Discourse Studies

`Did you have permission to smash your neighbour's door?' Silly questions and their answers in police ––suspect interrogations

Elizabeth Stokoe and Derek Edwards

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://dis.sagepub.com/content/10/1/89

Additional services and information for *Discourse Studies* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://dis.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://dis.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

Citations: http://dis.sagepub.com/content/10/1/89.refs.html

'Did you have permission to smash your neighbour's door?' Silly questions and their answers in police–suspect interrogations

ELIZABETH STOKOE AND DEREK EDWARDS
LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT   We examine the asking and answering of 'silly questions'
(SQs) (for example, 'might sound a bit silly, but do you know whose window
it is?') in British police interviews with suspects, the courses of action SQs
initiate, and the institutional contingencies they are designed to manage.
We show how SQs are asked at an important juncture toward the ends of
interviews, following police officers' formulations of suspects' testimony (e.g.
'so you've admitted throwing eggs'). These formulations are confirmed or even
collaboratively produced by suspects. We then examine the design of SQs and
show how they play a central role in the articulation of suspects' reported
'state of mind', and particularly attributing to them criminal intentions
constitutive of the offence with which they may be charged. In cases
where SQs do not produce unambiguous answers about 'state of mind' or
intentionality, police officers move toward direct questioning about suspects'
intent, thus making explicit the project of SQs in such interviews. Following
SQ–Answer sequences, police officers reformulate suspects' testimony,
with subtle but crucial differences with regard to suspects' knowledge state
and criminal intent. Suspects overwhelmingly align with police officers'
formulations of their testimony, and such agreements have the interactional
shape of affiliation. Yet SQs may work in ways that are institutionally
adversarial with regard to criminal charges, relevant evidence and
self-incriminating testimony.

KEY WORDS: *categories of crime, intentionality, neighbourhood crime, police
interrogations, silly questions, state of mind*

Introduction

Police interviewing is a central component of the UK criminal justice process,
and asking questions is a central activity of those interviews. We investigate
how a particular type of 'silly' question is asked and answered, its placement in

the interview, and the interactional and institutional business it accomplishes. Here are two illustrative examples. In the first, a suspect (S) has been arrested for alleged criminal damage to her neighbour's front door. In the second example another suspect has been arrested for damage to her neighbour's window. In both cases the suspects have already admitted causing the alleged damage to the interviewing police officer (P).

Example 1 (simplified transcript)

P: Did Melvin give you permission to throw the hammer at his front door?
            (pause)
S: NO!!

Example 2 (simplified transcript)

P: Um, may sound a bit silly but do you know whose window it is?
            (pause)
S: Yes! ((smiling))

In our analyses of police interrogations, we have observed officers asking silly-sounding questions that have 'obvious' answers. Sometimes, as in the second example, they preface such questions *as* silly ones to ask. And, in general, suspects supply the 'obvious' answer. Suspects may also align with police officers' treatment of the question as silly, as in Example 2 (S sounds like she smiles as she says 'Yes!'), or else may independently treat it as silly by, as in Example 1, delivering the 'obvious' answer in an emphatic, incredulous-sounding way ('NO!!').

To the best of our knowledge, silly questions (henceforth SQs) have not been studied, either as part of research into police interviews or other conversational settings. There is a relatively small literature on other aspects of police interviewing, including questioning (e.g. Heydon, 2005; Komter, 2003; LeBaron and Streeck, 1997; Linell and Jönsson, 1991; Shuy, 1998; Watson, 1983). Closest to our study is Brown and Drugovich's (1995) observational account of interaction in a psychiatric walk-in clinic. They found that, during patient assessment, clinicians frequently prefaced questions (e.g. 'Do you know where we are?') with statements such as 'Some of these questions may sound silly'. Brown and Drugovich suggested that such prefaces functioned to normalize the situation and reduce clinicians' discomfort in asking particular kinds of questions. Another relevant literature is the study of 'known answer' questions in classroom talk; that is, questions asked by teachers who already know the answer (e.g. Koshik, 2002a; Lee, 2007; Macbeth, 2004; Mehan, 1979a). There is also a large linguistic and conversation analytic literature on questioning more generally. Relevant to our article are studies of question prefaces and preliminaries (e.g. Schegloff, 1980), yes–no interrogatives in ordinary and legal settings (e.g. Drew, 1992; Heinemann, this issue; Heritage, 2002a; Koshik, 2002b; Raymond, 2003; Woodbury, 1984).

Elsewhere, we have demonstrated that SQs occur as part of the following robust sequence of actions in police interviews (Stokoe and Edwards, in press):

a) The police officer (P) formulates a criminally important aspect of the suspect's (S) testimony thus far, involving what S has claimed to have done;

b) P launches the SQ + answer adjacency pair in which S generally supplies the 'obvious' answer, which is confirmed by P via repetition;

c) P reformulates S's testimony in the light of his/her response to the SQ.

Our focus in this article is on the function of SQs in terms of the interactional and institutional contingencies they are designed to manage. A key question is, given that suspects have already admitted the actions of their offences before SQs are asked, why these questions, with their 'obvious' answers, are asked following those admissions. Our analysis will endeavour to show that SQs play a central role in the articulation of suspects' reported 'state of mind' and degree of intentionality at the time of their actions, which is, in turn, crucial to the category of crime with which they may be charged.

Data

We draw on approximately 130 tape-recorded interviews between police officers and arrested suspects, which took place at police stations in the Midlands region of the UK during 2003–4, and were collected as part of ongoing research on neighbour disputes and conflict.[1] The recordings were made by police officers as a routine procedure, for potential use in court. The topics under discussion are mainly neighbourhood crime and other community or 'antisocial behaviour' problems including assault, harassment and criminal damage. The interviews were digitized on-site at the Constabulary's data storage department, anonymized, and then transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) system for conversation analysis (see also Hepburn, 2004, for symbols marking 'wobbly voice' ['~'] and sniffing ['.skuh', '.shih']). Our criterion for selecting target questions was that they were overtly produced or oriented to, by police officers or suspects, as 'silly' or 'obvious-answer' questions. This criterion of requiring overt participants' orientations avoids relying on intuitions about a potentially open-ended set of what might be thought of as SQs, even in the restricted sense we are using that notion here.

The analysis is divided into two sections. The first examines a canonical SQ case, as identified in Stokoe and Edwards (in press), its placement and component features. The second section takes four additional cases that not only provide further evidence for the generic pattern introduced above but also contain features that are particularly revealing with regard to the *project* of SQs and their function in these interactions.

A silly question and its answer

We start with a detailed examination of the second example introduced earlier, and its surrounding talk, which we henceforth call Case 1, 'smashed window'. The suspect (S) was arrested on suspicion of criminal damage and has admitted smashing her neighbour's window after he reportedly hit her son. This sequence

occurs toward the end of the interview. Each case that we examine throughout the article is divided into three sections, a, b and c, the basis of which will be made clear once we have examined this first case. In Case 1, the SQ occurs at line 11, but we focus first on what happens before it.

Case 1(a) PN-04: Smashed window

```
 1                      (2.1)
 2   P:  →   I mean basically you've- (0.3) y'know you've
 3           admitted- (0.2) >everythin'< you've explained
 4           to me WHy
 5                      (0.4)
 6   P:     *Uh:* I've not got- (0.3) a lot more to a:sk
 7           you *basically uh:,
 8                      (0.3)
 9   P:     A few points that- I need t'cover,
10                      (0.5)
11   P:  →   Um: (1.4) m:ay sound a bit silly bu- *uh*
12           do y'know whose window it is.
```

The sequence is preceded by a long gap (line 1) that marks a break from their preceding discussion about where S kept the wheel brace that she used to smash her neighbour's window. P now launches a new sequence with a formulation[2] of S's testimony: her admission and explanation of 'everythin' (lines 2–4). P starts this turn by projecting a gloss on what has been said so far ('I mean basically you've-'), before continuing with his formulation of what S has testified: 'you've admitted- (0.2) >everythin'< you've explained to me WHy' (lines 2–3). Further, the specific term 'admitted', rather than other possibilities such as 'said' or 'told me', presupposes S's actions to be in some way untoward, or in this case criminally relevant. P then produces meta-commentary on the interview's progress (lines 6–9), the SQ preface (line 11) followed by the target question itself (line 12). Note that S does not challenge P's formulation of her actions (e.g. at line 5). P's meta-commentary characterizes the interview's main business as essentially done, except for a 'few points' which he 'needs' to cover, offered therefore as procedural and routine rather than anything new or important.

Taking up case 1 again, here is the SQ and its response.

Case 1(b) PN-04: Smashed window

```
11   P:  →   Um: (1.4) m:ay sound a bit silly bu- *uh*
12       →   do y'know whose window it is.
13                      (0.4)
14   S:  →   £Yes[:£
```

The turn in which the SQ ('do y'know whose window it is') is delivered includes delays, repair initiators and, crucially, a *preface*, which characterizes the question-to-come as 'a bit silly' and, unlike most questions asked in police interviews, treats it as an accountable thing to ask ('m:ay sound a bit silly bu-'). The preface works in part to frame the question as one with an institutional mandate: P is not asking this question because he wants to know the answer, but because procedure

requires it. There is a short delay before S responds with the simple one-word answer: '£Yes:£'. This response shows her understanding that, despite being a 'silly' question, it is nevertheless comprehensible: she produces an *answer* rather than, say, a repair initiator (e.g. 'huh?'). However, it is produced with a 'smiley' voice quality that displays her alignment with P's treatment of the question as 'silly', as being something required of him to ask, or as having an obvious answer. That the answer is obvious is given in P's proposal that S has indeed already '. . . admitted- (0.2) >everythin'<' (line 3). P's concern is not with events per se (he might have asked, 'whose window was it?'), but with S's *state of knowledge* about those events, her understanding of her actions at the time, as well as here and now, in what she has confessed to. Similarly, S's answer treats P's question as requiring a brief confirmation of her *knowledge state* rather than as asking for *information* about the name of the owner of the window.

Following S's response, P asks further questions.

Case 1(b) contd.

```
14   S:         £Yes[:£
15   P:  →        [Did you know whose window it is.=
16   S:         °Mm.°
17   P:         Mm.
18                   (0.8)
19   P:  →    D'you 'ave permission to smash it basically.
20   S:         No,
21   P:         (N-) No,
22                   (0.3)
23   P:         °*Okay.*°
24                   (0.5)
25   P:  →    And whose- (0.3) take it you know it's Mick's
26               property.
27   S          °Yes°
28   P:         Yeh,
```

P's second question (line 15) is a repair of the original rather than a 'new' question. What is repaired is the question's tense, from the present '*do* y'know' to the past '*did* you know'. Given that S has already admitted to smashing her neighbour's window (and by implication did it on that basis, that the window was her neighbour's), this repair gives us a clue as to why SQs get asked. P must establish not only that S knows *now*, in the police station and on reflection, that the window was 'not hers', but that she also knew *at the time that she smashed it* that it was 'not hers'. The issue of 'state of mind' at the time of the action, in law called *mens rea* ('guilty mind'), is critical to the crime category with which S will ultimately be charged (Edwards, forthcoming): was it, in escalating degrees of intentionality, accidental, reckless, intentional, or planned? If P establishes some such degree of intentionality on S's part, then the offence becomes a more serious category of crime, and this information must be articulated explicitly 'for the record'. S answers the reformulated question with a minimal confirmation at line 16 ('°Mm.°'), which is followed by a third turn in the sequence (P's repetition 'Mm.').

At lines 19 and 25, P asks two further questions that also look like SQs or have 'known' answers. They initiate the same kind of three-turn sequence that we saw at lines 15–17. P's third question ends with 'basically', which provides for it being a further re-formulation of the first two questions. This third formulation incorporates a specific description of S's alleged offence of criminal damage ('smash it'), along with a key consideration relevant to the action *as* an offence ('permission'). P's fourth question asks S to confirm her knowledge of whose window it was. He starts to formulate a *wh*-question ('And whose-') but cuts that off in favour of a repair that explicitly provides its 'known' answer ('it's Mick's property'), and also its status *as* known ('take it you know'). Although we have found that SQs are sometimes structured as *wh*-questions (Stokoe and Edwards, in press), P's repair from a 'wh-' to a 'yes-no' interrogative (YNI) functions to constrain more heavily S's possibilities for answering. YNIs, as the term implies, normatively require that answers should be 'yes' or 'no'. Both preferred and dispreferred second pair parts of YNIs can be either type-conforming (either 'yes' or 'no') or non-conforming (one which does not include 'yes' or 'no'). According to Raymond (2003: 945), 'the constraints that make relevant a choice between "yes" and "no" are built into the very grammatical structure of the turn', although, as we will see later, recipients need not conform to those constraints. In Case 1(b), each of S's second pair parts are 'type-conforming'; they are also examples of 'no problem' answers (Heritage, 2002b; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki, 1997), generated in part through the establishment of this rhythmic Q–A sequence (lines 12–28) for which the 'silly' preface seems to remain relevant.

Following each of S's answers, P takes a turn in 'third position' (i.e. after the basic Q–A adjacency pair: lines 17, 21, 28). However, the format of this 'sequence-closing third' (SCT) turn by P differs from the most common found in everyday conversation: it is a repetition of S's answer rather than an 'oh', 'okay' or assessment (Schegloff, 2007: 118.). When third-position repeats *do* occur in ordinary talk, they do not generally 'appear to be in the service of the sequence closure' (p. 126) but as a method of repair initiation which often extends the sequence. In our data, modifications of these patterns display the emerging institutionality of the interaction.

In Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) study of classroom talk, they found a basic three-turn sequence: Initiation (teacher), Response (pupil) and Feedback/Evaluation (teacher) (or 'IRF'/'IRE'; see also Mehan, 1979b). In the third turn, teachers evaluate pupils' responses to 'known information' questions (Macbeth, 2004). This turn, as in police interviews, may comprise a lexical repeat of pupils' responses (see also 'repeat receipts' in focus group interviews: Puchta et al., 2004). These repeats, if doing positive assessment, may function as an SCT. However, with different prosody, they can also mark the pupil's response as incomplete or incorrect (Hellerman, 2003), working as a repair initiator to prompt a fourth 'correction' turn (McHoul, 1990). In police interviews, P's repetitions confirm S's answer and end the sequence. This is interestingly different from other question–answer sequences done 'for the record', such as in Heritage's (2002b) health visitor–patient interviews in which few SCTs occur. P's SCT turns are therefore particularly fitted to the institutional business at hand; that is, eliciting and *confirming* clear testimonial accounts for the record.

Following the SQ–Answer sequence, P begins to close the interview with some further meta-commentary.

Case 1(c) PN-04: Smashed window

```
30   P:        °*Okay.*°
31                     (0.6)
32   P:        AWri:ght
33                     (3.2)
34   P:        Well ba:sically that's about it
35                     (0.4)
36   P:        Um:
37   S:        Okay.
38                     (0.4)
39   P:        I've not got- (0.3) anything else I need to ask
40             you.
41                     (0.4)
42   P:  →     >Obviously you< (1.2) you've- you've admitted
43             smashin' it,
44                     (0.3)
45   P:  →     You know it's not yours:=
46   S:        =Couldn't really deny: it [anyway £c(h)ould I,£]
47   P:                                  [n-                No]
```

P produces a gist formulation of S's admission (lines 42–5). However, in this post-SQ environment, he incorporates detail about what S *knows*, significantly with regard to an accusation of criminal damage, about the ownership of the window: 'You know it's not yours:'. S aligns with P's version of her testimony. Her confirmation that she 'couldn't really deny: it anyway £c(h)ould I,£' refers to the fact that P himself witnessed some of the events when he arrived on the scene, but the laughter toward the end of her turn displays particular affiliation with P's project in this SQ sequence, that of getting on record S's 'state of mind' when she smashed her neighbour's window.

Having described and analysed the basic environment in which SQs occur, we now examine their component features and actions in more detail. We take four further cases, each split into three sections a), b) and c) constituting

a) the initial formulation of testimony;
b) the SQ–Answer sequence, and;
c) the post-SQ formulation of testimony.

Each case includes some variation within the overall three-part order of actions, which further illuminate the work done by SQs.

The project of silly questions

A) THE INITIAL FORMULATION OF TESTIMONY

Cases 2(a)–5(a) provide further examples of initial formulations of testimony preceding SQs. In Case 2(a), S has been arrested on suspicion of 'criminal damage' following an egg-throwing fight in the street with his neighbours.

Case 2(a) PN-65: Egg fight

```
 1   P:  →   Jus': to summarize what you told me
 2             <Ev:>erybody was 'avin' an egg fi:ght,
 3                   (0.3)
 4   P:       On the stre:ets,
 5   S:       Yeh.
 6   P:       .hh
 7                   (0.5)
 8   P:  →   You've admi:tted to me throwin' eggs:
 9                   (0.3)
10   S:       °Yeh°
11   P:       At the premises of si:xty one Stevenage
12             Road.
13                   (0.4)
14   S:       Yeh.
15                   (0.5)
16   P:       AN:D at the vehicle you presume it must've
17             hit.
18   S:       Yeh.
19                   (0.4)
20   P:       Ye:ah?
21                   (1.4)
22   S:       phhhh
23                   (0.7)
24   P:  →   Obviously- (1.6) ↑d'you think that you've
25             got right to be thro:win' £↓e(h)ggs£ at
26             £that ho(h)use.£
```

The SQ occurs at line 24, preceded by P's formulation of what S has already 'admi:tted' which includes 'throwin' eggs:' at a neighbour's house and vehicle (lines 1–16). This is punctuated with one-word ('yeh') confirmatory responses from S (lines 5, 10, 14, 18).

In Case 3(a), S has been arrested for using violence to gain entry by hitting a door with a golf club following an argument with his neighbour.

Case 3(a) PN-08: Golf clubs

```
 1   P:  →   [...] (0.4) so you've- you've admitted hi:ttin'
 2                   (0.2)
 3   S:       [The door.]
 4   P:       [The door.] the do:or.
 5                   (0.3)
 6   P:       With that golf: *club.*
 7   S:       *Yeh.*
 8   P:       *(Is that) correct.*
 9   S:       Ye[h.
10   P:          [Okay,
11                   (0.5)
12   P:  →   Um:: the door:
13                   (0.7)
```

```
14   P:  →   D̲id the do:or belo:ng to yo:̲u,
15               (0.4)
```

Again, P formulates S's admission that he has hit his neighbour's door with a golf club, immediately preceding the SQ at line 14. S responds to P's formulation not just with confirmatory 'yehs' (lines 7, 9), which we observed in Case 2(a), but by producing a candidate completion of P's formulation in overlap with P at line 3. This is ratified in P's repetition of 'the do:or', uttered once the speakers have moved out of overlap (line 4). Here, then, S demonstrates clear alignment with P's formulation of testimony.

   Here are two further instances of testimony formulations preceding SQs. In Case 4(a), S has been arrested for smashing a window, and Case 5(a) comes from a case of broken roof tiles caused by S climbing on his neighbour's roof.

Case 4(a) PN-122: Smashed glass

```
 1   P: →   S̲o you ↑accept that- (0.2) obviously you acce̲pt
 2           that you sma̲shed the gla:ss,
 3               (1.3)
 4   P:     Is that correct,
 5   S:     Ye:h.
 6               (0.4)
 7   P:     °*Righ'*°
 8               (1.3)
 9   P:     Thē uh:
10               (1.0)
11   S:     .skuh
12   P: →   Is- it seems a [silly question [...]
```

Case 5(a) PN-51: Roof tiles

```
 1               (1.6)
 2   S:     ((yawns))
 3   P: →   So >you a̲dmit< to goin' on the garage roof:
 4               (0.2)
 5   P:     An' you sa̲:y you could've gone onto the house
 6           roof.
 7   S:     *Ye:ah.*
 8   P:     *Right.*.hh and:
 9               (1.2)
10   S:     .skuh
11   P: →   W̲ho does the ro̲of and ti̲les belong to.
```

Again, P's turn-initial 'so' initiates each formulation, which S confirms. Across our data, these pre-SQ formulations get 'on record' a condensed version of S's prior testimony; that S has engaged in a particular action. There is no clash, at this point in the interviews, between suspects' and officers' versions of events, despite the fact that the negotiation of 'what really happened' is an omnirelevant feature of most interviews. Rather, suspects are demonstrably aligned with officers' formulations, and may even, as we saw in Case 3(a), produce collaborative completions of them (see also Steensig and Larsen, this issue, on affiliative 'you say x'

formatted questions of the type we see in Case 5(a) and their function in getting information on record).

Let us now turn to examine the shift from formulating testimony to asking SQs about it.

b) THE SQ–ANSWER SEQUENCE
We present the contiguous interaction following P's initial formulation of testimony for each Case, starting with Case 2.

Case 2(b) PN-65: Egg fight

```
23                  (0.7)
24   P: →   Obviously- (1.6) ↑d'you think that you've
25          got right to be thro:win' £↓e(h)ggs£ at
26          £that ho(h)use.£
27                  (0.3)
28   S:     Well- (.) if he- ( ) well could
29          I ask you a ↓question, 'ave they got
30          rights to throw eggs at my 'ouse.
31   P:     (I says) that's a different- [(      )]
32   S:                                  [(Well)]
33          that's (th-) (th-) (th-) that's the same
34          uh- as far as I'm concerned that's the
35          same in- same as- if I'm throwin' eggs
36          they're throwing eggs back at me that's
37          the- that's the same incident.
38                  (0.6)
39   P:     >Well actually< I've got none of that as I say
40          I'm just investigatin' this incident mate.=.hhh
41          if you wanna make any: (0.6) obviously if
42          you've got any offences that we- you wish to
43          bring to our attention: (0.3) okay (officially)
44          you can't bring it to ourselves (because we're)
45          the officers in this case (0.5) okay but you
46          ca:n report it to us,
47                  (0.5)
48   S:     Ri:[ght.
49   P:        [Right. To another officer an' we'd
50          obviously get that looked into for you.
51                  (0.3)
52   S:     Ok[ay.
53   P:       [Oka:y, (.) you understand that for me.
54                  (0.2)
55   P:     [Ye:ah,
56   S:     [Yeh.
57                  (1.0)
```

Following P's initial formulation of testimony, and after a gap (line 23), P asks the question, 'Obviously- (1.6) ↑d'you think that you've got right to be thro:win''

£↓e(h)ggs£ at £that ho(h)use.£'. This turn shares some features with the SQ in Case 1(b) ('(0.5) um: (1.4) m:ay sound a bit silly bu- *uh* do y'know whose window it is.'). Both turns are preceded by a gap, which functions to separate the SQ sequence from the preceding formulation of testimony. Both are littered with pauses and repair initiators, indicating some orientation to trouble in asking such questions. They are grammatically structured as yes–no interrogatives (YNIs), with the subject ('you') following the pro-verb ('do'). They both contain prefaces ('Obviously-'; 'm:ay sound a bit silly') that frame the questions as accountable, or possibly redundant, ones to ask. Such turn design does preference-oriented work to place both grammatical and normative constraints on what the recipient does next. As we suggested earlier, these prefaces also formulate SQs as *needing* to be asked as part of interview procedure – as common-sensically 'routine' and unimportant – rather than as P's particular style of questioning, or as pursuing anything new.

In Case 1(b), S's response to the SQ was produced with 'smiley' voice quality ('£Yes:£'), displaying alignment with P. In Case 2(b), the end of P's question is delivered with particles of laughter as well as a 'smiley' voice ('£↓e(h)ggs£ at £that ho(h)use.£'). This works in aggregate with the question's preface and grammatical structure to produce it as one with an 'obvious' answer (in this case, 'no'). However, unlike Case 1(b), S does not produce a type-conforming answer, thus altering the course of action initiated by the YNI. Its dispreference is marked by the turn-initial 'well-' (line 28) (Pomerantz, 1984), and it *counters* (Schegloff, 2007) the SQ by initiating a new first pair part with the preliminary 'could I ask you a ↓question' (lines 28–30). However, given that S's counter-question projects the same preferred answer as P's original one, we suggest that although S did not produce the preferred 'no', the grammatical structure of his subsequent question and its delivery *as* a counter is also an acknowledgement that he has no right, outside of the proposed reciprocity in this case, to throw eggs at other people's houses.

P's response to S's question is another counter ('(I says) that's a different- [( )]'), suggesting that S's neighbours' egg-throwing constitutes a separate incident. Indeed, this is typical of police officers' responses to suspects' counter-accusations. S's response to this is also 'well' prefaced (lines 32–7), as is P's long turn at line 39. P recruits official police procedure to counter S's original counter – that the alleged offences of other people need to be dealt with as separate accusations outside of the current interview – which S accepts (lines 48, 52, 56).

Case 2(b) is an example of a suspect resisting the grammatical and moral constraints of an SQ. In Case 3(b), it is S rather than P who treats a question as an SQ.

Case 3(b) PN-08: Golf clubs

```
11                  (0.5)
12   P:      Um:: the door:
13                  (0.7)
14   P:  →   Did the do:or belo:ng to yo:u,
```

```
15                        (0.4)
16  S:  →    Whell n:o.
17                        (0.2)
18  S:  →    Obviously.=
19  P:       =Okay.
20                        (0.2)
21  P:  →    I: 'ave to ask these [questions (   ) questions]
22  S:                            [Oh right. (sorry)   yeh ]
23  P:       Okay,
```

The question 'Um:: the door: (0.7) did the do:or belo:ng to yo:u,' is another YNI that follows a gap. However, P does not preface it with an explicit orientation to its 'silly' or obvious quality.

The turn-initial 'Whell' in S's response (the 'h' indicates a breathy delivery) might expectably preface a dispreferred answer or counter as in Case 2(b) above. Actually, it initiates a type-conforming answer 'n:o.', delivered with raised pitch and elongation. These prosodic features, plus the turn-initial 'well', work in a similar way to S's smiley-voiced '£Yes:£' in Case 1(b), and to P's laughed-through '£↓e(h)ggs£ at £that ho(h)use.£' in Case 2(b), to inject the question with a 'known' or 'silly' quality, in the light of having already admitted to 'hitting' the door. After a short pause, S adds 'Obviously.' (line 18), making his stance on the question explicit. Notably, then, in the absence of an orientation to the question's 'silly' quality by P, S produces such an orientation in his answer, independently of P. A gloss might be, 'of course I know the door didn't belong to me: why ask such an obvious – and redundant – question?'

S's answer demonstrates a key principle of interaction: the recipient design of turns at talk. As Raymond explains:

> [speakers] are accountable for designing their utterances . . . for the particular recipient they target . . . in designing interrogatives, speakers are accountable for implementing actions appropriate for their recipient, for reflecting what the interactants know in common, for what can be presumed about the matters inquired into, for what has or hasn't been established by prior talk, and so on. As a consequence there should be relatively few presuppositions to be challenged, questions about matters settled by prior talk, or other problems with the design of an interrogative. (Raymond, 2003: 950)

Asking SQs therefore carries some risk for police officers, particularly if SQs are not explicitly framed as such, as in the case above. More specifically, asking questions with obvious answers may risk breaching the mundane norms of recipient design, such as not asking questions about 'matters settled in prior talk' (S has already admitted hitting the door) or including 'presuppositions to be challenged' (anyone would know that the door did not belong to S).

Following S's response to the SQ, P produces a 'sequence-closing third' (SCT) turn, 'Okay.' (line 19), but observe that this is *not* a repeat of S's 'no'. In his next turn, P does not move on to ask further questions, but produces an account for asking the SQ ('I: 'ave to ask these questions'). P's account is formulated in generalized, 'scripted' terms (Edwards, 1994): saying 'these questions' *in general* rather than 'this question' *in particular*, characterizes the question, along with 'have to', as part of routine police procedure. P's account is reminiscent of the way

people in institutional roles may 'distance themselves from questions that seem particularly bureaucratic' by using expressions such as 'I don't know why they want to know' (Heritage, 2002b: 319). Such distancing retains the requirement that the recipient answer the question while, in our police examples, disattending any investigative seriousness the question might otherwise have. The first part of S's response to P's account, 'Oh right.', displays S as someone unfamiliar with police procedure, and the puzzling things that might get asked as part of it. The second part '(sorry) yeh' accepts P's account for asking the SQ.

Here is the SQ–Answer sequence of Case 4(b), returning us to the case of the smashed window.

Case 4(b) PN-122: Smashed glass

```
10                    (1.0)
11   S:       .skuh
12   P:   →   Is- it seems a [silly question but- (0.3)
13   S:                      [.skuh
14   P:   →   did you have a- any excu:se.
15                    (0.5)
16   P:   →   In doin' what you di:d,
17                    (0.6)
18   S:       .Hkhhh w*:-w-w-.*
19                    (0.3)
20   S:       Uh- all I wan- *I:* only done it ~to:::~ (0.6)
21            hhh because the ↑k(h)ids ↑↑t(h)old ↑me ↑t(h)o,
22            ((yawning and sing-song voice))
23                    (0.4)
24   P:       Y'did it because: (0.2) other kids to:ld y'to.
```

P's question 'did you have a- any excu:se. (0.5) In doin' what you di:d,' is preceded with an overt SQ preface: 'Is- it seems a silly question but-', which again positions P as having to ask such a question for the sake of procedure. As in earlier cases, S responds to the SQ after a gap. Generally, any break in the contiguity between first and second pair parts signals some interactional 'perturbation', such as an upcoming dispreferred response. Here, S does not produce the preferred 'type-conforming' response to the SQ ('no'), but rather supplies *an actual excuse* (lines 20–21). In other words, she does not align with P's framing of his question as 'silly' by producing a confirmation, but instead treats it 'literally' and provides an answer that implies the dispreferred response 'yes [I did have an excuse]'. However, P still repeats S's answer (with appropriate pronoun change) 'Y'did it because: (0.2) other kids to:ld y'to.' (line 24), although with notably reduced prosodic marking. This demonstrates that although P echoes the content of S's answer, he is doing a different action with the same words: confirming for the record rather than answering a question.

Here is the SQ–Answer sequence of our final example.

Case 5(b) PN-51: Roof tiles

```
10   S:       .skuh
11   P:   →   Who does the roof and tiles belong to.
```

```
12                    (0.7)
13  S:  →   U::m: (2.4) (um) (0.5) ↑well my neighbour hh.
14                    (0.4)
15  S:      (Yeh.)
16                    (0.3)
17  S:      (°°Fuck it°°) °°uh: you know°° ((whispered))
18                    (0.4)
19  S:      .hhh
20                    (2.5)
21  P:      'Ka:y,
22                    (1.0)
23  P:      An::d (0.2) by you walkin' on ti:les (0.3)
24          which you say you might've done,
25                    (0.2)
26  S:      [Mmm.
27  P:      [Yeh?
28                    (0.8)
29  S:      That's gonna snap 'em.
30                    (0.6)
31  P:      You think it would;
32                    (2.2)
33  P:      Could.
34                    (0.4)
35  S:      *It* could do *y:eh hh*
36  P:      >What I'm gettin' at< is: (1.5).pt an' I'll ask
37          the question (1.0) did you inte::nd to break
38          the tiles on- the neighbours' roof.
39                    (0.3)
40  S:      You know I didn't (*uh um) (aim) for it.=I
41          didn't intend to.=cos I- (0.2) get on with Bill,
42                    (0.9)
43  P:      Not intended,
```

In Case 5(b), as in Case 3(b), it is S's response that indicates the 'silliness' of the question. Other shared features include that the response is delayed (e.g. the pauses in lines 12 and 13), and also the turn-initial 'well' that orients to the 'obviousness' of the question's topic and its answer.

There is no repeated receipt of S's response forthcoming from P, although there is a candidate 'sequence-closing third' turn at line 21: ''Ka:y,'. However, its continuing intonation (in contrast to the closure-implicative '=Okay.' in Case 3[b]) projects more to come. Between S's answer and P's receipt of it, S takes further turns, apparently confirming (line 15) and resigning himself to his admissions (line 17), although both of these turns are possibly designed not to be heard at all (being spoken indistinctly and quietly). P then asks another question, constructing it as part of ongoing activity with a turn-initial 'An::d' (lines 23–4). However, he does not ask an SQ but produces an incomplete utterance, designed for S to finish (similar to teacher's incomplete turns that project that an answer is relevant from pupils). P therefore produces the 'if X' component of an 'if X then Y' turn: 'by you walkin' on ti:les (0.3) which you say you might've done,' (Lerner,

1991). Note the slightly rising pitch at the end of P's turn that, together with S's syntactically-fitted answer 'That's gonna <u>sn</u>ap 'em', constitutes a 'compound turn-constructional unit' (Lerner, 1991). These sorts of completions have been shown to accomplish a variety of affiliative actions, including agreement or collaboration. However, the design of P's question, its placement in the larger sequence, and S's answers, reveal P's project of getting on record S's state of mind and degree of intentionality during the commission of his crime. In fact, the differences between this and other cases, particularly P's further question at lines 36–8, make explicit the function of the SQs we have been studying.

So, returning to the first part of P and S's 'compound' turn, P asks 'An::d (0.2) <u>by</u> you <u>w</u>alkin' on ti:les (0.3) which you say you might've done'. The insertion of 'which you say you might've done' orients to S's earlier testimony as formulated by P ('you <u>sa</u>:y you could've gone onto the house roof'). By producing a completion, S effectively collaborates with P in 'fixing' what has been a rather hedged testimony. S's completion is grammatically agent-free, which might account for why, given that P is seeking to get S's 'state of mind' on record, P asks for confirmation from S's perspective 'You think it <u>w</u>ould;' (line 31). The use of 'would' in his question implies an expectable outcome, something that predictably happens (roof tiles would break) as a consequence of the precipitative action (walking on roof tiles) (see Edwards's [2006] analysis of some functions of 'would' in police interrogations). It is interesting, then, that having already supplied the completion of the compound turn, S does not reply to P's question. After a long gap, P downgrades the epistemic modality, and thus solidity, of the testimony, from '<u>w</u>ould' to '<u>c</u>ould'. S confirms that walking on roof tiles 'could' 'snap them': '*It* <u>c</u>ould do *y:eh hh*' (line 35). S's confirmation, plus his earlier (almost inaudible) turn at line 17, is also a possible orientation to the *significance* or *pointedness* (rather than silliness) of P's questions, and their direct crime-relevance.

It is clear from the interaction so far that, from his perspective, P is not succeeding in getting S's 'state of mind' neatly articulated for the record. Following S's agreement that walking on roof tiles 'could' snap them, P spells out what SQs are designed to achieve: '>What I'm gettin' at< is: (1.5).pt an' I'll <u>a</u>sk the question (1.0) <u>d</u>id you in<u>te::nd</u> to break the tiles on- the neighbours' roof' (lines 36–8). This tells S that P wants to make explicit something that has hitherto been implied, and the yes–no question that follows P's preface not only includes the word 'intend' but P strongly emphasizes the word, leaving S in no doubt as to what is being asked. S then replies that he 'didn't (*uh um) (aim) for it', and latches a second turn constructional unit onto the first denial ('=I didn't intend to'), this time including the crucial word 'intend'. S finally produces a plausible basis for why he did not intend to break his neighbour's roof tiles ('=cos I- (0.2) get on with Bill'). P does not ask another question, but confirms S's testimony with a truncated repeat in third position which maintains the essential part with regard to crime categories: 'Not intended'.

It seems, then, that while SQs are designed to get suspects to confirm a formulation of their 'state of mind' during the time of their alleged criminal activities, police officers may move toward direct questioning about suspects' intent if the

SQ does not produce an unambiguous answer. We explore this notion further in the next section, in which we consider the third part of our general sequence of actions: P's reformulation of S's testimony.

c) THE POST-SQ FORMULATION OF TESTIMONY

Following the SQ–Answer sequence, we have observed that police officers produce further formulations of suspects' testimony. Such (re)formulations function to establish unambiguously the specifically *criminal* intent of suspects' actions. These subsequent formulations are therefore a critical part of the overall project of SQs. We rejoin Case 2(c) after S has produced a counter to P's question about whether he had a right to throw eggs at his neighbour's house. P has said that she cannot investigate S's complaint but will report it to another officer.

Case 2(c) PN-65: Egg fight

```
55   S:        [Yeh.
56                   (1.0)
57   P:  →     Right: >okay< so you've admitted the
58       →     criminal damage basically: with eggs.
59                   (0.2)
60   P:        And other fo:od.
61   S:        £Y(h)e(h)a(h)h,£
62                   (0.2)
63   S:        £Ye(h)£
64   P:        .pt ye:h?
```

At line 57, P reformulates S's testimony: 'Right: >okay< so you've admitted the criminal damage basically: with eggs.' The original SQ in Case 2(b) ('↑d'you think that you've got right to be thro:win' £↓e(h)ggs£ at £that ho(h)use.£') did not receive a direct answer from S, nor was the question reformulated by P following S's counter. However, when compared to P's initial formulation at the start of this sequence, there is an important difference. P's initial formulation noted that S admitted the *action* 'throwin' eggs:'. After the SQ, P states that S has admitted the *crime category* 'criminal damage' (lines 59–60). As we noted for Case 1(c), the insertion of 'basically' (line 58), along with the 'so' preface (line 57) offers 'you've admitted the criminal damage' as a formulation of what S has just been saying – and thereby, as S's response to the SQ, despite the lack of type-conforming response. S aligns with this interpretation with a laughed-through confirmation at line 61: '£Y(h)e(h)a(h)h,£', which he repeats (line 63) and P confirms (line 64). Thus by the end of this sequence S echoes the laughter in P's SQ '↑d'you think that you've got right to be thro:win' £↓e(h)ggs£ at £that ho(h)use.£', and the two parties are aligned with regard to the 'funny side' of what they are saying about S's activities.

Here is the final part of Case 3.

Case 3(c) PN-08: Golf clubs

```
24                   (0.6)
25   P:  →     Um: an' you kne:w (.) the do:or didn't
```

```
26                  *↓belong to you.*=
27    S:      Ye:h.
28    P:      [*(Yep.)*
29    S:      [>I w's< jus' so A:NGry you know warrame:an.
30              (.)
31    S:      I'd just (be/been) insu:lted.
32    P:      Understo:od,
33                    (0.6)
34    P:  →    So- (0.2) did you- (.) when you hit the do:or
35              (0.4) with the golf club >did you< inte:nd to-
36              damage the door.
37                    (0.7)
38    S:      ↑↑NO!
39                    (0.4)
40    S:      ↑It ↑wouldn't ↑anyway.
41                    (0.3)
42    S:      The ↑door's as strong as oa:k.
```

Having elicited from S, via an SQ sequence, that the door did not belong to him (see Case 3[b]), P now formulates that testimony in terms of S's *understanding at the time of the offence*, by adding somewhat emphatically, and in past tense, 'you kne:w' (line 25), to which S acquiesces (line 27). With S's intentional states now topicalized, S offers a mitigating motivational account involving response to provocation (lines 29–31), which P acknowledges without comment or pursuit (line 32). Rather, what P does pursue (lines 34–6) is his prior line of inquiry (re-initiated by 'So-') into S's thoughts and understanding at the time of the offence; in particular, his *intention* with regard to damaging the door. So, as in Case 5(b) where the police officer asks, 'did you inte::nd to break the tiles on- the neighbours' roof', P works at getting S's state of mind at the time unambiguously on record, formulated preferentially in terms of knowledge and intentionality (rather than circumstantial cause or motive), while also separating the intentionality of actions (hitting the door, walking on the roof) from intent to thereby cause damage. Crucially, for understanding these practices as police work, the relevant criminal action here is not hitting doors nor walking on roofs, but their effects – doing 'criminal damage'.

In Case 4(b), P asked whether S had an 'excuse' for smashing a window, and, rather than supply the preferred 'type-conforming' response ('no'), S supplied an actual excuse ('other kids told me to').

Case 4(c) PN-122: Smashed glass

```
27    P:      Ri:ght.
28                    (0.5)
29    P:  →    So: (1.5) would you agree then that you'd had no
30              excu:se in smashin' that window.
31    S:      ahhh
32                    (0.3)
33    S:      Y:ea(h)h.
34                    (0.4)
```

```
35  P:        What is that y:es you have an excuse or yes you
36            don't have an excuse.
37  S:        Yes I don't 'ave an *excuse.*
38  P:        Righ':
39                    (0.9)
40  P:  →     .hhh thē uh:: (0.8) what was your intention.
41                    (0.2)
42  P:        In s- (0.6) hittin' the window with the stick.
43                    (0.7)
44  S:        To smash it: *an' it-* the window'd go ri:ght
45            throu:gh.hh
46  P:        T'smash it.
47                    (0.2)
48  P:        And uh: (0.3).hhh t'put the window ri:ght
49            through.
50                    (0.2)
51  P:  →     An' obviousl- (.) d'you accept that's that r-
52            wrong;
53                    (1.4)
54  S:  →     W'll ye:h?
55                    (0.6)
```

S's dispreferred response to P's original SQ ('it seems a silly question but- (0.3) did you have a- any excu:se. In doin' what you di:d,') left the issue of S's intent yet to be articulated explicitly. Thus, following his receipt of S's excuse, P now reformulates his earlier SQ with a stronger projection of the preferred answer ('*would you agree* then that you'd had no excu:se in smashin' that window.'), which S then produces ('Y:ea(h)h.'). P's pursuit of a type-conforming response to his question demonstrates not just the preference for YNIs to produce such responses, but also that the 'silly' preface was initially designed to take into account possible trouble with the question and forestall it. So, when P's original SQ did not initiate the preferred response, he pursued it successfully with a reformulation.

Although S gives the preferred answer to P's reformulated question (line 33), P continues with his project of getting on record S's 'state of mind' when engaged in smashing the window. First, he checks S's understanding of his question (lines 35–6), which S confirms ('Yes I don't 'ave an *excuse.*'). Following this, and echoing our earlier cases, P asks an explicit question regarding S's state of mind ('what was your intention' lines 40–2). S's answer describes her intended action and its consequences ('To smash it: *an' it-* the window'd go ri:ght throu: gh.hh'), which P confirms with a repeat (lines 46–9). Note the substitution that P introduces – the explicitly agentive '*to put*' the window right through (line 50) in place of S's description '*and the window would go*' right through (lines 44–5). At the end of the sequence, P asks another SQ: 'd'you accept that's that r- wrong;' with the preface 'an' obvious-'. S matches P's orientation to this being a 'silly' or 'obvious-answer' question in her response, which comes after a delay, 'W'll ye:h?' (line 54). As we saw in other cases, S's turn-initial 'well' prefaces the *preferred* confirmation, rather than a dispreferred answer. 'W'll ye:h?' confirms that S *knows* that her action is wrong, and her delivery of 'ye:h?', with some elongation and

rising pitch gives an 'obviously!' quality to the response, as something that hardly needs saying. There are no further questions about the incident following this; P moves on to ask about another incident.

Finally, here is the continuation of Case 5. S has given the preferred response to the SQ '<u>Wh</u>o does the <u>roof</u> and <u>ti</u>les belong to', and then P asked about whether S *intended* to break his neighbour's roof tiles. S has answered that he did not intend to, because he gets on with his neighbour.

Case 5(c) PN-51: Roof tiles

```
44                    (2.0)
45   P:  →   So you've >not int<u>en</u>ded to< cause damage.
46                    (1.0)
47   S:      No::: ( )=
48   P:      =By climbin' on it d'you think it was <u>reck</u>less:
49           (0.2) as to whether damage could be caused.=<In
50           other words: by climbin' on it,
51                    (0.5)
52   S:      U:ye:h that's what it is yeh.
53                    (0.3)
54   P:      It's <u>li</u>kely that damage >woulda been< caused.
55   S:      *Yeh.*
```

P's first turn formulates S's testimony with regard to his 'intent' to break his neighbour's roof, and note that 'break the tiles' has now been reformulated as 'cause damage', with 'damage' being the relevant legal category subsuming 'break'. S produces a further emphatic denial, which is followed by another question from P, 'By climbin' on it d'you think it was <u>reck</u>less: (0.2) as to whether damage could be caused'. This question initiates a new sequence that demonstrates clearly the way police officers and suspects work to fit action descriptions to categories of crime, according to escalating degrees of intentionality (Edwards, forthcoming). If P can establish intent on S's part, then the offence becomes more serious (Richardson, 2006). Here we can see how P abandons pursuit of 'intentional damage' in favour of the lesser (but still intention-relevant) charge 'reckless damage'. He asks, 'd'you think it was <u>reck</u>less: (0.2) as to whether damage could be caused', prefacing the question with a description of the causal action 'by climbin' on it'. P's question therefore is about whether S might *reasonably know in advance* of climbing on roof tiles that such an action would be likely to cause damage. If that consequence is something that anyone should reasonably predict, then the behaviour is accountably 'reckless'.

Concluding remarks

We have shown how 'silly questions' asked by police officers in interviews with suspects are designed to initiate courses of action in which suspects' intentions and knowledge, or 'state of mind' with regard to the actions they have already admitted carrying out, are made explicit 'for the record'. Furthermore, and crucially relevant in the context of police interrogation, it is a domain of

specifically *criminal* intent (in law, *mens rea*, meaning 'guilty mind') that SQs pursue. What gets established is intent not only to perform some vernacularly described action (climb on a roof, hit a door, throw eggs at a neighbour's house, etc.), but to cause various consequences (break, snap, smash), whose nature can be formulated or re-formulated forensically (e.g. as 'criminal damage'). Police officers' SQ prefaces ('might sound a bit silly', 'take it you know . . .') and accounts ('I have to ask these questions') characterize SQs as routine and merely (re-)stating the obvious. But they also (indeed, somewhat by dint of those SQ features) work as an efficient method of obtaining for the record an elicited or confessed-to version of *criminally relevant* understandings, intentions, actions and consequences.

During the sequence of actions contextual to and including SQs, speakers may move in and out of alignment with each other. In both pre- and post-SQ formulations of suspects' testimony, we observed the prevalence of ratified or even collaboratively built descriptions in which suspects confirmed without challenge P's formulations of suspects' own version of events, including the activities to which they have admitted. In some cases, these sequences appeared to be moments of particular affiliation between police officer and suspect; where, say, joint laughter took place. Furthermore, suspects often aligned with the course of action projected by the SQ preface and grammatical design of the 'yes–no' question, as displayed in their type-conforming responses and coordinated stance on questions *as* SQs. Even in cases where some misalignment arose, such as S launching a counter question in response to P's SQ (Case 2[b]), P accounting for asking the SQ (Case 3[b]), S doing a 'literal' response to the SQ prompting pursuit of the preferred response by P (Case 4[c]) or negotiation of level of intentionality (Case 5[c]), the post-SQ (and post-trouble) formulations of testimony were overwhelmingly confirmed by suspects.

These agreements between speakers, including P's formulations of ostensibly nothing more than S has said, and S's acceptances of those formulations, have the interactional shape of affiliation. However, SQs may work in ways that are institutionally adversarial with regard to criminal charges, relevant evidence and self-incriminating testimony. Under the guise of 'silly' or 'obvious' questions, police officers work to obtain, for the record and for later use in court, something very serious indeed. These are action descriptions that S may produce or concede to, that are nicely fitted to the ready-made categories of crime and their 'mental state' requirements.

NOTES

1. The data were collected as part of ESRC grant number RES-148-25-0010 'Identities in Neighbour Discourse: Community, Conflict and Exclusion' held by Elizabeth Stokoe and Derek Edwards.

2. 'Formulations', in the sense used here, are versions of what a participant has previously said, produced either by that same participant or by another. They typically provide a gist or upshot of prior talk that transforms it in ways relevant to the current interaction (see Heritage and Watson, 1979).

REFERENCES

Brown, P. and Drugovich, M. (1995) '"Some of These Questions May Sound Silly": Humor, Discomfort, and Evasion in the Mental Status Examination', *Research in the Sociology of Health Care* 12: 159–74.

Drew, P. (1992) 'Contested Evidence in Courtroom Cross-examination: The Case of a Trial for Rape', in P. Drew and J. Heritage (eds) *Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings*, pp. 470–520. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, D. (1994) 'Script Formulations: A Study of Event Descriptions in Conversation', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 13(3): 211–47.

Edwards, D. (2006) 'Facts, Norms and Dispositions: Practical Uses of the Modal *Would* in Police Interrogations', *Discourse Studies* 8(4): 475–501.

Edwards, D. (forthcoming) 'Intentionality and *Mens Rea* in Police Interrogations: The Production of Actions as Crimes'.

Hellerman, J. (2003) 'The Interactive Work of Prosody in the IRF Exchange: Teacher Repetition in Feedback Moves', *Language in Society* 32: 79–104.

Hepburn, A. (2004) 'Crying: Notes on Description, Transcription and Interaction', *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 37(3): 251–90.

Heritage, J. (2002a) 'The Limits of Questioning: Negative Interrogatives and Hostile Question Content', *Journal of Pragmatics* 34(10–11): 1427–46.

Heritage, J. (2002b) 'Ad Hoc Inquiries: Two Preferences in the Design of Routine Questions in an Open Context', in D.W. Maynard, H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, N.C. Schaeffer and J. van der Zouwen (eds) *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and Practice in the Survey Interview*, pp. 313–34. Chichester: Wiley.

Heritage, J.C. and Watson, D.R. (1979) 'Formulations as Conversational Objects', in G. Psathas (ed.) *Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology*, pp. 123–62. New York: Irvington.

Heydon, G. (2005) *The Language of Police Interviewing: A Critical Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. and Antaki, C. (1997) 'Creating Happy People by Asking Yes–No Questions', *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 30(4): 285–314.

Jefferson, G. (2004) 'Glossary of Transcript Symbols with an Introduction', in G. Lerner (ed.) *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation*, pp. 13–31. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Komter, M. (2003) 'The Interactional Dynamics of Eliciting a Confession in a Dutch Police Interrogation', *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 36(4): 433–70.

Koshik, I. (2002a) Designedly Incomplete Utterances: A Pedagogical Practice for Eliciting Knowledge Displays in Error Correction Sequences', *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 35(3): 277–309.

Koshik, I. (2002b) 'A Conversation Analytic Study of Yes/No Questions which Convey Reversed Polarity Assertions', *Journal of Pragmatics* 34: 1851–77.

LeBaron, C.D. and Streeck, J. (1997) 'Built Space and the Interactional Framing of Experience during a Murder Interrogation', *Human Studies* 20: 1–25.

Lee, Y. (2007) 'Third Turn Position in Teacher Talk: Contingency and the Work of Teaching', *Journal of Pragmatics* 39: 180–206.

Lerner, G.H. (1991) 'On the Syntax of Sentences-in-progress', *Language in Society* 20: 441–58.

Linell, P. and Jönsson, L. (1991) 'Suspect Stories: Perspective-setting in an Asymmetrical Situation', in I. Marková and K. Foppa (eds) *Asymmetries in Dialogue*, pp. 75–100. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Macbeth, D. (2004) 'The Relevance of Repair for Classroom Correction', *Language in Society* 33: 703–36.

McHoul, A.W. (1990) 'The Organization of Repair in Classrooms', *Language in Society* 19: 349–77.

Mehan, H. (1979a) '"What Time Is It, Denise?": Asking Known Information Questions in Classroom Discourse', *Theory into Practice* 28(4): 285–94.

Mehan, H. (1979b) *Learning Lessons: Social Organization in the Classroom.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pomerantz, A.M. (1984) 'Agreeing and Disagreeing with Assessments: Some Features of Preferred/Dispreferred Turn Shapes', in J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds) *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*, pp. 57–101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Puchta, C., Potter, J. and Wolff, F. (2004) 'Repeat Receipts: A Device for Generating Visible Data in Market Research Focus Groups', *Qualitative Research* 4: 285–309.

Raymond, G. (2003) 'Grammar and Social Organization: Yes/No Interrogatives and the Structure of Responding', *American Sociological Review* 68: 939–67.

Richardson, P.J. (ed.) (2006) *Archbold 2006: Criminal Pleading, Evidence and Practice*. London: Sweet and Maxwell.

Schegloff, E.A. (1980) 'Preliminaries to Preliminaries: "Can I Ask You a Question?"', *Sociological Inquiry* 50: 104–52.

Schegloff, E.A. (2007) *Sequence Organization: A Primer in Conversation Analysis, Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shuy, R.W. (1998) *The Language of Confession, Interrogation and Deception*. London: SAGE.

Sinclair, J.M. and Coulthard, R.M. (1975) *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils*. London: Oxford University Press.

Stokoe, E. and Edwards, D. (in press) 'Asking Ostensibly Silly Questions in Police Interrogations', in A.F. Freed and S. Ehrlich (eds) *Why Do You Ask? The Function of Questions in Institutional Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Watson, D.R. (1983) 'The Presentation of Victim and Motive Discourse: The Case of Police Interrogations and Interviews', *Victimology* 8: 31–52.

Woodbury, H. (1984) 'The Strategic Use of Questions in Court', *Semiotica* 48: 197–228.

ELIZABETH STOKOE is Reader in Social Interaction in the Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University. She has written extensively on the topic of gender and interaction, including editing a special issue of *Discourse & Society* (2002, with Ann Weatherall), and is currently writing two books on the topic (*Analysing Gender and Interaction*, Sage; *Conversation and Gender*, Cambridge University Press, with Susan Speer). She is the author of *Discourse and Identity* (2006, Edinburgh University Press, with Bethan Benwell) and is currently working with Derek Edwards on an ESRC-funded study of neighbour disputes and complaints. ADDRESS: Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU, UK. [email: e.h.stokoe@lboro.ac.uk]

DEREK EDWARDS is Professor of Psychology in the Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University. His interests are in the analysis of language and social interaction in everyday and institutional settings. He specializes in discursive psychology, in which relations between psychological states and the external world are studied as discourse categories and practices. Current work focuses on action formulations, person descriptions and intentionality in neighbour disputes, mediation and police interrogations. His books include *Common Knowledge*, with Neil Mercer (Routledge, 1987), *Ideological Dilemmas*, with Michael Billig and others (Sage, 1988), *Discursive Psychology*, with Jonathan Potter (Sage, 1992), and *Discourse and Cognition* (Sage, 1997). ADDRESS: Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU, UK. [email: d.edwards@lboro.ac.uk]