con-

front the candidate sequence and which cause it to be distorted or go awry in particular instances (see, for example, Jefferson and Lee, 1981).

The Candidate Troubles-Telling Sequence

Inspection of the corpus of conversations in which troubles are talked about yields a series of recurrent elements which can be grouped into a rough segmental sort of order, out of which a candidate package may be built up. The rough segmental order is as follows: A) Approach, B) Arrival, C) Delivery, D) Work-Up, E) Close Implicature, F) Exit.

Within that segmental ordering a series of elements are found which may occur singly or in combination within a particular segment. Following is an array of elements grouped according to segment. The array is not exhaustive of the elements found in troubles-talk; and the orderings and formulations provided are preliminary and subject to revision. Some segments have a rich collection of elements while others do not. This disparity of richness and thinness tends to reflect not so much the phenomena as it does the current state of the investigation. For some of the segments I have proposed an ordering of elements. These are numerically ordered within a segment. For some of those ordered elements I have listed some devices which may stand in alternation to one another or may occur in combination. These are posted with lower case letters or Roman numerals, but this does not indicate a sequential ordering.

A. Approach
   1. Initiation
      a. Inquiry
      b. Noticing
   2. Trouble Premonitor
      a. Downgraded Conventional Response to Inquiry
      b. Improvement Marker
      c. Lead-Up
   3. Premonitor Response
B. Arrival
   1. Announcement
   2. Announcement Response
C. Delivery
   1. Exposition (Includes descriptions of symptoms, events, etc.)
   2. Affiliation
   3. Affiliation Response
D. Work-Up (Includes diagnoses, prognoses, reports of relevant other experiences, "relationalized" remedies, etc.)
E. Close Implicature
      a. Optimistic Projection
      b. Invoking the Status Quo
      c. Making Light of the Trouble
F. Exit
      a. Boundarying Off
         i) Conversation Closure
         ii) Conversation Restart
         iii) Introduction of Pending Biographicals
         iv) Reference to Getting Together
      b. Transition into Other Topics

Following is a series of brief arrays in which actual instances of troubles-talk elements are grouped into segments organized by reference to the candidate package. For reasons of econ-

omy, only a very few examples from the instances collected are shown.[1] These examples can do no more than illustrate the kinds of objects which recur in each segment of the troubles-telling sequence.

A.   Approach   1.   Initiation   a.   Inquiry

If a coparticipant knows about the presence, or possible presence, of a trouble, he can inquire into its current status and thus initiate talk about the trouble.

[A.1.a](1)   [NB:I:6.12ffR]

L: How:'s your foo:t.

[A.1.a](2)   [NB:II:3:10ffR]

E: How is your arthritis. You still taking sho:ts,

[A.1.a](3)   [W:PC:1:(1):42ff]

J: How is your back anyway.

[A.1.a](4)   [TCI(b):9:1]

J: How are you feeling now.

A.   Approach   1.   Initiation   b.   Noticing

Whether or not a coparticipant has prior knowledge of a trouble, he may be prompted by something in the talk to notice a possible trouble.

[A.1.b](1)   [TCI(b):7:1]

((Opening unrecorded, L is caller, is identifying herself to C.))

L: Jo:dy's mothe:r?
      (0.6)
C: ((hoarse)) Oh ye⌈h
L: ⌊Jo:dy Lih- tempi,
C: ((hoarse)) Oh: yeh,
      (0.2)
L: Are you si::ck,   ←

However, troubles-talk is so arranged that a coparticipant need not know about the presence of a trouble to effectively initiate talk about it. As can be seen in the following array (for example, in fragments A.2.a(3) and A.2.a(4) below) a conventional "How are you?" can stand as a first component in a troubles-talk package, the trouble emerging in response to such an inquiry.

A.   Approach   2.   Trouble Premonitor

Essentially, with such an item as a downgraded conventional response or an improvement marker (i.e., instead of something like "Fine," an item like "Oh, pretty good" or "Bet-

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ter"), a speaker can orient his coparticipant to the presence of a trouble, or if the trouble is already known about, then to the continuing state of trouble (Jefferson, 1980c).

A. Approach 2. Premonitor a. Downgraded Response to Inquiry

[A.2.a](1) [TCI(b):9:1]

J: How are you feeling now.
M: Oh:.? (.) pretty good I gue:ss,   ←

[A.2.a](2) [NB:II:3:10ffR]

E: How is your arthritis:. You still taking sho:ts,
L: Ye:ah, well it's: e-it's alri::ght   ←

[A.2.a](3) [TG:2]

A: ˙hh How've you bee:n.
B: ˙hh Oh:: survi:ving I guess, hhh!   ←

[A.2.a](4) [NB:II:4:1]

((Opening unrecorded, N is caller.))

E: Hi: honey how are yo⌈u.
N: ⌊Fine how're you.
E: khhhhhhhhhh. Oh:: I'm pretty goo:d   ←

A. Approach 2. Premonitor b. Improvement Marker

[A.2.b](1) [W:PC:1:(1):2]

M: How is your mother by: the wa:y ˙h
      (.)
J: We:ll she's a:,h bit bette:r,   ←

As an alternative to the downgraded response to inquiry and the improvement marker, we find another sort of premonitor, the lead-up. This item can indicate the presence of something possibly untoward and/or begin to exhibit the nature of the trouble. While the lead-up is used in response to inquiry (as in fragment A.2.c(1) below), it tends heavily to occur in those instances where talk about a trouble is being initiated by the teller.

A. Approach 2. Premonitor c. Lead-Up

[A.2.c](1) [NB:II:5:2-4R]

L: What's new with you:.
E: ˙hhh Oh I went to the dentist   ←

[A.2.c](2) [NB:IV:14:1]

E: Almost everybody won something but=
L: =uhh, ⌈huh-huh hu:h.
E: ⌊˙hhhhhhhhhhhh   ←
      (0.2)
E: Ah:::I been to the do:ctor   ←

[A.2.c](3)   [FDII:88ffR:1]

C: It's a big mess, just honest to goodness.
     (0.2)
B: Y⌜eah I know what you mean.
C: ⌞Never seen so many people in my life. ˙hhhh
B: Yeah,
     (0.4)
B: We got a (.) We got a little bit of it out he:re,   ←

[A.2.c](4)   [Fr:USI:57ff]

((Multiparty, V is finishing a story))

V: Cause that- that's (his policy).
J: Hey Victor.
V: So I (have to say)
J: The next time you see me I'm gonna be looking like he:ll you   ←
     know why,

In that these approach devices are available to troubles-disattentive/resistive responses by
coparticipants, they are systematically ambiguous as to their troubles-implicativeness. Notice
the arrowed utterances in the following array:

(1)   [A.2.a](4)   [TG:2]

A: ˙hh How've you bee:n.
B: ˙hh Oh:: survi:ving I guess, hh⌜h!
A: ⌞That's good,   ←

(2)   [A.2.c](3)   [FDDII:88ffR:1]

B: We got a (.) We got a little bit of it out he:re,
C: Eh not too much though huh,   ←

(3)   [A.2.c](7)   [JG:I:8:1]

M: I don't kno:-:w uh where he went from the:re, I:ee uh hhuh ˙hhhh I re: I
     really couldn't tell you where he went from
     there h⌜e m a y
C: ⌞(I tell you) Is he pra- Is he prohn planning to go   ←
     to:: Las Vegas next week?,

However, this ambiguity also provides an opportunity for a coparticipant to exhibit re-
ceptiveness to the possible trouble premonitory work being done. A recipient of a possible
trouble premonitor will exhibit that he or she is tracking the item as on the way to further
talk, as not in itself assessable (as in fragments (1)-(2) above) or dismissable by reference to
other matters (as in fragment (3) above). Rather, recipient produces a "continuer," an item
that expects and is ready to receive further talk.

A. Approach   3.   Premonitor Response

[A.3](1)   [W:PC:I:(1):2]

J: She's a:,h bit bette:r,
M: Mm::,   ←

[A.3](2)   [Fr:HB:II:1]

J: I'm much better this afternoo:n.=
P: =Ye:h,   ←

[A.3](3)   [NB:II:5:2ffR]

E: I went to the dentist and=
L: =Yea::h,   ←

[A.3](4)[Fr:TC:I:1:9]

S: Wendy and I have been really having problems.
G: M-hm,   ←

These responses exhibit an alertness to further talk, even though those prior items might otherwise be treatable as then and there assessable or receiptable as "news." But these responses also seem to be specifically attentive and fitted to the ambiguously premonitory character of such prior utterances and do not commit themselves to, for example, hearing a trouble underway when it is possible that a trouble is not in fact underway. That is, they are "neutral" with respect to occasioning further troubles talk. The fact that when there is any response to possibly trouble-premonitory talk it is either weighted towards no trouble (as in fragments A.2.a(4) and A.2.c(3)) or is specifically, recognizably "neutral" (as in fragments A.3(1)-(4) above), constitutes another aspect of a pressure towards business as usual, to which participants are demonstrably oriented (Jefferson, 1980a:120-23). Specifically, as the troubles-talk is being entered, we see a strong alignment with business as usual and an ambiguous alignment with trouble.

B.   Arrival   1.   Announcement

A troubles-teller regularly proceeds from an approach device to an announcement of the trouble across the range of recipient responses; i.e., across silence, as in fragments B.1(1)-B.1(2) below, across disattention/resistance, as in fragments B.1(3) and (4) below, and across "neutral" receptiveness, as in fragments B.1(5) below.

[B.1](1)   [Fr:TC:I:1:9]

J: The next time you see me I'm gonna be looking like he:ll you know why,
      (0.7)
J: Cause e:very damn one of these teeth coming out.   ←

[B.1](2)   [W:PCIII:1:2]

S: ˙hhhh Uh:m::: tch Oh it's all been happening he:re ((this with clogged
      throat)) ukhh Oh: God. (.) the voice is going now,
      ˙hhh (0.2) eh We got bu:rgled yesterday.   ←

[B.1](3)   [FDII:88ffR:1]

B: We got a (.) We got a little bit of it out he:re,
C: Eh not too much though huh,
B: We:ll, (0.4) Oh I got hurt a little bit last night.   ←

[B.1](4)   [Rah:b:1:(11):3ff]

A   Ann's (absolutely in) a pig sty couse the two beds've come
      this morning.the new be:ds. ˙hhhh A:nd uh but o nly one   ←
J: ⌊(   )

J: That was quick that was quick them co<u>m</u>ing,

A: Not <u>too</u> bad. But there's only one <u>m</u>attress with it. They <u>d</u>on't   ←
     <u>k</u>now <u>w</u>here the other mattress is.

[B.1](5)   [Fr:TC:I:1:9ff]

S: ˙t'hhhhh Well <u>W</u>endy and I have been really having <u>p</u>roblems.

G: <u>M</u>-hm,

S: ((confidingly)) ˙hh And yesterday I talked to her. ˙hhhh A:nd
     (0.3) ap<u>p</u>arently her <u>m</u>other is <u>t</u>erminal.   ←

B.   Arrival   2.   Announcement Response

In contrast to the range of responses that follow the approach devices considered above,
the announcement is recurrently followed by an item which marks arrival at the topic that
was so far being approached. And there seem to be two types of announcement response; one
which marks arrival and elicits further talk on the matter but does not necessarily align recip-
ient as a troubles-recipient, as in fragments B.2(1)-(2) below; and one which, by displaying
"empathy," commits recipient as, now, a troubles-recipient, as in fragments B.2(3)-(5) below.

[B.2](1)   [NB:IV:13:2]

L: His <u>m</u>other's real low.

E: Oh really,   ←

[B.2](2)   [NB:IV:4:1]

E: Bud <u>left</u> me last night.
     (1.0)

E: He ⌈got- ma:d and went off uhh huh huh!

L: ⌊(   )·
     (0.4)

L: <u>Did</u> he really?   ←

[B.2](3)   [W:PCIII:1:2ff]

S: <u>W</u>e got bu:rgled yesterday.

D: Na<u>h</u>: <u>no</u>::.   ←

[B.2](4)   [NB:II:5:2ffR]

E: <u>G</u>od he wanted to pull a <u>tooth</u> ⌈and make me a new go:ld uh

L: ⌊a h h h h !   ←

E: ˙hhhhhh (.) <u>br</u>idge for (.) EI:GHT hundred <u>d</u>ollars.

L: O<u>h</u>:: sh:<u>i</u>:t.   ←

[B.2](5)   [Rah:B:1:(11):3ff]

A: But there's only one <u>m</u>attress with it. They <u>d</u>on't <u>k</u>now <u>w</u>here the other
     mattress is.

J: O<u>h</u>: <u>no</u>:.   ←

C.   Delivery   1.   Exposition

To enhance the sense of the possible tightness of the troubles-telling package, we will stay

with the fragments displayed in B.2. above. In some instances we find a strict progression from B.1. announcement, to B.2. announcement response, to C.1. exposition.

[C.1](1)   [NB:IV:13:2-3]

L: His mother's real low.
E: Oh really,
     (0.6)
L: His dad wants him to come ba:ck and gosh Earl doesn't know   ←
     what to do you know it's a- kind of problem? if you're gonna stay there,
     and- 'hh you gotta go back, anyway=
E: =⌈Mm hm
L: =⌊You know it's- an::d poor Dad's all by himself,

[C.1](2)   [NB:IV:4:1-2]

E: Bud left me last night.
     (1.0)
E: He ⌈got- ma:d and went off uhh huh huh!
L: ⌊(   )-
     (0.4)
L: Did he really?
E: Yeah, 'hh We were supposed to have gone out to dinner with   ←
     PHil and Martha we were over there watching the ga:me and, 'hhh he had
     a beer, and I had a m-martini, and then we came over here and uh-lee I
     had your thing th-thawing out you know, that ri:ce stuff. And I thought
     well if we don't go out I'll have that and- 'hh he says well you know,
     you've gotta put that back in the rih- 'hh you don't put it back in the
     freezer, hh when you- take it out, and I said . . . .

In fragment B.2(4) above the exposition follows, but not immediately. That it does not follow immediately may have in part to do with the emergence of a priority activity generated by the particular announcement response which occurs in this case, i.e., "Oh:: sh:i:t." In general, cursing and obscenity can be used as a display of intimacy. Such an item is recurrently followed by recipient affiliation, i.e., recipient confirms that it is appropriate to use such language in this interaction (see Jefferson et al., 1987). In the fragment reproduced below, it appears that being a recipient of and affiliating with an obscenity is given priority over a move into the exposition. And this momentary priority may have consequences for the sequence. Specifically, I noted that the B.2. announcement response is, in the first place, of a particular sort: one which is especially troubles-receptive. As such, it may tend to converge with a component of, not the B. arrival segment, but the C. delivery segment, i.e., with a C.2. affiliation which recurrently *follows* a C.1. exposition:

[C.1](3)   [NB:II:5:2-4R]

01   E: God he wanted to pull a tooth ⌈and make me a new go:ld uh
02   L: ⌊a h h h h !
03   E: 'hhhhhh (.) bridge for (.) EI:GHT hundred dollars.
04   L: Oh:: sh:i ⌈:t.   ←
05   E: ⌊Shit. (.) is right.   ←
06   L: That's a big: that's a big uh:::=   ←
07   E: 'hhh ⌈He won't try to save this tooth. This is a new   ←
08   L: ⌊gimmick.

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09    E:    dentist=He says it's got to- deh doesn't hhurt me at a::ll you
10          know and he took all my exra::ys and then I awg I go: and it
11          ·hhhhh he wanted to pull it and I said God no I:'m not ready
12          to have my tooth pulled toda:y, (.) Edith went with me and
13          (1.0) we were gonna go to lu:nch and I wasn't ready you
14          know go in and have my tooth pulled.
```

Troubles-teller's own C.3. affiliation may then constitute a sequentially appropriate next move (as at line 5) to the C.2. affiliation. Whereupon troubles-recipient can properly understand that the announcement of an exorbitant price (line 3) had itself comprised the exposition and that the sequence is now ready to move on to the D. work-up segment, an appropriate component of which she now provides ("That's a big: that's a big uh:::=gimmick.").

As it happens, such a condensed version of a troubles-telling is not to be. At a recurrent locus of "interruption" of one utterance by another, i.e., as troubles-recipient's utterance goes into a "search" (that is, at "uh:::", line 6 above), troubles-teller launches the exposition (lines 7, 9-14), thus putting to rights a sequence which we may now see as having gone temporarily awry.

In fragment B.2(5) above, it appears that we are losing the candidate sequence altogether. The announcement response is followed by an item which qualifies as an E.a. close-implicative optimistic projection, "It'll turn up I expect:"

[C.1](4)   [Rah:B:1:(11):3ff]

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A:    But there's only one mattress with it. They don't know where the other
      mattress is.
J:    Oh: no:.              ←
A:    So anyway weh- It'll turn up I expect. ·hh So we've been        ←
      sort of trying this: rearranged bedroom, ·hh and it was What
      I'd forgotten was they're (.) six inches wi:der than the
      others. ·h So the room looks (.) so cluttered now.           ←
```

It turns out that what has been understood by troubles-recipient to be "the trouble" and strongly responded to as such with "Oh: no:" is but one of several aspects of a multi-faceted trouble. The optimistic projection closes down attention to that aspect of the trouble and is followed by approach to and arrival at a next aspect. Further, that the multi-faceted trouble is being delivered in just this way, i.e., by an optimistic projection for an initial aspect and a reintroduction procedure for a next aspect, may in part have to do with the nature of the announcement response. Again we note that it is especially troubles-receptive and may converge with a C.2. affiliation. In this case, the optimistic projection which follows it may be dealing as much with the interactional implications of such an item as its sequential implicativeness.

The foregoing consideration of element C. delivery 1. exposition in its regular and apparently fitted relationship with elements B. arrival 1. announcement and 2. announcement response stands as a capsule version of the sort of argument I am developing. Specifically, I am arguing that instances in which the elements do not occur in strict order are not to be understood as counter-cases, nor is the fact that there are many of them to be understood as evidence for a vague, loosely organized sequence. Rather, each instance in which the elements do not follow in strict order appears to be an accountable disordering of a tightly organized sequence, and can be examined in detail for specific, perhaps systematic, sources of such disorder. Such an argument is readily enough made when there are also many instances of a strict ordering, as is the case for the B.1.→B.2.→C.1. series. It is problematic when there are no available instances of a strict ordering, as is the case for the proposed overall sequence of which this series stands as a component. And it is possible that, for example, "big packages"

may be adequately characterized as a collection of tightly organized sequential nodes which themselves are loosely linked and interchangeably positioned over the course of the talk.

C. Delivery 2. Affiliation 3. Affiliation Response

Following the C.1. exposition we recurrently find a series in which the troubles-recipient exhibits affiliation (with an expression of "empathy" and/or an affiliative formulation), and troubles-teller's subsequent talk appears to be produced specifically in response to that exhibited affiliation; i.e., we find troubles-tellers producing emotionally heightened talk, "letting go" and/or turning to or confiding in the troubles/recipient. To get a sense of the reciprocity which seems to be involved in these two elements, I show them in tandem. And to get a sense of the "emotional heightening" of the C.3. affiliation response, as well as the potential for a tightly ordered sequence, I show these two elements as they follow a C.1. exposition component.

[C.2. C.3](1)   [JG:1:19:1:Gold Trans]

M: I been taking antibiotics ever since Sunday.
S: Ohh.
M: And uh I w-h-h-en I lie down or when I get up it feels like the m::flesh is pulling off of my bones.
S: How awful.   ←
M: Oh I have listen I was in such excruciating pain yesterday   ←
     and the day before that I really I just didn't know what to do I just pulled my hair.

[C.2. C.3](2)   [FR:HB:II:6]

J: It happened within: minutes. ˙hhh Within a half hour the house was go:ne I guess,=
P: =Ohh:: Ghod,   ←
J: So it's just l⌈i:ke, we wouldn:'t, we just wouldn't've been=
P: ⌊˙hhhh
J: =here˙hh You kno:w,
P: ˙t! ⌈O H : : : : : : : : b a : b y.   ⌉   ←
J: ⌊There's no way it was it was jus⌋:t, we're just lucky I guess:,
P: ˙hhhh Okay wait⌈a minute I don't know if you're cryi-ing but=   ←
J: ⌊So,
P: =I hhh(h)a⌈hhhm uh hm:˙hhh=   ←
J: ⌊(hhhhhh hum)
J: =˙h I was guh- I- middle of the night la-ast night I   ←
     wantehhd hhto hhc(h)all (h)y(h)ou ˙mhhh!

A review of the three segments of the proposed troubles-talk package shown so far reveals a serial shifting of alignment as between teller and recipient; roughly, a movement from distance to intimacy. Likewise, across the three segments there appears to be a serial shifting from an engagement with the proper procedures of ordinary conversation to a focussing on the trouble in its own right. When the package is run off in order, then, it provides for a series of moves across which participants to a troubles-telling can mutually achieve a locking in, to the trouble and to each other, and likewise a disengaging from the topical and relational proprieties of business as usual. By reference to such a progression this third segment constitutes the topical and relational heart of troubles-talk, an intense focussing upon the trouble and upon each other.

D. Work-Up

I have done no detailed analysis of this segment. I simply note a patterned occurrence in troubles-talk of a range of activities, including diagnoses, reports of relevant (similar or contrastive) experiences, relationalized remedies and prognoses. Such elements are found, singly or in various combinations, in such fragments as these.

[D](1)   [Fr:TC:I:1:ff]

```
S:   ·t'hhh So she's very very upset.
G:   Well how long did they give her.                ←
S:   Get thi:s. Fifty percent chance of three years.
     (0.7)
G:   Well that's not bad at a::ll.=
S:   =I kno:w.
G:   I mean my(g)Go:d. Some people find out and they've only got like    ←
     six mo ⌜:nths.
S:         ⌊·hhhhhhh hOh: I was talking to this friend of        ←
     Wendy's the other day. ·hh whose father, (.) collapsed. They found out he
     had a brain tumor. And he died the next da:y.
     (1.0)
G:   ·tch·hhhh Well (.) I mean there's reason to be upset on her     ←
     part⌜t,
S:       ⌊S: u⌜: re,
G:            ⌊But- (.) there's also reason to (.)feel very lucky.
S:   ·hhhhhhhhh Well I look at it this way . . . .       ←
```

[D](2)   [SBL:1:1:1:7-8]

```
B:   He does the things he needs to- the errands=
T:   =⌜Mm hm, mm hm,
B:    ⌊and things like that. Once in awi- I think one day a week he plays golf,
T:   Uh huh, ⌜(     )
B:          ⌊And other than that, why uh he=
T:   =Yes. But uh you see no improvement.        ←
     (2.0)
B:   Ohh,
T:   in her condition.
B:   It's uh in ways, yes, ⌜uh and, and uhm,
T:                         ⌊Mm hm,
T:   Well that means she could go on for a long, long time.      ←
B:   Unfortunately.
T:   uh without really completely recovering.
B:   Yes.
T:   I mean in her condition.
B:   Yes.
T:   Uh huh. Well, ·tch my that man has really a challenge     ←
     doesn't ⌜he.
B:          ⌊Oh, indeed. ⌜(      )-
T:                       ⌊She probably doesn't really know what's    ←
     going on.
B:   No.
T:   Or does she.
B:   No, I don't think so.
```

T: No:::. Well, we never know dear, that's what uhm uh   ←
      marriages bring sometimes,
B: ⌈Mm hm,
T: ⌊But we just never know.
B: Mm hm,
T: Well, it's a good thing he has money dear to uhm do the right thing   ←
B: Yes.
T: And the thing he wants to do.
B: Yeah.
T: I'm sure he does.

While these fragments may start out focussed on the trouble they do not end up that way. In contrast to the C. delivery segment with its intense focus on the trouble, the D. work-up seems to position the trouble by reference to more general circumstances. If the segments proposed so far are considered in terms of a trajectory with C. delivery having altogether disengaged the trouble from the proprieties of business as usual, treating it in isolation and in its own right and achieving (at least in American data)[2] the interactional apex of the trajectory, then the D. work-up may stand as a rearticulation of the trouble with the world at large, a reengagement with the proprieties of business as usual, and (at least in the American data) a return to a more conversation-standard interactional distance.

In short, whatever else the D. work-up segment and its elements may be designed to do, it also appears to be preparing for closure of the troubles-talk. Whatever else may be achieved by the proffering of a remedy, or the introduction of relevant other experiences, diagnoses, prognoses, and so on, the occurrence of such items may be recognizably invoking the relevance of, now, a move towards closure, as in the following fragment.

[D](2)   [SBL:1:1:1:7-8]

T: Well it's a good thing he has money dear, to uhm do the right thing.
B: Yes.
T: And the thing he wants to do.
B: Yeah.
T: I'm sure he does.
B: Mm hm
T: Well listen Bea, I'll probably see you Sunday then.   ←

And in fragment D.1, an elaborately extended work-up is brought to a close and followed by exit from the troubles-talk.

[D](1)   [Fr:TC:I:1:6ff:Extended]

S: ˙hhhhhhhhh Well I look at it this way, you know, her mother, is over
      sixty.
      ((ca. 51 lines omitted; work-up))
S: You know why: for three years should she be miserable. ˙t ˙hh when she
      can have a few months of reasonable (.) contentment.
      (1.2)
S: You know,
G: We:ll,
      (0.3)

2. See Jefferson (1980b:26-31) for a discussion of a difference which showed up between the American and British data: briefly, all instances of C2-C3 pairs illustrated above occurred in the American data. No instances could be found in British data of the paired activities of a troubles-teller "letting go" in response to recipient affiliation: so in the British data there did not appear to be the same emotional reciprocity found in the American materials.

S: You know I teh- Anyway it's a hunk of shit goes on I don't have to tell you.
    (0.7)
S: ˙hmhhh ˙t ˙hhhhhhh BU::::T?hhh SO HOW ARE YOU:?

But more generally, while troubles-talk has arrived at a place where closure is becoming relevant, it may not have reached a point where closure is imminent. Bringing troubles-talk to a point of imminent closure appears to be the work of a discrete unit, in which we find a range of close-implicative elements.

E.   Close-Implicature

We find a range of close-implicative elements which may occur singly or in combination. These include such items as optimistic projections, invocation of the status quo (i.e., a re-engagement of the trouble with ordinary everyday activities), and making light of the trouble. An array of each of these element-types is shown. To get a strong sense of their close-implicature, fragments were selected for the arrays in which a candidate close-implicative element is closely followed by a move out of the troubles-talk.

E.   Close-Implicature   a.   Optimistic Projection

[E.a](1)   [JGI(S):X15:6]

P: ˙hhh But I think it'll iron itself out,   ←
M: I sure hope⌈so.
P: ⌊I'll see you Tuesday.   ←

[E.a](2)   [Rah:B:1:(11):6]

A: Never mind it'll all come right in the end,   ←
J: Yeh. Okay you go and get your clean trou⌈sers on=
A: ⌊Yes.
A: =⌈(   )
J: =⌊hh hhahh(h) I'll see⌈you in a few minutes
A: ⌊See you then

[E.a](3)   [Rah:MB:2:4-5]

R: He'll recover. hhhe ⌈h ˙hehhh   ←
B: ⌊Yeh well he- he said he'd give us a
    ti⌈n(kle)?
R: ⌊Yeh he mi:ght come later so.
B: Oh: fair enough mate yeh, ˙hh⌈h
R: ⌊˙tch
B: Ye⌈h, ( )-
R: ⌊See you later then   ←

E.   Close-Implicature   b.   Invoking the Status Quo

[E.b](1) [RahA:1:(2):1-2]

```
I:    You're not in bed are you.
J:    No:?no ┌:no  I'm- ┐ I'm going shopping ┐ ehh heh┌heh              ←
I:          └Oh: have ┘ I disturbed y o u. ┘             └Pardon?
J:    I'm just going shopping I'm la:te actually, ┌heh heh                ←
                                                  └Yeh well I
      wondered whether you were still in be:d or (0.2) going (.)
      out shopping? or what. hhh Well there's eh: few things             ←
      arrived for you,
```

[E.b](2) [NB:II:3:10ffR:2-3]

```
E:    Mine's on the outside of the nail down by the cuticle just be a little ti:ny
      brow:n spot then it'll grow up through I've got nail polish on no:w so:,   ←
      (.)
L:    ┌Yeah
E:    └hi:- hide it.         ←
      (.)
L:    Ye:ah,
E:    ·hhhhhhhh Okay honey well I'll talk with you next week
```

[E.b](3) [NB:IV:10:10-11]

```
E:    I'm not gonna have this thing with Bu:::d, and and uh ·hhhh
      uh dah-you know hu:: whatever's to be's to be that's all             ←
      Lottie, ┌and this-
L:            └Yeah.
E:    If this Thanksgiving thing doesn't turn ou:t, I've got the           ←
      turkey and I'll cook the damn thing, and freeze part of it and give you
      some of it or,
      (1.0)
L:    Oh.
      (0.4)
L:    Uh, no I don't want any, No. I- that's okay, I din't, I don't
      really want any, Oh well you gonna- ge- uh fix the:: thing          ←
      for Thanksgiving anyway aren't you?
E:    Why sure I'm gonna fix the turkey. I'm getting it thawed            ←
      ou:t, so ┌I thought I'd just go ahead up to that Balboa
L:            └Yeh.
E:    Market,
E:    They deliver, and I went up and put my order there at ·hhhhhh kruh hh
      quarter of nine. They didn't open til nine, it
      was such a beautiful morning, So I ┌just-
L:                                       └This morning?
E:    Oh God Lottie it was beautiful down here,
L:    Ih- I g-it was wa:rm? It felt rih- well it was real warm=          ←
E:    =┌Mm hm::
L:    =└down at Palm Springs. Gee it was gor- hh but it ┌was-            ←
E:                                                      └The wind blew didn't it,
L:    Yea:h. Toda:y. And last night it really blew.
      (0.5)
```

E: Mm hm,
      (0.7)
L: And ye̲sterday we went down to- to̲wn, see they're about   ←
      eighteen mi̲les from uh, Palm Sp̲rings.

In fragment E.b(3) note, for one, the presence of a recurrent "substitute optimistic projec-
tion," "Whatever's to be's to be." Secondly, in the movement out of troubles-talk, note a can-
didate instance of what might be called a where-are-we-now topical negotiation, in this case,
by references to talk about the weather. Specifically, while weather-talk may constitute a
"transition topic," it may not stand as "a topic" in its own right, and as Sacks (February 13,
1970:8-9) points out, may operate as a version of a how-are-you sequence; i.e., in the ways that
people talk about the weather, they can be, and can be understood to be, exhibiting how they
feel. Thus, in fragment E.b(3), it may be unclear, and negotiable, that the weather-talk consti-
tutes an exit from the troubles-talk or that it is part of an elaborated closing segment of the
troubles-talk.

E.c.   *Making Light of the Trouble*

[E.c](1)   [NB:II:5:3R]

E: Go̲:ld's at a pre̲:mium no̲:w, ˙hhhh and my G̲od I'm not even the go̲::ld is
      just sitting in my mo̲uth it's not in any to̲o:th
      you know what I mea:n the te̲e⌈th are just
L: ⌊Who's gonna see(h̲)e̲e it is   ←
      anybody gonna look up the(h)re to see if you go⌈t gold or no̲:t?
E: ⌊eHHHHhhhhhhhh   ←
E: hargh hargh a̲gh a̲gh a̲gh hh⌈hh   ←
L: ⌊Mm:⌈:::.
E: ⌊WHY DON'T YOU COME DO̲W:N FOR A   ←
      MINUTE SOME TIME TODA::Y.
L: Ye̲h I wi̲:⌈ll I was just
E: ⌊AND LO̲OK AT YOUR BE̲AUTIFUL SWE̲ATER.

[E.c](2)   [Fr:HB:II:11]

((Also E.b. status quo and E.a. optimistic projection))

J: (h)I mean re̲ally if you c̲alled this morning I don't know
      what I whhould(h)'ve do̲:⌈ne,
P: ⌊Wuhhhhheh (h)yeh ri⌈g h t.˙hhh
J: ⌊But I was even
      able to A(h̲)my called befhho:re, ˙hhh and she even made me   ←
      laughheh- ⌈he̲h!
P: ⌊And she me̲hh ⌈huh   ⌈e̲hh!
J: ⌊·n̲hhhh e-h̲heh a⌊bout scho̲o(h)oo(h)l of a(h)a(h)ll
      th(h)in(h)gs.
      ((ca. 16 lines omitted re. incident at school))
J: And she ha-she had to lie to Mi̲ssiz Se̲:lvin. I said o̲h that's
      wondher⌈fu(h)u(h)l
P: ⌊That's w(h)onderfhhul ⌈r i g h t
J: ⌊˙h̲h! Said I'm glad to see   ←
      thing are the s(h)a⌈me,
P: ⌊e̲hh!

```
J:    ·nh!=
P:    ='hhh Nothing's changed uhhhh h           ←
J:                              ⌐neh hhm- ⌐hhm
P:                                       ⌐'hhh
J:    ·nhhh So: m-everything'll be good and=    ←
P:    =That's goo d.
J:                 ⌐M:aybe 't 'hh maybe next weekend if you and    ←
      Freddy wanna come up,
```

As I noted in the introduction to the E. close-implicature arrays, fragments were chosen in which we could see a move out of troubles-talk closely following a candidate close-implicative element. Although that talk is, for the most part, specifically, recognizably not troubles-talk, there may be good reason to include it in a consideration of how people talk about their troubles, and indeed, to include it as an integral part of the troubles-talk package. Rather than treating the talk which follows troubles-talk as some, any, next activity, topic, or business, I take it that there are good grounds to treat it as a troubles-talk exit device. The substantial space I devote to this phenomenon, in which people are not talking about a trouble, reflects my sense of its importance in a consideration of the sequential organization of troubles-talk, and indeed, its bearing on such a general issue as the overall structural organization of conversation, or the sequencing of "big packages," to which reference was made in the beginning of the paper.

F. Exit a. Boundarying Off

Overwhelmingly in the current corpus, the procedure used to achieve exit from troubles-talk is to start some altogether new activity, topic, or business. I have isolated several distinctive devices by which troubles-talk is boundaried off. These are arrayed below.

F. Exit a. Boundarying Off i) Conversation Closure

The most frequently used device in the current corpus is that of boundarying off and exiting from the troubles-talk by entering conversation closing (see Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Button, 1987). Following are but a few instances, selected for clarity from among those in which the conversation is terminated following an entry into closings.

[F.a.i](1)   [NB:IV:7:5-6]

```
E:    Will you help me out of this,
M:                         ⌐'hh I'll call him toni:ght,
      (0.4)
M:    ⌐And you-
E:    ⌐Alright dear, ⌐'hhhh
M:                  ⌐And you call me at nine tomorrow mor ning.
E:                                                       ⌐Alright darling, I
      appreciate it,
M:    Okay,
E:    Bye bye,
M:    Buh-bye,
```

[F.a.i](2)   [JGI(S):X15:6]

P: But I think it'll iron itself out,
M: I sure hope⌐so.
P: └I'll see you Tuesday.
      (0.4)
M: Ri:ght.
P: O⌐kay Mar⌐vin
M: └You-   └You alright. You ⌐can get there.
P: └(Y-)
P: YA:h.
M: Okay.
P: Oka:y,
      (.)
P: Tha⌐nk you,⌉
M: └See y┘ou Pete. Bye.

[F.a.i](3)   [Rah:MB:2:3-5]

R: He'll recover˙hhhhe ⌐h ˙hehhh
B: └Yeh well he- he said he'd give us a
      ti⌐n(kle)?
R: └Yeh he mi:ght come later so.
B: Oh:: fair enough mate yeh, hhh⌐h
R: └˙tch
B: Ye⌐h, ( )-
R: └See you later then⌐:
B: └Yeh ( ) gonna wait for you to come mate,
R: Ohka: ⌐y ye:h.
B: └ (Alright ⌐)
R: └Byera:,
B: Ta ra mate,

Overwhelmingly, interactants treat troubles talk as a topic after which there is nothing more to be said. For one, this may constitute an index of deference to the phenomenon of "troubles." Whatever other (relatively "trivial") matters might have been introduced are set aside. Further, that troubles-talk massively has such a consequence for the course of an interaction may be used as an organizational device by participants. So, for example, these are materials in which I get a sense that talk about a trouble is specifically introduced in order to bring the conversation to a close, i.e., as a "last" topic, a topic after which no more matters should be introduced. There are, however, a range of troubles-exit devices which do provide for further conversation. Following are several of these.

F. Exit a. Boundarying Off ii) Conversation "Restart"

This device may be seen as indexing the same sort of deference of "troubles" as does the device of conversation closure. In effect, the conversation in which a trouble was talked about is terminated and a fresh new conversation is begun. The product is not, then, a single conversation in which troubles-talk is followed by other matters, but two juxtaposed conversations.

[F.a.ii](1)   [Fr:TC:I:1:12]

S: You know why: for three years should she be miserable. 't 'hh when she
      can have a few months of reasonable (.) contentment.
      (1.2)
S: You know,
G: We:ll,
      (0.3)
S: You know I teh- Anyway it's a hunk of shit goes on I don't have to tell you.
      (0.7)
S: 'hmhhh 't 'hhhhhhh BU:::T?hhh SO HOW ARE YOU:?   ←

[F.a.ii](2)   [W:PC:1:(1):3]

J: I mean it's not good e⌈nough. ⌈(   )=
M: ⌊'hh   ⌊It isn't.
M: It isn't.
J: No::.
M: 'hhhh And what've you been doing this last week   ←

Note that the conversation restart device is used to exit from, not troubles-talk per se, but
from talk which has become interactionally problematic. And in fragment F.a.ii(1) above we
see a convergence of the two matters; i.e., detailed analyses of that fragment shows it to be an
exit from not only talk about a trouble, but talk in which the participants are having various
interactional troubles. The analysis on which these claims are based will not be shown. I
simply assert that convergence in that, and other similar instances.

F.   Exit   a.   Boundarying Off   iii)   Introduction of Pending Biographicals

Although closely related in its form and function to the conversation restart, the introduc-
tion of pending biographicals does not start the conversation off afresh, but introduces an
especially warranted new topic. That the topic chosen to follow troubles-talk is of this particu-
lar sort may again stand as an index of deference to "troubles."

[F.a.iii](1)   [NB:IV:14:7]

E: 'hhhhhhh But hell if it costs five hundred bucks I'm gonna get- we:ll,
L: Well don't you have insur⌈ance on that? ⌈Huh?⌉
E: ⌊Yeah.   ⌊Yeah⌋ :: .Yeah.
L: Oh:.
      (0.3)
L: So you're coming down in Ma:rch hu:h?   ←

[F.a.iii](2)   [Rah:II:3]

J: 'hh That'll teach hi:m hheh he ⌈h-he
I: ⌊That will teach him ⌈yes,
J: ⌊'hhh he-eh
J: 'hh Hey⌈l i s ⌈ten:- 'hh   ←
I: ⌊Yeh⌋
J: When are you getting your: dining room suite.   ←

[F.a.iii](3)   [NB:IV:4:4-5]

E: I'm just a ma:ss of b-little p(h)imp(h)les::heh heh
      ⌈˙hhh
L: ⌊Oh tha:t's from uh:: (.) ⌈ne:rves.
E: ⌊ne:::rves˙hhuhh
      (0.4)
E: Are you going down the desert?   ←

The troubles-exit device arrayed in fragments F.a.iii(1)-(3) clearly involves the selection of a matter which engages this coparticipant in particular.[3] The matters being introduced are, that is, "biographically intimate." Thus, as an alternative to closing the conversation altogether or starting it afresh, we find an invocation of intimacy as a recurrent, and perhaps systematic, sequel to troubles-talk.

And indeed, among the range of troubles-exit devices is one which can be characterized as explicitly "intimate." Simply enough, talk that follows troubles-talk recurrently makes reference to "being together." I am not intending to point to the "arrangements" which occur in the post-troubles entries into conversation closings (see F.a.i. above). However, the contiguity of troubles-talk and closings may provide interactants with access to a virtually automatic opportunity and procedure for invoking the appropriate post-troubles "intimacy." And, equally automatically, the "restart" device (see F.a.ii above), with its conversation-initial "How are you?" provides opportunity and procedure for the appropriately invoked "intimacy." With the title "post-troubles references to being together" I wish to point to a particular type of device, instances of which are arrayed below.

F.   Exit   a.   Boundarying Off   iv)   Getting Together

[F.a.iv](1)   [NB:II:4:1]

E: It wasn't any fun, but I'm better I was: lying on the cou:ch
      out in fr⌈ont.
N: ⌊ Oh:::: I:'m so:r⌈ry E:⌈mma::?
E: ⌊Ah:- ⌋
E: ((cutesy)) I am too.Why don't you come and see me.=
N: =˙hhh Well I was go:nna call and ask you if you- Bud was playing golf this
      afternoon if you wanted to go over to Ro:binson's with me.

[F.a.iv](2)   [NB:II:5:2-4R:3]

L: Who's gonna see(h)ee it is anybody gonna look up the(h)re to
      see if you go⌈t gold or no:t?
E: ⌊eHHHHhhhhhhhh
E: hargh hargh agh agh agh ˙hh⌈hh
L: ⌊Mm:⌈:::.
E: ⌊WHY DON'T YOU COME DOW:N FOR A   ←
      MINUTE SOME TIME TODA::Y.
L: Yeh I wi:⌈ll I was just
E: ⌊AND LOOK AT YOUR BEAUTIFUL SWEATER.

---

3. See Jefferson (1984:194-98) for consideration of the only two "deviant" cases uncovered, in which recipients introduce topically inappropriate and self-attentive matters subsequent to the troubles-tellings. However, in both cases the introduction of these self-attentive stories is strongly marked as especially warranted—such marking possibly exhibiting an orientation to and an attempt to deal with specifically that inappropriateness.

[F.a.iv](3)   [SBL:2:1:4:7]

N: I wasn't <u>tired</u> my arm wasn't tired when I got <u>down</u> there.
B: Well that's good.
N: <u>Yeah</u>.
B: Well I'm⌈awfully glad to hear it,
N: ⌊Well-
B: Well I've been thinking of you, and I think it was Monday evening that I   ←
     came by to see you,
N: Yeah,
B: And uh-
N: Well suh- I'm soh- I'm sorry I wasn't <u>home</u>.

Across the F. exit a. boundarying off arrays, we are struck by a combination of features. These troubles-talk exit devices are both topically disjunctive and interactionally cohesive/ affiliative. Further, when a next topic is introduced, as in F.a.iii. pending biographicals and F.a.iv. reference to getting together, it carries a special warrant; specifically, it may stand as a carryover or product of the intimacy generated in the troubles-talk. This particular combination of features may stand as a solution to the problem posed for topical movement by talk about a trouble. Most roughly, it appears that "trouble" has a status which provides that not any next matter is appropriate, which selects from among a range of possible next topics those which are specifically "entre nous." In summary, it appears that a standard procedure for continuing conversation while exiting from troubles-talk is to produce a next item which is both topically disjunctive and interactionally cohesive/affiliative.[4]

While troubles-talk might be no more than some particular type of "content" slotted into specifiable standard conversational organizations, and although the procedures for interaction in general certainly operate within and upon it, troubles-talk is a discrete organizational domain, shaping the interaction in distinctive ways. The foregoing exploration of talk which is specifically *not* addressed to "trouble," i.e., the troubles-talk exit devices, powerfully enhances our understanding of troubles-talk as discretely organized and consequential for the shape of interaction.

Summary and Caution

I have arrayed a series of recurrent troubles-talk elements in terms of a progression through a template ordering, and given some consideration to the sequential logic, the topical/interactional work made possible by that ordering of elements. I proposed that this particular ordering constitutes an elegant and effective machinery by which the polar and competing relevancies of attention to business as usual and attention to the trouble can be managed. Roughly, I found that by progressing through the template ordering, the talk moves from an engagement with business as usual to a focussing upon the trouble and then to a reengagement with business as usual. Likewise, the relational distance of coparticipants moves from some conversational standard to varying degrees of intimacy and back again. In short, I offered a system and a function.

However, the template ordering is more or less an artificial one. It is "artificial" in that I found no actual instances of that ordering. It is artificial "more or less," in that we do find a rough tendency to that ordering. The template ordering might, then, constitute an over-refined characterization which ought to be relaxed; i.e., this rough ordering might be, not an

4. See Jefferson (1980b:58-70) for discussion of an alternative troubles-exit device, one which is not totally-disjunctive and thus does not boundary off the trouble, but which gradually disengages from it over a span of talk—i.e., a stepwise transition into other topics. This device is more fully considered in Jefferson (1984).

index of problems in the running off of the sequence, but the way the sequence ought to run. Such roughness might be a feature of troubles-talk in particular, or perhaps a feature of "big packages" in general.

We know that the sequences which tightly run off in template order are the small conversational machineries, many of which have been described as highly "ritualized" (see, e.g., Goffman, 1967). A feature of ritual is that everyone knows precisely what to do, and there are known consequences for not doing what ought to be done. And for such interactional particles as, e.g., greetings, closings, question-answer sequences, compliments, thankings, we find that interactants have experienced explicit, overt training: they have been repeatedly instructed on the proper procedures, and there is a one to one relationship between not doing one of the proper actions and being instructed, admonished, reprimanded (e.g., "Didn't you hear the lady say hello? Well you know you should say hello back.," e.g., "You didn't answer my question").

Thus, on the one hand, it is possible that for troubles talk and other big packages, especially those that are not used frequently, no one has had step by step explicit, overt training in the proper procedure; nor has anyone experienced a one to one relationship between not doing some action and being instructed, admonished, reprimanded (e.g., no one has been told "Didn't you hear the lady say I went to the doctor? Well you know you should say yea:h?," e.g., no one has been told "You didn't empathize with my exposition"). In short, it may be unreasonable to demand of any but those "ritualized" small elements that there be a strictly ordered progression, unreasonable to propose that if they are not running off that way then we are seeing a sequence going wrong.[5]

On the other hand, we might yet be seeing not a rough ordering but a recurrent disordering of an elegantly designed package. So, for example, various investigations show unscripted "spontaneous" story tellings to be highly structured (see, e.g., Labov and Waletsky,1966). However, it is also the case that a story told in ordinary conversation is, if not significantly disrupted, in various ways characterizably (mis)shaped by a range of interactional contingencies (see Jefferson, 1978).

We have, then, two alternative and I think viable approaches to the observable roughness of the candidate troubles-talk sequence encountered in actual instances of troubles-talk: 1) the sequence is designedly rough,[6] and that is accountable for by reference to such issues as its function, i.e., the movement between attending to trouble and attending to business as usual; 2) the sequence is designedly tight, the roughness an artifact of disordered production, and accountable by reference to problematic local and general contingencies. In the beginning of the paper I raised the alternative possibilities that the sequence might be gross but strong, or elegant but weak. Detailed analyses of upwards of twenty instances of troubles-talk (Jefferson, 1980b:section II) suggest that the latter characterization may hold.

Certainly it is the case that instances of "troubles-talk" do not flow unproblematically from one to another element or segment in a manner which is adequately characterized as

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5. Sacks (April 12, 1971:1-3) has remarked that "information about utterances and their organization for smaller units might . . . not tell us anything about some much larger package as we might try to get at," and that "indeed, [such information] might be misguiding." It is altogether possible that we are attempting to force an organization, which works for small units, onto units which are not organized in that way. The fact that people are not, from infancy, trained to produce such talk can indicate that the talk is not required to proceed that way; i.e., at best, the strict ordering is optional.

6. Thus, we might be studying a culture which has gotten control of small interactional units, but is not yet able to properly cope with large units. Such an image projects an evolved-to future in which the proper positioning of some Nth component of an occasionally-activated large package is insisted upon to any child and lapses thereof are complained of by any coparticipant. Conversely, we might be seeing, in the ritualized elements, remnants of a more primitive, rigid version of interaction, from which the culture has been in the process of devolving as it becomes more interactionally sophisticated. The projection, then, is of a future in which it is no bother or issue as to whether someone returns a greeting, answers a question, now, later, or at all; where, upon the occurrence of such a strictly ordered pair, a participant might remark upon the coincidence that just last week something similar occurred.

the taking up of options from among a loosely packaged variety, as one might pick this or that particular item from a bag of licorice all sorts according to one's appetite. The materials we have examined display recurrent, characterizable problems, grossly so and in fine-grained detail. And many of the problems lend themselves to, or become observable in the first place by, a characterization of the talk in terms of a strict sequential progression and disruptions thereof.

Evidence of weakness exists not only in the absence of "strong local control" as between the various sequence components, i.e., the absence of the sort of powerful sequential implicativeness of a prior to a next which may be seen in the small "ritualized" machineries such as greetings, closings, and question-answer (Sacks, 1964-1972, especially Spring, 1972:lectures 1-5), but in the enormous susceptibility of the phenomenon to "contamination" by converging issues and procedures. Further, on occasion, troubles-talk appears to be subject to self-contamination; i.e., in the course of "pure" troubles-talk, issues may be generated which are specifically problematic in that they introduce matters belonging to one or another of the convergent issues with its alternative procedures. And, further, although the sequence may be designed to fluently navigate the polar relevancies of attention to a trouble versus attention to business as usual, it is constantly encroached upon, and recurrently breached, by the pressure towards business as usual, to which talk about a trouble appears to be irrevocably vulnerable, and to the concerns of which a "trouble" appears to be irremediably subordinate and accountable. Also earlier, I raised the possibility that if the sequence is adequately characterized as occurring in a "disordered" fashion, then that disorder might be accountable, not in terms of the particularities of a given conversation, but as a matter of a problem or some rather general problem-types encountered or generated by troubles-talk. These include such problems as "interactional asynchrony" and "activity contamination" (Jefferson, 1980b; Jefferson and Lee, 1981).

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