

“To Be Honest”: Sequential Uses of Honesty Phrases in Talk-in-Interaction

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In this article, we examine parenthetical uses of honesty phrases (HPs) such as *to be honest* and *honest to God* in mundane domestic telephone calls and, for comparison, police interrogations. Parenthetical uses of HPs express a speaker’s stance on the *complement* to which they are attached. We focus on HPs in two kinds of turn sequences: in framing dispreferred answers in question–answer (Q–A) sequences and in framing assessments. In Q–A sequences, HP+complement structures offer accounts for inability to answer in the form of reports on the speaker’s intentional state (what they think, know, prefer, etc.). In assessment sequences, they frame first assessments as personal to the speaker and make relevant subsequent claims for independent, “my-side” assessments by second assessors. Generally, HPs are optional members’ methods (among others) of asserting sincerity and independence as the basis of what they are saying on occasions when something functional, normative, or otherwise motivated is expectable.

There is at least a *prima facie* interest in what people are doing when they preface or frame the things they say with phrases such as *to be honest* or *to tell the truth*. One of Grice’s (1975) maxims for conversation, which he called “quality,” was that people are assumed, by default, to be telling

the truth. Why, therefore, should they feel the need on some occasions to point it out? What kinds of occasions are they, and what is being done? Related to Gricean considerations is the casual observation that people who make frequent use of such expressions start to sound defensive or even untrustworthy, as if for them, truth telling were not to be presumed. Although there has been scant treatment in the literature of the phrases *to be honest* and *to tell (you) the truth*, discussions of related items such as *actually*, *really*, *certainly*, and *in fact* have started from their grammatical status as adverbs or adverbial phrases and have proposed a range of grammatical and pragmatic functions for them.

An influential linguistics textbook (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985) defines adverbials such as *actually*, *really*, *certainly*, *definitely*, *surely*, *of course*, and *in fact* as “reinforcing ... the truth value of the clause or part of the clause to which it applies ... expressing the comment that what is being said is true” (p. 583). Functional and pragmatic studies have focused on the contrastive or elaborative use of adverbs such as *actually* in text cohesion (Halliday, 1985; Martin, 1992) and in signaling the speaker’s “stance” toward what they are saying, such as expressing some kind of commitment or attitude to it (Biber & Finegan, 1988), or to mark something as true but contrary to expectations (Chafe, 1986; cf. Lenk, 1998, and Tognini-Bonelli, 1993). Other studies have focused on the effects of varying the position of adverbial phrases within sentences or turns at talk (Aijmer, 1986; Clift, 2001). It is clear that each of the various stance adverbials has a range of practical uses and also that there are interesting semantic and pragmatic differences between them, and across written and spoken uses of them, that belie their treatment in various dictionaries as more or less interchangeable (Oh, 2000).

In this study of HPs (*honestly*, *to be honest*, etc.), we examined their sequential placement in naturally occurring talk. Most work on the uses of adverbial phrases has used written text or transcription oriented to linguistic rather than turn-interactional organization (but see Clift, 2001, and Ford, 1993¹). However, we do not start from a grammatical category such as adverbials; indeed, some instances are grammatical clauses rather than adverbs (e.g., *I must be honest*; *I’ll be honest with you*). Instead, we examined the occurrence of HPs within turn sequences. In that respect, we concur with Clift’s (2001) remarks regarding the term *actually*: “Once sequences and the turns within them, rather than isolated utterances, are at issue, the analytical salience of certain interactional considerations becomes apparent” (pp. 247–248).

The phenomenon we examined, which is to say our criterion for data selection, is *parenthetical, speaker's stance* (i.e., metalinguistic) uses of *to be honest* and related phrases (*quite honestly, I'll be honest with you*, etc.) that are not embedded in propositional statements. Note the difference between these invented examples:

1. They believed every word she said to be honest.
2. They believed every word she said, to be honest.

In Example 1, it is “she” to whom honesty is attributed; this is not what we are calling an HP. In Example 2, honesty is predicated of *whoever is currently talking*; the grammatical comma marks off the expression “to be honest” as parenthetical, as a reflexive framing of the speaker’s stance on what it is attached to. We call what it is attached to its *complement*. So in Example 2, “to be honest” is an HP, and “they believed every word she said” is its complement.

Although invented sentences are useful for clarifying definitions, the examples we analyze in detail, such as the following (from Holt:M88:1:5:12),² were all taken from recorded domestic telephone conversations.

Les: ↑did you have ↓anybody want a photogra:ph?
 (0.5)
Rob: → I'll be honest with ↑you
Les: No.=
Rob: =haven't a:sked ↓th'm.

We present and analyze this example in more detail as data Extract (1) following. It serves here as an initial example of what we are interested in and as a starting point for asking analytical questions. Along with Quirk et al. (1985), for example, we could take it that Robbie is simply emphasizing the honesty, sincerity, and factuality of what she is saying. Such an observation, however, takes no account of why she may be saying it here and now and why she does not preface everything she says in that way. A further, rhetorical analysis (in Billig's, 1987, sense of rhetoric as argument) might suggest that Robbie is being defensive and denying what might otherwise be thought, which is that she might be lying or disposed to lie (at least on this occasion). This would support the casual observation we mentioned at the start that habitual users of parenthetical HPs risk sounding like people for whom truth is not to be expected. A third, conversation-analytical pos-

sibility is unavailable from looking at just one example. It is that expressions of this kind may function in particular kinds of sequential environments within sequences of turn types. Although these three possibilities are mutually compatible, it is the conversation-analytical approach that we adopt here as yielding the most thorough analysis of the details of and across a range of actual conversational examples. We examine HPs in two prominent environments where they occur: in dispreferred answers to questions and in first assessments following some prior assessment-relevant talk.

We collected the main materials for this study by searching for HPs through two extensive corpuses of transcribed domestic telephone calls: the “NB” data recorded in California in the late 1960s and the “Holt” data recorded in England in the mid-1980s.³ Additionally, we drew on a collection of police-suspect interrogations transcribed by D. Edwards. HPs were more frequent in the Holt data than in the NB data, so it is the Holt corpus that provides the bulk of our conversational examples. HPs seem to be an option favored by particular speakers who also tend to use particular variants (e.g., *honest to God*, or *to be honest*, or *quite honestly*). In any case, our analysis focuses on how HPs are sequentially occasioned and what they do rather than on differences between individual speakers.

ANALYSIS

We present the data analysis in three sections. In the first two, we examine HP+complement structures within two classic sequential environments: in dispreferred answers to questions (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) and in assessments (Pomerantz, 1984). In the third section, we examine additional examples that extend the analysis of HPs to another interactional setting and focus on answers to questions in police interrogation.

HPs Framing Dispreferred Answers

One use of an HP+complement is to preface or otherwise frame a dispreferred response to a question. There is evidence of similar uses of HP+complement in other types of dispreference such as request refusals and offer rejections, but we focus here on answers to questions in which

there is some notion in play that the person asked ought to be in a position to answer. The HP+complement frames and provides an account for being unable to answer. In Extract (1), the relevant adjacency pair is the question–answer (Q–A) sequence in lines 2 and 5 through 6. Robbie’s HP “I’ll be honest with you” (line 4) prefaces a problematic response to Lesley’s question:

(1) Holt:M88:1:5:12

- 1 Les: [Eh: ↑WE:LL eh ↑WHAT I RANG up ↓about was ehm
 2 di-↑did you have ↓anybody want a photogra:ph?
 3 (0.5)
 4 Rob: → I’ll be honest with ↑you
 5 Les: No.=
 6 Rob: =haven’t a:sked ↓th’m.
 7 Les: Oh: that’s alrigh[t ↑h↑[.ah
 8 Rob: [()] [C’n I leave it
 9 another wee:k,

Prior to answering (following the dispreference-suggestive delay in line 3), Robbie inserts the HP variant “I’ll be honest with you” (line 4). The fact that the HP projects a problematic response appears to have a normative, recognizable status for the participants; we see that in Lesley’s anticipation of a negative answer in line 5. One function of an HP is to frame or preface an account for a negative or dispreferred response, suggesting that it is being done out of honesty rather than some other kind of motive or attitude such as wilfulness, spite, apathy, or whatever. In this sense, HPs do not merely announce upcoming dispreferred seconds, as does the familiar *well* preface, but they also start to provide the account component that dispreferreds typically contain.⁴

So Robbie’s HP projects and provides some initial accountability for not providing Lesley with the information she requests. Note that it is also information that Lesley’s question presumes that Robbie can provide. Accountability starts to surface at line 2 where Lesley implies that Robbie might by now have performed a service for her, possibly based on a prior agreement, to have found out whether any of the other teachers at the school where they work might want copies of pictures of a new baby.⁵ Lesley’s specific wording “↑did you have ↓anybody,” particularly the past tense “did” rather than “do,” presumes prior action on Robbie’s part. Lesley’s “Oh: that’s alright” and subsequent laughter (line 7) receives Robbie’s HP-prefaced account as some kind of apology-relevant confes-

sion of an offense (cf. Robinson, 2004, p. 310) that Lesley immediately forgives and makes light of.

An important feature of HPs is that idiomatic though they are, they also retain a substantial semantic element in proposing honesty as the basis for saying something. HPs handle not only objectivity (the factuality of what is being reported) but also subjectivity—the speaker’s knowledge state and motivation in reporting it (cf. Edwards, 2000, 2005, and in press on the management of subjectivity in complaints, extreme expressions, and other places). This is worth examining closely because it has wide relevance for the specific selection and use of HPs in place of any other metacommunicative frame or no frame at all. Note that in Extract (1), the HP (line 4) and its complement (line 6) are not simply dealing with a question concerning other people such as “Does anybody want a photograph?” Rather, they are answering the precise question “*did you have* anybody want a photograph?” It is strictly (i.e., grammatically) a question about Robbie herself (“did you have” rather than “did anybody want”), and it projects the implication that it was in some way *for Robbie* to solicit photograph wanters. So Robbie’s accountability is invoked. In keeping with that, Robbie’s reply addresses her own role in the matter—not that nobody wants the pictures but that she is *in no position to say* because she has not asked them.

There is a basis, therefore, for seeing Robbie’s HP as managing some kind of failed incumbency to provide a definite answer. A more self-serving account might have been offered such as having been unable to ask anyone yet. However, Robbie does not say that she could not or has had no opportunity to ask the other teachers. Those would be the kinds of circumstantial, externally attributed, inability accounts common in invitation refusals, offer rejections, and other kinds of noncompliance to questions and requests (Drew, 1984). Instead, Robbie’s inability account is personal and confessional; she simply has not asked anyone. What the HP seems to propose here is that rather than offering an excuse, as one might be expected to do, Robbie is being open and honest and taking responsibility for the dispreferred answer.

We can identify two adjacency pairs in Extract (1) in which the HP+complement is involved. First, there is a Q–A sequence starting with Lesley’s question at line 2 to which she herself provides a projected answer at line 5. Robbie’s HP+complement is also a response to that question and accounts for Robbie’s inability to provide the information asked for. Second, Robbie’s HP+complement is then treated by Lesley as the first part of something like a confession/explanation–acceptance pair, the second part

being Lesley's "Oh: that's alright \uparrow hhah hah hah hah \uparrow " at line 7. The HP+complement therefore has what Schegloff (1986) termed an "interlocking organization" (p. 131) and serves as the second of one related pair of actions and the first of a next pair. This turns out to be typical of how HPs work in Q–A structures in everyday conversation in which expectable answers are not forthcoming.

Extract (2) is another Q–A sequence in which Phil displays some difficulty in answering Lesley's question:

(2) Holt:X(C)1:1:3:6.

- | | | |
|---|------|--|
| 1 | Les: | Oh! Did they <u>invoice</u> you f'r carriage? |
| 2 | Phi: | We:ll I do:n't (.) <u>think</u> so because ih big or:der |
| 3 | → | but I .hhh quite honestly I: I I don't kno:w: (0.4) |
| 4 | | u-e- if they <u>put</u> yours on or \uparrow no:t. |
| 5 | | (1.0) |
| 6 | Phi: | Uh::m (.) u-I uh <u>sorry</u> to be so va: [gue b u t u h] |
| 7 | Les: | [O h you've <u>had</u>] |
| 8 | | other <u>things</u> from them have you:? |

Unlike Extract (1) but more typical of the rest of the data, Phil's HP+complement (line 3: "quite honestly I: I I don't kno:w:") is not the first item in his turn following Lesley's question. Phil starts on a mitigatedly negative answer (line 2) before inserting the HP+complement structure. Despite the HP not being the first order of business for Phil's turn, he does display an orientation to it as some kind of frame or preface for what he is saying; note how he starts to say "but I" (line 3) and then breaks off to insert the HP "quite honestly" before restarting on what then becomes its complement, "I don't kno:w: (0.4) u-e- if they put yours on or \uparrow no:t." HPs do occur before and after their complements, but there seems to be a preponderance of cases in which they occur in front of them (as in Extract (1) and indeed throughout the examples used in this article) even when not in turn-initial position. Further, HPs may occur under repair and restart as in Extract (2) in which a speaker stops to put them first, displaying an orientation to having them there in that order (see also Extracts (4), (5), (7), (15), (19), and (20) for self-repaired restarts in which the HPs occur; we collect these together in the Conclusions section of this article.)

Similarly to Extract (1), the HP+complement in Extract (2) occurs as part of a dispreferred (in this case, "we:ll"-prefaced) negative answer to a question. Again, as with Robbie in Extract (1), Phil appears to be accountable for being unable to answer it—that is, for not knowing the answer. Ac-

countability is oriented to via Phil's provision of an account ("because it's big order," line 2),⁶ by the HP itself (the relevance of honesty), and by his subsequent apology in line 6. The basis for that accountability appears to be broadly similar to Extract (1); we base these remarks on Extract (2) and its further context we do not provide here. Lesley has discovered that her horticultural order has apparently been delivered to Phil's place, and her question presumes that Phil will *know* that it has arrived along with his and perhaps will have checked and separated hers from his and might know whether there is an invoice for the delivery costs that Lesley is offering to pay. What we have here, then, is an HP+complement structure in which the complement is again confessional, in this case invoking a mental state⁷ ("I don't know") in the environment of taking responsibility for some kind of failed incumbency to provide information in answer to a question.

Lesley's receipt and acknowledgment of Phil's HP+complement is delayed or absent at line 5. After just enough time (line 5; see Jefferson, 1989) for Phil to see that Lesley's receipt is late in appearing, Phil issues a stuttering apology (line 6) along with a candidate account for Lesley's problem—that is, his own vagueness in answering her initial question. The further absence of an acceptance by Lesley, this time of Phil's apology (see Robinson, 2004, on the preference for absolving or rejecting the need for an apology) is obliterated by Lesley's cutting into the turn containing Phil's apology (line 7) with a pursuit of further specifics about the circumstances that might account for why Phil can't answer her question about this particular delivery (lines 7–9). We pick up Lesley's absence again in the section on police interrogation later in this article.

Extract (3) continues shortly after (2) and is Phil's continuing response to Lesley's inquiry about her plants:

(3) Holt:X(C)1:1:3:7

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 1 | Phi: | (...)I ↑c <u>ouldn'</u> do it yesterday I <u>did</u> it this |
| 2 | | mornin' before the rai:n 'nd ah .hh an' ah- |
| 3 | → | I <u>must</u> be <u>honest</u> eh:- e-there <u>are</u> : some in: |
| 4 | | e-in: ↓pots now <u>whether</u> they include ↓yours |
| 5 | | I <u>know</u> we ordered (.) .hh a <u>few</u> ↓pla:nts |
| 6 | | [you know an' uh:m a fe[w shrubs]= |
| 7 | Les: | [Yes. [Oh well:]= |
| 8 | Phi: | =[a n' t h a t] |
| 9 | Les: | =[we've ↑had the]in↓voi:ce so I e[xpect they= |
| 10 | Phi: | [Ye:s, |
| 11 | Les: | =do[:. (...) |

- 20 Myr: =I mean .hh [hhhhh
 21 Les: [This hap'ns t'me ↓too

At lines 2 through 5, Myrna offers an inability account for non-attendance at the meeting. Lesley refers to it in definite terms as “the meeting t'↓night,” and Myrna shows no trouble recognizing what Lesley is referring to and no trouble with the idea that Myrna might expectably attend it. Indeed, Myrna acknowledges (lines 2–3) that she owes Lesley an explanation; she treats as accountable both her nonattendance and her not having already told Lesley about that (“I wz gun' to ring you in a short while”; lines 3–4). The content of Myrna's excuse is the prospective late arrival home of “Ben” (lines 3–5) who is presumably Myrna's husband or partner.

One feature of HP+complement structures, which we have noted, is an invocation (as in being open and confessional) or direct report of what purport to be the speaker's intentional states (what they know, think, understand, remember, want, etc.). Although the HP does not occur until line 11, intentional states (rather than just whether Myrna will attend the meeting) are the object of Lesley's question at line 1: not “are you coming” or “are you able to come,” but “↑Are you *thinkin:g* of comin:g”—as if Myrna's coming were a matter of her intentions and preferences rather than, say, circumstances. This is what Myrna counters by introducing situational contingencies (lines 2–9) that are not provided for in Lesley's question. Note that Myrna starts with “D'youu know” (line 2), which hearably projects a negative response rather like “Well” would do (and does in Extract (2), line 2). Nevertheless, Myrna's specific formulation “D'youu know” (rather than, say, “well”) invokes Lesley's intentional state, reciprocating Lesley's prior “↑Are you *thinkin:g*.” This framing of both question and response in terms of what each other thinks and knows (note also Myrna's “I wz gun' to ring you,” line 2, claiming prior intentions about the meeting and her obligations toward Lesley) has relevance for what follows; there is a sense of Lesley perhaps not quite accepting the sincerity of Myrna's excuses.

Evidence for that sense of doubt includes line 6 where Lesley's minimal “yes” acknowledges Myrna's report about Ben but signals neither sympathy nor acceptance of Myrna's apology neither at this point nor at the earlier turn transition relevance places (TRPs; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) in Myrna's prior turn. An acceptance of an apology is, of course, normatively due as part two of an adjacency pair. Following some further accounting (lines 7–8: A potential babysitter is also unavailable) and some factual recognition by Lesley (lines 8 and 10), Myrna recycles her apology

at line 11 immediately prior to her HP “honestly,” which is done in overlap with Lesley’s acceptance (“That’s ↑alri:ght”; line 12) of Myrna’s second apology. So the occasion for Myrna’s HP+complement is this prior difficulty in soliciting Lesley’s acceptance of her circumstantial, nonagentive, inability excuses.

Consider now the content of Myrna’s HP complement. In contrast to her earlier circumstantial accounting (the unavailability of Ben and “mummy”), this takes the form of a report on motives and intentions: “This is why: I almost gave up doing ev(h)rything” (line 13). Myrna then delicately attributes that attitude back to Ben’s habit (delicate in that she avoids overtly blaming him) of arriving home late and at short notice (lines 16–18). Myrna’s HP+complement, formulating Myrna’s intentions and motives, finally addresses the terms of Lesley’s initial question—that is, her intentional state rather than her circumstances (“↑Are you thinkin:g of comin:g”) as well as responding to Lesley’s displayed skepticism or at least nonaffiliative receipt of Myrna’s initial circumstantial excuses. It is also what elicits an eventual affiliative acceptance from Lesley (lines 19–21).

One feature of Lesley’s affiliative “This hap’ns t’me ↓too” (line 21) is that it reciprocates and claims for her too precisely the same kind of my-side complaint about unreliable spouses that Myrna has provided. It makes joint or shared what would otherwise be a one-sided complaint. This my-side-too response to an HP-framed complaint features strongly with regard to assessments generally, which we examine next; indeed, we can see that lines 16 through 20 constitute an assessment sequence with regard to Myrna’s “Ben” and (presumably) Lesley’s own husband. Relevant here is that HP+complement structures claim their complements for the speaker only. They are not routinely sayable on behalf of others but rely on the normatively privileged access that speakers can claim to their own intentional states (Pomerantz, 1980; Sacks, 1984). We return to the relevance of that idea for the Q–A extracts we have examined after looking at HPs in assessment sequences.

The main feature of the use of HPs in Q–A sequences then is that they occur in second position in the Q–A pair as ways of framing a dispreferred answer. What occasions them is the responder’s failure to provide some information that they are presumed to be in a position or even incumbent to provide, for example, because of a prior arrangement, undertaking, or understanding. That prior condition may not be analytically available until we see how the absence is accounted for. The HP orients to that failure and frames the account (i.e., its complement) as a sincere, my-side report on

what the speaker thinks, knows, or remembers. It is not that such a device guarantees acceptance or affiliation any more than it guarantees that what one is hearing is indeed the unvarnished, open-hearted truth. Rather, an HP effectively ups the ante or raises the stakes for recipients to introduce or persist with skeptical receipts. It offers the speaker's integrity or good faith with regard to the scope of their responsibility for the matter at hand based in revealing their thoughts and feelings. That is what makes receipts of HP+complement formulations normatively immediate and positive; they effectively make any pursuit of the questioner's inquiry start to sound rude or confrontational and some kind of affiliative receipt appropriate (e.g., Extract (1), line 7; Extract (2), line 5; Extract (3), line 7; Extract (4), lines 15 and forward). Consistent with that, an HP+complement is a nice option for when a circumstantial account fails to elicit immediate acceptance.

HPs in Assessments

HPs are also used in framing assessments, which are evaluative descriptions of various kinds (Pomerantz, 1984). Most of our examples are *negative* assessments of *third persons* (several of our examples have the quality of gossip; Bergmann, 1993), but the phenomenon is not restricted to those environments. Assessments of any kind are widely recognized to be delicate moves in social interaction in that they normatively require (or "prefer") not merely an echoed agreement but an upgraded agreement (Pomerantz, 1984) and/or overlaps aligned prior to TRPs as soon as the direction of assessment is cued (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992). Such structural features index, on one hand, a normative tendency of assessors to act prudently, introducing first assessments with moderate intensity and on the other hand, a task for respondents to corroborate the assessment as soon as possible and with added value or fervor and other signs that the judgement is genuine and independently arrived at—effectively as another first assessment and not just a conventional second (cf. Heritage, 2002, and Heritage & Raymond, 2005, on *Oh prefacing*).

Given these displayed sensitivities concerning the *bases* for agreement and independence of judgement in assessments, HPs can work in ways that permit first and second assessors to orient to standard normative preferences while promoting their judgements as nevertheless genuine and sincere. This echoes the use of HPs in Q–A sequences in which HPs and their complements offer an account for noncompliance in the form of a report on thoughts, feelings, or preferences. Relevantly to how HPs work with regard

to asserting a subjective “my side” of things, the following examples are all cases in which both conversational participants are in a position to make their own assessments. It may be that HPs in assessment sequences are restricted to those environments; that is a difficult thing to assert with limited, no matter how extensive, sets of data. However, it is clear that the HPs we have examined strongly orient to a notion of just how joint an assessment may be and on what possibly independent basis it is offered. Although the examples we found are all first assessments rather than seconds, they all occur when there has been some prior assessment-implicative storytelling or complaining such that jointness and independence of the assessment is relevant for these first-position assessments just as it would be for seconds. They are probably best characterized as first *explicit* assessments.

Prior to Extract (5), Robbie and Lesley have agreed on how the children, in the classes they have been teaching, seemed to become noisy, excited, or “high” toward the end of term. Line 1 is Robbie’s appreciation of Lesley’s concurrence about that:

(5) Holt:M88:1:5:4.

- 1 Rob: Well it’s quite a relief to hear you say that.
 2 =c[uz
 3 Les: [Yes I found they got ↑very high last term an’
 4 I kept saying to Miss ↑↑Pelch:: that I .hhh e-were
 5 hers hi::gh? a:n:’she wz saying no everything wz
 6 going along steadi↑ly’n.hh [hh
 7 Rob: [W’I I[(wonder)]
 8 Les: [mine were]↑terribly
 9 ex↑cited. ↓f’some [reason.
 10 Rob: [Ye::h.
 11 (0.3)
 12 Rob: Well I wonder you know I don’t always know what to
 13 ma:ke of mih- Cynthia Pelch, what do you:. I don’t
 14 kno[:w.
 15 Les: [.hh No, I think she- (.) ↑aa- well. b-di-Quite
 16 → honehstly .hhh I think she c’n be ru:de. An’, an’ I
 17 think Freddie Masters can too[:.,
 18 Rob: [°Oh:, I kno:w.° I mean I
 19 haven’t run up against them but I do:n’t find th’m
 20 overhelpful.=

Lesley introduces a potential problem with a colleague teacher “Miss Pelch” in the form of a reported conversation she had with her (lines 3–6). What ensues is the collaborative production, step by step and sequentially,

of a negative assessment of Pelch. It is offered explicitly as a personal-perspectival “I think” report by Lesley at line 16, extended to another teacher “Freddie Masters” at 16–17, and then claimed as joint and somewhat more objective by Robbie’s “°Oh:, I kno:w. °” at line 18. Robbie’s turn-initial “°Oh:, I kno:w. °” claims an independent epistemic basis for her agreement with Lesley (cf. Heritage & Raymond, 2005)—that this is also her own assessment. Note, in this regard, how Robbie restricts her evidential grounding to her own experiences—she has not openly “run up against them” but displays that she can make her own judgement from other experiences (lines 19–20; note again the my-side experiential claim “I do:n’t find”).

The collaborative nature of the assessment, that is, Robbie’s involvement *prior to* Lesley’s first explicit assessment, is also seen in how Robbie restarts on line 12 her earlier utterance “well I wonder” from line 7 when it comes immediately on hearing Lesley’s story that Pelch reported having no trouble with the children in *her* class. Robbie’s initial “W’l I (wonder)” may be a start on questioning the veracity or motivation of Pelch’s claim, which could be taken to imply that she (Pelch) had better control of her children than Lesley and Robbie did. The fact that Robbie *restarts* her turn at line 12 with “Well I wonder” frames what she now says (lines 12–14) as responsive to Lesley’s report that Pelch “wz saying no everything wz going along steady↑ly’n.hh[hh.” In lines 12 through 14, Robbie delicately broaches, although not explicitly providing, a negative assessment of Miss Pelch, now self-repaired to a less formal “Cynthia Pelch.”⁸ It is this delicate broaching and invitation by (in particular, Robbie’s “what to ma:ke of” and “what do you:” at lines 12–13) that elicits Lesley’s explicitly negative assessment at line 16.

Lesley’s initial “No” (line 15) is also noteworthy in that it echoes, via grammatical agreement, Robbie’s prior “I don’t always know what to ma:ke” and “I don’t kno:w.” By starting with “No,” Lesley produces her own assessment as in concert with what Robbie has just said and indeed, as a hearing of what Robbie said as assessment implicative and negatively so. It is in the immediate environment of this broaching of joint criticism that Lesley then prefaces her assessment with the HP “quite honehhstly” (lines 15–16). Note Lesley’s self-repair and restart in which she starts to provide an assessment (line 15; “I think she-”) and cuts it off to insert the item “quite honehhstly” before starting again with “I think she” (line 16). As we have remarked, this displays a concern on Lesley’s part to use an HP at that precise juncture and in initial position as a frame for her assessment; Myrna also did it in Extract (4), lines 11 through 13. We pick up this pattern of repair in other examples.

Again, there is an orientation toward collaborative production of the assessment.⁹ Joyce is invited (line 12) to display her grasp of the story and does so by making the first overt assessment that Lesley has provided grounds for, starting with “↓Oh isn’t he ↓drea:dful” (line 14). Joyce’s HP “Oh:: honestly” (line 20) prefaces two kinds of moves. First, it prefaces a more serious rather than possibly playful assessment of the man. Lesley’s laughter in line 19 is not echoed in Joyce’s turn at line 20 where the HP’s precise placement is immediately after Lesley’s laughing receipt of Joyce’s prior assessment “What’n aw::f’l ma:::n.” Taken together, these features, along with Joyce’s HP+complement, amount to something like joking apart; she actually, seriously, can not stand him.

Second, the particular expression “↓I cannot stand the man,” which is the HP’s complement, reports Joyce’s own intentional state or attitude, whereas the preceding assessments are descriptions of their object, the “awful” and “dreadful” man (cf. Extracts (3) and (4) previously). As with other uses of HPs, it proposes a my-side basis for the assessment expressed as a subjective report. It proposes Joyce’s judgement as grounded beyond or prior to hearing Lesley’s anecdote, which tells of an event at which Joyce was not present and for which Joyce can not provide an independent witnessing. In affiliating with Lesley’s story, Joyce’s previous judgements, “↓Oh isn’t he ↓drea:dful” and “What’n aw::f’l ma:::n,” could be heard as reactions to the story Lesley is telling. However, the HP’s complement “↓I cannot stand the man,” along with the HP’s *Oh preface* (line 20), implies something different, not merely a formulation of (or response to) what Lesley is driving at but an independent and prior assessment on Joyce’s part (again see Heritage, 2002; Heritage & Raymond, 2005), indeed, an assessment of “the man” as such and not just of his particular actions as reported by Lesley. Joyce’s assessment is thereby produced as genuine and independently grounded. Lesley’s receipt of Joyce’s HP+complement (line 22), although not explicitly affiliative, implies that Joyce has provided just the kind of reaction Lesley anticipated (“I thought well I’m gon’ tell Joyce that”) in telling her the story; it also starts with her own reciprocating my-side, subjective, report preface “I thought.”

The next two extracts, Extracts (7) and (8), are less clear cut as HP-framed assessments in that they do not occur with a straightforward assessment of something or somebody as complement. Nevertheless, in each case, they have a clear, attended-to relevance to assessing the character of a third person known to both speakers:

(7) NB:IV:4:R:2

- 1 Emm: ↑Oh: Go:d dammit. I sid it's ↑too bad the boat
 2 didn't sink yesterday en tha:t m-guh thah- I
 3 shouldn'a'said ↓th*a:t. But (0.4) .t.k.hhhh
 4 → ↑Lottie I: can't do anything ri:ght hones'tih Go:d
 5 I ca:n't. e-↑Here I ↑worked ha:rd va::cumi:ng'nd
 6 hh (.) .hhh he got up'n fe:lt it tuh see if there
 7 wa:s any du:st,hhh
 8 (0.8)
 9 Emm: NIS RE:DI:cu↑lous?
 10 (0.4)
 11 Lot: °Oh: he's crazy.°

Emma's HP "hones'tih Go:d"¹⁰ comes in the course of a complaint about her husband Bud in which she tells her sister Lottie about a row with Bud that culminated in his "walking out" on her. The HP has as its complement "I ca:n't" (line 5), which is a partial repeat of "I: can't do anything ri:ght" at line 4, with the HP now inserted prior to the "I ca:n't." Of course, this is not Emma's assessment of herself but a formulation of Bud's unreasonable attitude toward her. Together, the HP and partial repeat work to emphasize the complaint. After Emma instantiates her complaint, there is still no uptake at line 8, whereupon Emma produces an assessment at line 9 to elicit such uptake. Lottie then issues an *Oh*-prefaced response to inquiry, which, as Heritage (1998) showed, proposes the inapposite quality of the inquiry. It is as if Lottie is suggesting the obviousness of Emma's assessment, which is to say it is one that hardly needs spelling out. Lottie's initial withholding of her assessment through several TRPs (notably at lines 5 and 8) along with Emma's having to invite it (line 9) makes relevant Lottie's "Oh" preface to her assessment at line 11. It is a way for Lottie to correct any notion that she may have been unsympathetically withholding affiliation from Emma.¹¹ By providing an upgraded, strongly negative assessment of Bud's character ("Oh: he's crazy.") rather than just of his reported actions (cf. in Extract (6), Joyce's "↓I cannot stand *the man*"), Lottie displays how she has heard the generalized, character-implicative¹² nature of Emma's complaint.

Extract (8) is a final example of an HP in the environment of a negative assessment of a third person. As with Extract (5), it is a jointly produced criticism of a work colleague. Again, there is some sounding out of the other speaker's sentiments prior to Joyce's overtly negative assessment at lines 11 through 12:

(8) Holt:Oct88:1:8:9-10.

- 1 Joy: An' I: (.) ↓ee-ee↓ She said oh I did come roun'
 2 to see you uhm:: ('bout)- n a couple of weeks ago
 3 an' I s'd oh yes we were awa:y .hhh She said then
 4 I wz away las' week 'n sud'nly it's all on me
 5 'n: [this that this that 'n the other 'n I s' well=
 6 Les: [eh: he: he: he
 7 Joy: =I'm terribly sorry although I sh'be calling in
 8 I'm [: [you know I'm [() now. I c]a:n't
 9 Les: [.hh[hh [Oh ↑good for you:.] Good
 10 for ↓you:
 11 Joy: → ↑Well what hon↑es↓tly (.) Les she treats us all
 12 like (.) ↓di:rt.
 13 Les: An' ↑then she rang me up 'n said that (.) Joyce
 14 suggested that I [()hel) ↑huh [hah huuh↑
 15 Joy: [Ahhh:::] [Ohhh:::]:

As in Extract (7), the HP's complement (lines 11–12) contains not an explicit assessment but rather the basis for one: “she treats us all like (.) ↓di:rt.” “Treats” is not simple present tense but the generalizing, iterative, *historic present* that denotes, for a person's actions, a character-implicative, repeated pattern of behavior (Edwards, 1995). Further, these are actions directed indiscriminately at “us all” (presumably other teachers at the school). In other words, “she treats us all like (.) ↓di:rt.” is a complaint formulated in extreme terms (Pomerantz, 1986) in the form of a character-assessment-relevant description of a person's recurrent actions (cf. Emma's extreme case formulation, “I: can't do anything ri:ght,” in Extract (7)).

As with previous examples, Joyce does not start with a condemnatory assessment but rather provides details that offer opportunities for the recipient to affiliate or coproduce. Lesley first starts to come in (line 6) straight after Joyce's complaint-implicative “'n sud'nly it's all on me.”¹³ Lesley then provides strong support for Joyce's actions in the story (lines 9–10), and it is at this point that Joyce produces the HP “hon↑es↓tly” (lines 11–12). Following Joyce's HP+complement (lines 11–12), Lesley starts to produce an affiliative second story marked as a further instance or extension (“An' ↑then”) of Joyce's own and by the same token as something independently known and told by Lesley.

Extracts (9) through (11) are further cases of HP+complement structures, but these are not subjective reports on intentional states (what a per-

son thinks, intends, wants, remembers, etc.) but rather generalized observations or opinions on life:

(9) Holt:M88:2:4:13.

- 1 Dee: (...) you know running round organizing caterers
 2 organizing a hall 'n that it's ↑just not o:n.
 3 Mar: iYes
 4 Dee: → Quite honestly b'time you've done all ↓that, it
 5 doesn't really work out, that mu [ch chea]per
 6 Mar: → [N o:].hhh:hhh:hhh

(10) Holt:M88:2:4:20.

- 1 Dee: → .p.t.hhh Uh:: but quite honestly the prices that
 2 'ey've 'ad to- 'ave to pay up here is absolutely
 3 'orri:fic you know:w,
 4 Mar: → [Yerah,h So I gather (...)]

(11) Holt:M88:2:4:9.

- 1 Dee: (...) I know the feeling cz I'm: still on full time
 2 → Mark an' quite honestly w- .p.hh what you can't do
 3 durin' the week you've jus' got t'd[o ()]
 4 Mar: → [That's ri:ght yeh]

Despite the HPs' complements not being formulated as subjective reports, Extracts (9) through (11) also attest to the generic relevance for HPs of making *my-side* claims in which both parties are in a position to comment. Being in a position to comment includes occasions when people are making generalized observations about the world in addition to when talking about particular people they both happen to know given that the world at large is anybody's to comment on. As with the other examples we have examined, the *my-side* nature of an HP makes relevant what the recipient knows or thinks, on their side, about the topic at hand and also the status of those thoughts as either secondary to, prior to, or independent of hearing it said first by someone else.

We have noted how HPs assert the *my-side* independence of assessments in environments of collaborative production. In Extracts (9) through (11), the HPs work to intensify first assessments as a way of occasioning agreement. In each case, agreement (second assessment marked by the sec-

ond side arrow in each example) is also done in ways that claim that assessment as jointly and independently held. In Extract (9), the “No:” at line 6 is done in overlap, anticipating the key terms “much cheaper” as if Mark were able to project Dee’s utterance and complete it himself (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992, on overlap prior to TRP in signalling keen and genuine agreement). In Extracts (10) and (11), “So I gather” and “That’s ri:ght yeh” are methods in addition to the uses of “Oh” that we have seen in other extracts (cf. Heritage, 2002) of asserting the independence or primacy of assessments done in second position (another method was Lesley’s “An’ ↑then” second story preface in Extract (8)).

The upshot of Extracts (9) through (11), taken together with the person-assessment sequences in Extracts (5) through (8), is a characterization of how HP+complement structures work in making assessments and judgments. Unlike in Q–A sequences, HP-prefaced assessments do not typically occupy second position in the adjacency pair. As ways of claiming epistemic independence or heartfelt sincerity or genuineness, one might expect HPs generally to frame second assessments. However, we noted the tendency of HPs to occur as first (explicit) assessments in which they do two kinds of work: (a) intensify the assessment as a way of eliciting a second and (b) assert the assessment as independent and genuine following some prior assessment-implicative talk. Receipts of HP+complement assessments are regularly designed to reciprocate that independence and genuineness, deploying devices such as *Oh-prefaced* agreement (Extract (5)), providing additional information (Extract (8)), overlapped agreement (Extract (9)), and *my-side* framings such as “I thought” (Extract (6)), “So I gather” (Extract (10)), or “That’s ri:ght yeh” (Extract (11)).

HPs in Police Interrogation Q–A Sequences

We explore here, for comparison, some examples of HPs from a different kind of interactional setting from mundane conversation: police interrogation.¹⁴ This is an environment rich in Q–A sequences but very sparse in seconded or collaborative assessments; we focus on HPs in Q–A sequences. Mostly, it is police officers that put questions (and other initiating actions) to suspects, and suspects respond (Heydon, 2005). As in various other settings of asymmetrical and institutional talk, affiliation and agreement are not the normative order (Drew, 2003). Nevertheless, HP+complement structures occur, notably in Q–A structures in which again they occur

in second position in the production of negative answers, and take the form of personal, *my-side*, *intentional-state* complements comparable to those found in the mundane conversational data.

In Extracts (12) through (15), “Beveridge” is accused of attempted murder, which he consistently denies. He has admitted to being in the company of “Phil” and “Gerry” when *they* committed the assault but in a different room in the house such that he did not directly witness the event. “P1” is one of two police officers present along with Beveridge and his solicitor:

(12) DE:Beveridge:9

- | | | |
|----|------|--|
| 1 | P1: | Right. Can you remember what Phil was wearing. |
| 2 | | (1.5) |
| 3 | Bev: | ((Loud exhalation or nose blowing: 3 seconds)) |
| 4 | | (4.5) |
| 5 | Bev: | pf::: ((exhalation through lips: 1.2 seconds)) |
| 6 | Bev: | → Honestly I can't no sorry, |
| 7 | | (0.2) |
| 8 | P1: | What about um (0.2) Gerry. |
| 9 | | (0.6) |
| 10 | Bev: | Sorry no. |
| 11 | | (1.1) |

Beveridge's HP+complement is at line 6 in the slot, after some delay and displayed difficulty in answering, where an answer to P1's question is due. The complement “I can't” should be understood as meaning “I can't *remember*” (making elliptical use of P1's question in line 1). This is the same format as in our mundane conversational data in which the HP+complement works as an inability account, in a Q–A sequence, for not providing some requested information that ought plausibly to be available (it is already apparent that Beveridge did not see Phil and Gerry briefly or from a distance but spent at least an hour with them and also that bloodstained clothes are a key piece of evidence that might convict them). Again, and relevantly, the HP+complement pertains to Beveridge's intentional state: He can't *remember*, and (as we saw in several examples from domestic telephone talk) there is a linked apology (line 6, repeated in line 10). As Drew (1992) noted (cf. Lynch & Bogen, 1996), not knowing and not remembering are responses to questions that work, in legal contexts of this kind, to avoid either confirming or disconfirming factual propositions.

The main difference from our domestic conversational Q–A examples is the absence of the second pair part of a second adjacency pair. Bever-

idge's HP+complement and apology elicit no acceptance by P1, and this is typical of the rest of our police interrogation examples. Indeed, it is one of a number of features that mark this interaction, in contrast to those in the NB and Holt corpuses, as professional interrogation. This is not to say that something such as *interrogation* may not feature in mundane talk between friends and family members, only that it is a pervasively relevant and constitutive characteristic of police work. Indeed, recall Extract (2) in which Phil's HP+complement and then subsequently his apology received no clear acknowledgment or acceptance from Lesley (relevantly at the places marked by the side arrows):

Extract (2) revisited

- 3 Phi: but I .hhh quite honestly I: I I don't kno:w: (0.4)
 4 u-e- if they put yours on or ↑no:t.
 5 → (1.0)
 6 Phi: Uh::m (.) u-I uh sorry to be so va[gue b u t u h]
 7 Les: → [O h you've had]
 8 other things from them have you:?

Rather like the police officer does in Extract (12) (see also Extracts (13)–(16), (19), (21), and (22)), in place of an acceptance or acknowledgment, Lesley continues to pursue further details about Phil's circumstances, all of which contributes to a sense of mild conflict in that sequence. With regard to the police data, the general absence of affiliative receipt or acceptance is not specific to that setting nor to HP+complement structures in that setting. Rather it appears to be a feature of interaction across a range of professional and institutional settings such as courtrooms and news interviews (Clayman, 1992; Drew, 1992). The point here is that HP sequences appear to be robust across different settings, with variations adapted to, typical of, and performative of the business of those settings. The effect of the absent receipt is not necessarily disaffiliative but rather a display of and orientation to the performance of police work, which normatively includes gathering facts and testimony (Heydon, 2005), for example, rather than just cross-examination. As noted by Drew and Heritage (1992) with regard to legal, medical, and news interview settings, "such withholdings would be interpreted as disaffiliative in a conversational context, but often are not clearly so interpreted in these professional encounters" (p. 24).

Extracts (13) through (15) display similar components and sequential organization to those seen in (12):

(13) DE:Beveridge:8

- 1 P1: .hh So Gerry and Phil have knocked the door.
 2 (.)
 3 Bev: °m°
 4 P1: ((Sniffs))
 5 (0.9)
 6 P1: D'you know which one?
 7 (0.9)
 8 Bev: → U::m (0.2) to be honest with you no.
 9 (2.1)
 10 P1: Where were you, (...)

(14) DE:Beveridge:24

- 1 P1: I'm askin you, did (0.9) you see them go into
 2 the bathroom.
 3 (0.5)
 4 Bev: → U:h (0.3) t- (.) to be honest with you I I
 5 really don't [(remember)
 6 P1: [(clears throat))
 7 (0.3)
 8 Bev: I may a been in my house, (0.5) I didn't know
 9 wha- what was goin on like >d'y know waramean?<
 10 (0.5)
 11 Bev: [I jus wanted to get out there.]
 12 P1: [Did you hear (.) any]one runnin the bath.

(15) DE:Beveridge p.30

- 1 P1: D'you know who came into the room to fetch that
 2 to take it downstairs.
 3 (0.2)
 4 Bev: Phew I couldn't tell you mate.
 5 (3.8)
 6 Bev: → °Honest to God I couldn't tell you.°
 7 (1.3)
 8 P1: What s- (.) w-what state were you in last night (...)

In each of the Extracts (13) through (15), there is a question that Beveridge might expectably be able to answer given his presence at the scene followed by an HP whose complement is a subjective, intentional state (not knowing or remembering) that accounts for not answering. Interestingly, in these instances, it is P1's questions ("do you know," "did you

see”) that introduce intentional states; Beveridge is asked to report not simply what happened but what he knows happened. The *not knowing* account for not providing the requested information, then, is already projected in how P1 formulates his questions (recall also Extract (4) in which Lesley inquired, relevantly to how the matter was then pursued, not whether Myrna was going to the meeting but whether she was *thinking* of going).

To speculate, one way in which that kind of intentional states questioning may be especially relevant in the police setting is that it calls to account not only the events themselves but the witness’s disposition to report on them given that under persistent and often repeated questioning, and accused of criminal culpability, he may be lying or evading the truth (Heydon, 2005). Of course, that also makes the *honesty* in HPs all the more relevant as a proposed basis for answering. Note in Extract (15) that Beveridge’s HP and inability account at line 6 follow a long 3.8-sec absence of any acceptance or response by P1 to the initial answer at line 4. Again, as in Extract (12) and typically, we find no second, interlocked adjacency pair in these examples; P1 offers no acceptance of Beveridge’s *not knowing* account for not telling but instead, in each case, pursues the questioning (see the final lines in Extracts (13), (14), and (15) and Extract (12), line 8).

In Extracts (16) through (18), a different police officer is interviewing the suspect “North” about an alleged threat to kill his neighbor “Mr Cole”:

(16) N–P:Tape11:171

- 1 P1: An’ what time[d’y’come] out? ((referring to a pub))
 2 Nor: [U:::m]
 3 (1.4)
 4 Nor: → T’be honest I’m not su:re really,
 5 P1: °hm°
 6 (0.3)
 7 Nor: I dunno bu’ it’s probably: (1.1) I’d say m-u-
 8 Joe or Martin w’d be able t’give you (0.4)
 9 better time of () (.) be honest I’ve not
 10 got a watch on.=
 11 P1: Wh- who were you with (.) when you were drinking?

(17) N–P:Tape11:295

- 1 P1: (...) C’n you remember: what was sai:d.
 2 (1.7)

- 3 Nor: → U:m (0.5) t'be honest not. hundred per cent no:
 4 (0.3)
 5 Nor: Uh uh bt I c'r'member (0.4) u-Joey s-saying (...)

(18) N-P:Tape11:606

- 1 P1: So wha- what d'you think's going to happen no:w
 2 in terms of .hh (0.3) [the relationship between you=
 3 Nor: [(Wel-)
 4 P1: =and Mr Cole. What wha[t
 5 Nor: → [↑T'be honest u-I'd jus prefe:r
 6 th- (0.8) °u-heh° (1.5) just prefer to ge-u- get on with
 7 every day life. (...)

As with the Beveridge extracts, each example includes

1. A dispreferred answer to a question.
2. Framed by an HP+complement structure.
3. In which the complement provides a subjective report (*not sure*, *can't remember*, *I prefer X*) as, or with, an account for not providing the requested information or answer.
4. Absence of acceptance or other acknowledging response by the police officer.

Beveridge's and North's uses of HPs fit the basic sequential pattern found for mundane conversation in a manner interactionally adapted for doing and handling investigative interrogation. In what appears to be lexical choice variation across speakers, "West," accused of "robbery," although admitting to the lesser crime "theft," consistently uses the expression *to tell the truth* in just the kinds of sequential environment where Beveridge and North favor *to be honest*. See Extracts (19) through (22):

(19) DE:West:9

- 1 P1: Right. So- you both went off in same direction.
 2 (0.2)
 3 W: → I haven't gotta clue mate? (.) I- to tell you the
 4 truth I weren't really wo- (.) worryin about im?
 5 Y'know waramean? I jus wanted to get away?
 6 (0.4)
 7 P1: Mhm,

(20) DE:West:12

- 1 P1: What sort a dis- (0.4) what was you talkin about
 2 as you were goin down?
 3 (0.6)
 4 W: → Jus (0.2) rugby, (0.2) tā- well (0.4) to tell
 5 you the truth I was takin the piss.
 6 (0.5)
 7 W: Cos England won again.
 8 (0.9)

(21) DE:West:29

- 1 P1: What time did you leave im roughly then on uh Saturday.
 2 (1.1)
 3 W: → Tell you the truth I haven't got a clue I just (0.5)
 4 wen out he didn't know where I'd gone.
 5 (2.0)
 6 P1: He said you'd go- you were all in watchin telly.

(22) DE:West:30

- 1 P1: H'd you been drinkin on Saturday?
 2 (1.3)
 3 W: U::h (0.4) I might've had (0.5) a couple a cans if I
 4 → was, (0.9) but to tell you the truth, (0.8) I really
 5 can't remember?
 6 (0.5)
 7 P1: W'you drunk?

In each of Extracts (19) through (22), West responds to a question or question prompt (Extract (19)) in the first line that he is expectably in a position to answer in that they all concern his own recent activities. The HP variant *to tell the truth*,¹⁵ as with our other HPs, may (Extract (21)) but need not (Extracts (19), (20), and (22)) occur in turn-initial position. In each case, the complement formulates an intentional state that accounts and takes some responsibility for the nonprovision of the requested information: “I haven’t got a clue” (Extracts (19) and (21)), and “I really can’t remember” (Extract (22)).

The exception is Extract (20) in which the HP complement “I was takin’ the piss” (line 5) follows the answer “jus rugby” (line 4). Although West on this occasion does provide a straightforward factual answer (“jus rugby”), the HP+complement remains relevant in the subjective, *my-side*

reporting sense that we have identified. The import of P1's question is that West has been, under persistent questioning, denying his companion's involvement in the theft from a shop, which West has admitted to. P1's inquiry concerns what West and his companion were discussing when approaching the shop; the issue is intent and complicity regarding the imminent theft. West's modifier *just* in "jus rugby" defines that conversational topic as innocuous and irrelevant to whatever criminal motive P1 might be pursuing. With the expression "I was takin' the piss" (i.e., joking and teasing), positioned as the immediate complement of the HP, West is offering their rugby talk as something different in attitude and intent as well as topic from planning a robbery. The HP+complement characterize West's answer as an honest rather than deceitful report of something other than what P1 has been pursuing as an answer. The significance of "cos England won" as a topic for "takin the piss" is that West is English, his companion Welsh, and England had just beaten Wales at rugby. Again, following the pattern of the Beveridge and other police interview examples, P1 withholds acceptance of West's HP+complement responses.

CONCLUSIONS

We have explored interactional uses of HPs in two kinds of sequential environment—Q–A sequences and assessments—and in two different kinds of social interaction: domestic telephone calls and police interrogations. We found differences in HP usage to be adapted to those different environments.

In the Q–A sequences, HP+complement structures were used as dis-preferred answers (second pair parts) to questions in which there is a presumption of ability, or even incumbency, to provide the requested information. HPs framed accounts for not answering that were based on the answerer's intentional states: not remembering, not knowing, and so on. The *honesty* element relates both to intentional states as common-sensically privileged matters (known for sure and reportable only by the speaker) and also to claiming responsibility for the inability to answer. The use of an HP serves to counter any alternative, motivational basis that might be supposed such as inventing excuses or (particularly in the police examples) avoiding criminal culpability; to this end, HP complements generally attend to correcting the question asker's assumptions or presuppositions about what the answerer should know. Both the claim about *honesty* and

the invocation of intentional states work to make it difficult or awkward (although not impossible) for the questioner to pursue the point.

In the case of assessments, HPs generally occurred as first assessments (first pair parts) and in the order HP+complement rather than vice versa. Their occurrence as first assessments, along with how they claim primacy or independence for their assessment complements, works with regard to their occurrence in the context of prior assessment-relevant stories or descriptions of persons or objects known to both parties, which makes relevant who may be agreeing with whom (cf. Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Speakers seconding HP-based assessments generally also attend to that status by asserting their own *my-side* primacy or independence using a range of devices including *Oh prefacing* (Heritage & Raymond, 2005), *and prefacing*, or otherwise providing additional information, generalizing to other known instances and confirmatory expressions such as *so I gather* and *that's right*.

The preference for placing the HP frame prior to its complement (*to be honest, X* rather than *X, to be honest*) is weakly evidenced by its preponderance but more strongly displayed in speakers' orientations in patterns of self-repair. In each example of self-repair, speakers displayed an orientation to restarting HP+complement structures with HP in first position. Thus, we show the repairable item and its solution or repetition in bold face:

From Extract (2)

but **I** .hhh quite honestly **I: I I don't know:** (0.4)

From Extract (4)

it's hhh honestly ah-ah- **this is** why: I (.) almost gave up doing ev(h)rything

From Extract (5)

I think she- (.) ↑aa- well. b-di-Quite honehhstly .hhh **I think she** c'n be ru:de.

From Extract (7)

↑Lottie **I: can't** do anything ri:ght hones'tih Go:d **I ca:n't**.

From Extract (15)

Phew **I couldn't tell you** mate. (3.8) °Honest to God **I couldn't tell you.**°

From Extract (19)

I- to tell you the truth **I weren't** really wo- (.) worryin about im?

From Extract (20)

tā- well (0.4) to tell you the truth I was **takin the piss**.

One feature that HPs in Q–A sequences and in assessment sequences appear to have in common is that they convey a degree of reluctance on the speaker's part to be saying what they are saying. We find them in non-

answers to expectably answerable questions; in confessions of failed incumbency to perform a service; and in generally negative, delicately broached assessments of persons (particularly spouses and work colleagues) known to both parties. HPs appear to propose, whatever else they do, that in place of something interpersonally preferable such as providing the required answer or saying something nice about someone, *honesty* requires that truth be told in which that truth is equivalent to the speaker's intentional states—their genuine understanding, knowledge, thoughts, judgements, or opinions. HPs are thereby available as an optional but nicely occasioned members' method for discounting an interpersonally functional reading of their talk.

In the case of our police interrogation data, HPs occurred exclusively in Q–A pairs (as answers) rather than assessment pairs. This pertains to the nature of interrogation as overwhelmingly a Q–A kind of interaction, but the absence of HPs in assessment pairs may also reflect the absence of the kinds of collaboratively affiliative assessment-implicative sequences that we found preceding HPs in the ordinary conversational data. Indeed, the absence of affiliative receipts by police officers is a notable feature of interrogations generally and of various other settings involving professional interviewing (e.g., Clayman, 1992; Drew & Heritage, 1992) in which either neutrality or skepticism are normatively displayed. There is also a special relevance, regarding the police interrogations, of HPs framing nonanswers. Whereas in ordinary conversation, one might normatively answer any question to which one knows the answer, in police interrogations, HPs propose that the suspect's nonanswer is not merely a way of avoiding telling an incriminating truth. Again, the HP proposes that the nonanswer is no such functional thing but rather merely a report of what the suspect actually knows.

We began the article by citing Grice's (1975) influential maxim of quality, which observes that people are, by default, taken to be telling the truth. Although not denying the value of that principle for logical and pragmatic analysis, we point out that when it comes to conversational interaction, members may also treat talk as routinely functional, conventional, normative, invested, and so on, all of which threaten simple truthfulness. The notion of a *basically* or *by default* truthful, perspicuous, informative speaker starts to look like a kind of cognitive dope that parallels the "judgmental dope" of standard normative sociology depicted by Garfinkel (1967; see also Edwards, 1997, on the "honest Jo" version of speakers favored in cognitivist approaches to language use). HPs are optional members' ways (among others) of asserting sincerity and independence as the

basis of what they are saying on occasions in which something functional, normative, or invested is expectable. In the event, HPs are shown have their own normative sequential environments and uses; there is no escape from talk's interactional, rhetorical, occasioned business.

NOTES

- 1 Ford (1993) provided an innovative conversation-analytic take on a range of adverbial phrases, but these do not include items such as *in fact*, *to be honest*, and *to tell the truth* but rather mostly *nonparenthetical* phrases introduced by adverbs of time, cause, and conditionality. Clift (2001) examined the term *actually* and focused on what it does at various positions within a turn at the start, middle, or end.
- 2 This and other data extracts are identified by codes referring to their position in a larger data corpus, including the abbreviated name of the corpus, the specific call or interview it comes from, and the overall line number where the extract begins.
- 3 We gratefully acknowledge Elizabeth Holt for collecting the latter data and Gail Jefferson who transcribed both data sets.
- 4 This may help explain why HPs may occur in various places in a turn, whereas *well* is routinely a first-position item.
- 5 That baby photographs are the topic of Lesley's inquiry is gleaned from contextual talk not included here.
- 6 The transcription "ih" captures a condensed version of "it is a" or "it was a." It later transpires that the large size of the order was the reason for no delivery charge being levied. In any case, it accounts also for Phil's difficulty in knowing whether Lesley's plants had been included with his.
- 7 In referring to *mental state* or *intentional state* expressions, we do not mean to imply that participants are referring to a realm of mental experience lying behind talk; rather, we are commenting on a common sense, public use of words (Edwards & Potter, 2005). The status of intentional states as privately and reliably known by the experiencer but opaque or invisible to anyone else is refutable philosophically as well as being practically defeasible in practices such as psychiatry, domestic disputes, and in how parents talk to children (Sacks, 1992). What we examine here are practices of public accountability (cf. Edwards & Potter, 2005).
- 8 The self-repair, from "mih" to "Cynthia" (line 13) probably signals just this orientation on Robbie's part to altering the form of address. Note, however, that Jefferson provides a cautionary footnote in her transcription that it may also have been a false start on Pelch's real, nonanonymized first name.
- 9 Broaching, sounding out, or building up to assessments in a delicate and collaborative way as likely environments for HPs may be particularly relevant in cases of negative as-

assessments of someone known to both parties (cf. Bergmann's, 1993, observations on gossip and gossip invitations as involving moral assessments). HPs effectively deny that the assessment is motivated by anything *other than* honesty, with other possibilities including spite, rancor, jealousy, or a tendency to complain (cf. Edwards, 2005). It may not be clear to the participants precisely how well each of them may know the person or what prior relationship they may have had. HPs, in framing *my-side* assessments, provide a way of avoiding coimplicating the recipient even when it may be fairly clear they are on board. This also makes relevant the reciprocal *my-side* framings by the other assessor.

- 10 *Honest to God* was Emma's only variant of an HP that we could find throughout the extensive NB corpus of telephone calls, and we found only three of those. Additionally, the *to God* component introduces a mild sense of blasphemy, providing it with additional emphasis (Emma had also just said "↑Oh: Go:d dammit" at line 1).
- 11 We propose that any complaint that a person might make about their partner or spouse in such a story is available to be heard as *their side* of things, indeed, as possibly symptomatic of and not merely a report on the relationship troubles being told. Note, in that regard, Emma's acknowledgment that she may indeed have gone too far in wishing that Bud's fishing boat had sunk: "I shouldn'a'said ↓th*at" (lines 1–3). It is this delicacy, in balancing just how far she can go and just how vindictive she is being, that directly precedes the HP and its complement (lines 4–5). The "but" preface (line 3) also sets up the HP and complement as a justification or mitigation of having wished ill of Bud.
- 12 The kind of link that Emma and Lottie collaboratively build between generalized or "scripted" kinds of actions, narrated instances of them, and the character or dispositions of actors has been analyzed in some detail in Edwards (1994, 1995). There is a similar pattern in Extract (5) in Lesley's "she c'n be ru:de," for which we noted that "can be" implies repetition and disposition in which the specific narrated episode stands as an instance. Descriptions of a person's dispositions, grounded in accounts of their repeated actions, are at the same time opportunities for person assessments and their evidential grounding.
- 13 Features that make this *complaint* implicative include "sud'nly," which suggests something unforeseen or unoccasioned by understandable cause or reason, and the extreme case formulation "all on me."
- 14 These data are from a corpus of 47 audio-recorded police interviews based in two different regions of the United Kingdom. Many of the interviews contain no HPs at all; the data we present are from 3 interviews that do. Of the recordings, 27 were funded by Economic and Social Research Council Grant RES-148-25-0010 awarded to Elizabeth Stokoe and D. Edwards.
- 15 We provisionally include West's uses of *to tell the truth* as HPs because this is what West repeatedly and idiosyncratically said (he never used the term *honest*) in the same sequential environments as Beveridge used (again exclusively) *to be honest*. Semantically, we might expect differences between phrases invoking *truth* versus *honesty* given that *truth* is understandable as a relation between a description and its object, whereas *honesty* relates a description to its producer's intentional states. Further observa-

tions may find those differences relevant, but here, West seems to be doing what HPs do. Note that the expression is “to tell the truth,” which proposes not only truth but the speaker’s *disposition to reveal it*. This dispositional or subjective element is absent in expressions such as *actually* and *in fact*, which do indeed appear to have different interactional uses that we do not explore here (but see Clift, 2001; Ford, 1993; and Oh, 2000).

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