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# Arriving: Expanding the Personal State Sequence

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**Arriving: Expanding the Personal State Sequence\***

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## ABSTRACT

When arriving to a social encounter, how and when can a person show how s/he is doing/feeling? This article answers this question, examining personal state sequences in copresent openings of casual (residential) and institutional (parent-teacher) encounters. Describing a regular way participants constitute – and move to expand – these sequences, this research shows how arrivers display a non-neutral (e.g., negative, humorous, positive) personal state by both (i) deploying interactionally-timed stance-marking embodiments that enact a non-neutral state, and (ii) invoking a selected previous activity/experience positioned as precipitating that non-neutral state. Data demonstrate that arrivers time their non-neutral personal state displays calibrated to their understanding of their relationship with coparticipants. Analysis reveals that arrivers use this action to proffer a first-hand experience as a self-attentive first topic that works as a bid for empathy, inviting recipients to collaborate in expanding the personal state sequence and thereby co-create an empathic moment. Data in American English.

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\*This manuscript originated as a paper presentation on arrivers “telling ‘where I’m coming from’” at the 2004 American Sociological Association meetings. Since developing and refining the analysis, I have elsewhere referred to arrivers displaying a non-neutral personal state as “doing ‘how I’m coming here’” (Pillet-Shore, 2008:361-410) and “displaying a state-of-being” (Pillet-Shore, 2013). I thank Charles Antaki and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions on this manuscript. I also thank Clara Bergen, Steve Clayman, John Heritage, Kristen Lindblom, Amanda McArthur, and Manny Schegloff for offering insightful comments on earlier versions of this manuscript, and I appreciate Chase Raymond, Tanya Stivers, Alex Tate and the members of the UCLA Department of Sociology Conversation Analysis Working Group for giving me the opportunity to present some of these findings to them in May 2015. I am grateful to the National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship Program for supporting my analysis of the parent-teacher conference data in this project.

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### **Arriving: Expanding the Personal State Sequence**

When people open interaction, they (re)constitute their social relationship (Goffman, 1967; Kendon & Ferber, 1973; Pillet-Shore, 2008; 2012; Schegloff, 1986). People seeking to establish or continue a personal relationship regularly populate the opening phase of their interactions with personal state sequences (cf. Bolden, 2003; Pillet-Shore, 2008; Sacks, 1975:69; Schegloff, 1986:129). Through the personal state sequence, participants to interaction enact self- and/or other- attentiveness to an interlocutor's current psychophysiological state, including that person's affective/emotional and physical states (e.g., exhausted, happy, stressed). The personal state sequence is important for social scientists to understand because, through it, participants do both key presentation of self work (Goffman, 1959) – showing how they are doing/feeling as they start an encounter, and key information regulation work (Sacks, 1975) – revealing their orientation to what constitutes an appropriate topical disclosure given the character of their social relationships.

This article describes a regular way that participants constitute the personal state sequence in copresent openings. Focusing on openings of encounters in which one party is arriving where another is already-situated, this research elucidates how and when arrivers can move to show how they are doing/feeling as a first topic of conversation by displaying a non-neutral (e.g., negative, humorous, positive) personal state.

A distinguished literature discusses the personal state sequence, consistently using the vernacular term “*how are you?*.” Firth (1972:1-15) mentions the utterances “how do you do?” and “how are you?” as part of making “some broad generalizations” about cross-cultural greeting and parting “rituals.” Sacks (1975:64-78) discusses “how are you” as a “greeting substitute” in a passing “minimal proper conversation” while considering the truth of the statement “Everyone

has to lie.” Jefferson (1980; 1984) and Schegloff (1986) provide accounts of “how are you” sequences in landline telephone call openings. While Jefferson’s work focuses on how talk about a trouble is managed, Schegloff (1986:118) describes “howareyou” sequences more generally as having “an overt topic-priority relevance: they provide a formal early opportunity for the other party to make some current state of being a matter of joint priority concern.”

Building upon established conversation analytic works’ use of Anglo-American data, subsequent studies examine telephone openings among speakers of various languages, including Bolden’s (2003) specific focus on the Russian particle *–to* in “howareyou inquiries.” Drew & Chilton (2000), who observe that Schegloff’s account of telephone openings applies most between people who are neither particularly intimate nor strangers, mention the occurrence of “how are you” in habitualized weekly telephone calls between mother and daughter. In addition to research on casual telephone interaction, studies of impersonal institutional telephone calls, particularly for emergency assistance, show participants to reduce the opening phase by omitting greetings and the personal state sequence (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987).<sup>1</sup> And more recent studies investigate mobile phone conversation – notably, Hutchby & Barnett (2005:167) provide a comparative analysis of landline versus mobile telephone openings, showing that, though not a substitute for landline “how are you,” location information is often requested or proffered in mobile phone openings “as relevant to one or both of the parties’ current activities.”

With respect to *face-to-face* encounters, although openings have been described (Pillet-Shore, 2018/this issue) – including how incipient interactants first sight one another and coordinate their movements (e.g., Kendon & Ferber, 1973; Mondada, 2009; Mortensen & Hazel, 2014; Pillet-Shore, 2008), and how people recipient-design their greetings (Pillet-Shore, 2012), only Coupland, Coupland & Robinson (1992) discuss a particular kind of personal state sequence,

focusing on elderly people's responses to a scripted "how are you" opening in interviews about their medical experiences. Thus, there is still a gap in our understanding of how personal state sequences work in the "primordial scene of social life" (Schegloff, 1996:54) – naturally occurring copresent interaction. This article addresses this gap by providing the first detailed analysis of personal state sequences in sustained copresent interaction, thereby advancing our understanding of conversational openings. This article also complements previous work on topic initiation (e.g., Button & Casey, 1984), showing how copresent participants generate first topic through personal state sequences. And, because these sequences recurrently involve participants enacting affect displays using a full repertoire of spoken and embodied resources, this article also adds to the literature on the coordination of talk and bodily conduct (e.g., Sidnell, 2006), emotion in interaction (e.g., Goffman, 1978; Ruusuvuori, 2013), and multimodal methods for displaying stance and inviting others to affiliate by displaying a congruent stance (e.g., Heritage, 2011; Stivers, 2008).

After describing the data and method for this research, this article's analytic section shows how arrivers recognizably display a non-neutral personal state, timing their actions calibrated to their understanding of their relationship with coparticipants. Organized into three subsections, analysis demonstrates that arrivers can start displaying a non-neutral personal state as (1) an other-initiated, second-position action, (2) a self-initiated, first-position action, or (3) a straddling action – self-initiated vis-à-vis embodiments, but other-initiated vis-à-vis talk. A key finding of this research is that, in doing this action during the early moments of an encounter, arrivers disclose a remarkable first-hand experience as a method of inviting recipients to collaborate in expanding the proffered topic/sequence and thereby co-create a moment of empathic communion (Heritage, 2011).

## DATA AND METHOD

This article is part of a larger project in which I am examining how people open face-to-face interaction as newcomers arrive to a variety of residential and institutional settings in which at least one person is already-situated (Pillet-Shore, 2008:4, 362). I collected a data corpus involving over 365 residential encounters (e.g., friends, family, roommates coming home or coming over) and 88 workplace encounters (e.g., in schools, break rooms, restaurants, salons, gyms) with the informed consent of participants, and I anonymized all participant identifiers. My analysis of over 92 hours of naturally occurring videorecorded data yielded 496 copresent openings between English-speaking persons (on the west and east coasts of the United States) coming together to socialize and do work. Using the methods of conversation analysis, I examined all personal state sequences that occur in my corpus. I developed the details of my analysis for this article by closely examining 55 personal state sequences in which participants display a non-neutral state. As the majority of my data come from residential encounters and parent-teacher conferences (e.g., Pillet-Shore, 2015a), this article shows openings in these two contexts. Transcripts follow conversation analytic conventions (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013) and, when IRB-permitted, include video frame figures showing key visible conduct.<sup>2</sup>

## ANALYSIS

During the opening phase of interaction, a participant may display a neutral personal state, or display a non-neutral (e.g., negative, humorous, positive) personal state. Focusing on the latter, data in this section show that a participant recognizably displays a non-neutral personal state by both:

- (i) deploying interactionally-timed stance-marking embodiments – audible and/or visible enactments of a non-neutral state; and
- (ii) invoking a selected previous activity/experience positioned as precipitating her/his present state.

By performing this action when entering into an emergent encounter, a participant proffers her/his personal state and/or the previous activity/experience that precipitated it as a “talkable” (Schegloff, 1986:116) – as a topic meriting subsequent sequence-expansion (which contrasts with a participant who displays a neutral state and thereby proposes personal state sequence-closure; see Excerpt 1 for comparison). This analysis demonstrates that displaying a non-neutral personal state is a method for disclosing a remarkable first-hand experience (Heritage, 2011) that participants regularly use to generate a first substantive topic of conversation.

In principle, any participant can display a non-neutral personal state. But during the early moments of an encounter in which one party is arriving while another is already-situated or “pre-present” (Pillet-Shore, 2008:4, 362; 2010:153), interactants recurrently treat arrivers as getting the ‘right of first refusal’ when it comes to proffering a personal state and/or previous activity/experience as a matter of joint priority. This arriver-centric bias may be due to participants’ default orientation to arrivers as having been more recently subject to dynamic contingencies (e.g., weather or traffic; cf. Goffman’s [1978:801] “transition display”).<sup>3</sup> Thus, this analysis focuses on arrivers, showing when (into which sequential position) they routinely start displaying a non-neutral personal state. The following three subsections are organized to demonstrate that arrivers can start displaying a non-neutral personal state as (1) an other-initiated, second-position action, (2) a self-initiated, first-position action, or (3) a straddling action – self-initiated vis-à-vis embodiments, but other-initiated vis-à-vis talk. By elucidating how and when participants display a non-neutral personal state, this analysis illuminates the sequential and social consequences of this action.

### Displaying a Non-Neutral Personal State as an Other-Initiated Action

Arrivers can display a non-neutral state as an other-initiated action, immediately after and responsive to an interlocutor's inquiry launching an other-attentive personal state sequence. This second-position is exactly where prior work (e.g., Sacks, 1975; Schegloff, 1986) suggests that people canonically manage their personal states. Thus, in this subsection what is newsworthy is not *that* arrivers display non-neutral personal states in this position, but rather *how* they do so: by opting to *deploy stance-marking embodiments* and *invoke previous activities/experiences* (while opting to *not* deliver a "value state descriptor"; Sacks, 1975). Analysis thus demonstrates that copresent personal state sequences regularly unfold in patterned ways previously unexplicated by extant work.

Consider Excerpt 1, taken from the opening phase of a parent-teacher conference between the arriving party, Mom (M) and Dad (D), and the pre-present person, Teacher (T). After the participants have done most of their settling in actions (Pillet-Shore, 2008; 2018) from lines 1-7 to establish a participation framework (Goodwin, 1981), Teacher delivers a personal state inquiry at line 8. Dad responds at line 9 by displaying a neutral personal state through his lexical assessment "Good" and his concurrent head nod (which works as a nonverbal continuer; Schegloff, 1982), thereby moving for sequence-closure (cf. Jefferson, 1980; Sacks, 1975; Schegloff, 1986). In contrast, Mom responds at lines 10, 12 and 14 by displaying a non-neutral personal state, thereby moving for sequence-expansion by proposing a first substantive (non-setting) topic.

(1) [PT21]

01 T: Come o:n i:nuh?

02 (0.5)

03 T: An' sit do:wn,=(We) have tih get (0.8) our little

04 chair[s, hih hih hih hih

... ((6 lines omitted, parties moving chairs))



05 M: =They're so tiny.Yeah.They jus' slide [right under,  
 06 T: [They do inde::ed.  
 07 (0.9)/((M sitting; D lowering to sit))  
 08 T: **So how're you this morning?** ((T lowering to sit))  
 09 D: **Goo[d.** ((D does shallow/rapid head nod))  
 10 M: -> [hhhhahh[hh ((voiced))  
 11 T: [eh hih [Thank you fer coming so early,=  
 12 M: -> [We're he::reɪ  
 13 T: =I kn[ow.  
 14 M: -> [Everybody distributed,[hhh ((gesturing w/both hands))  
 15 T: [hih huh hah  
 16 M: .nhh  
 17 T: **Where [a:re they.**

Mom displays a non-neutral state by launching her response (at line 10) with a stance-marking embodiment – an audible, voiced out-breath (Pillet-Shore, 2008) or pre-beginning sigh (Hoey, 2014). Participants regularly produce and understand audible out-breaths as displaying a negative affective stance or complaint (Pillet-Shore, 2008: 392-399; 2015b). One of the most robust resources that participants use to embody a non-neutral state, audible out-breaths can project the relevance of an account – thus, participants can use such out-breaths (and other bodily manifestations of non-neutral states) to premonitor an invocation of a previous activity/experience, as Mom does here.

At line 12, Mom formulates how she is doing by specifically avoiding delivery of an assessment term (or “value state descriptor”; Sacks, 1975:69), instead saying “We're he::reɪ” to suggest that she is no more than, or just ‘here’, representing the maximal property of the description (cf. Drew, 1992) or self-assessment – the *most* Mom can say about how she is doing. Such a formulation implies a negatively-valenced answer to Teacher’s personal state inquiry (especially compared to Dad’s response at line 9). Finally, at line 14 Mom says “Everybody distributed,hhh” to invoke a selected previous activity/experience: distributing her three school-aged children to various places to be watched by alternate caregivers for the duration of this early (7:30am) weekday morning conference (to which Mom and Dad are invited, but their children

are not). Thus, Mom is invoking not just any previous activity/experience, but one that took extra effort and casts Mom as having endured an inconvenience (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987) in the service of the school/teacher and her children. As she delivers this utterance, Mom gestures with both arms/hands projected outward, moving them right to left in front of her torso to visually depict the act of distributing her children (cf. Sidnell, 2006), thereby re-enacting and positioning her previous activity/experience as precipitating or triggering (Goodwin, 1996:391) her present non-neutral personal state.

Through her utterances at lines 11 and 13, Teacher shows her understanding of Mom's audible out-breath (at line 10) as displaying a negative affective stance toward – and thereby embodying and projecting a complaint about (Pillet-Shore, 2015b) – the early start time of this conference. After first producing laugh tokens that treat Mom's out-breath as a possibly non-serious, exaggerated aftereffect of some previous labor, Teacher thanks Mom and Dad “fer coming so early” (in overlap with Mom's line 12), and then delivers “I know” as an “empathic response” (Heritage, 2011:161). With her next utterance at line 17, Teacher shows that she understood Mom's preceding personal state sequence disclosure as inviting further on-topic talk, accepting Mom's move for sequence-expansion by asking a follow-up question.

Excerpt 2 also shows an arriver displaying a non-neutral – but this time, positive – state immediately after a personal state inquiry. At lines 1-2, two pre-present roommates, Cat and Mel greet arriving Keesh in unison (Pillet-Shore, 2012) as she enters through the door into their shared apartment's common area, returning home after her internship at a local community teen center. After Keesh's return greeting, Mel and Cat deliver simultaneous personal state inquiries addressed to Keesh, displaying their orientation to the same relevancy. Whereas Mel designs her inquiry at line 5 to be relatively generic/unspecified, Cat designs her inquiry at line 6 to be more



selected previous activity/experience – winning this basketball game, thereby proffering this as a talkable.

At line 9, Mel produces an empathic response by producing a celebratory utterance with marked prosody that mirrors the stance that Keesh's immediately preceding and overlapping utterance conveyed (Pillet-Shore, 2006; 2012; cf. Heritage, 2011; Stivers, 2008), thereby demonstrating affinity with Keesh's experience (Heritage, 2011; Hoey, 2013). And at line 11, after offering congratulations, Cat shows her understanding of Keesh's disclosure as inviting further on-topic talk, accepting her move for sequence-expansion by asking a follow-up question.

Thus, this subsection has shown that, after an arriver displays a non-neutral personal state, recipients regularly produce an empathic response that both mirrors the arriver's stance toward her/his previous activity/experience, and collaborates to expand the topic and sequence (e.g., by asking a follow-up question).

### **Displaying a Non-Neutral Personal State as a Self-Initiated Action**

Arrivers may also display a non-neutral state as a self-initiated action, thereby launching a self-attentive personal state sequence. In Excerpt 3, pre-present friends Mary and Nan are seated in the living room of Nan's shared apartment, talking as they periodically work on their respective laptops. Starting at line 2, Nan's roommate Amy is audible entering through the apartment's front door, returning home from work after traveling through a substantial snowstorm. Before Amy can see or be seen by the pre-present persons, she proffers her current state as a priority topic at line 5, derailing the pre-present party's topic already-in-progress. “£Fu:ck my life” is an idiomatic expression understood among Amy's peers as displaying a negative-but-humorous affective stance, complaining about some recently-endured misfortune. This utterance thus constitutes an expletive exclamation that characterizes her current state,

working as a dislocated response cry (cf. Goffman, 1978) re-enacted for her audience now.<sup>4</sup>

Amy's prosodic production of line 5 also enacts her non-neutral state: she delivers it with an audible smile and scratchy voice, and deploys post-completion laugh tokens as embodied displays of a humorous stance toward her current complainable state. And line 5 works as a "prospective indexical" (Goodwin, 1996) because what exactly constitutes the complainable (Schegloff, 2005) is not yet available to Amy's interlocutors.

(3) [S10JC-2]

01 Mary: Well I was talkin' to Gabry an' she like (.)  
 02 [\*>walks in between us an is like<=  
 03 [(/\*door squeaking open))  
 04 Mary: =<°"Exc[use m:e"°>  
 05 Amy: -> [fFu:ck my l#ife, hhh! hih= ((at door, not visible))  
 06 ((Mary looks at Nan smiling, suppressing audible laughter))  
 07 Nan: =hah! .hhh fWHY What's wrong. ((Nan turns head toward door))  
 08 (1.0)/((sound of Amy's keys))  
 09 Amy: -> F#first of all,=  
 10 Mary: =°heh° ((Nan and Mary sustaining mutual gaze))  
 11 Amy: -> I fell in thuh parking lot at wo(h)r(h)k, h[hih  
 12 Nan: [HAH hah hah hah hah  
 13 ↑.HHH+hhih!=  
 +fig.3.1  
 14 Amy: -> =↑.hhhih!=I am no:t? (.) [↑dressed fer this:: ri:ght no::w?  
 15 Mary: [°She doesn't know me,° ((to Nan))  
 16 Nan: hih hih hih .hh  
 17 (.)/((sound of Amy's footsteps as she becomes visible))



Fig.3.1



Fig.3.2

+fig.3.2  
 18 Nan: This [is +Mary,=This [is Amy  
 19 Amy: [hhh! [Oh hi=  
 20 Mary: =[H(h)i:= ((waving at Amy))  
 21 Amy: [hih heh heh [Wh(h)at's (h)up  
 22 Mary: [Ni(h)ce teh m(h)eet y(h)o:u,  
 23 Amy: -> .hh HUHhhh! Okay secondly, I ordered Wing:s frum wer:k  
 24 thinking, "No big deal." I'm not going to Wings right now?

At lines 6-7, pre-present Mary and Nan adopt Amy's non-serious stance, with Nan laughing as she issues a follow-up inquiry at line 7 that requests an account for Amy's preceding utterance, thereby making way (Pillet-Shore, 2010) for Amy to disclose more details about her state and the previous activity/experience that precipitated it, but now as a responding action. At line 9, Amy launches her invocation of a selected previous activity/experience with a list-initiating marker (Schegloff, 1982), projecting a multi-TCU telling which she starts delivering at line 11. Here Amy continues deploying audible stance-marking embodiments, using infiltrating and post-completion troubles-resistant laugh particles to make light of her misfortune and invite her recipients to laugh with her. Nan and Mary respond by mirroring Amy's non-serious stance: at lines 12-13, Nan laughs loudly as Mary visibly smiles (Fig.3.1), thereby accepting Amy's invitation to laugh and demonstrating affinity with her experience (Heritage, 2011). After invoking this painful and embarrassing previous experience, Amy uses sharp rises in pitch at line 14 to continue embodying a complaining/humorous stance toward her current state. Then, soon after she establishes mutual visual perceptibility with Mary and Nan (Fig.3.2), Amy resumes her previous activity/experience telling at line 23 (after an intervening introduction sequence at lines 18-22, prompted by line 15; Pillet-Shore, 2011), prefacing her resumption by deploying a loud, voiced out-breath (Pillet-Shore, 2008) to show that she is continuing to enact a negative affective stance as she invokes her predicament (she has placed a take-out food order at a local restaurant, but due to hazardous road conditions is unable/unwilling to travel to claim it).

Excerpt 4 also exemplifies a self-initiated personal state sequence. Arriving Sara starts to display a non-neutral state after she admits herself into her shared apartment and establishes mutual visual perceptibility with her two pre-present roommates, Kate and Molly. Observably waiting until after she exchanges greetings (lines 7-8) and hears Molly's assessment (line 10)

moving to close the pre-present party's topic already-in-progress, Sara starts to audibly and visibly enact her non-neutral state as a first topic at lines 11-12, smiling expansively (Fig.4.1) as an initial stance-marking embodiment. This utterance works as a story preface or pre-announcement (Schegloff, 2007), her second TCU self-repairing "this" to more precisely project a telling about a selected previous activity/experience that precipitated her current state. Though Sara's utterance at lines 11-12 clearly projects a self-attentive, non-neutral first-hand experience, her expansive smile is equivocal as a positive stance-marking embodiment – Molly's line 13 shows her readiness to receive, and empathically affiliate with, a negative<sup>5</sup> previous activity/experience from Sara.

(4) [F17SL] (simplified)

01 Kate: =iPhone X will have An:emoji which are animated  
 02 emojis that mimic the user's <facial fexpressions.>

03 Molly: Yo::[:::.=That's so::=  
 04 [((door unlatching sound))

05 Molly: =un[nece:ssa[ry: ((Sara entering through door))

06 Kate: [(hehY(h)[o/I kn(h)o(h)w)

07 Sara: [Yo: ((to Kate, smiling, tilting head upward))

08 Molly: Yo girl, ((to Sara))

09 (0.4)

10 Molly: That's su:ch a force.=

11 Sara: -> =fLi+sten tuh thi[s?=Listen to what happened=  
 +fig.4.1 [((door closing sound))

12 Sara: -> =in my class.=

13 Molly: =Oh no.  
 14 (0.3)/((Sara sustains gaze at Molly, puts down phone))

15 Sara: -> .hhm fWe had a quiz and a presentation today?...

16 -> ((4 lines omitted))... grade oursel:ves,=  
 17 Molly: =Wh:at:?

18 Sara: -> fS[o you can ↑li:terally cha:nge your answer=  
 19 Kate: [Oka:y,  
 20 Kate: [hah heh hah  
 21 Molly: [+ftahh! ((unvoiced; mouth open, smiling, eyebrows up))  
 +fig.4.2

22 Sara: -> .hhuhh! And the:n, we had the presentation,...

23 -> ((12 lines omitted))... So >I got an A and a hundred.<

24 Kate: [There ya go

25 Sara: -> [An' I didn't (.) do shit.



Fig.4.1



Fig.4.2

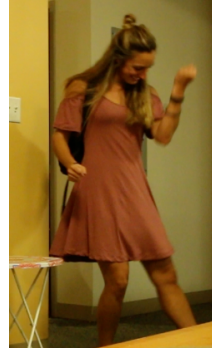


Fig.4.3

26           -> (1.5)/((Kate raises arm, then Sara begins lt. arm gesture,  
 27                   making fist and pulling elbow to hip, smiling))  
 28 Kate:       Sco+r:e,  
                   +fig.4.3  
 29 Sara:       heh[h! ((smiling expansively))  
 30 Kate:       [Get it.  
 31 Sara:       Yes:[u:h,  
 32 Molly:       [Yes  
 33 Sara: -> fI'm so hap[py ((smiling expansively))  
 34 Kate:       [Awesome,  
 35 Sara: -> fI'm so happy,=It's a good ti:me?

As she begins invoking her selected previous class activities/experiences at line 15, Sara renews and intensifies her expansive smile as a resoundingly positive (visible and audible) stance-marking embodiment, continuing to smile as she delivers line 18 with emphatic prosody. At lines 20-21, both Kate and Molly start reflecting Sara's positive stance-displays, with Kate audibly laughing as Molly's facial expression visibly mirrors Sara's (Fig.4.2). And after Sara delivers the upshot of her multi-TCU telling at lines 23 and 25, Kate shoots her left arm into the air (line 26) as an embodied empathic celebration gesture, which directly precedes and engenders Sara to enact her own celebration gesture (Fig.4.3/lines 26-27) – gestures which are echoed in the talk of all three participants from lines 28-32. As the sequence is starting to wane, Sara explicitly lexicalizes her current state at lines 33 and 35. Thus, throughout this sequence, Sara recognizably performs the action of displaying a non-neutral state, to which her recipients respond by demonstrating empathy (Heritage, 2011; Hoey, 2013).



This subsection has shown how arrivers can self-initiate a self-attentive personal state sequence quite early in the copresent opening phase by displaying a non-neutral state. Representative of other cases in my collection, this subsection's exemplars show arrivers entering physical/social territories to which they observably claim ownership. While this prototypically occurs in cases showing arrivers coming home, I have one non-residential case showing a parent to do this as she arrives to a teacher's classroom in which she regularly volunteers. This pattern suggests that the deontic and emotional facets of the participants' relationship (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2014) impact the timing of arrivers' deployment of this social action. Self-initiating a display of a non-neutral state indexes and invites greater social closeness (cf. Jefferson, Sacks & Schegloff, 1987:160). Indeed, data in this and the preceding subsection manifest a striking coherence: across all cases, arrivers report a non-neutral first-hand experience as a recognizable bid for empathy (Hoey, 2013:2), and pre-present recipients respond empathically by mirroring the arriver's stance toward her/his previous activity/experience and collaborating to expand the topic and sequence. Participants thus apparently treat other-initiated and self-initiated displays of a non-neutral personal state as morally obligating others to collaboratively "create moments of empathic communion" (Heritage, 2011:160).

### **Displaying a Non-Neutral Personal State as a Straddling Action**

In addition to displaying a non-neutral state as either a clearly other-initiated/second-position action, or a clearly self-initiated/first-position action, arrivers recurrently perform this action such that its constitutive components designedly straddle a personal state inquiry: while they initially deploy stance-marking embodiments before an interlocutor's inquiry, they hold off invoking a previous activity/experience until after an interlocutor's inquiry. Arrivers observably bridge their post-inquiry actions to their pre-inquiry actions by renewing their earlier stance-

marking embodiments as part of invoking a selected previous activity/experience. Data in this subsection thus show how a copresent personal state sequence can be tacitly self-initiated vis-à-vis embodiments, but ostensibly other-initiated vis-à-vis talk.

At the start of Excerpt 5, Mom (M) and Teacher (T) are visibly preparing to sit at a table for their parent-teacher conference. Standing near the chair into which she is about to sit, Mom places items she had been carrying in her hands – including a pile of children’s picture books – down onto the tabletop. As she releases these books from her grasp, Mom produces an audible, unvoiced out-breath at line 3. After Mom and Teacher continue doing settling in actions at lines 4-6 (Pillet-Shore, 2008; 2018), Teacher delivers a personal state inquiry at line 7. Ostensibly in response to this inquiry, Mom invokes a previous activity/experience as part of displaying a non-neutral state at lines 8-10, thereby proffering a self-attentive first topic.

(5) [PT33]  
 01 (1.0)/((M and T are standing, moving toward table,  
 02 preparing to sit; M places books/purse on table))  
 03 M: -> **hhhhhh!** ((unvoiced))  
 04 (0.2)/((M, T facing each other, but gazing down to table))  
 05 T: Come on i:n. ((T lowering herself to sit))  
 06 (1.2)/((M starts lowering herself to sit))  
 07 T: **How’s your da:y!** ((T gazes at M))  
 08 M: -> **=hohh Was just up at h .h \*Powell Library (\*shifts gaze to T))**  
 09 **checking out more books fer Kathryn’s field tr(h)ip huh hih!**  
 10 **[hih hih .h h h h**  
 11 T: **[Oh that’s ri:ght.=You guys are (.) leaving: this:**  
 12 **tomorrow? [(or today.)**  
 13 M: **[Tomorrow morning,=[↑five forty=**  
 14 T: **[(Tomorrow)**  
 15 M: **=fi:ve!huh huh**

At line 8, Mom starts to display a non-neutral state in part by launching her response with a stance-marking embodiment: an audible out-breath (Pillet-Shore, 2008). Here she is observably renewing the audible out-breath she delivered at line 3, showing that her out-breaths constitute harbingers of an incipient previous activity/experience formulation. Like preceding exemplars, even though Teacher’s personal state inquiry invites a response that includes an assessment term, Mom chooses to deliver a response that omits lexical assessment and instead invokes a selected

previous activity/experience of being in a recognizable place (Powell Library) “checking out more books” for her daughter’s upcoming field trip. At lines 11-12, Teacher demonstrates her understanding of Mom’s personal state sequence disclosure as inviting further on-topic talk, accepting her move for sequence-expansion by asking a follow-up question. This sequence shows Mom using the action of displaying a non-neutral state to perform the context-specific work of doing “being a good parent” (Pillet-Shore, 2015a), invoking not just any previous activity/experience, but one that explicates her efforts to get “more books” for her daughter to read – clearly a school-sanctioned activity (note she was not checking out movies/video games) – in preparation for volunteering as a field trip chaperone. Mom thereby positions herself as enduring inconveniences (line 9, 13-15; cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987) for the benefit of her child and the school.

Excerpt 6 also shows an arriver displaying a non-neutral state in a way that straddles a personal state inquiry. Lines 1 through 10 show Mom (M) becoming copresent with Teacher (T) for her scheduled parent-teacher conference. It is only after Mom secures Teacher’s displayed attention and receives confirmation that she is ready to interact that Mom produces an audible, voiced out-breath at line 11 (note Mom does not produce audible breathiness leading up to line 11, including during line 8, demonstrating that she is timing her audible breathiness interactionally, and *not* audibly breathing to meet a purely physiological need). Then, ostensibly in response to Teacher’s personal state inquiry at line 12, Mom invokes a previous activity/experience as part of displaying a non-neutral state, thereby proffering a self-attentive first topic.

(6) [PT13]  
 01 ((5 knocks at door))  
 02 (0.7)  
 03 T: ↑Come on i::n,  
 04 (0.4)  
 05 ((sound of door opening))

06 (1.2)/((M peeks head through door opening))  
07 T: Hi::,= ((M, T in mutual gaze))  
08 M: =Are yo[u ready for me?  
09 T: [Yeah,Yeah. ((M walking into classroom))  
10 T: Come on (h)i(h)n.=  
11 M: -> =hhuhh! ((voiced))  
12 T: **How a:re you?**  
13 M: -> **I'm right after thuh book fai(hh)r.hh**  
14 M: .h[h  
15 T: [Are you:- [They giving you a quick bre:ak,  
16 M: -> [h h h o h h h ((unvoiced))  
17 M: **Yeah.[hh**  
18 T: [heh he he [he he  
19 M: [Well, .h I'[m giving myself a=  
20 T: [(I'll take it)  
21 M: =quick break, .hh (I >noticed< them) with Ana's  
22 backpack.°Do(hh)[wn the(hh)re.hh°  
23 T: [↑Oh.Perfe#ct. Oka[y.  
24 M: [That was i(hh)t.hh  
25 T: Well come o:[n in:ɪ  
26 M: -> [↑Ohhhh! ((voiced))  
27 M: >Okay,Where am I sitting=Thuh other side?er=  
28 T: =You can sit down he:r[eɪ  
29 M: [°Kayhh°  
30 (0.7)  
31 T: (M: [put:]) this: awa(h)yɪhh  
32 M: -> [hhhhhohh [(.hh)  
33 M: -> **I'm e[xhausted.hhh**  
34 T: [hih .hhh  
35 (0.4)  
36 T: **Is it-**  
37 M: -> **hhh I been here since nine o'clock this mo(hh)rning.=**  
38 T: **=Oh no::[:. >Do you still have a lot more< ti:meɪ**  
39 M: [hh  
40 (.)  
41 T: **T[ih be there? or:**  
42 M: [tch! I ha:ve thuh whole week:. Since I'm in charge.  
... ((16 lines omitted, discussing lack of other volunteers))  
43 T: **Aw[o:h?**  
44 M: [So .hhh ↑There's like hh[h  
45 T: [So thuh nice ones have tih  
46 do al[:l thuh wo:rk, heh hih heh

At line 13, Mom invokes a selected previous activity/experience of working the school's week-long book fair fundraiser, grammatically fitting her response to Teacher's preceding inquiry despite omission of a value state descriptor. On her turn-final word "fai(hh)r.hh", Mom interpolates aspiration particles (cf. Potter & Hepburn, 2010) as a stance-marking embodiment. Then, in overlap with Teacher's start of a topically-related follow-up question at line 15, Mom produces another audible out-breath (line 16). Throughout this sequence (from line 11 onward),

Mom displays that she is using her precisely-timed audible out-breaths (e.g., at lines 11, 13, 16, 22, 24, 26, 32-33, 37) as a kind of interactional connective tissue which binds together her multiple moves to continue and expand upon the topic of her previous activity/experience's impact on her current state (e.g., at line 22, even though Mom is giving Teacher a parcel she found with her daughter's backpack – which seems topically unrelated to her state, Mom produces her reference to the place where the book fair is located, “°Do(hh)wn the(hh)re.hh°”, with interpolated aspiration particles, thereby continuing to display an embodied stance toward her previous book fair activity/experience).

At line 26, in between two short settling in sequences (at lines 21-23, and lines 27-31 in which the participants manage parcels and seating; Pillet-Shore, 2008; 2018), Mom deploys a voiced out-breath with a high onset pitch, apparently to renew her previous displays of a non-neutral personal state via response cry (Goffman, 1978; Goodwin, 1996). Then at line 32, Mom once again renews her audible breathiness, this time contiguous with her explicit lexicalization of her current state at line 33 (“I'm exhausted”). Mom further accounts for why she is in this state at line 37. Both Mom and Teacher are oriented to the fact that this conference is occurring on a Tuesday starting at 3:00pm; thus Mom is presenting her current state as resulting from six consecutive hours (and days – see line 42) of sustained volunteer work that she has unexpectedly been obliged to perform by default due to others' complainable (Schegloff, 2005) failures to help work the school's book fair. Similar to Excerpt 5, this sequence shows Mom using the action of displaying a non-neutral state to perform the context-specific work of doing “being a good parent” (Pillet-Shore, 2015a), invoking not just any previous activity/experience, but one that elucidates her volunteering efforts and positions herself as enduring the inconvenience (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987) of running the book fair alone all week to help the school.

Throughout Excerpt 6, Teacher shows that she understands Mom's disclosures as inviting further on-topic talk, accepting her moves for sequence-expansion by asking follow-up questions (e.g., lines 15, 38). And perhaps more importantly, Teacher treats Mom's non-neutral state displays as bids for empathy by offering expressions of sympathy (e.g., at lines 38, 43), credit and appreciation (lines 45-46), thereby demonstrating affinity with Mom's experience (Heritage, 2011).

All of the preceding excerpts have shown (i) arrivers displaying a non-neutral personal state as a method for proffering first-hand experiences as topics meriting subsequent sequence-expansion, and (ii) recipients producing responses that mirror the arriver's stance toward their previous activities/experiences and collaborate to expand the topic and sequence. Analysis thus reveals that the action of displaying a non-neutral state works as a bid for empathy, inviting recipients to co-create moments of empathic communion (Heritage, 2011). But of course not all such invitations are accepted. Excerpt 7 shows an exceptional case in my collection – a case in which a recipient declines the arriver's move for personal state sequence-expansion, thereby declining an empathic moment.

**An exceptional case.** Like other exemplars in this subsection, Excerpt 7 shows an arriver displaying a non-neutral state in a way that straddles a personal state inquiry. But unlike the other exemplars, in this case the inquiry is observably delayed. As Mom (M) enters Teacher's classroom for her conference, Teacher (T) and another student's father BJ (B) are talking about re-scheduling BJ's conference (line 1). After BJ and Mom exchange greetings (lines 2-3), Mom delivers a personal state inquiry to BJ (and he responds at line 4, but does not deliver a reciprocal inquiry to Mom). Only after Teacher first visibly and audibly attends to Mom at line 6 does Mom start to display a non-neutral state at line 7 by both producing an

audible, unvoiced out-breath, and audibly dragging her feet (line 8), thus clearly interactionally timing her stance-marking embodiments for Teacher.

(7) [PT29] (simplified)

01 B: =>°So I'll jus' try at ten.< ((to T))

02 B: Hi. ((to M))

03 M: [Hi:,How are you.= ((to B))

04 B: =Fi:ne.Thanks. ((to M))

05 (0.4)

06 T: Arrright. Co:me on in, ((gazing at M))

07 M: -> **hhh!**

08 -> (1.0)/((M walking to seat, **audibly dragging feet**; T/B gazing at M))

09 T: Is Greg coming in? ((to M))

10 M: <He's just signing thuh chi:ldren in up at thuh>

11 T: Okay.

12 M: (Yeah.) How are you.= ((to T))

13 T: =Good.[Come and sit down.

14 M: [**I'm sorry we're late.**

15 B: (W[ell] tha:t's fine.We had a n:ice=

16 T: [Okay.

17 B: =con[versation=

18 T: [khh! ((cough))

19 B: =[du(h)ring thuh time (you/we) were,=

20 M?: [(Oh good.)

21 M: -> =(Yer [certainly,/so: good,) ((M shakes head laterally))

22 T: [.hhh! ((vocalized laugh; T gazing at Mom))

23 B: >(°Please come°)<

24 M: -> **We had uhp- (1.2)**

25 T: **You had uh- (.) What's going on.**

26 M: -> **Just- We had a high stress morning getti[ng here on ti:me.**

27 T: [Okay.

28 T: Okay,

29 M: -> [**I had been (0.7) Somehow I had- in my mi:nd**

30 -> **thet (1.2) having an extra hour would mean it was a lo:w**

31 M: -> **stress morning.B[ut it- didn't make any difference=**

32 T: [Yeah.

33 M: -> =**at all.It was worse than u(h)su(h)[al?**

34 T: [Okay.

35 M: -> **hihm!**

36 (1.0)/((M putting down parcels))

37 M: -> **.hh hhhh! ((M shakes head laterally))**

After Teacher and Mom do a settling in sequence about an expected participant (Mom's husband "Greg" at lines 9-11; Pillet-Shore, 2008; 2018), Mom delivers a personal state inquiry to Teacher. Responding with a neutral lexical TCU which moves for sequence-closure, Teacher then delivers a locally subsequent 'come in' at line 13 (instead of issuing a reciprocal personal state inquiry to Mom). In overlap at line 14 Mom apologizes to Teacher for being late – an action often concomitant with an account. But, though not properly entitled to accept Mom's apology, about-

to-depart BJ intervenes with an acceptance (at lines 15, 17 and 19), displacing Mom's projected invocation of a previous activity/experience that precipitated her lateness. During this time, Mom does a lateral headshake at line 21 as an embodiment that renews the negatively-valenced stance she displayed through her previous embodiments at lines 7-8, and appears to prospectively display a stance toward her as-yet-unexplicated previous activity/experience. Then at line 24 Mom starts delivering an utterance, but she does a trail-off right where her preceding syntax projected an invocation of a selected previous activity/experience. Mom's trail-off appears to be a display of reluctance to explicate her previous activity/experience as an initiating action (i.e., *not* in response to a personal state inquiry; note that, though Mom has deployed personal state inquiries to other participants since her arrival, none of these yielded a reciprocal inquiry addressed to Mom which could have provided Mom the opportunity to display a non-neutral state as a responding/second-position action).

Ultimately, at line 25 Teacher does a full repeat of Mom's line 24 followed by a *wh*-question to elicit the projected portion of Mom's utterance. Though clearly delayed (relative to earlier points in this opening phase when it might otherwise have been initially relevantly performed), Teacher's line 25 works as a personal state inquiry. And it is ostensibly in response to this that Mom invokes her previous "high stress morning" experience (lines 26-33), using her audible unvoiced out-breath and lateral headshake (at line 37) to both bridge this telling back to her earlier embodiments and bracket her display of a non-neutral state.

Similar to preceding exemplars (e.g., Excerpt 1, 3, 5, 6) which show arrivers displaying a non-neutral state to index an endured *inconvenience*, Excerpt 7 shows Mom using this action to manage the negative face threats (Brown & Levinson, 1987) represented by both the inconvenience that her lateness has caused Teacher, and the impediments that she has personally



suffered as a result of her selected previous activity/experience. But in stark contrast to preceding exemplars, Excerpt 7 shows how a recipient of this action can withhold an empathic response: at lines 27-28, Teacher quickly deploys two “okay”s as strong moves for sequence-closure which, along with her subsequent utterances (lines 32 and 34), decline Mom’s tacit invitation to respond empathically (Heritage, 2011) and/or engage in further on-topic talk. Teacher thus observably declines Mom’s move for personal state sequence-expansion, thereby declining an empathic moment.

This subsection has shown how arrivers can uncouple the two constitutive components of the action *displaying a non-neutral personal state*, initially only deploying interactionally-timed stance-marking embodiments while deferring an invocation of a previous activity/experience until after an interlocutor’s personal state inquiry. Consistent with the other cases in my collection, this subsection’s exemplars all originate from parent-teacher conferences, showing arrivers entering physical/social contexts toward which they are displaying some deference (e.g., to the pre-present person’s availability, schedule and/or agenda). In light of the pattern explicated in the previous self-initiated subsection, this pattern again suggests that the deontic and emotional facets of the participants’ relationship (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2014) impact how/when arrivers display a non-neutral state: they observably time their actions calibrated to their understanding of their entitlements to impose a self-attentive first topic on fellow coparticipants. In displaying a non-neutral state as a straddling action, arrivers proffer a more subtle, tentative bid for empathy, tacitly inviting – rather than morally obligating – recipients to co-create moments of empathic communion (Heritage, 2011).

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has addressed a gap in the literature on conversational openings by providing the first detailed examination of personal state sequences in copresent interaction. Analyzing videorecorded openings of sustained casual (residential) and institutional (parent-teacher) encounters, this article has described a regular way that participants constitute the personal state sequence. Focusing on sequences in which arrivers display a non-neutral (e.g., negative, humorous, positive) personal state, analysis has demonstrated that arrivers perform this action by both (i) deploying interactionally-timed stance-marking embodiments that enact their non-neutral states, and (ii) invoking a selected previous activity/experience positioned as precipitating their present non-neutral states. Analysis has also shown that arrivers can start displaying a non-neutral personal state as (1) an other-initiated, second-position action, (2) a self-initiated, first-position action, or (3) a straddling action – self-initiated vis-à-vis embodiments, but other-initiated vis-à-vis talk.

While the term “how are you sequence” has been used in past CA work (e.g., Schegloff, 1986) as a vernacular metonymy for the entire personal state sequence, this article has shown that this phrase and its lexical variants are dispensable: no such inquiry need occur for parties to recognizably launch a personal state sequence. Copresent participants recurrently self-initiate these sequences by conveying self-attentive information through the action of displaying a non-neutral state. In addition, past work on “how are you” asserts that a “proper” response will provide a “value state descriptor” (e.g., *good/fine/great/lousy*; Sacks, 1975:69). But this article has shown that the affordances of copresence make such lexicalized assessments dispensable: participants can instead deploy stance-marking embodiments to audibly/visibly *enact* a value state. A key finding of this research is that copresent participants orient to interlocutors’ present

personal states as intertwined with their previous activities/experiences – thus a speaker’s invocation of a selected previous activity/experience is treated as a proper response to a personal state inquiry.<sup>6</sup>

This article has also elucidated a previously unexplicated way that participants use stance-marking embodiments to re-enact – specifically for incipient interlocutors – their reaction to a past, temporally and spatially dislocated triggering activity/experience (cf. Goffman, 1978; Goodwin, 1996). Concomitantly, this study has shown participants to interactionally time their stance-marking embodiments: for example, when deploying one of the most recurrent resources for embodying a negative state – the audible out-breath – participants have not previously produced audible breathiness, showing this to be neither involuntary nor purely physiological. Much as speakers place laughter, coughs, or other non-speech sounds sensitive to surrounding talk (Jefferson, Sacks & Schegloff, 1987), participants precisely place their bodily manifestations of their non-neutral states. Because participants treat such embodiments as accountable, arrivers can parlay this accountability, initially deploying stance-marking embodiments to premonitor an invocation of a previous activity/experience.

Displaying a non-neutral personal state is clearly a specific action that participants can use to do important presentation of self work (Goffman, 1959), showing *how they are doing/feeling* as they enter into interaction with others. Abstractly, parties use the sequences engendered by this action to manage participants’ positive face wants (the desire to be “ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired”; Brown & Levinson, 1987:62) and negative face wants (the desire to be unimpeded in one’s actions; *ibid*). More concretely, by displaying a non-neutral state during the early moments of an encounter, a participant discloses a remarkable first-hand experience as a method of proffering both:

- a substantive self-attentive first topic, thereby moving to solve the practical problem of what the parties can talk about first (cf. Button & Casey, 1984; Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984); and
- an opportunity for affiliation (Pillet-Shore, 2006), proposing a close social relationship through a recognizable bid for empathy (Hoey, 2013:2) that at least tacitly invites, and at most morally obligates recipients to co-create moments of empathic communion (Heritage, 2011).

Copresent openings during which arrivers display a non-neutral personal state constitute specific sites where participants manifest an orientation to empirical, lived liminality. Through this action, arrivers imply that their selected previous activity/experience has left a metaphorical residue on their present personal state, positioning that residue as impacting and consequential for how they are entering into the emergent interaction. At the same time, arrivers use this action as a way of ridding themselves of this residue with the collaboration of their interlocutors. Displaying a non-neutral personal state thus appears to be a regular method through which arrivers achieve delivery *from* the ‘there-and-then’ (referenced in their previous activity/experience invocations) *to* the ‘here-and-now’ – the current setting, activity, and participants.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Impersonal institutional interactions are those in which participants orient to their respective categorical identities (e.g., “citizens” and “dispatchers” in calls for emergency assistance) rather than their individual or personal identities. While the openings of some *impersonal* institutional interactions, particularly on the telephone, may involve a reduction of opening phase practices – including the omission of the personal state sequence (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987), the openings of other more *personal* institutional interactions, particularly those conducted face-to-face (e.g., parent-teacher conferences), recurrently include the personal state sequence.

<sup>2</sup> Data in this article also use: “**bold**” to indicate personal state sequence actions, arrows “->” to point to non-neutral personal state displays, an exclamation point “!” following an abruptly punctuated sound, an asterisk “\*” to indicate onset of visible conduct described inside double parentheses “(( \* ))” and a plus “+” to denote the moment in the transcript that a video frame grab figure occurs (cf. Mondada, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> This does not preclude the possibility that in some cases parties might instead prioritize the pre-present party’s state (e.g., when an arriving parent returns home and prioritizes how the pre-present parent is doing, orienting to shared contextual knowledge that the latter has been home caring for sick children).

<sup>4</sup> I connect this phenomenon to Goffman’s (1978) “response cries” with the caveat that Goffman’s writing did *not* describe, anticipate or account for this particular action of interactionally timing one’s production of a reactive particle (including most commonly in my data set audible out-breaths/sighs, and imprecations/exclamations) such that it is dislocated (temporally and spatially) from the original triggering experience (cf. Goodwin 1996); see Conclusions.

<sup>5</sup> During non-neutral personal state sequences, participants may orient to a negativity bias (e.g., Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer & Vohs, 2001); this requires future investigation.

<sup>6</sup> Future research is needed to investigate if this is related to how, in mobile phone openings, *location* information is often relevant to one or both of the parties’ current *activities* which may be oriented to as bearing on their personal states (Hutchby & Barnett, 2005).