

Authority, subordination and the re-writing of ‘Epistemics’: A reply to a rebuttal

Douglas Macbeth

Ohio State University

This is a third post in reply to John Heritage’s rebuttal of the special issue of Discourse Studies devoted to a critical review of what is now a 30-year corpus of “Epistemic” studies of natural conversation, substantially authored by Professor Heritage.¹ This reply begins with matters of the rebuttal’s tone and temperament. It then moves on to briefly address a collection of ‘charges’ made against the critics, and then centrally to address how the rebuttal proceeds to re-write key features of the arguments and claims that the critics brought into view.

Introduction

As the third posting of a reply to John Heritage’s rebuttal of the arguments delivered in the special issue of *Discourse Studies* “The epistemics of Epistemics” (Vol. 18, No. 5, October 2016), we want to begin with an observation about the rebuttal paper that we think would be available to any reader, with no need for reading the arguments it rebuts. It is a very angry rebuttal. It resorts to denigrations of the critics and accuses us of personal attacks. It assures the reader that the critics offer an incompetent reading of CA’s disciplined practices, and are instead covertly promoting an irreconcilable conceptual program that, though it shared the formative history of CA, shares nothing with it now.

The critics are collectively and personally dismissed as “naïve and absurd” (p. 3) analysts, who partake of “wholesale misrepresentation” and “word games” (p. 10), which are underwritten by “fundamental errors in the group’s understanding of CA techniques and of its analytic armamentarium” (p. 14), and still other dismissals. These are *ad hominem* remarks in the extreme, and while we fully anticipated a rebuttal (and solicited commentaries by Heritage and others for the special issue), we were quite unprepared to find the very exercise of criticism *itself*, critical readings and critical exchanges, dismissed because “rehashing and litigating claims and counter-claims about texts do not advance our knowledge of social interaction...” (p. 4). But texts, of course, are where arguments, analyses, claims, counter-claims and intellectual histories themselves are played out. It’s not clear what other venue for scholarship Professor Heritage has in mind.

1. The rebuttal was posted on academia.edu, as were the replies by Lynch (2016) “Notes on a display of epistemic authority: A post-closure rejoinder to John Heritage’s rebuttal to ‘The epistemics of Epistemics’”, and Lymer, Lindwall & Ivarsson (2017) “Epistemic status, sequentiality, and ambiguity: Notes on Heritage’s Rebuttal”.

The rebuttal goes on to conclude with an authoritative call for a ‘separation’, a *decreo nisi*, that will effectively end any further need, sense or relevance for the criticisms that the rebuttal rebuts, especially given that there is “nothing in their critiques that has the least substantive merit,” and also because “the authors’ general ignorance of CA methods and results tend to turn out badly” (p. 2). We, the critics, have puzzled over the question of whether we have ever seen such an ill-disposed and high-handed author’s reply to critics.²

Our aim for the moment is to register the anger of the rebuttal, but also to raise the question: given the play of sequential organization in all sorts of communicative actions, could it be that the counter-claims and accusations of the rebuttal constitute an “insult in return”? Like greetings and compliments, insults tend to come in pairs: a first is met with a next, usually ‘in-kind’. And hearing an insult, seemingly a first, can lead one to search for its prior. And in that spirit, we want to register that while our special issue was clearly critical, even penetratingly critical, and was indeed pointing to what strikes us as marked conceptual departures from the labors and achievements of Garfinkel, Sacks and Schegloff and their studies and conceptualizations of grammars of talk-in-interaction, at no time did we intend “attacks ... on my research, both solo-and jointly-authored, reaching back more than thirty years” (p. 1). We were writing criticisms, not attacks, and it is difficult to see how scholarship can proceed without a serviceable distinction between the two. Yet an attack was clearly sensed and, measured to the rebuttal, deeply felt.

We wrote our criticisms on behalf of our understandings of Garfinkel, Sacks and Schegloff and the instruction we have found from them, personally and textually, throughout our careers. They were *our* mentors too. This is what motivated our special issue, and now, in the presence of the rebuttal by Heritage, we find further reason to take interest.

We do so in this post along a central line of interest: how it is that joined to the rebuttal’s expressions of authority and subordination,³ there also seems to be a re-writing of central positions taken in signal Epistemic publications, positions that were central objects of our critique. In this fashion, we actually may find in the rebuttal an affirmative response to our criticisms, a response that seems quite consequential for how we might read the literature in Epistemic CA from this point forward. If so, our criticisms may have been useful.

We also want to register from the outset our abiding appreciation of Sacks’ conceptual innovations, and his extraordinary proposal that by turning to actual materials in their constitutive detail, on the understanding that the parties to them are the first analysts on the scene and are giving evidence of *their* analyses of things like action formation, we might take whatever professional-analytic disputes we may have *back* to the materials themselves to take the measure of our disagreements. This was central to our critical commentaries. As Sacks observed,

2. The ‘decreo’ Heritage invokes has to do with his characterization of the critics as representing a program of ‘post-analytic ethnomethodology’. While his rebuttal devotes many pages to an historicized and literary account of ethnomethodology as a warrant for the claim, for us, it was a characterization completely ‘out of the blue’. [Lynch (2016) addresses it directly, and for anyone interested in the conceptual and professional histories of EM and CA, his multiple publications on the topic are highly recommended (Lynch, 1993, 311ff., 2000; Lynch and Bogen, 1994, 1996, 262ff.).] But more generally, we were struck with the sense of an ‘expulsion’, an exercise mindful of the early church fathers. The premise of the exercise, of course, is ownership, and we were unaware that Professor Heritage held title to the territory in question.

3. The phrase “authority and subordination” is borrowed from the title phrase in Heritage and Raymond (2005).

It was not from any large interest in language or from some other theoretical formulation of what should be studied that I started with tape-recorded conversations, but simply because I could get my hands on it and I could study it again and again, and also, consequentially, because others could look at what I had studied and make of it what they could, if, for example, they wanted to be able to disagree with me. (Sacks, 1984:26)

In this light, and especially in light of Sacks' extraordinary labors, we find a rebuttal that has no use for the exercise Sacks recommends. The rebuttal quickly dismisses as “gestures at ‘reanalysis’” (p. 2) the substantial collection of transcripts and commentaries that are critically re-examined in our special issue (transcripts and commentaries that, in many instances, are themselves re-analyses of materials previously reported and analyzed in the CA corpus). Heritage addresses virtually none of the many re-analyses that the special issue takes up and finds wanting. (We shall address the one that *is* taken up, in this post.) The rebuttal is in this way a decisive move away from the very possibility that Sacks was pointing to. At best, this is a disappointment. It deprives our several critiques of the very foundations that leverage them: the analysis of actual materials, and what can and cannot be said of them in the disciplined fashion of sequential analysis. That question is thus elided and avoided in the rebuttal.

First things

Turning to our central interest, we find in the rebuttal several formulations and re-formulations of prior, and central, positions within the Epistemic corpus that we critically examined in the special issue. Several of these appeared in the publications discussed in “The story of ‘Oh’: Part 1” of the special issue (Macbeth et al., 2016): Heritage, 1984; 1998 and 2002. Some may seem minor and only deserving of a footnote, and some are actually pursued in footnotes, and yet each is puzzling. And one such puzzle turns on a trail of footnotes. It is found in the first footnote in Heritage 1984, which acknowledges the relevance of Deborah James' (1972) first formulation of a pair of ‘Oh’ productions—“sentence initially, or by itself”—that becomes the pair ‘turn initial’ and ‘free standing’ in the 1984 and subsequent treatments. In the note, Heritage introduces James' prior work and observes, “The present chapter, in arguing that ‘oh’ makes a generic-change-of-state proposal that is made relevant by, and is particularized in, certain contexts, *takes James' view of the matter*” (1984: 337, footnote 1, emphasis added). We noted the debt in our special issue.

But in the rebuttal, also in a footnote, we are forcefully told:

Nothing in the paper was taken, as absurdly and misleadingly alleged by Macbeth et al. (2016: 553 et seq), from Deborah James' (1972) observations which, in the context of very little previous discussion of *oh*, were introduced in a footnote in my paper solely to contrast with Yngve's (1970) earlier treatment of response particles as undifferentiated ‘signals of continued attention.’ (2016: 6, footnote 3)

By this account, *nothing* in the 1984 paper was taken from James. (The contrasting account in the 1984 footnote is attributed to Charles Fries (1952), not Yngve.) We are left with the question of what it then means to ‘take James' view of the matter’? James' discussion seems to have been rather formative; she wrote a dozen years earlier. The Heritage distinction between “turn-initial” and “free-standing” seems clearly aligned to her prior formulation of “sentence initially, or by itself”. It is difficult not to see a strong family resemblance between them, and thus how a good deal was *not* leveraged from James' (1972) first observations.

By chance, the 1984 footnote to James ties to a next objection raised in the rebuttal, and again in a highly-charged footnote (number 7), on page 12:

In one of several bizarre misreadings of my paper, Macbeth et al. (2016: 555) treat my recitation of what I'm attempting to achieve in terms of general meaning and its particularization (Heritage 1984: 234 [sic]) as if it were an (of course, faulty) representation of how *oh* works in actual sequences of interaction.

We're not sure of what, if any, difference there is between "generic" meaning and "general" meaning, but in light of the 1984 footnote to James and its account of "a generic-change-of-state proposal that is made relevant by, and is particularized in, certain contexts..." our recitation appears to be *Heritage's* recitation of what he was "attempting to achieve," as seen in the central passage we examined:

The aim of this chapter thus far has been to demonstrate that the production of "oh" generically proposes that its producer has undergone some kind of change of state ... [I]t has been argued that this generic proposal is particularized by reference to the sequence types in which "oh" occurs and by the details of its placement in such sequences. Finally, some attempt has been made to characterize the formal or official sequence-specific tasks accomplished by the production of the particle... (Heritage, 1984: 324)⁴

In the rebuttal, our discussion of the passage is cast, "... as if it were an (of course, faulty) representation of how *oh* works in actual sequences of interaction." Perhaps because the objection is offered in a footnote, we hear nothing more of what a faithful representation would be. Nor do we understand how "formal or official sequence-specific tasks [are] accomplished by the production of the particle..." Note the alternation between 'formal tasks' and 'official sequence-specific tasks', and the puzzle of what is 'official' about them. By whose 'office'? As we observed, "... the weight of the account would be substantially relieved if it were understood that 'particularized expressions' are all that we ever hear, particularized within sequential production contexts and the like..." (Macbeth et al., 2016:555)

It was formulations such as these that we were bringing into critical view. And if ours is a "bizarre misreading" of the cited passage, it remains to be shown how it is a misreading at all, let alone a bizarre one. There is a long-standing distinction in sequential analysis between "claims" and "displays" of understanding, or now mis-understanding. Here, we have only the claim.

"Free-standing 'Ohs'"

Other objections (both ours and those of the rebuttal) may be more significant. One has to do with a central topic for Heritage (1984), and our review (Macbeth et al. [2016]): the nature of "free standing 'Ohs'", which are turns consisting of just and only the "change of state" token. Heritage (1984) characterizes them as "opaque" and "backward looking", and because they are, they provide no traction for next turns. There can be nothing done with them until more is heard from the speaker whose 'Oh' it is, and thus "free-standing 'Ohs'" are evidenced by how their recipients "withhold" next-turn remarks (having no idea of *what* "change of state" the just-heard "Oh" is indexing). "Withholding" thus becomes a central mark and evidence for the production of a "free-standing 'Oh'". A 'withholding' is how we know and recognize them.

4. Or, in Heritage (1998: 293): "In what follows, I shall continue to argue that *oh* generically proposes a 'change of state', here of orientation or awareness; but that its sense and the associated purposes of its use are particularized distinctively in this question-answer context."

To our summary account of this discussion, the rebuttal writes a significant revision of the original discussion in question, about “free-standing ‘Ohs’,” their opacity and the withholdings they engender. As we will see, it leaves us with two authoritative accounts, separated by thirty-plus years. In the first (Heritage, 1984), there is a categorical distinction between “free-standing ‘Ohs’,” and “Oh” in turn-initial position—as in “Oh no,” or “Oh you’re kidding.” And the turn-initial production turns out, in 1984, to be the overwhelmingly familiar one. Though it did not begin there, the 1984 discussion concludes that “free-standing ‘ohs’,” in their opacity and backward looking—a centerpiece of the early discussion—are “rare”, and this shift of position is closely tracked in our review:

As noted in Section 2, free-standing “oh” receipts to informings are rare in the data to hand. Instead, the particle most regularly occurs in conjunction with additional turn components... Thus, an informant/”oh” recipient may withhold further talk on the assumption that the “oh” already produced is prefatory to further turn components. (Heritage, 1984: 325; see also p. 302)

We then remarked:

In this fashion, the free-standing ‘Oh’—a central turn-production of the Jamesian ‘oh₂’ pair—becomes a rarely found one... ‘Withholding’ has become the withholding observed on any next turn’s turn-initial production, and the prior discussion of opacity and backward-looking yields to a discussion of projectability. (Macbeth et al., 2016: 558)

We continued:

In fairness, one could imagine other uses for the description ‘free-standing’, as in Schegloff’s (2007: 117) larger discussion of ‘sequence closing thirds’. For Schegloff, ‘Oh’ is an utterance doing sequential work, and is heard that way. For the EP, however, it seems to have been a link within a conceptual chain that treats—at least initially—this utterly commonplace expression as generic, opaque, backward-looking and free-standing, and, in the very first move, an index of both ‘changes of state’ and ‘extra-conversational contingencies’. (2016: 558)

The rebuttal here is complex, and it leads to a remarkable place. The path is through our remarks above (p. 558) about Schegloff’s usages, though only through the first two sentences. The rebuttal observes:

Indeed my paper argued exactly that. Schegloff’s (2007) discussion (which actually occurs on p.118) proceeds quite rapidly to a discussion of *oh* as a backward looking object that does not invite sequence expansion when it appears in free-standing form. Schegloff references this sequential account to Heritage 1984, and helpfully includes a footnote on p.119 with a concise description of the difference between turn-initial and freestanding forms of *oh*, which is also attributed to Heritage (1984, 1998). Perhaps Macbeth and his colleagues failed to notice these pages, or to grasp their import as a demolition of the case they had been struggling to make. But if *oh* is doing sequential work for Schegloff, and Schegloff references the analysis to Heritage, then a fair-minded reader might be inclined to conclude that *oh* is doing sequential work for Heritage as well. (p. 13)

There is much to be said about the passage. Whether Heritage 1984—in multiple discussions of “free-standing ‘Ohs’,” their backward-looking opacity and the withholdings they receive in reply to the uncertainties they project—has produced a description of “sequential work,” or a description of

a sequential “dead end,” is a question worthy of discussion. It is the question we were raising. As for Schegloff’s (2007) discussions, however, three things seem clear:

a) He does indeed cite Heritage 1984 with respect to “Oh” as a “change-of-state token” that registers a prior turn as an “informing” and thus a change from “non-knowing to now-knowing” (2007: 118). But the account so far is barely a sequential one at all, and Schegloff continues:

“Oh” can be deployed after a wide variety of utterances, positioned variously within sequences. For our purposes here, however the position of interest is after a first and second pair part ... where a change-of-state token can mark or propose the possible end of the sequence. (2007:119)

And such positions—sequence closing thirds—are indeed doing sequential work, rather than producing opaque puzzlements. They project closure and reflexively a next position for initiation. This is the sequential work we were pointing to, as different from Heritage’s brief remarks on “sequence exit devices” (1984: 318), or “a sequence-terminating ‘oh’...” (1984: 320) in sequences of “understanding checks.”⁵ Projecting sequence closure is a forward-looking—not simply a backward-looking—production. It is hearable for next horizons, not stasis. And this is what is so curious in the rebuttal passage above, specifically:

Schegloff’s (2007) discussion (which actually occurs on p.118) proceeds quite rapidly to a discussion of *oh* as a backward looking object that does not invite sequence expansion when it appears in free-standing form. (p. 13)

But this is a delicate matter, because:

b) Nowhere does Schegloff, in his cited discussion of sequence-closing thirds as doing “minimal post-expansion,” say *anything* about “oh” as a “backward looking object.” He says they can “mark or propose the possible end of the sequence” (Schegloff, 2007: 118). But again, this is sequential work, oriented to both the local sequential history *and* to projectable sequential horizons; this is more and other than producing an opaque token that cannot be read.

5. Note further how the discussions of “oh” as “sequence exit devices” are found in fourth turns, in understanding-check sequences wherein the ‘checker’ “identifies a trouble with a previous turn’s talk by proposing a solution to that trouble.” The candidate is then confirmed/disconfirmed by the first speaker in third turn, and this confirmation is then “routinely receipted” with an ‘oh’ in fourth turn (1984: 319). The following transcript (number 37 in Heritage, 1984: 318, line numbers added) is offered in evidence:

[NB: III:1:2]

((Re: an invitation for F’s daughter to visit))

1. F: When didju want’er tih come do::w[n
2. S: [.hhh Oh any time
3. between: now en nex’ Saturday, hh
4. F: A wee:k from:: (0.3) this coming Saturdee.
5. S: Yeah.
6. (.)
7. F: .hhh Oh:::

On consideration, however, one can fairly ask how the stretched “Oh:::” in line 7 is either a ‘routine receipt’, or a ‘sequence exit device’ as the discussion proposes. Absent a fuller transcript we can’t be sure, but it seems to mark surprise, misunderstanding, even troubles and, if anything, sequence expansion. (See footnote 12 for further discussion of the sequence.)

c) There then follows, in the rebuttal, a syllogism of a kind: “But if *oh* is doing sequential work for Schegloff, and Schegloff references the analysis to Heritage, then a fair-minded reader might be inclined to conclude that *oh* is doing sequential work for Heritage as well” (p. 13). But such a conclusion is well beyond “fair-mindedness,” unless citations imply programmatic endorsements. Schegloff keeps his own counsel. For example, in the above-referenced footnote (2007: 119) he observes:

“Free-standing ‘oh’” refers to an “oh” designed as an utterance or utterance-component in its own right – often by being delivered under its own intonation contour (Heritage, 1984), and is distinguished from “oh” designed to be a preliminary component of another unit of talk (as in “Oh–I don’t know”), what Heritage (1998) terms “oh-prefaced.”

This is of course the pair developed by Heritage (1984) through James (1972). Schegloff’s footnote thus references the distinction, reports how Heritage speaks of it, *and no more*. How Schegloff’s mentions are then a “demolition” of our critical review of the Epistemic “free-standing ‘Oh’” and its attachments seems again a claim pending its demonstration. And, again, one might think that its demonstration would take us to the transcripts re-analyzed in our special issue. One could expect, *per* sequential analysis, that a demolition would be produced *there*. Instead, the rebuttal argues that the Epistemic formulation of “free-standing ‘Ohs’” is closely aligned with Schegloff’s prior work on sequence-closing thirds. We will return to Heritage’s discussion of sequence-closing thirds (SCTs) below. His rebuttal on this point provides what is perhaps his most significant revision of the Epistemic armamentarium.

Rules of transcription

It should be noted that the rebuttal does take interest in—and bristling objection to—a particular re-analysis of transcript produced in 1984 that was offered as exemplary of “free-standing ‘Ohs’.” The re-analysis is discussed in Macbeth et al. (2016: 556):

(2) [Rah: II:7]; (line numbers have been added)

- | | | | |
|----|-----|----|--|
| 1. | | J: | Derek’s ho:me? |
| 2. | | | (0.5) |
| 3. | | I: | Yo:ur De[rek. |
| 4. | | J: | [Ye:s [mm |
| 5. | | I: | [Oh:. |
| 6. | 1 → | | (.) |
| 7. | 2 → | I: | An’– is he a’ri:ght? = |
| 8. | 3 → | J: | = Oh he’s fi:ne (Heritage, 1984a: 324, exhibit 38) |

Line 5 is identified as “free-standing”, given its transcription with the closing intonation of a ‘period’, and *also* by the micro-pause in line 6, claimed as evidence for a withholding of a next turn by its recipient [J], who is waiting to discover the sense of I’s (generic) change of state expression. We thought the argument for line 6 as J’s withholding was thin, on two counts. First, *every* pause is emblematic of a joint construction: whatever its duration, a pause is produced by all who witness and sustain it, notwithstanding that it may ‘belong’ to one party and not another. And second, but perhaps a point not made well enough, given that pauses are communitarian productions, we did not think it could be said just whose withholding it was. While the brief silence in line 6 is certainly a “pause”, we still need to establish its sequential production. And we thought one could perfectly well represent the transcript this way, as an oh-prefaced turn production:

- | | | |
|----|----|------------------------------|
| 5. | I: | Oh:.(.) An’– is he a’ri:ght? |
|----|----|------------------------------|

And thus the formatting of the transcript, giving a micro pause its own line, both disposed the reader to a certain reading, and leveraged a recipient’s “withholding”—and thus a ‘free-standing Oh’—on an exceedingly modest, even fugitive feature of transcript. This led to a vigorous retort:

Behind the various critiques of the oh paper offered by the EoE papers lie fundamental errors in the group’s understanding of CA techniques and of its analytic armamentarium. For example, Macbeth et al. seem to think that an analysis of freestanding *oh* is decided from whether the oh is placed on its own separate transcript line or not—a decision that they seem to view as arbitrary and misleading (Macbeth et al. 2006: 555-7). Yet for the past forty years, CA transcripts have followed Jefferson’s initiative in assigning a new line to pauses following complete turn constructional units. Complete turn constructional units are units that have come to syntactic, pragmatic and intonational completion (Ford and Thompson 1996), and that therefore give no immediate indication of continuation. “Oh.” (within its own intonation contour) is certainly such a unit and, if and when it is followed by a pause, the pause will be correctly placed on a new line.

The reason for this convention is that, by the rules of the turn-taking system ... any completed turn constructional unit is a potential candidate for a response involving a change of speaker. ... A transcript can make that possibility more or less visible, but it cannot alter the fact that an *oh* with its own encapsulating intonation contour can never be other than a free-standing object. (Heritage 1998; Schegloff 2007; Raymond 2010; Reed and Raymond 2013). (Heritage, 2016: 14)

Still, notwithstanding the evident authority of his account and its definitions, we noted at the time that the sequence was produced a second time in Heritage (1984: 329). And there it renders a *different* “Oh”, one that is followed by a comma (arrow 2), which according to Jefferson (1984: xi) “indicates a continuing intonation, not necessarily between clauses of sentences.”

[Heritage, 1984: 329, Ex. (38), Rah:II:7 (extended)]

- ...
1. → J: [Derek’s home?
(0.5)
I: Yo:ur De[rek.
J: [Ye:s [mm
2. → I: [Oh:,
3. → (.)
I: An’- is he a’ri:ght? =
J: = Oh he’s fi:ne

So, however authoritative the account of the ‘rules’ of both sequence organization and transcription, there is no relief from disciplined hearings. ‘Rules’ will never tell us when and where they have been aptly applied. *That* was our question, then, and now.

On causatives and communication

Recall that the rebuttal to our remarks on “free-standing ‘ohs’” began with our observation that Schegloff’s use of “Oh” in sequence-closing thirds shows an utterance doing sequential work, and is heard that way. In our view, the play of “Oh” through Heritage’s various treatments over the years (e.g., 1984, 1998, 2002, *passim*), is as a generic token or particle, indexing changes of states, or claims or possessions of knowledge, information, epistemic status, or structure itself. “Oh” is a central

“ticker”, episodically marking the work of parties who are relentlessly engaged in monitoring what the ticking is about: “Interactional participants keep rather exact track of who knows what at each and every moment of an interaction” (Heritage, 2005: 194). Note, however, that claims about “each and every moment” defy empirical demonstration, and thus speak in a very different register.

One may wish to make out such preoccupations as central for the smooth running of action formation and conversation itself, and we agree, and insist, that the Epistemic account does so. By the Epistemic account, actual turn productions, e.g., action formation in first turn, would falter and succumb to uncertainty, if not ambiguity, were it not for the relentless monitoring of Epistemic status that underwrites, and “trumps” when necessary, morpho-syntactic and intonational productions (see Lindwall et al., 2016, and Lymer et al., 2017). But Schegloff has none of that, and if the occasional uptake of “Oh” in his discussions, and they are only occasional, is to suggest otherwise, it will have to be shown.⁶

These preoccupations bring us to whether or not Epistemic status is a causative apparatus, “driving” sequence productions, as is said so many times across an extensive literature, or is now to be understood as a “communicational” vehicle for the expression of Epistemic relations. The difference, and putative errors of the first reading, is claimed for the first time in a few places in the rebuttal, including this one:

The failure to distinguish between resources for communication and causal processes is endemic in the EoE papers. My work aimed to establish relationships between communicative practices and routine states of epistemic relations *as a communicative matter, not as a cause of behavior*. (Heritage, 2016: 27, footnote 10, original emphasis)

This is a central argument in the Heritage rebuttal. Yet as Lynch (2016) observes in his reply, Epistemic “status” and perhaps also “stance”—if the difference can be established in any actual case (see also Lindwall et al., 2016 and Lymer et al. 2017)—are repeatedly treated as the forces of an “engine”, “shaping” sequential productions, and “driving” next expressions such as “Oh” in the service of “indexing” Epistemic claims, structures, possessions and their distributions. The causative play of epistemic status is replete in the Epistemic corpus (and finds its most developed expression in Heritage 2012b and the special issue it joins). “What drives sequences?” is Drew’s (2012) title question. The causative language is not ours.

6. In a footnote to the rebuttal (p. 32, footnote 13), Heritage allows there may be some useful distance between his Epistemic inquiries and Schegloff’s sequential analyses.

Note that I do not assert, as claimed by Lynch and Wong (2016: 530) that “requesting and asserting information makes up the ultimate paradigm of an adjacency pair first action” (Heritage 2012a: 3) (sic). Rather I assert that requesting information represents such a paradigm. This is at variance with a point made by Schegloff (1988) to the effect that there are no ‘paradigm’ cases of adjacency pairs point [sic], though the basis for my departure is too complex to address here and now.

He concludes by deferring any discussion of his departure from Schegloff, saying that it is “too complex to address here and now.” The 2016 special issue directly addressed several such Epistemic “departures” across multiple conceptualizations that are indeed complex. We look forward to reading a discussion of these departures, and this one, on some future occasion.

And Heritage allows in his rebuttal that the metaphor of the ‘engine’ may have been overcharged.

Although I used the metaphoric term ‘engine’ with its unfortunate implicit invocation of internal motivation for sequences, my focus was, and is, on how a K+/K- imbalance can be a *warrant for continuing, and accountably so*, in sequence expansion. This conceptual stance pervades my case-by-case analysis, and was also articulated explicitly:

I see the engine primarily in terms of accountability rather than motivation: A person, finding some new thing to say, is warranted in saying it, and finds warrant from others in its saying, by the fact that it is a “new thing.” If we restrict the engine to this layer of public accountability, then, I believe, we remain on the relatively safe ground of finding evidence for its operation in public displays of its relevance or relevant absence. (Heritage, 2016: 41 [emphasis in original], quoting Heritage, 2012c: 80)⁷

This pair of passages offers much to consider. First off, the idea of an “implicit invocation of internal motivations of sequences” (we would say, on his behalf, “causatives”) is hardly a tertiary reading for the metaphor of “engines” equipped with “hydraulics”. Engines are drivers. They drive things forward. That’s what they do. It is hard to imagine some other intended reading of the ‘metaphor’.⁸

Second, it is not clear that the ‘restrictions’ proposed in 2012c—leveraged from how ‘new things’ are warranted for the saying because they are new—have been observed in subsequent discussions. Is

7. We want to note a puzzle of reference in both passages. The notion of “accountability” is familiar enough in popular parlance. Public officials, like teachers and politicians, are to be held “accountable”. It’s a useful expression. But Garfinkel’s discussions of “accountability” (Garfinkel, 1967; Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970) shows an incommensurate conceptualization of the ‘account-able’:

Their central recommendation is that the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members’ procedures for making those settings ‘account-able’. The ‘reflexive’ or ‘incarnate’ character of accounting practices and accounts makes up the crux of that recommendation. (Garfinkel, 1967: 1)

How Garfinkel’s treatment of accountability relates to Heritage’s remarks on “how a K+/K- imbalance can be a *warrant for continuing, and accountably so*,” and how the engine is to be seen “primarily in terms of accountability rather than motivation...” is not clear. So too for the proposed “safe ground” that is secured “if we restrict the engine to this layer of public accountability...” We simply do not know what layer this is, or how he is speaking. Perhaps we are on safer ground if no continuity is presumed.

8. Subsequently in the rebuttal, and though fully qualified, the “driving” metaphor and its familiar reading is affirmed:

I fully reiterate the claim that “expressions of epistemic imbalance drive sequences” (Heritage 2012b: 32), but I also believe that they are very far from being the only sequential drivers out there. ... I would add that the proposal that such expressions have sequential consequences is not formally different from the idea that adjacency pair first actions have sequential consequences. (2016: 39)

Thus, a diversity of “drivers” is affirmed, and with it the “driven” account of talk-in-interaction, joined by the phrase “sequential consequences” (itself later paired with “sequential obligations”). ‘Questions’, like greetings and compliments, certainly are implicative, each in its occasioned particulars. As expressions of sequential order and production, they certainly make replies and answers relevant. But there are too many *other* possible next turns that can be made relevant, leaving the driven account with the puzzle of ‘failed’ drivings. Everything can’t be “driven”. This would be a return to mid 20th century certainties and Wrong’s (1961) “over-socialized conception of man” [sic]. It is the ‘driven’ account of talk-in-interaction that our reviews were pointing to, and the distance between such an account and the founding grammatical emphasis in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, and Garfinkel before them. Theirs were not ‘driven’ grammars. Their gears worked very differently.

the ‘engine’ now to be read as an expression of the primacy of ‘telling new things’? If ‘new things’ are what drive sequences forward (as different from, say, discussing a football game or family dinner with one who was there), then it would seem we have found another novel formulation of ‘information’ in the play of sequence production. “Telling news” is certainly a topic in sequential analysis (cf., Maynard, 1997; Schegloff, 1988; Terasaki, 2004), where it is understood as ‘news in the context of how we have been speaking’, meaning that every telling shows its ‘tie’ to the talk at hand even if it takes its leave of prior talk. But there are a great many ‘new things’ that could be said that would be quite insensible in any actual conversation. If ‘telling new things’ is to be understood as the ‘fuel’ of the Epistemic engine, then this may be a central argument in Heritage (2012c) that we simply missed, and perhaps because it shows so little subsequent development.

The rebuttal passage (p. 41) also assures us that the focus is, and has been *all along*, on “how a K+/K- imbalance can be a *warrant for continuing, and accountably so*, in sequence expansion” [original emphasis]. This also strikes us as an innovation. Our readings of prior publications found treatments of K+/K- imbalance oriented to the disambiguation of first actions when syntax and intonation fail the task (see Lindwall et al., 2016)⁹. Imbalance is now, on this account, a “*warrant for*

9. To anticipate an objection already made, the Heritage rebuttal assures the reader that the disambiguation of first actions has nothing to do with an ‘inherent ambiguity’ of talk:

I absolutely reject the misleading claim that I think utterances are inherently ambiguous. My question concerned how sequences and other background information inform the recognizability of actions, in such a way that ‘*ambiguity*’ *specifically does not arise*. Focusing on participants’ abilities to distinguish between the actions of giving and requesting information, my claim was, and remains, that joint recognition of relative epistemic status – however achieved – is the primary vehicle for this. (Heritage 2016: 31, emphasis in original)

Yet the passage can be read to suggest a device for preempting the ambiguity that *would* arise in its absence—the reckonings of Epistemic status—by securing the critical difference between requesting and giving information. Lindwall et al. (2016) provide an instructive reading of how the Epistemic reading *inserts* the hazard of ambiguity that epistemic ‘status’ is claimed to resolve:

[I]f the sequential environment of the utterance is removed, and only syntax and intonation are considered, any utterance is in principle ambiguous with regard to the action it is performing. (Lindwall et al., 2016: 504)

Their larger argument is highly recommended. (See also Lymer et al., 2017.) As they note, Schegloff (1984) takes interest in ambiguity too, and the difference suggests the distance between his and the Epistemic conceptual landscape. Lindwall et al. (2016: 504) note that discussions of ambiguity through Schegloff (1984) are of a “theoretical ambiguity – a potential ambiguity ostensibly ‘produced and solved without surfacing’” (2016: 504).

Most theoretically or heuristically conjurable ambiguities never actually arise. That could be so because of the operations of a so-called disambiguator, as a component of the brain, as a service of context to syntax, and so on. Or it could be that the theoretically depictable ambiguities are derived by procedures that are not relevant to naturally occurring interaction, and therefore in natural contexts the ambiguities are not there to disambiguate. (Schegloff, 1984: 50)

The question of ‘conjurable ambiguities’ derived from ‘procedures that are not relevant to naturally occurring interaction’ strikes us as a signal question for Epistemics. Is there a tie between ‘theoretically depictable ambiguities’ and proposals for the constant, at “each and every moment”, intersessions of reckonings of epistemic status, and what of *those* ambiguities? [See also Lymer et al. (2017)].

For Heritage, ‘epistemic status’ appears to be a firewall, the back up to the first plays of morpho-syntax and intonation within a single turn’s construction. On the other hand, if we understand sensible expressions as occasioned productions, and *this* inherently so, Epistemics would have nothing to disavow. Occasioned sense doesn’t begin as ambiguous sense; there’s no repair ‘built into’ it. It’s occasioned. But there may still be the difficulty sighted by Lymer et al. 2017: if every expression is an occasioned expression, ‘epistemic status’ would seem to be a diminished account of the ‘occasioned corpus’ that renders every next expression, in its occasioned particulars, sensible (Zimmerman and Pollner, 1970).

continuing... in sequence expansion". Like 'telling new things', however, we find no development for it in the 2012 special issue, for example.¹⁰ One could, of course, align these proposals by saying that securing a hearing of a current turn (as, for example, telling a new thing) is the portal onto *every* next turn, *and therefore* onto sequence expansion. But this would be no more than to say that 'expansion' entails the production of next turns. The alignment would be a reductionist account of both sequence expansion *and* turn construction, which are quite different topics in CA. Still, the proposed ties and interests in Epistemic imbalance for 'telling new things', and sequence expansion are newsworthy, and are not the only innovations that show themselves in the rebuttal to the 2016 criticisms.

Curious locutions

An early topic we take up in our treatment of Heritage (1984) is his discussion of other-initiated repair sequences and how they are organized. These passages (Heritage, 1984: sections 5 and 6) speak on behalf of the work of "Oh" in last position. The schematic representation looks like this:

1. A: Repairable
 2. B: Repair Initiation
 3. A: Repair
 4. B: 'Oh' receipt
- (Heritage, 1984: 319)

And it was the accompanying narrative that drew our attention:

Given this organization [of other-initiated repair], the initiator of a repair may be committed by the provision of a repair, to have undergone a change in his or her state of information and may be required to propose just that. The particle "oh" is a major resource for the achievement of this proposal which, in turn, permits a mutually ratified exit from repair sequences. (Heritage, 1984: 318)

We found it a "curious locution" that writes 'pre-commitments' into other-initiated repair sequences, animating them with hidden tasks and tensions we hadn't heard of before in the CA literature on repair, and then assigns the task of resolving those tensions to "Oh" productions in last turn. The account seemed built to give the particle 'Oh' useful work to do. The rebuttal rebuts:

[M]y "curious locution" was an attempt to get at the sequential obligations that are publicly mobilized in sequences of other-initiated repair, and it was these and other sequential obliga-

10. The phrase "sequence expansion" appears twice in Heritage 2012b (p. 36 and 37), and once in Heritage 2012a. There (2012a), he is discussing the "propositional contents" of the following imagined first turns:

- Are you married?
You're married, aren't you?
You're married.

He marks the K+ /K- gradients that [reflexively] attach to them [the first question is least knowing and most K-; the last is most K+], and observes:

While taking an "unknowing" epistemic stance ... invites elaboration and projects the possibility of sequence expansion, the more "knowing" formats... tend to invite confirmation and sequence closure (Heritage, 2010; Heritage & Raymond, in press; Raymond, 2010). (Heritage 2012a: 6)

This appears to be the extent of the discussion of epistemic gradients for sequence expansion in the 2012 special issue. (Heritage & Raymond, in press, and Raymond, 2010, cited in the rebuttal, do not appear in its reference list.)

It is in this context of prior work that we found in the rebuttal a remarkable re-writing of the interests in this unremarkably mundane expression and the structures it is said to index. Following a citation to Norrick (2009), as to how it is that ‘oh’ “is the second most common turn-initial object in English conversation”, we are assured that

A large proportion of these instances of *oh* (whether free-standing or turn-initial) are likely to be in third turn, operating as responsive acknowledgements of information and having sequence-closing import. And the sequence-closing aspect matters... this usage likely is the primary element accounting for the frequency with which *oh* appears in conversational corpora. (Heritage, 2016: 18)

This is news. In this fashion, a 30-year corpus that had quite little to say about “Oh” productions in third turn is now speaking of them as “the primary element accounting for the frequency with which *oh* appears in conversational corpora” (2016: 18). Underwriting the move is a tack towards Schegloff’s treatments of ‘third-turn closure’, which is a major preoccupation of the rebuttal’s pages 15–20, and we want to try to account for it.

It begins with an objection to our treatment of an imagined “third-turn proof procedure” (our phrase), that began with a discussion of the Heritage (2012c) and Levinson (2013) critiques of CA’s “next-turn proof procedure.” The discussion is to be found in Macbeth and Wong (2016: 586) and our discussion here is limited to the following points.

Our remarks were a rebuttal to the Heritage and Levinson critiques. The insight of the ‘next-turn procedure’ is that next turns routinely display the speaker’s analysis and understanding of what has just been said. The pervasive achievements of common understanding are first and routinely exhibited in next turns (see Moerman and Sacks [1971/1988]), and the exercise of consulting these understandings of prior turns seems to be, for the parties, ubiquitous. So too for sequential analysts, and Heritage claims to have had “plenty of use” for the next-turn procedure (p. 15). We don’t doubt it. Sequential analysis would be unrecognizable without it, less as a procedure than an identifying way of taking interest.¹²

However, his and Levinson’s formulations of “action formation” are leveraged on the claimed analytic, and even “occult”, *insufficiencies* of the “next-turn procedure” (cf., Heritage, 2012a: 2–3; 2012c, and Levinson, 2013: 105.) Where Heritage (2012c: 80) found the next-turn procedure insufficient as “a source of unequivocal validation” of a first turn’s action, we pointed out that there was little about the grammars of natural language that *ever* produce “unequivocal validations.” Conversation doesn’t proceed from one ‘unequivocal validation’ to a next, turn by turn.

12	Lot:	Uhh! [huh-hu:h hy]:h,
13	Emm:	[.hhhhhhhhh]
14		(.)
15 →	Emm:	Ah:: I been to the do:ctor, hhhhhh

We inserted the arrows in the far-left margin to flag five expressions. The arrows to the right of the line numbers are original and flag the single “Oh” in line 5. The commentary remarks that Emma “... shifts topic at line 15 – a shift adumbrated by her initial oh-prefaced response to the initial inquiry (at line 5) ...” We noted our puzzlement over how the “Oh” in line 5 foreshadows the topic shift in line 15. We also noted that Emma’s “initial oh-prefaced response” is actually in line 1, not line 5. Because the transcript begins with a second-position remark, we do not see the initial inquiry.

But our real point was that the notion of a next–turn *proof* procedure was a misreading. Sacks et al. were not claiming analytic proofs of what first turns were doing from next turn remarks.¹³ The procedure of consulting the parties’ next turns does not prove a hearing, whether it is the hearing evidenced in next turn [a turn cannot ‘prove’ itself (see Schegloff, 1996: 173)] or, and especially, the hearing of the professional analyst. Rather than proving, our point was that next turn remarks display a hearing, and thereby discipline the overhearing analyst to the parties’ first analyses. They tie our analyses to the analyses of the parties on the scene. And our question was: having alleged the insufficiency of next turns as such a resource, a move that is so central for posing the Epistemic puzzle of first turn “action formations” (Heritage, 2013a)—as though first turns were not themselves next turns produced within sequential environments (see Lindwall et al., 2016)—how would the Epistemic analyst be disciplined to the vernacular grammars of actual talk–in–interaction as evidenced by the speaking parties?

12. We presented a transcript relevant to a discussion of next turns in footnote 5, above. There, S is asking F when a visit by F’s daughter [S’s cousin] can be expected.

(37) [NB: III:1:2] [line numbers added]

1. F: When didju want’er tih come do::w[n
2. S: [hhh Oh any time
3. between: now en nex’ Saturday, hh
4. F: A wee:k from:: (0.3) this coming Saturdee.
5. S: Yeah.
6. (.)
7. F: .hhh Oh:::. (Heritage, 1984: 318)

We were raising the question of how the “.hhh Oh:::” in line 7 was either a “routine receipt”, or a “sequence exit device” as claimed in the discussion (Heritage, 1984: 319). We thought that it might mark surprise and, if anything, sequence expansion. But the transcript ends with line 7. Thus, absent the “next–turn procedure” we are left with the assurances of the overhearing analyst. However, if one examines the next turn as seen in the *full* transcript, one does indeed find expansion, ‘Oh–prefaced’, even:

4. F: A wee:k from:: (.03) this coming Saturdee.
 5. S: Yeah.
 6. (.)
 7. F: .hhhh Oh:::. (0.2)
 8. .hh We::ll?
 9. S: .hhh Oh she c’n come do:wn (uh:m.). (1.2) Le’s^{ee}:. (0.7) .hhhhhh
 10. (0.4)
 11. Uh::[:m,
 12. F: [Wil yuh know Ah’d ha:f t’bring’e:r...
- [<http://talkbank.org/browser/index.php?url=CABank/Jefferson/NB/12invitation.cha>]

Line 7 now appears as neither a ‘routine receipt’, nor an ‘exit device’, for both parties.

13. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) speak of ‘next turns’ as a “central methodological resource” and observe:

The display of those understandings in the talk of subsequent turns affords both a resource for the analysis of prior turns and a proof procedure for professional analyses of prior turns—resources intrinsic to the data themselves. (1974: 728)

The reader can take the measure of what kind of “proof” this is. We take it that what the parties make of prior turns is a resource for taking the measure of the reckonings of dis–engaged analysts, and this is intrinsic to the materials themselves. That such measures could be intrinsic to the materials was, and is, an enormous innovation in social science. See also Schegloff (1996: 173ff.), approvingly cited in the rebuttal.

That was our question: if the next–turn procedure is insufficient, how else would the Epistemic analyst be disciplined to the talk–in–interaction whereby the parties evidence their understandings of prior turns? And in answer to the question, and with a smile, we offered up a sequence in which Heritage (2012a:10) seemed to be writing a ‘third–turn procedure’. In it, Ida is quizzing Jen about her work schedule, a schedule that apparently has implications for Ida too, which Ida had heard from a third party. Briefly, the sequence with its original annotations is this:

- (5) [Heritage 2012a:10, Ex (10), Rah:12:4:ST] [arrows are in original text]
- 1 Jen: → = [Okay then I w]’z askin = ‘er en she says yer
 2 → working tomorrow ez well.
 3 Ida: Yes I’m s’pose to be tihmorrow yes,
 4 Jen: → O[h:::
 5 Ida: [Yeh,

The 2012a commentary observes:

Jenny’s declaratively framed utterance [turn 1] references information that is in her recipient’s epistemic domain and is treated as a request for confirmation (line 3). Here it can again be noted that Jenny’s change of state (K– → K+) oh–receipt *confirms by implication that her original declarative was indeed a question in search of information.* (2012a: 10; emphasis added)

We suggested that we may have here a kind of ‘proof procedure’. For having produced her ‘Oh–receipt’ in third turn [line 4], we have ‘proof’, “by implication”, that Jen’s first turn “was indeed a question in search of information” (or confirmation) of what she had heard. We now have grounds for identifying the action formed in Jen’s first turn in her *third* turn, a “third–turn proof procedure”.

But, we suggested this would be a “curious procedure”. We already have in hand Ida’s next turn, revealing *her* reckoning of what Jen was doing in first turn. And if Jen’s third turn (in line 4) is somehow a return to her understanding of her own first turn, well, it was *her* turn to begin with. So what need would she have for a third–turn procedure here? In this context we observed, as the rebuttal recites:

There’s no evidence that natural conversation could actually ever go on this way, in a regime of third turn confirmations. (Macbeth and Wong 2016: 587)

And it is from *here* that the rebuttal turns to Norrick (2009), the frequencies cited for ‘oh’ productions (18), and Schegloff’s work on repair after next turn, and especially third–turns “with sequence–closing import”, as Oh’s most familiar productions. The rebuttal thus aims to show the relevance of ‘third–turn proofs’.

In this way, the rebuttal simply missed our use of the sequence above, and took it as a challenge to show the relevance of third turns for sequential order. We never imagined otherwise. In suggesting a “*third–turn proof procedure*” in the sequence above, we were only asking how Epistemics proceeds, *absent* the ‘next turn procedure’ that has proven so serviceable in sequential analysis. This mis–reading seems to have led to the rebuttal’s keen interest in third–turn closings, and the arguments marshaled on their behalf. (And of course one could ask: by what resources do we hear that a third–turn closing is, for the parties, a closing bid?)

But to return to our larger point: Heritage (1984, 1998, 2002, *passim*) wrote the story of “Oh” very differently. The rebuttal’s turn to third–turn organizations is a move in reply to a critique of prior Epistemic discussions that had little use for third–turn productions, *at all*. This is both a major innovation and an agreeable one, so far as it goes, insofar as it affirms the exercise of critique.

Conclusion

Having missed the ‘key’ of our discussion of a “third–turn proof procedure,” the rebuttal argues from a mis–reading of the critique. It is not the first or only time, but this mis–reading seems to yield a fairly large–scale revision to the story of “Oh”. What should not be missed is how a 30–year literature was built upon readings of changes of state, free–standing, opaque and backward looking expressions and what they index, “withholdings”, “Oh–prefaced next turns” and assessments, proprietary relations, ‘extra–conversational contingencies’, sequential drivers, and the rest. We questioned several of these claims and formulations from the early literature, and now a new and usefully different account seems to have been produced. Among other things, we are assured that Epistemic relations are a “communicative” matter, that Epistemic gradients are in the service of ‘telling new things’ and ‘sequence expansion’, that Oh–prefaced first and next turns are apparently secondary in accounting for the corpora of ‘Oh productions’, and that sequence–closing thirds are their mainstay. Taken together, the rebuttal seems to have substantially revised the Epistemic conceptual map and “Oh’s” place within it. Though perhaps this is an American expression, our special issue was pointing to how ‘the tail’ of “Oh” had come to ‘wag the dog’ of conversation’s organizations. We cannot tell for sure, but perhaps the rebuttal, in its move toward the more local organizational domain of third turn productions, has tamed the wag.

But at key points, it does so from criticisms that were not made (as can be found in the replies by Lynch [2016] and Lymer, et al. [2017] as well). The most recent criticism taken up in our discussion that *was* made, about “next turn procedures” as a resource for disciplining professional analyses, was, it seems, simply missed. Discussions of repair in third turn, for example, and the defense of intersubjectivity *there* are simply non–responsive to our question of how an Epistemic analysis disciplines itself to the first analyses of the parties as revealed in next turns.

As for the claimed [re]distribution of the particle that finds third–turn “Oh” productions as the “the primary element accounting for the frequency with which *oh* appears in conversational corpora,” that’s an enormously new proposal. It leads us to ask whether the Epistemic literature to date, pre the rebuttal, has ever made *any* such claim about what accounts for the preponderance of “Oh” productions in the “conversational corpora”. In fact, we continue to be impressed by the regularity with which the pre–rebuttal literature takes little interest in a great many “Oh” productions that appear in their transcripts (see footnote 11 for an example). We find in the habit no basis for distributional claims, at all. Nor have we found them, until now.¹⁴

14. This is not quite true. As noted above, in Heritage (1984) we find the distributional claim that relative to Oh–prefaced productions, “free–standing ‘oh’ receipts to informings are rare in the data to hand” (1984: 325). Within the targeted domain, this leaves ‘Oh’ in turn–initial position as the most familiar production.

The account is particular to ‘receipts to informings’. But this category of ‘Oh–prefaced’ productions begs the question of the many kinds of turn productions that could be so prefaced (see footnote 11, line 10, for example), and there is simply no discussion in the rebuttal, or elsewhere, of the diverse forms beyond those that preoccupy the prior Epistemic literature, e.g., replies to inquiries and second assessments. In addition, and contrary to the 1984 passage cited above about the rarity of “free–standing ‘Ohs’”, the move to sequence–closing thirds seems to have resettled them there.

Perhaps the rebuttal's central innovation is found in its affiliation to Schegloff's prior work on sequence-closing thirds (SCTs). And to fully see the new alignment, one must see how in Schegloff's treatment of closing thirds, "Oh" is but one expression among others that do this work. "Okay" is another, and "assessments" are a third. Speaking of these "minimal sequence expansion" third turns and how they are variously produced, Schegloff observes:

As "oh" registers information as having produced a change of state in its recipient and "okay" registers and accepts a responsive action, an assessment in third position articulates a stance taken up—ordinarily by the first pair part speaker—toward what the second pair part speaker has said or done in the prior turn. (Schegloff, 2007:123–124).

In Schegloff's hands, Oh is *no more than* a "change of state token." There is no "indexing" of other dynamics or "adumbrating" of subsequent turns. It is an index of nothing else. It is the sequential grammar of third turns that holds his attention.

SCTs are thus *not* "Oh's" dominion (as were, it seems, replies to inapposite inquiries [Heritage, 1998], for example). 'Oh' is not their tell-tale mark. Instead, the "primary" 'Oh' productions within the "conversational corpora" are now found within a modest organizational domain of sequence closings that show other closing devices too. Their descriptions, through Schegloff, are in terms of sequential grammars rather than "drivers", "gradients", or "obligations". Note finally how in Schegloff's treatment of SCTs, 'Oh' "registers... a change of state"; 'okay' "registers and accepts..."; and 'evaluation' "articulates a stance taken up..." There seems to be a gradient here as well, but not of knowledge, information or status possessions. It seems to be a gradient of social *action*, and the expression 'Oh', in Schegloff's hands, seems minimally actionable.

The "Epistemics" that emerges from the rebuttal is at some distance from Sidnell's (2012) expansive assessment:

Indeed, what Heritage describes is not another "domain" like turn taking, sequence organization or repair. It's something more basic—one set of principles and assumptions that make these and other domains what they are. (2012: 59)

Our reply doesn't directly address this vision. Nor does our special issue. Sidnell's proposals seem to be in pursuit of general theory, and seem, for that reason, specifically unavailable for demonstration in the material detail of transcript. But if the first 30 years of this 'program' has repeatedly turned to the extraordinary indexing, adumbrating and 'tickering' powers of 'Oh' in ways our reviews suggest, then there seems to have been without question [though surely it will be questioned] a major conceptual down-grade presented in the 2016 rebuttal.

This reply aims to show how the rebuttal writes a very different rendering of the play of an Epistemic CA, in how it claims Schegloff's discussions of SCTs to have been central to the Epistemic discussion all along. We don't think so, but we welcome the tie. We think there has been a significant re-writing of the epistemics of Epistemics in light of our 2016 interrogations, a move that is on the one hand responsive to the exercise of critique, while on the other hand denouncing it for having no merit.

The EMCA community has known disagreement before. But perhaps it has nowhere known the depth of conceptual dispute pursued and developed in the 2016 special issue, and confirmed in the 2016 rebuttal. As a scholarly community, we can be either 'put off' by the exercise, on grounds of

personal affiliations or ‘likes’ [or worse, ‘tweets’]. Or we can become engaged in the conceptual registers that are at play, and at risk. Everything we know of scholarship and intellectual history, and of the labors of Garfinkel, Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson, their students and colleagues, recommends our engagement. Their extraordinary innovations were conceptual throughout.

The rebuttal’s promise also seems tied to how effective its claims of authority and subordination will be. It even calls for a “separation” of (or from) those who disagree. No doubt, CA in the early years, having so profoundly upset the apple cart of “language study” with the “absurd” proposal that talk was a sociological phenomenon *first*, received much the same kind of denigration. The marvel of conceptual dispute, however, is that in the end, authority and subordination count for very little. The conceptual leads, especially where there are disciplined conceptual communities. We think EMCA is just such a place.

References

- Drew P (2012) What drives sequences? *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1), 61–68.
- Ford, E and Thompson, S (1996). Interactional Units in Conversation: Syntactic, Intonational and Pragmatic Resources for the Management of Turns. In Elinor Ochs, Emanuel A. Schegloff and Sandra A. Thompson, (Eds.) *Interaction and Grammar*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 134–184.
- Garfinkel H (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Heritage J (1984) A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement. In: Atkinson JM and Heritage J (eds) *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 299–345.
- Heritage J (1998) Oh-prefaced responses to inquiry. *Language in Society* 27(3): 291–334
- Heritage J (2002) Oh-prefaced responses to assessments. In Ford C, Fox B and Thompson S (eds) *The language of turn and sequence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 196–224.
- Heritage J (2005) Cognition in discourse. In te Molder H and Potter J (eds) *Conversation and Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 184–202.
- Heritage J (2010) Conversation analysis: Practices and methods. In Silverman D (ed) *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. 3rd edition. London: Sage, pp. 208–230.
- Heritage J (2012a) Epistemics in action: Action formation and territories of knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 1–29.
- Heritage J (2012b) The epistemic engine: Sequence organization and territories of knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 30–52.
- Heritage J (2012c) Beyond and behind the words: Some reactions to my commentators. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 76–81.
- Heritage J (2013a) Action formation and its epistemic (and other) backgrounds. *Discourse Studies* 15(5): 551–578.
- Heritage J (2013b) Epistemics in conversation. In Sidnell J and Stivers T (eds) *Handbook of Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Blackwell, pp. 370–394.
- Heritage J (2016) Epistemics, Conversation Analysis, and ‘Post-Analytic’ Ethnomethodology: A Rebuttal*. Posted on academia.edu
- Heritage J and Raymond G (2005) The terms of agreement: Indexing epistemic authority and subordination in assessment sequences. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 68(1): 15–38.
- James D (1972) Some aspects of the syntax and semantics of interjections. In *Papers from the Eighth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*: 162–72.
- Jefferson G (1984) Transcript notation. In: Atkinson JM and Heritage J (eds) *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. ix–xvi.
- Levinson S (2013) Action formation and ascription. In Sidnell J and Stivers T (eds) *Handbook of Con-*

- versation Analysis. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 103–130.
- Lindwall O, Lymer G and Ivarsson J (2016) Epistemic status and the recognizability of social actions. *Discourse Studies*. 18: 550–573.
- Lymer, G, Lindwall, O. & Ivarsson, J (2017) “Epistemic status, sequentiality, and ambiguity: Notes on Heritage’s Rebuttal”.. Posted on academia.edu (February 2017)
- Lynch M (1993) *Scientific practice and ordinary action: ethnomethodology and social studies of science*. New York, Cambridge University Press
- Lynch M (2000), “The ethnomethodological foundations of conversation analysis”, *Text & Talk*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 517–532.
- Lynch M (2016) Notes on a display of epistemic authority: A post-closure rejoinder to John Heritage’s rebuttal to “The epistemics of Epistemics”. Posted on academia.edu (December 2016)
- Lynch M and Bogen D (1994) Harvey Sacks’s primitive natural science. *Theory, Culture and Society* 11: 65–104.
- Lynch M and Bogen D (1996) *The Spectacle of History: Speech, Text and Memory at the Iran-Contra Hearings*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press
- Lynch M and Wong J (2016) Reverting to a hidden interactional order: Epistemics, informationism, and conversation analysis, *Discourse Studies* 18:526–549.
- Macbeth D and Wong J (2016). The story of ‘Oh’, Part 2: Animating transcript. *Discourse Studies* 18: 574–596.
- Macbeth D, Wong J & Lynch M (2016). The story of ‘Oh’, Part 1: Indexing structure, animating transcript. *Discourse Studies* 18: 550–573.
- Maynard D (1997) The news delivery sequence: bad news and good news in conversational interaction. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*. 30(2) 93–130.
- Moerman M and Sacks H (1971/1988) On common understanding. In Moerman M *Talking Culture*. Appendix B. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp. 180–186.
- Norrick, Neal R. (2009). “Interjections as Pragmatic Markers.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 41: 866–891.
- Raymond, Geoffrey (2010). Prosodic Variation in Responses: The Case of Type-Conforming Responses to Yes/No Interrogatives. In Dagmar Barth-Weingarten, Elizabeth Reber and Margret Selting, (Eds.) *Prosody in Interaction*. Philadelphia, John Benjamins: 109–130.
- Raymond G and Heritage J (2006) The epistemics of social relations: Owning grandchildren. *Language in Society* 35: 677–705.
- Reed B and Raymond Geoffrey (eds) (2013). *Units of Talk - Units of Action*. Amsterdam, John Benjamins.
- Sacks H 1984 Notes on methodology. In Atkinson JM and Heritage J (eds) *Structures of Social Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 2–27.
- Sacks H (1992) *Lectures on Conversation*, Vol. I & II. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sacks H, Schegloff EA and Jefferson G (1974) A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50: 696–735.
- Schegloff EA (1984) On some questions and ambiguities in conversation. In Atkinson JM and Heritage J (eds) *Structures of Social Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 28–52.
- Schegloff EA (1988) Goffman and the analysis of conversation. In Drew P and Wootton A (eds) *Erving Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order*. Oxford: Polity, pp. 89–135.
- Schegloff EA (1992) Repair after next turn: The last structurally provided defense of intersubjectivity in conversation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 97(5): 1295–1345
- Schegloff EA (1996) Confirming Allusions: Toward an Empirical Account of Action. *American Journal of Sociology* 102(1): 161–216.
- Schegloff EA (2007) *Sequence Organization in Interaction: A Primer in Conversation Analysis*, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff EA, Sacks H and Jefferson G (1977) The preferences for self correction in the organization

- of repair in conversation. *Language* 53:2: 361–382.
- Sidnell J (2012) Declaratives, questioning, defeasibility. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 53–60.
- Terasaki AK (2004) [1976] Pre-announcement sequences in conversation. In: Lerner G (ed.) *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 171–223 (Social Science working paper no. 99, University of California Irvine).
- Wrong, D (1961) The oversocialized conception of man in modern sociology. *American Sociological Review*, (26(2): 183–193.
- Zimmerman D and Pollner M (1970) The everyday world as a phenomenon. In Douglas J (Ed.) *Understanding everyday life*. Chicago: Aldine, pp. 80 – 103.