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## Managing the Moral Implications of Advice in Informal Interaction

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What does advice giving look like among family members? Most conversation analytic research on advice has been in institutional settings, which constrain what speakers can do. Here we analyze advice in the apparently freer environment of telephone calls between mothers and their young adult daughters. We concentrate on how the advice is received. Our analysis shows that the position of “advice recipient” is a potentially unwelcome identity to occupy because it implies one knows less than the advice giver and indeed that one may be somehow at fault. Advice can be resisted, but choosing to do so seems to depend on what the interactional costs would be. We discuss the implications for studying advice and promoting advice acceptance as well as the way relationality more generally can be constituted in talk.

Giving advice is a pervasive action in everyday life. We see it in institutional settings, where professionals are called on specifically to give advice on matters they are specialized in. We see advice as the centerpiece of the popular self-help book, on television programs and radio shows, in newspaper articles, and on Internet forums. We also see advice weaving its way in and out of the very heart of our social relations, where people interact with each other in everyday encounters.

Advice giving has become a growing area of study in conversation analysis in recent years. Not surprisingly, particular attention has been given to advice within institutional interactions

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where advice is a common feature. This has included research into interactions between health visitors and first-time mothers (Heritage & Lindström, 1998, 2012; Heritage & Sefi, 1992), HIV and AIDS counseling interactions (Kinnell & Maynard, 1996; Silverman, 1997), pharmacy interactions (e.g., Pilnick, 2001, 2003), and within educational settings (e.g., Vehviläinen, 2001; Waring, 2012). Helplines have been of particular interest, including Kids Helpline in Australia (e.g., Butler, Potter, Danby, Emmison, & Hepburn, 2010; Emmison, Butler, & Danby, 2011), the NSPCC Helpline (Hepburn & Potter, 2011a), and a consumer-run “warm-line” for mental health issues (Pudlinski, 2002).

Conversation analytic research on advice in informal, everyday interactions is scarce (although see Jefferson, 1981, 1992, who looked at advice in the context of troubles telling, and Randall, 1995). But informal interactions provide a particularly revealing arena for considering the social organization of advice, precisely because of the lack of a clear institutional warrant to give it. Participants in the conversation are not incipiently occupying the positions of advice recipient or advice giver, as they would if they were making or receiving a call to a helpline, for example. Advice giver and advice recipient are less subject to the institutional constraints that provide epistemic asymmetries and accountability for all parties, as well as an explicit basis on which to be requesting and accepting advice. They have to construct the advice giving, or its receipt, on the fly.

We shall concentrate here on one component of these informal advice-giving sequences: the responsive turn. In doing so, we shall come across issues of morality in advice acceptance (or resistance), building on recent work in conversation analysis (e.g., Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011), which has emphasized the importance of morality to the organization of social interaction.

Before discussing the data and analysis, we will first outline the literature on advice responses. We will proceed by outlining the types of advice response that have been identified thus far in the literature. We will then go on to discuss the emerging relevance of morality to advice responses.

## RESPONDING TO ADVICE

Within the literature, resources have been identified that enable advice recipients to code in their competence in regard to committing to a future course of action. Heritage and Sefi (1992) identified three main types of advice response within interactions between health visitors and first-time mothers. Firstly, mothers used “marked acknowledgments” that treat the advice as informative through tokens such as “oh” and partial repeats, while also working to accept the advice through utterances such as “right.” Mothers also responded with “unmarked acknowledgments” that display passive resistance through minimal and ambiguous tokens such as “mm” and “yeah.” Mothers also resisted advice more strongly by asserting their knowledge or competence through turns such as “I know” (Heritage & Sefi, 1992).

There is evidence that competence is an issue for recipients when responding to advice, and this is seen in the extra work recipients do when accepting advice. Pudlinski (2002) shows how recipients on a “warm-line” display their competence by jointly planning a future activity when accepting advice. Waring (2007) showed how recipients manage the issue of competence when responding to advice in peer-tutoring interactions in a graduate writing center. Two strategies were identified in which recipients displayed their competence rather than “mere acquiescence.” Recipients accepted advice by making “claims of comparable thinking” or accepted with an

account as to why the action had not been done already. Such responses can display the recipient's competence, "reconfiguring the asymmetrical consultant–client role relations as less asymmetrical" (Waring, 2007, p. 123). Waring (2007) goes on to suggest that there may well be a preference for autonomy in response to the delivery of advice. Indeed Waring (2012) goes further by providing evidence of a preference for tutee-initiated advice over tutor-initiated advice (where the actual advice is preempted by the tutee), in the case of graduate peer tutoring.

Although an array of response types has been identified in the literature, less attention has been given to why one response type is selected over another. The step-wise approach to advice delivery in which the recipient's perspective is gained first has been considered a favorable approach to advice delivery that is more likely to promote acceptance (e.g., Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Silverman, 1997). However, systematic research is needed to identify the issues that are related to the selection of one response over another. Furthermore, while advice that is solicited by the recipient seems to be related to subsequent positive displays of advice acceptance (see Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Silverman, 1997), in mundane interactions, seeking the recipient's opinion first may be less of a relevant thing in that the advice giver isn't driven by clear institutional goals.

Waring (2005), however, showed how recipients displayed different types of resistance to advice in academic peer-tutoring sessions, depending on what was being advised on. For example, on issues concerning academic writing, the tutees mitigated their resistance by citing source difficulty. When the issue concerned content-related matters, the resistance was not mitigated but was contrastively bald and interruptive. Waring (2005) argues that the selective type of resistance relates to issues of identity claims and knowledge asymmetry. The tutee oriented to the tutor's role as an advisor on academic writing by marking resistance of such advice as problematic and dispreferred. Contrastively, the tutees orient to their own expertise in a particular subject by treating resistance to such advice as less problematic.

The value that is given to knowing or not knowing is more clearly tied to the issue of morality by Heritage and Lindström (1998). They showed that in interactions between health visitors and first-time mothers, there was a moral subtext where the mothers oriented to the health visitor's role as evaluator of her own capabilities:

There are occasions in which the defensiveness of the mothers' responses formulates the absence of moral evaluation by the HVs [health visitors] as a kind of "withholding" of moral judgement. In this way, moral considerations are circuitously reintroduced into the talk as its luminal context. (Heritage & Lindström, 1998, pp. 417–418)

The supply-driven role of the health visitor seems to bring with it a moral dimension where the health visitor is treated as a judge of the mother's behavior.

Elsewhere, Pilnick (2001, 2003) has reported on the potentially delicate action of giving what can be understood as treatment "instructions" within pharmacy consultations in an outpatient paediatric oncology ward because of the patient's long-term status. In those interactions, parents of the patient often provide displays of competence by coming in early within the pharmacist's turn (Pilnick, 2001), and preempting, summarizing, or extending the pharmacist's turn to go beyond mere acknowledgment of the "instructions" (Pilnick, 2003). These competence displays enact the parent's moral obligation as carer. However, there is an alternative issue concerning the ambiguity of what is expected from these consultations in the first place, raising the possibility that the "instructions" are simply treated as irrelevant by the parents (Pilnick, 2003). Interesting,

though, is the example provided by Pilnick (2003), where a first-time clinic attendee receipts the pharmacist's "information" with what Heritage and Sefi (1992) have referred to as "marked acknowledgments." Here, Pilnick (2003, p. 843) argues that "there is no expectation from any party that this mother should have any knowledge about chemotherapy regimes, and as a result she is morally entitled to receive the information as both new and necessary."

As this research suggests, "morality" seems to be an important issue in advice giving. This article will build on this finding by showing how the selection of one response over another seems to relate to what might be glossed as a "moral" dimension, where the value of knowing about and indeed performing a particular course of action is given varying degrees of weight. Recent work within the field of conversation analysis more broadly has indeed given particular emphasis to morality and its relationship to epistemics:

As in any normatively organized system, we can and do hold one another accountable for justifiably asserting our rights and fulfilling our obligations with respect to knowledge. It is in this way that we see the epistemic domain as morally ordered. (Stivers et al., 2011, p. 3)

The analysis will highlight the importance of considering how the fulfillment of the recipient's rights and obligations might be thrown into jeopardy through the giving and receiving of advice. In other words: What is at stake for the recipient in being positioned as an advice recipient, entailed in a specific localized context?

By considering why certain actions are done as opposed to others—for example, an "acceptance" rather than an "unmarked acknowledgment"—the article will try to illuminate what issues become relevant to people cast as recipients of advice.

## DATA AND METHOD

The data come from conversations on the telephone between a sample of British mothers and their young adult daughters. By focusing on this specific type of relationship, the analysis does not suppose that mothers and daughters interact differently than fathers and daughters or mothers and sons, but rather, the aim is to explicate *how* advice giving and receiving is managed in these interactions. Although mundane is a useful way of distinguishing the type of interaction being studied here in comparison to the clearly institutional kinds of interactions, assuming a clear-cut distinction would be problematic. Indeed, family interactions themselves may become organized around particular goals, suggesting a potential gray area in which mother–daughter interactions operate in an institutional versus mundane sense.

Altogether, five families were recruited with a total of nine different mother–daughter dyads. The daughters were aged between 19 and 31, and the mothers' aged between 48 and 56. A total of 41 short and extended episodes of advice formed the collection from 51 telephone conversations. All participants have given informed consent, and all names and identifying information has been anonymized.

Some calls were short and in the service of making arrangements, others were more focused on catching up (see Drew & Chilton, 2000). One way or another, these calls provided a useful corpus for examining how advice giving and receiving came to be made relevant and socially organized in interactions with no preset institutional contingencies.

## Collecting Advice

What counted as advice itself remained a topic for investigation rather than something predefined. The aim was not to try to come up with a technical definition for “advice,” but rather to see how an action that might be hearable as advice, is brought off, with different interactional consequences (see Schegloff, 1988 [on Sacks]; Edwards, 1997, 2005). In order to preserve the normative and vernacular nature of language, the starting point is a “loose, to-be-refined notion of the phenomenon” (Edwards, 2005, p. 7).

Research into advice giving has tended to use the broad definition put forward by Heritage and Sefi (1992), as something that “describes, recommends or otherwise forwards a preferred course of future action” (p. 368)—implicitly, as Searle (1969) observed, in the supposed interest of the recipient. Heritage and Sefi (1992) outline the important dimensions of normativity and knowledge asymmetry in advice. “Normativity” refers to how prescriptive an action is put forward as being. Giving advice imposes and prescribes that an action *should* be done rather than claiming that it will be done. This implies that the recipient has some degree of choice in committing to the action. By giving someone a piece of advice, the advice giver also treats themselves as more knowledgeable than their recipient on that matter. This knowledge asymmetry can make giving advice a particularly tricky thing to do, in that it can propose that the recipient didn’t already know what to do, problematizing their competence (e.g., see Heritage & Lindström, 1998; Heritage & Sefi, 1992).

So, to summarize, there appears to be some key features intrinsic to “advice”: that a future course of action, ostensibly in the interests of the recipient, is promoted; that the action’s “normativity” is imposed; that a knowledge asymmetry is invoked between the speaker and recipient; and that an accept/reject response is provided for.

This network of dimensions has provided a useful starting point for considering what counts as advice in the corpus. This has meant considering a broad range of formulations that do the work of delivering advice. Knowledge asymmetry can be calibrated to claim that the advice recipient knows more or less than the advice giver concerning what course of future action they should follow. Normativity can also be calibrated to provide the recipient with more or less optionality or possibility other than to simply accept the advice. Table 1 provides a brief summary of how normativity and knowledge asymmetry can be calibrated to design “stronger” or “weaker” forms of advice.

The following analysis will highlight how the giving and receiving of a particular piece of advice might jeopardize the recipient’s rights and obligations

## ANALYSIS

The analysis will draw on a distinction between resisting the *action* of advice giving and rejecting the *content* of the advice. Recipients are able to resist the position of “advice recipient” using various methods to propose the independence of their commitment to a future course of action. So, an advice recipient can affiliate with the *content* of a piece of advice, agreeing that a course of action is relevant, and yet they can resist the *action* of advice giving by proposing that they already knew. Advice recipients can also disaffiliate with the content of advice by rejecting that a course of action is relevant to them. For issues of space, we will focus specifically on responses that

TABLE 1  
Forms of Advice

	<i>Normativity</i>	<i>Knowledge Asymmetry</i>
Stronger forms	Imperatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do X.</i></li> </ul> Verbs of obligation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>You need to do X.</i></li> </ul>	Unmarked assertions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>You need to do X.</i></li> <li>• <i>X is good.</i></li> </ul>
Weaker forms	Downgraded imperatives/obligations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Consider/think about doing X.</i></li> <li>• <i>Maybe you should do X.</i></li> </ul> Downgrading the favorability of a particular action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If you do X, then Y.</i></li> </ul> Removing reference to the recipient <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I would do X. (my-side telling)</i></li> <li>• <i>X is good. (assessment)</i></li> <li>• <i>I am doing X. (description)</i></li> </ul> Remove reference to advisor's perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dad wouldn't be happy about that.</i></li> </ul> Disguising the advice through advice-implicative actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Have you done X? (interrogative)</i></li> <li>• <i>X is good. (assessment)</i></li> <li>• <i>I am doing X. (description)</i></li> <li>• <i>If you are (category A), then you should do X. (advice-as-information)</i></li> <li>• <i>Shall I help you with X? (offer)</i></li> </ul>	Tag question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>You need to do X, don't you?</i></li> </ul> Interrogatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Have you done X?</i></li> <li>• <i>Have you thought about X?</i></li> </ul> Epistemic downgraders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Maybe you should do X.</i></li> </ul>

align with the content of advice to varying degrees. Let us begin by considering the environments for advice acceptance, followed by the environments where the action of advice giving is resisted.

### Acceptance

Prior research (e.g., Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Silverman, 1997) and analysis of the current corpus suggests that there is a reluctance to occupy the interactional role of "advice recipient." This is not to say that there won't be certain environments where "acceptance" may be more readily seen, but that such environments are interesting areas for consideration. Heritage and Sefi (1992, p. 395) argue that in the case of health visitor interactions with first-time mothers, "advice acceptance" seems to come in environments where "the advice recipient has already cast herself in the role of prospective advice recipient." Within the examples of advice acceptance in the current corpus, while advice has not been solicited, very little seems to be at stake in accepting a suggested or implied course of action. We will spell out what we mean by this in relation to each example.

#### Extract 1: P2C1 – Car trouble, 0:13

- 1 Mum: Just a quickie d'you- (.) >has-< ↑have you: urm:↑
- 2 remembered to check your water.
- 3 (1.2)
- 4 Lot: No I haven't but I will do (in a bit,)=no I'll
- 5 >do it in a minu:te.<

In this extract, Lottie is responding to a “reminder” to check the water; Mum is not overtly enquiring into the possibility of this as a future action, rather, whether she has remembered to do the action. Doing the action has therefore already been agreed upon. The advice-implicative interrogative form (Butler et al., 2010), together with its function as a reminder, work to propose that Lottie knows to do the action already but might have forgotten. So while Lottie’s response embodies advice acceptance, the terms that are being accepted mean that Lottie’s competence is not put in a very compromising position; she is accepting a reminder in the form of an advice-implicative interrogative that she will do something she has already committed to do.

Please note that where arrows appear in an extract the “A” marks the advice or advice implicative turn, and the “R” marks the responsive turn.

### Extract 2: P2C13 – Checking up, 0:46

- 1 Kat: ‘til I’ve got my gla:sses, u-  
 2 Kat: Ur:m (0.9) [but]  
 3 Mum: A→ [G- ] (0.2) gotta get those  
 4 [glasses ] ordered as well,=Haven’t you.  
 5 Kat: [(yeah but)?]  
 6 (0.5)  
 7 Kat: R→ Yeah=I’ll pop in to town on my luunch hour an do  
 8 it.

Similarly in this extract, the advice from Mum comes in an environment where Katie has already asserted some commitment to the future action: getting her glasses (line 1). Furthermore, by treating Katie as able to confirm the relevance of the future course of action through the tag question (line 4), Mum concedes epistemic authority (see Heritage & Raymond, 2005). This also functions as a reminder, treating Katie as already on board with the advice. Again, aligning with the advice might be less problematic here, as Katie is already positioned as knowing.

In both extracts the position the recipients inhabit is not one of clear incompetence; they are either aligning with the position of “already knowing,” or they would not necessarily be expected to know. The matter of what is at stake in accepting the advice seems to be a central issue that recipients orient to in choosing one type of response over another. The next section will demonstrate this by considering alternative response types where there seems to be more at stake when responding to the advice.

### Resisting the Action of Advice Giving

While the previous section showed that “acceptance” was found in environments where the recipient’s competence was not compromised, this section will show how more strongly misaligning responses seem to come in environments where conversely, the stakes are higher. A central issue when choosing one type of response over another seems to be with how the advice positions the recipient with respect to matters in their own epistemic domain. Moreover, while advice may cast the recipient as less knowledgeable, it may also carry with it a critical dimension in which the lack of knowledge may translate in to something morally contentious (see Heritage & Lindström, 1998). Recipients may be positioned as not looking after oneself, being a bad mother, having bad work ethic, or being frivolous with money, for example. Another example provided by Silverman

(1997, p. 155) is that advising a recipient “to be sure to have safer sex in future,” implies that the recipient has not been having safe sex in the past. In this case, merely accepting the advice would put the recipient’s sexual morality at stake.

This issue of “stake” can be most clearly demonstrated by first considering responses on the other end of the alignment continuum to “accept” responses, where the action of advice giving is more strongly rejected with explicit claims of competence and knowledge.

### *Explicit Claims of Competence and Knowledge*

The specific focus here is on the responses that strongly resist the action of advice giving through constructions such as “I know” or “I do.” They achieve this by explicitly orienting to issues of incompetence or ignorance that the advice may package. In the following extract, Mum is discussing Katie’s 2-year-old daughter’s hand, having just looked after her.

#### **Extract 3: P2C8 – Sudocrem, 0:59**

- 1 Mum: >Did you, <(0.2) did you think her ha:nd looked  
2 any better.  
3 (1.1)  
4 Kat: ↑>Yeah yeah,<↑=I hadn’t really noticed to be  
5 honest, So-rry,  
6 (.)  
7 Kat: Why- <what did you put on it.  
8 Mum: S:udocrem.  
9 (0.5)  
10 Kat: Yeah that’s what I’ve been putting on it.  
11 (0.4)  
12 Mum: A→Yeah but I’ve been putting it on: sort of like (0.6)  
13 every hour?  
14 (0.6)  
15 Kat: Oh right.  
16 (0.3)  
17 Mum: A→And she’s ↑quite accepting,  
18 (0.6)  
19 Kat: R→Yeah.=↑No I know I-↑(0.3) I know.  
20 Mum: She walks round with her <hand out> sort of he he hah  
21 hah hah  
22 (.)  
23 Kat: Ye:ah  
24 Mum: hu .hhh Bless her.

In this extract, Mum has initiated the advice sequence in a roundabout way, by reporting how she has potentially helped to alleviate Farah’s rash. In line 15, Katie treats Mum’s advice implicative/my side telling (see Pomerantz, 1980) as news, acknowledging the action of applying the cream every hour in the future, but without committing to doing it. Mum’s subsequent pursuit negates a possible obstacle—the assumption that Farah is not accepting of the cream (line 17).



This potentially implies that Katie is negligent in not regularly applying the cream, a critical dimension that is particularly weighted as looking after Farah is crucial to Katie's role as her mother. If Katie were to accept the advice, she would problematize her ability as a carer. Katie's explicit resistance (line 19) to the implicit advice to put the cream on regularly is therefore understandable here, as she is resisting not only the advice but the potential judgment that accepting it might entail. Katie achieves this resistance by negating the proposition that she didn't know (with "no") and then making two explicit claims to knowledge with "I know." The usefulness of "I know" is that it treats the matter as closed, heading off any need for advice. Indeed, Mum orients to this resistance by building her turn in lines 20–21 as continuing postresponse, elaborating her turn and reflexively recharacterizing it. Mum invokes Farah's potentially "funny" behavior, especially through the laughter in postposition, taking the emphasis off of what Katie has or has not been doing.<sup>1</sup>

Mum's advice-implicative description (line 17) is on the surface less imposing when compared with verbs of obligations and imperatives (see Table 1) because the recipient is not required to accept the advice but more minimally acknowledge the description (see Silverman, 1997, on advice as information sequences and Butler et al., 2010, on advice-implicative interrogatives). However, while the construction is less imposing, the specific relevance of this form to Katie's conduct, past and future, is what makes it hearable as containing some judgement and imposition. Here we also see evidence that it is the implication of accepting the advice that matters, rather than the cream in itself. This nicely demonstrates the social nature of advice, over a more straightforward informational level.

Similarly in the next extract, Mum's advice in lines 9–10 carries a potential critical dimension.

**Extract 4: P5C4 – Rhyme time, 1:45**

- 1 Lucy: So we [were- ] (0.3) dancing and singing to that, an:  
 2 Mum: [(cough)]  
 3 Lucy: °ha° - Eva was getting a little bit fright (h) e (h) ned  
 4 (. ) hu he=  
 5 Mum: =ehh heh heh heh  
 6 Lucy: But [urm: °but° yeah I think she liked it,  
 7 Mum: [ .HH  
 8 (0.7)  
 9 Mum: A→Okay well you have to just keep doing it until they  
 10 get [used to it. ]  
 11 Lucy: [<Yeah> ]  
 12 Lucy: R→I know heh huh .h [h It's [pretty- ]  
 13 Mum: [Are you- [>are you ] going to<  
 14 rhyme time again next week. =

Lucy has been reporting how she has been playing a nursery rhyme DVD to her baby daughter, Eva. The potential problem arises that Eva was frightened (although notably, she softens this trouble in various ways). Subsequently, in lines 9–10, Mum strongly forwards a future course of

<sup>1</sup>Here we see how laughter has the function of managing the sequence so that it is brought off in a less problematic way (see Potter & Hepburn, 2010, and Shaw, Hepburn, & Potter, 2013).

action through the construction “you have to” (see Table 1), positioning Lucy as knowing less than Mum (Heritage & Raymond, 2012) regarding what she should do to solve the problem.

Mum’s advice seems to undermine the problem by asserting that the issue “just” needs persistence (line 9). As such, it carries the implication that Lucy may be disposed to give up early. Furthermore, it is not about giving up on something trivial, but a matter essentially concerning her daughter’s development. Like the previous extract, at stake in not claiming competence is Lucy’s ability as a carer. Lucy’s assertion of knowledge (“I know,” line 12) is therefore fitted to the sequential environment as it explicitly asserts and raises the issue of knowledge, curtailing the relevance of any further advice to “keep doing it.” Indeed, Mum backs off slightly with a less imposing inquiry into a related event: “rhyme time.” Through this, Mum displays some orientation to the resistance, while still pursuing the underlying advice to continue engaging Eva with nursery rhymes.

We also see here that even though Lucy is apparently alluding to a problem that she is unsure about, thus potentially making advice relevant, the actual nature of the advice makes “acceptance” less palatable. So again, we see priority given to the social level of advice. That is, it is not just the content of the advice that matters, but who should know what.

In both extracts, the advice goes beyond forwarding a future course of action, to being packaged with some judgment whereby the recipient is cast as failing in some way. Further than this, the critical dimension is not concerning something trivial but the social responsibility of being “a good mother.” It therefore seems fitting that recipients work to strongly resist advice through explicit claims of competence and knowledge, when not doing so would put them in a morally compromising position. Interestingly, all five extracts in this collection are concerning the recipient’s conduct in relation to another person, a domain where conduct may be under more scrutiny. We will now consider the environments where we get the less-exposed type of advice resistance.

### *Claiming Prior Commitment to the Advice*

Within this collection, advice recipients tend to use the basic formula: “yeah + **I’m going to do X.**” What is notable about this type of response is that the recipient does not use the perhaps more straightforward version: “**I will do X,**” as we saw in the first section on advice acceptance. Instead, the recipients use a form that proposes that the commitment to doing the advised-about-action has been independently made. So, while the content of advice is being aligned with, work is done to manage the import or newsworthiness of that advice.

This section will consider the environments in which these claims of prior commitment are found (see Shaw, 2013, for a more detailed discussion on this type of response). In comparison with “I know,” these response types provide a demonstration of knowledge, resisting advice in a less exposed or on-the-record manner. That is, they *display* knowledge rather than explicitly *assert* it. This is achieved via displays of established intent, reformulating and elaborating on the action component of the advice, and claiming “firstness” in agreement.

The central argument here is that claims of prior commitment regularly occur in environments where there is a potentially critical dimension to the advice, where the recipient has some stake in resisting the advice. However, the critical dimension seems to be less potent when compared to the environments where we see more explicit forms of resistance. The analysis will proceed by discussing the resources used to claim prior commitment and the sequential environments that they are found.

*Displays of established intent.* The first extract comes from a call between Gen and Mum, where Gen has been complaining about the long hours she is working at the weekend, and Mum has undermined the extent of this problem.

**Extract 5: PIC4 – The appraisal, 10:45**

- 1 Gen: = <And <an::d, (0.2) ‘e wants me to go to breakfast  
 2 Sunday morning again as °we:ll,°=  
 3 Mum: =Oh yeah.=Well <that’s only at saddlers >in it.<=so  
 4 ‘at’s not too bad.  
 5 (0.8)  
 6 Gen: Well: yeah, but it’s still getting up bloody  
 7 earl [y af]ter (0.3) the (0.3)  
 8 Mum: [Yeah ]  
 9 Gen: <full weekend.  
 10 (0.2)  
 11 Mum: Yeah  
 12 (0.2)  
 13 Mum: A→.HH Well don’t get doing too ↓much or you will knock  
 14 [yourself ou:t. ]  
 15 Gen: R→ [<NO WELL I’LL def-](0.3)speak to-<I’m gonna speak to  
 16 him tomorrow and just say I wanna swap next weekend’s  
 17 shift.  
 18 (0.4)  
 19 Gen: >Well I don’t wanna swap it, I don’t wanna do it,<  
 20 Basically.<

Mum’s warning in lines 13–14 is interesting in that it both forwards a future action and builds a noxious upshot as a result of failure to follow that course of action (Hepburn & Potter, 2011b). As such, Mum seems to be proposing that Gen can do something about her problem, rather than more clearly taking the stance that the problem lies with the boss. Gen is therefore treated as having some responsibility in the curtailing and therefore existence of her problem. At stake, then, is Gen’s competence in looking after herself. The claim to prior commitment through the form “I’m gonna,” together with the elaborated and apparently well-thought-out plan (this resource is discussed in more detail in the next section), nicely combats this critical dimension by displaying that she is proactively dealing with the problem, which merely acquiescing with the advice would fail to show.

The response is also carefully gauged to the extent of judgment that is carried in the advice, where a more explicit claim to knowledge such as “I know” might be considered slightly overdone. While Gen might be at risk of being seen to contribute to her problem, this is perhaps a lesser transgression than failing in her responsibilities as a mother; for example, as we saw in Extracts 3 and 4. Although Mum is not aligning with Gen’s account of who is to blame, her project throughout is that Gen needs to cut back on work. Curtailing the sequence completely with “I know” would fail to attend to this somewhat supportive move. So in these types of examples, the recipient seems to be managing a potential critical aspect of the advice by orienting to an established intention or current occupation with carrying out the particular action. However, this critical dimension is less potent than what we have seen in the prior section on explicit or

more “high-stakes” claims of competence and knowledge. The next section will consider the environments in which recipients reformulate or elaborate on the action component of the advice.

*Elaborating or reformulating the action component of the advice.* The next extract is another example where the recipient’s handling of a problem is brought into question. We join the call where Mum has been describing her illness symptoms.

**Extract 6: P1C15 – Mum ill, 7:18**

- 1 Gen: [<B'that's just-](think) that's just you thinking  
 2 that though I think,  
 3 (1.4)  
 4 Mum: ↑Oh: no↑='cause I say my face is rea:lly painful.  
 5 (0.6)  
 6 Gen: Yeah?  
 7 Mum: mmm.  
 8 (0.4)  
 9 Mum: tch  
 10 (.)  
 11 Mum: Chu  
 12 (0.3)  
 13 Mum: °°But°° °>never mind.<°  
 14 (0.9) ((mouth noises during))  
 15 Mum: ANYWAY,=  
 16 Gen: A→= <You been to the d↑octors about it.=Have you?=  
 17 Mum: R→= > Well I've gotta go- I've gotta go to the < doctors  
 18 on Thursday anyway. So I'll [ask her about] it  
 19 Gen: [Oh: °right°. ]  
 20 Mum: the:n.

Gen delivers some advice through an inquiry that uses a tag formatted declarative (line 16). This advice-implicative interrogative (see Butler et al., 2010), comes in an environment where Gen has shown little alignment with Mum’s trouble (see lines 1–2), and so Mum’s ability to handle her problem is already under scrutiny.

The declarative form strongly proposes that Mum would have been to the doctors, packaging the activity as strongly expectable. Not having been already is built as the dispreferred response, reflected in Mum’s “well preface” and account for not having been already. Mum responds by aligning with the content of the advice, and yet she resists the newsworthiness of the advice by reformulating what it is exactly that she will do. That is, she doesn’t simply comply but displays some knowledge of how and when she will go to the doctors in an apparently thought-out manner. By reformulating the action component of the advice (like in the previous example) in accounting for not having been, rather than saying for example, “no, but I’ll do that,” Mum displays her prior commitment to managing her problem in this way while also managing why she hasn’t been to the doctors. This works to manage Mum’s competence in handling her problem in the way that the declarative strongly imposes that she should have.

Again, a more resistant response is made less relevant here by the more minimal judgment that is carried in the advice. That is, given Gen’s skeptical handling of Mum’s problem so far,

at stake here is Mum's apparent ability to handle her illness symptoms. Furthermore, Gen's advice-implicative interrogative supposes that Mum would have thought to go to the doctors herself, treating Mum as competent. Indeed, Gen has reopened the sequence, showing continued interest in solving Mum's problems, after Mum has moved to close the sequence in line 15 with "anyway." Asserting her knowledge or competence at this point would, as in the previous example, fail to attend to a somewhat supportive move. However, because of the interrogative form that is used here, Mum is limited in the linguistic resources to do this. That is, "I know" would not be an answer to a question.

So reformulating how an action will be done in the future seems to be one resource used by recipients to display an orientation to one's obligations and responsibilities, heading off the relevance of advice giving in a more subtle way to simple claims of knowledge or competence.

The next section will conclude this broader section on claims of prior commitment by considering the environments in which recipients claim "firstness" in their agreements.

*Claiming "firstness" in agreement.* As discussed previously, claiming "firstness" or epistemic authority in agreement (Heritage & Raymond, 2005) is another way that recipients work to claim prior commitment to advice. That is, recipients can do work to upgrade an agreement in order to reclaim the epistemic authority that has been compromised in going second. This section will highlight the potentially compromising environments in which these types of response occur.

The forms of advice in this collection are implicit through their appearance as "assessments" or "descriptions," where similarly to the case of advice-implicative interrogatives (see Butler et al., 2010), the recipient is not required to accept or reject a piece of advice but more minimally provide an assessment, acknowledgement, or an answer. The advice-implicativeness of these turns is discussed by Shaw (2013).

In the following extract, Mum and Pat are discussing the sale of Pat's house and an alternative possibility of renting. We join the conversation with Pat negatively assessing the latter option.

**Extract 7: P3C10 – Selling the house, 5:12**

- 1 Pat: I wanna go with a clean sla:te.  
 2 Mum: Yeah.  
 3 (.)  
 4 Mum: A→But- (0.2) but it would be a great position if: if:  
 5 you had some savings: (0.3) you know, (0.2) to  
 6 [add to ]  
 7 Pat: R→[ Abso] l↑tely.  
 8 Mum: to add to while you're away.  
 9 Pat: R→I kn↑o:w.=°I know.°<Imagine if we could put lik\*e  
 10 (0.2).hhh ↑because the cost of↑ living's so low and  
 11 we're not paying rent,  
 12 Mum: >M[m.<]  
 13 Pat: [We ] could- we could realistically put five  
 14 hundred pounds a month,=In savings,=  
 15 [At leas:t\*.=[Ea ]sily.  
 16 Mum: [↑Mm. ] [↑Mm]

Mum's assessment in lines 4–6 forwards the action of "saving money" and for a second time in the call. The "but" positions Mum's appraisal of "saving money" as contrasting with Pat's desire to "go with a clean slate" (line 1). By saying this for the second time and as an objection to Pat's stated desires, this assessment carries with it the critical dimension that Pat may not be cautious with money. By reclaiming the "firstness" of her second assessment and asserting independent rights to assess, Pat manages to resist this implicit judgment (lines 7–15). Pat does this by claiming to already be fully on board with saving money through the upgraded agreement turn "absolutely," which works like a confirmation or claim of certainty. The "I know"s (line 9) do semantic agreement by being positioned after an assessment while also making an explicit claim of knowledge. Pat then demonstrates this knowledge by detailing how exactly she could save money. She essentially claims to already be positioned as someone who is committed to being cautious with money, subverting the need to be (implicitly) advised on this matter.

However, being cautious with money, together with the less-forceful assessment form in comparison to verbs of obligation and imperatives, for example (see Table 1; Shaw, 2013), put Pat in a less compromising position morally than we saw in the case of explicit claims of knowledge.

This section has attempted to show how claims of prior commitment via assertions of "firstness" in agreement regularly occur in environments where there is a critical dimension to the advice that simply accepting the advice would not address. Resisting the action of advice giving nicely heads off such judgment by claiming to already be committed to the appropriate conduct. However, this critical dimension appears to be less exposed (through descriptions and assessments, for example) and moreover, less problematic than where explicit claims of competence are found.

In sum, this section on "claims of prior commitment" has considered how this broad type of response is occasioned. It has been shown that this broad type of response seems to occur in environments where the advice has put the recipient in a morally compromising position to some degree. However, this is notably less compromising than where we get the occasioning of more explicit claims of knowledge or competence, as was shown in the previous section. That is, more strongly resisting the need for advice might be considered overdone.

We do not wish to overstate categorical distinctions in response type here but to show the subtle use of different resources along a continuum. The next section will consider those types of responses further along the normativity continuum again, where resistance is more implicitly done through unmarked acknowledgments.

### *Unmarked Acknowledgments*

Heritage and Sefi (1992) identified "unmarked acknowledgments" as minimal responses to advice that do not clearly show acceptance of the advice. Instead, these types of response fudge the action they are doing. As such, they provide a more implicit resistance to advice compared to claims of prior commitment and more so again than explicit claims of competence. Here we are describing resistance to the *action* of being advised on one's future conduct. In terms of the rejection continuum, though, unmarked acknowledgments are more dubious, aligning less clearly with the *content* of the advice. That is, while resistant to the action of advice giving by claiming independent commitment to a future action, claims of prior commitment more strongly praise that action. This raises the question: Why do recipients resist with claims of prior commitment, when they could just resist with a more minimal unmarked acknowledgement?

While stronger claims of resistance seem to occur in environments where there is a critical dimensions to the advice, these unmarked acknowledgments seem to occur in environments where much less is at stake.

In the following extract, Katie has just been describing the nature of the headaches she has been suffering with.

**Extract 8: P2C14 – Headaches (painkillers), 4:19**

- 1 Mum: A→=I ↑↑tell you wha:t↑↑ the best one to try is the:  
 2 urm: (.) w:hjch (.) urm I (.) dosed meself up be-  
 3 °°fore°°(0.4) -fore on is the <they do a migraine one  
 4 quick relief migraine one.  
 5 (0.3)  
 6 Kat: R→°Y:[eah°  
 7 Mum: [<I know it's quite expensive but it (.) it's  
 8 good. hh  
 9 (0.2)  
 10 Kat: Yeah  
 11 Mum: >Have you not tried that one.<  
 12 (0.2)  
 13 Kat: No not yet  
 14 (0.6)  
 15 Mum: °Yeah (.) ↑well° (0.6) .hhHH (.) try 'em ou:t.<But  
 16 ↑is  
 17 i:t↑ (0.2) now that you haven't taken any painkillers  
 18 have you still got headache. Hh.

Mum is here recommending or positively appraising a particular painkiller (lines 1–4), with the implications that Katie should take the painkillers. This follows Katie's reported problems with her current painkiller. This recommendation does not treat Katie as having epistemic authority (see Heritage & Raymond, 2005, and, more generally, Heritage, 2012a, 2012b). Indeed, not knowing about a specialist type of painkiller in itself does not seem to be a very contentious issue. It does not cast any aspect of Katie's character or behavior in a negative light. Of course, this might be different if Katie were a pharmacist; more would surely be at stake. Not claiming or displaying competency in this instance does not seem to be a morally compromising thing to do.

Indeed, Katie only provides minimal responses to the advice in line 6 and again in line 10, despite the pursuit from Mum. The “yeah” only minimally resists the action of advice giving; Katie does not claim independent commitment to the future course of action. At the same time, because the “yeah”s (line 6 and 10) do not display any commitment to following Mum's advice, it is ambiguous as to whether the course of action is being affiliated with (Kinnell and Maynard, 1996). This commitment could be packaged as responsive to the advice, e.g., “I'll try them out” or as preexisting it, e.g., “I'm *going to* look into the different options.” So while Katie does some resistance to the advice, this is done in a much more measured way. One issue here might be that taking migraine medication seems a bit excessive for a headache, but by minimally responding, Katie maintains some kind of alignment and affiliation with Mum.

In the following extract, Mum suggests taking some chocolate hen lollipops off of their sticks, in order to avoid any danger to Katie's toddler, Farah, who will be eating them.

**Extract 9: P2C2 – Chocolate hens, 4:03**

- 1 Mum: A→[↑I ] would↑ take them off the stick if  
 2 that's possible,  
 3 (.)  
 4 Kat: R→°Yeahh°  
 5 (0.2)  
 6 Kat: °>Have a look.<°  
 7 (0.3)  
 8 Mum: A→If you put 'em in the fridge you're probably able to  
 9 break 'em off the fri:- s:tick,=Wont you,  
 10 (.)  
 11 Kat: R→Yeahh.  
 12 (.)  
 13 Mum: A→That's quite dangerous ↑i'n it.  
 14 (0.7)  
 15 Kat: HHhhh

In the first instance, Katie “acknowledges” some advice from Mum about taking the chocolate hens off their sticks (line 4). She further orients to the contingency: “if that’s possible,” in Mum’s advice by committing to: “have a look” (line 6). In this way, the response aligns with the possibility of a future action as opposed to something more concrete. As Mum apparently bought these chocolate hens and has herself left the sticks on, the expectancy for Katie to know about this potential hazard is possibly less contentious. This might explain why Katie does not orient to any prior knowledge or competency here. At the same time, “have a look” nicely displays some concern and attentiveness toward this issue, managing her responsibility as Farah’s mother.

Mum pursues her advice concerning lollipop sticks in the face of a lukewarm uptake from Katie, and tag formats it (line 9), making a “yes/no” response relevant (Raymond, 2003), while also treating Katie as able to confirm the veracity of this claim (Hepburn & Potter, 2011a). Katie’s unmarked acknowledgment, “yeah,” does not exert any competence on the matter, nor does it wholeheartedly accept the advice. Mum’s continued pursuit through the negative characterization of the problem as “dangerous” (line 13) is not overtly putting Katie’s competence at stake, in that the chocolate was apparently given to Farah by Mum in the first place. However, Katie is positioned as agreeing with the advice that kids ought not to have sharp stuff in their mouths, and to this she provides no further unmarked acknowledgements.

This example shows the way unmarked acknowledgments can blur the line between resisting and aligning with a somewhat troubling pursuit of advice. It also shows that even though the advice concerns Katie’s role as a mother, this “topic” alone does not implicate Katie in a particularly compromising position morally. That is, it is through the specifics of the local sequence of talk that these roles and obligations become manifest.

In sum, while explicit claims of competence regularly occur in environments where the stakes seem to be high in resisting the action of advice giving, unmarked acknowledgments seem to comparatively occur in environments where less seems to be at stake. So, while unmarked acknowledgments do some fudging between resistance and acceptance, the choice not to more strongly resist the advice seems to relate to the local environment whereby the terms of acceptance are brought to bear.



## DISCUSSION

This article set out to see how it was that people less subject to institutional constraints offer—or more especially, receive—advice. These are our main findings: Recipients can resist the advice by orienting to their competence in explicit, implicit, and ambiguous ways. Certain forms of advice in themselves provide the recipient with more leeway in terms of how to respond, and here the recipient's resistance may not be so readily exposed. Choosing one response over another is not necessarily just to do with the form of advice but seems to relate to other local issues, including the degree to which the advice implies fault. Let us briefly review each of these elements.

Recipients have the option to align or disalign with the central action of advice giving. Recipients can accept the advice, fudge acceptance with unmarked acknowledgments, implicitly reject the advice through claims of prior commitment, or explicitly reject the advice with claims of competency of knowledge. This article has argued that the position of advice recipient is a potentially contentious position to occupy whereby the recipient's morality can be jeopardized. The choice between one affiliative response and another seems to indeed relate to the degree of trouble accompanying the position of advice recipient.

As in Waring (2005), certain types of advice were shown to be resisted (rather than rejected) in particular ways. Within these mundane interactions there are arguably less-clear-cut roles and therefore more scope for different aspects of identity and character to be problematized through locally contingent critical moves. However, the more-explicit types of resistance, in these data at least, seem to concern the recipient's relationship with other people. It is therefore possible to see what aspects of behavior recipients treat as particularly morally contentious. And as in Heritage and Sefi's (1992) analysis of interactions between health visitors and first-time mothers, the analysis here has shown how the advice recipient's defensiveness seems to relate to the issue of morality. Furthermore, it is in environments where the daughter's role as a mother is put into a morally compromising position that we see some of the more defensive forms of advice resistance.

The notion of what is at "stake" for recipients of advice adds complexity to previous literature that has considered why advice is rejected. Jefferson and Lee (1981, 1992) claim that troubles-telling environments are ripe environments for advice rejection, as the troubles teller is required to adopt the role of "advice recipient" as opposed to "troubles teller." They include examples where the *action* of advice giving is resisted, as well as where the *content* of the advice is rejected. This analysis has highlighted other issues to be considered, including how the recipient is positioned morally. Indeed, it may be that the rejection of advice in troubles telling may be in part related to such local issues as opposed to the broader position of "troubles teller."

Other research has shown how advice acceptance can be facilitated by seeking the recipient's opinion first (e.g., Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Silverman, 1997). However, in the current article, even when the recipient is seemingly given the entitlement to offer advice (by invoking a K-position) the advice can still be rejected. The issue of stake might be one alternative and complementary issue in considering ways of promoting advice acceptance. Indeed, in these mundane interactions, many of the interactional constraints that come with institutional talk are missing, providing an array of issues concerning how advice is made relevant in the first place. As Heritage and Lindström (2012, p. 190) suggest, it seems to be the case that "responses to advice giving are fundamentally conditioned by the underlying social motivations that inform the interactants' reasons for participating in the first place."

In analyzing advice in these more mundane interactions, we have considered advice in terms of the dimensions put forward by Heritage and Sefi (1992), that is, normativity and knowledge asymmetry. In doing so, it has been possible to get more analytic traction through the exploration of more implicit forms of advice giving and receiving. This has enabled the possibility of adding further considerations, including how far the advice impinges on the recipient's own business and, relatedly, how much is at stake for both the advisor and advisee.

Future research will be to make formal comparisons with interactions of a more strictly institutional nature. In particular, it will be interesting to see how morality features in the selection of one response type over another. Furthermore, while the current study has focused on mother–daughter interactions, an interesting next step will be to extend the analysis to other filial relationships and different types of close relationships more broadly.

It is important to consider what the analysis here has to say about the relationship between the recipients. Within institutional settings, the activity of advice giving is often warranted by an institutional role. Although it might be said that mother and daughter may be in a particular kind of close relationship whereby establishing independence is particularly relevant, the types of issues that are tied to advice resistance are not exclusive to the categories of “mother” and “daughter.” Indeed, tying actions to categories of people is problematic in itself (see Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The point here is that although the critical dimension of advice may be more prominent in mother–daughter relationships, it is potentially a live issue for any context.

In responding to advice, interlocutors reveal some fascinating glimpses into their own social positioning, through the tight patrolling of certain territories of knowledge over others.

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