

DISCOURSE STUDIES

Comment

Throwing the baby out with the bath water?

Commentary on the criticism of the ‘Epistemic Program’

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DRAFT: 19 April 2016

Abstract

It is timely and important that new developments in CA become the subject of principled debate. John Heritage’s recent papers on the role of epistemics constitute one such development and by re-analysing excerpts from this work, the papers in this special issue reveal some significant problems with a programmatic approach to epistemics. This commentary agrees with the critics that there are dangers in an over-emphasis on epistemics, and in using isolated utterances and proposing abstract scales and terms. But the commentary also warns against totally rejecting epistemics as a domain of inquiry in CA and points to places where the critics exaggerate their criticisms in a way that makes them unnecessarily hostile.

Keywords

Conversation analysis, epistemics, sequential analysis, criticism, re-analysis, methodology

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Introduction

Conversation Analysis (CA) is more than 50 years old, and its fascinating history differs in interesting ways from those of many other research paradigms. Building on Garfinkel's (1967) radical insistence that social phenomena be studied *in situ* and in the demonstrable orientations of members of society, Sacks (1992a,b) provided a set of methods and observations, which were developed into what we now know as CA. Already from the outset, however, there were tensions and incompatibilities in how CA was practiced. (1) *The collection method*, most prominently developed by Jefferson (e.g. 1983) and Schegloff (e.g. 1996) can be seen to conflict with the more ethnomethodological favouring of single case analysis and on seeing every case as a re-specification for another first time. (2) *Membership categorisation analysis*, envisaged by Sacks and subsequently developed by, e.g. Hester and Eglin (1997) and Jayyusi (1984) may be difficult to reconcile with sequential analysis (see Schegloff, 2007a for a discussion and an attempt).

While CA has spread to other continents, languages, and disciplines and has been applied to new types of data and by new generations, the internal tensions and incompatibilities were rarely discussed publicly. There was, rather, a tacit agreement to develop the 'analytic mentality' of CA (Schenkein, 1978), most prominently perhaps to 'bracket' received notions of intentionality and motivation in order to avoid making claims that were not demonstrable in interactants' behaviours and orientations. It is only from around the turn of the century, that the CA community has been publicly engaged in principled debates. These debates have primarily taken place in *Research on Language and Social Interaction* (ROLSI) and include Heritage's (1999) proposal of a quantitative turn in CA, Stivers and Rossano (2010 and commentaries) on response mobilisation, Stivers (2015 and commentaries) on coding in CA, Heritage (2012a, 2012b and commentaries) on epistemics,

and Kendrick and Drew (2016 and commentaries) on recruitment. While ROLSI has provided a platform for debate, commentaries often seem reluctant to engage critically in these debates. In this respect, the papers in this special issue are very different. The papers present a sharp critique of what they term the ‘Epistemic Program’, a program ascribed to 30 years of work by John Heritage, beginning with his paper on *oh* as a ‘change-of-state token’ (1984) and ending with his entry in *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis* (2013b). The papers initiate a timely discussion of what has become an important topic in CA and raise concerns that we as a scientific community are best served not to ignore. However, the papers also collaterally formulate an ‘Epistemic Program’ that we find difficult to reconcile both with the literature and with our own understanding of epistemics and its potential relevance for the analysis of interaction. Consequently, we propose an alternative version of an ‘Epistemic Program’. We begin, however, by outlining and discussing three of the main criticisms against the ‘Epistemic Program’, as they are presented in this special issue.

A solution to a non-existing problem?

According to Lindwall et al. (2016), the ‘Epistemic Program’ is presented as a solution to a non-existing problem: that of how participants in interaction disambiguate action. This is a long-standing issue in CA: while participants in interaction routinely produce actions, e.g. questions, complaints, requests, greetings, story-tellings etc., and routinely recognise (or ascribe) these actions, analysts face the problem of determining *how* ‘the resources of the language, the body, the environment of the interaction, and position in the interaction [are] fashioned into conformations designed to be, and to be recognised by recipients as, particular actions’ (Schegloff, 2007b: xiv). This becomes a problem, according to Heritage (2012b), because neither analysts nor participants can rely on turn-design (including prosody) to determine whether an utterance is, for instance, requesting or conveying information. Moreover, while the ‘next turn proof procedure’ (Sacks et al., 1974: 728) that CA usually

relies on ‘will certainly help us understand *that* a prior turn was, or was not, understood as a request for information’, this procedure is ‘less informative about *how* that came to be the case’ (Heritage, 2012c: 80). As Lindwall et al. note, others – most notably Schegloff (1996: 173) – have made the same observation, but Heritage (2012a, 2013a), they argue, goes radically further, by discarding the resources of sequential analysis *entirely*, so that ‘co-participants as well as overhearing analysts seem to be left with single turns-at-talk and their composition’ (Lindwall et al., 2016: 5). It is into this void, where turn-design is an insufficient resource for action formation and ascription, and where sequential analysis is rejected as unreliable, that: ‘Epistemic status is then introduced as a way of disambiguating single utterances and determining whether they are providing or requesting information’ (Lindwall et al., 2016: 6). The ‘Epistemic Program’, then, only becomes necessary because Heritage downplays – or even disqualifies – sequential analysis.

Heritage’s (2012a,b, 2013a) emphasis on the compositional features of turns-at-talk can certainly be seen as a departure from earlier work in CA, where researchers have attempted to determine how participants in interaction disambiguate utterances that might or might not be understood as questions (e.g. Heinemann, 2008; Koshik, 2003; Schegloff, 1984) specifically by considering the sequential environment in which the potentially questioning turn occurs. In this respect, Lindwall et al. are right in suggesting that the ‘Epistemic Program’ de-emphasises the sequential environment and instead focuses on linguistic aspects of turn design and epistemics. But their more radical claim that the ‘Epistemic Program’ ‘disquali[fies] the resources of sequential analysis’ (Lindwall et al. (2016: 5) is hard to reconcile with Heritage’s (2012c) own discussion of the relative importance of the ‘epistemic engine’ *vis-à-vis* other aspects of the analysis of interaction:

Though its salience and significance may vary, the “engine” is likely, as often as not, to be at the bottom of the food chain in the analysis of interaction: Simplistic efforts to

invoke it in an overgeneralized way as an explanation of first resort will be the surest means of robbing it of “bite.” (p. 80)

For Lindwall et al., the diminished position of sequential analysis in the ‘Epistemic Program’ is however also of methodological concern. To them, Heritage neglects obvious sequential interpretations and replaces them with epistemic ones in the analyses of specific excerpts of interaction. To illustrate that sequential analysis can in fact account for participants’ ability to disambiguate specific utterances, without having to revert to the putative epistemic status of themselves and their co-participants, Lindwall et al. (along with the other papers in this special issue) employ re-analysis to some of Heritage’s excerpts. One example is an excerpt from Heritage (2012a, 2013a) where Ida produces the following utterance at the beginning of a telephone call: *Ye:h. .h uh:m (0.2) ah’v jis rung tih teh- eh tell you (0.3) uh the things ev arrived from Barkerr’n Stone’ou[:se*. Heritage writes: ‘Here the declarative form of Ida’s turn is congruent with its content, which is exclusively within her epistemic domain’ (2012a: 8; 2013a: 560). In Lindwall et al. (2016: 10), this is relayed as follows: ‘This fragment is presented as an example of a declarative utterance that is congruent with the speaker’s epistemic status – the things talked about are within the speaker’s epistemic domain, so that “the things ev arrived from Barkerr’n Stone’ou:see” is duly heard as providing information.’ They then go on to suggest that:

Here one could note that the phrase is preceded by ”ah’v jis rung tih teh- eh tell you” (line 7). This means that the lexical and syntactical construction alone provides an evident and unequivocal packaging of the declarative as an informing action. An account of the turn’s recognizability can thus be constructed without reference to epistemic matters. (2016: 10-11)

By implication, this formulation suggests that Heritage did not ‘note’ this part of Ida’s utterance and hence that it did not form part of his analysis. However, the ‘declarative form’

that Heritage (2012a, 2013a) speaks about quite easily encompasses what Lindwall et al. ‘note’ and then categorise as a ‘preceding part’, so that when Heritage (2012a: 8) concludes that ‘The result is an action that is unambiguously an “informing”’, he quite possibly refers to all parts of Ida’s utterance (indeed both parts are indicated with arrows in the transcripts; in Heritage’s (2012a) and in Lindwall et al.). There is nothing in what Heritage writes to suggest that he did not take the whole utterance into consideration. Here, we see an instance of a way of reading Heritage that could be termed the ‘antagonistic reader’s maxim’, which goes: If the reader can understand an analysis as ignoring other perspectives to the advantage of focusing only on epistemics, understand it like that (cf. the ‘overhearer’s maxim’ in Macbeth and Wong, 2016: 22).

The antagonistic reader’s maxim is heavily applied throughout the four papers in this special issue, but in some cases, re-analysis does point to potentially fundamental problems with the ‘Epistemic Program’. One such instance is the utterance produced in another of Heritage’s excerpts by Shelley: *So an’ t’when other time have I ever [done that?*, as part of a response to Debbie’s accusation that Shelley ‘abandons her “girlfriends” in favor of “guys”’ (Heritage, 2013a: 563). In Heritage’s (2012a, 2013a) analysis, this utterance is produced from a knowing (K+) position and can hence not be understood to request information, despite its interrogative syntax. Lindwall et al. (2016: 16ff) take issue with this claim and include both an earlier fragment from the same conversation and some lines that follow after the excerpt. By means of this re-contextualisation, and by citing Koshik’s (2003) analysis of the same excerpt, Lindwall et al. point out that the accusation against which Shelley is defending herself has been made in general terms, and that Shelley has earlier begun an utterance that can be heard as the beginning of something like *how many times*. They also contest the claim that Shelley necessarily has a privileged K+ position with respect to whether she favours guys over her girlfriends. Finally, they are able to show that ‘[t]he continuation of the interaction

shows that when Debbie does not come up with any concrete occasions, Shelley pursues the issue by suggesting candidates herself' (2016: 21). They conclude their re-analysis by saying:

Given that the conversation develops in this way, Heritage's (2013a: 563) claim that 'the speaker's putatively K+ position cancels the possibility that the utterance will be heard as requesting information, but will rather be heard as "rhetorical"' does not look like a claim grounded in the manifest details of the interaction. (2016: 23)

Here, Lindwall et al. have a point. Firstly, the action implications of the focal utterance are more complex than Heritage's analysis suggests, and, secondly, he seems to have overlooked that something happening just after the excerpt he shows may speak against a purely 'not requesting information' analysis.

Regressing to cognitivism and informationism?

Lynch and Wong present the 'Epistemic Program' as being 'a *regression* from what is, or was, radical about CA' (2016: 3, original emphasis). The regression involves a reliance on participants' putative cognitive states and an over-emphasis on information-exchange as an 'underlying extrasituational "driver" in social interaction' (Lynch and Wong, 2016: Abstract). While Lynch and Wong (2016: 13) acknowledge that Heritage does not 'explicitly embrace cognitivist conceptions', they maintain that he 'goes on to say that an underlying cognitive order is in the driver's seat of action formation' (2016: 6). The term 'cognitive', however, is not used in the main presentations of the 'Epistemic Program' (e.g. Heritage, 2012a,b) and when using the metaphor of the epistemic machine that *drives* sequences, Heritage (2012b) carefully avoids any claims of cognition not expressed or addressed by participants in his analyses, for instance by including terms like '*expressions* of epistemic imbalance' (Heritage, 2012b: 32, our emphasis). Lynch and Wong also argue that the 'Epistemic Program' 'preserves a classic linguistic analysis of sentence form' (2016: 15) in which '[a] *literary* version of language (words, sentence forms propositional content) together with presumptions

about epistemic rights and statuses, provides an *a priori* apparatus through with the epistemic engine turns out its analytical product’ (2016: 26). This is aggravated by the fact that Heritage uses ‘an abstract apparatus of scales, gradients, tickers, and idealized grammatical forms’ (2016: 27). As an example of how the ‘Epistemic Program’ makes unwarranted use of abstraction to over-emphasise the exchange of information and concomitantly de-emphasise other interactional factors, Lynch and Wong (2016: 27) target the use of ‘binary code’ in the analysis of the following excerpt from Raymond and Heritage (2013: 137):

[Sisters Call 1]

- 01 Nik: Wut ar you doin tomorrow are< you goin downtown⁻?
 02 Reg: Yeah. Are you gunna go downtown? (K-)
 03 Nik: ·hh I don’t know I’m bro:ke*. (K+)
 04 Reg: Oh °poo:per:° (K- -> K+)
 05 Nik: I kno::w⁻

Though Raymond & Heritage (2013) do not focus specifically on epistemics, they use the K+ (party with more knowledge) and K- (party with less knowledge) notation in their analysis. Lynch and Wong (2016: 12) take issue, among other things, with the assignment of K+ to line 03:

Line 03 is coded as K+, perhaps on the assumption that Nikki has the “epistemic right” to address what she plans to do, despite her overt expression (“I don’t know”); an expression that could be heard as open to persuasion, and which might seem relevant less to exchange of information than to the pursuit of an invitation.

The problem that Lynch and Wong see here is not just that Nikki’s ascribed epistemic status (K+) is unfounded, but the exchange of information is presented as being *the* central concern for the participants. From this and other similar excerpts, Lynch and Wong conclude:

Perhaps the most fundamental problem with the Epistemic Program is the *abstraction and generality* of its assertions about the ubiquity of information exchange, as both a motivation and contingent achievement in conversation. Both the generality at which such claims are cast, and the way they are brought into play as omnirelevant processes, motivations, expectations, presuppositions, states, statuses, and “tickers”, provides analytic license to search for and ‘confirm’ their overt or covert ‘presence’ in virtually any instance. (2016: 30)

Lynch and Wong point out important shortcomings in the analytic arguments on which the ‘Epistemic Program’ is founded and their invitation to readers ‘to examine further transcripts-under-analysis in the EP literature, and to form their own judgments’ (p. 31) may result in similar conclusions for other excerpts. In fact, Heritage (2012c) notes the risk that his approach ‘will start to produce generalizations that become unfalsifiable and, hence, nonempirical’ (p. 80). To Lynch and Wong, however, the problem is more serious. It is not just that there is a risk of making unfalsifiable generalisations within the ‘Epistemic Program’, but that it is in itself ‘*founded* on such generalizations’ (2016: 18). We agree that some of Heritage’s arguments are based on generalisations that are not supported in interactants’ demonstrable orientations, and we can see the danger in starting from isolated utterances and ‘literary versions’. To conclude from this that the ‘Epistemic Program’ is founded on generalisations, however, can in our opinion only be sustained by applying the antagonistic reader’s maxim (see above).

The demotion of *oh*?

Macbeth and Wong (2016) and Macbeth et al. (2016) expand the critique of the ‘Epistemic Program’, temporally and conceptually, by focusing on Heritage’s work on the particle *oh* (1984, 1998, 2002). As the titles imply, there is a story to be told about *oh* and the ‘conceptual

landscape' (Macbeth et al., 2016: 27) that *oh* has prepared for the 'Epistemic Program'.

For both articles, a major problem with Heritage's work on *oh* is his characterisation of the particle as a "change-of-state" token, a characterisation that they find 'constrained' (Macbeth et al., 2016: 9), 'ordinal' (ibid., 27) and 'formal-analytic' (Macbeth and Wong., 2016:24). As Macbeth et al. note,

'Change of state' says little of Oh's play interactionally as other than a "response cry", and it says nothing of an 'Oh' that invites a telling, or announces one, or an 'Oh' that has the full register of ways of speaking, as in humorously, sarcastically, with interest, disbelief, and the like. (2016: 10)

That there is more to be said about participants' particularised use of linguistic items such as *oh* is perhaps most evident when considering languages other than English, which are 'coded differently in the linguistic inventory' (Golato, 2010: 170). As illustrated by Koivisto (2013, 2015a,b, in press) for instance, speakers of Finnish have available a range of different particles with which they can indicate a change-of-state, each of these particles having a particularised function, for instance of indicating that the change involves remembering, now-understanding, the receipt of neutral news, or a shift in orientation. And though English *oh* does appear to be rather 'opaque' (Heritage, 1984: 325), more *has* in fact been said about how *oh* can be employed to indicate for instance disappointment, surprise and delayed realisation, by way of how it is produced prosodically, and where it is positioned sequentially (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen, 2009; Local, 1996; Reber, 2012; Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2006).

So Macbeth and his colleagues are right in claiming that Heritage's work on *oh* presents a constrained account of the particle *as it is used* in particular contexts and particular sequential positions. It seems to us, however, that Heritage's account of *oh* is purposefully constrained. When Heritage (1984), for instance, concludes that *oh* is 'entirely opaque as to

the quality or character of the change of state proposedly undergone by its producer' (p. 325), it is exactly because he is primarily interested in the generic properties, or 'general semantics' (Heritage, 2013c: 332; see Heritage, 2015 for a similar approach with the particle *well*) of *oh*, rather than in how it is 'particularized by reference to (1) the conversational sequences in which it occurs, (2) its precise placement within such sequences, and (3) the additional turn components that it commonly prefaces' (Heritage, 1984: 300).

To Macbeth and his colleagues, the problem with Heritage's work on *oh* is not just that his account is too generic, however, but that he demotes *oh* to being a 'particle that in some way provides a portal through which states and changes – cognitive and informational – find their way to conversational structures' (Macbeth et al., 2016: 6). To support this argument, Macbeth et al. (2016) quote Heritage (1984: 300 – quoting Goffman, 1981) as claiming that *oh* is a sign 'that *index[es] directly* "the state of the transmitter"' (p. 64), before letting Schegloff (1991: 157) 'remind' us that '*Oh* can claim a change in the speaker's state, but its utterance enacts an interactional stance and does not necessarily reflect a cognitive event.' When Schegloff (1991) 'reminds' us of the interactional status of *oh*, however, he does so with reference to Heritage (1984). And Heritage (1984 – again following Goffman, 1981) explicitly argues that *oh* is a sign that is only '*meant to be taken to index*' the internal state of its producer (Heritage, 1984: 300, our emphasis). Heritage's work on *oh* thus aligns with Macbeth and Wong (2016) and Macbeth et al.'s (2016) insistence that change-of-state tokens (and response cries) are purely interactional events, rather than cognitive expressions that can be tied to a direct reality within a particular speaker's head.

According to Macbeth et al. Heritage's work on *oh* not only 'provides a faithful account of a program not yet in evidence', the same work is also recruited to do 'extraordinary service' when the 'Epistemic Program' 'fully comes into view' (Macbeth et al., 2016: 7). As one type of evidence for this, Macbeth and Wong (2016: 27-29) consider the

following excerpt and its accompanying analysis from Heritage (2012a):

[Rah:12:4:ST]

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,

Jenny's declaratively framed utterance 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 ($K^- \rightarrow K^+$) *oh*-receipt confirms by implication that her original declarative was indeed a question in search of information. (2012a: 10)

Macbeth and Wong (2016) conclude that Heritage's accumulated work on *oh* is (here and elsewhere) transformed into the binary code of K^+ and K^- , and then recruited to serve as evidence for the (omni-)relevance of epistemics. The de-particularisation that Heritage is accused of is thus presented in its most extreme version: *Oh* is entirely decontextualised from its actual occurrence and has instead been 'assigned the (reflexive) tasks of indexing epistemic structure, and animating transcripts of ordinary conversational interaction to show it' (Macbeth et al., 2016: 7).

Macbeth and Wong (2016: 22) are right when suggesting that 'a more quotidian understanding of this expression on this occasion ("Oh")' would provide a more appropriate analysis of the excerpt above than the 'formal-analytic underwritings' (Macbeth et al., 2016: 21) that are provided by Heritage (2012a). We do not agree, however, with the conclusion that *oh* is recruited to do 'extraordinary service' on behalf of the 'Epistemic Program'. Firstly, there is an insinuation of something strategic or even deliberately hidden in the formulation

that we find slightly paranoid. Secondly, we see in this criticism a more general scepticism towards the collection method, which we do not share. Working on a collection does indeed require a certain de-particularisation in order to describe the phenomena under investigation. It is, of course, an integral part of this method that the collected phenomena can be re-contextualised and Heritage's collection-based analyses (1984, 1998, 2002) have in our opinion proven robust enough for such re-contextualisation.

Discussion

The four papers in this special issue not only present their readings of a substantial part of the work produced by John Heritage over the last 30 years. They also ascribe to this work a programmatic nature by coining the term 'Epistemic Program'. It is worth noting, we think, that neither Heritage, nor others who have employed the concept of epistemics analytically, use the word 'program'. In fact, Heritage seems to have something more modest in mind when he categorises 'the epistemic order' as one of 'a number of domains of organization' that are the 'objects of continuing investigation' (2008: 305). Other domains include *turn-taking, sequence organisation, intersubjectivity and repair*, and *social solidarity*. Similarly, in the *Handbook of Conversation Analysis* (Sidnell and Stivers, 2013), epistemics is presented as one key topic in CA, along with *embodied action, gaze, emotion, phonetics, affiliation* and *grammar*. Thus, while epistemics has been equated with other analytically relevant features of interaction, these are features that we – as a community – would not normally think of as programs.

On the other hand – and as pointed out in Lindwall et al. (2016) – Heritage (2012a) does suggest that epistemics is of '*fundamental* relevance ... in the construction of action and the management of interaction' and is 'a *primary* and *unavoidable* element of action formation' (p. 25, our emphasis). While these claims of epistemic omni-relevance are somewhat modified in the accompanying paper (2012b: 50), where Heritage suggests that 'the

exploitation of epistemic status and stance' constitutes *one* of a set of principles of sequence organisation that also includes adjacency pairs, the seemingly omni-relevant character of epistemics that is invoked in at least some of Heritage's papers can certainly be interpreted as programmatic. Indeed, one of the commentaries in the issue that presented Heritage (2012a, 2012b) readily embraced this interpretation by concluding that 'what Heritage described 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' (Sidnell, 2012: 59). And another of the commentaries, by Paul Drew, more implicitly acknowledges the programmatic nature of an 'Epistemic Program' through a caution:

It becomes rather beguiling to regard anything and everything as bound up with epistemics, as though every aspect of turn design, for instance, can be laid at the epistemic door. There is a tendency in some of the papers I've reviewed for journals recently for epistemics to be regarded as the default explanation for anything and everything; the danger is that whatever looks at first sight to involve epistemics may be counted off as 'There's another one,' and the analyst moves on. (2012: 66)

The concerns raised by Drew (2012) and the papers in this special issue (see also te Molder, 2016) may be well-founded; according to the EMCA bibliography database, the number of publications with the words epistemics or knowledge is increasing. We do not here wish to judge whether some of these papers regard epistemics 'as the default explanation for anything and everything' (Drew, *op. cit.*), but there seems to be a clear tendency that epistemics is catching on in the field. The incline in papers that apply epistemics, and the potential dangers and pitfalls of such an approach clearly warrants the thorough treatment the 'Epistemic Program' receives in this special issue.

The ‘Epistemic Program’ that is formulated and critiqued in this special issue is one in which epistemics is seen as a primary driver of interaction. This is a version which clearly skirts the boundaries of CA by invoking traditional linguistic notions of information exchange and traditional psychological notions of cognition, giving these notions precedence over CA’s insistence on ethnomethods and sequential analysis.

The papers in this special issue undoubtedly point to crucial problems: In some of Heritage’s work there are claims of epistemic omni-relevance along with an over-emphasis on epistemic issues that leads to a neglect of sequential insights. The critics are also right in pointing to the danger of reverting to a focus on information exchange, and to the simplifications inherent in the K+/K– terminology. There is certainly a danger that other researchers may apply the K+/K– terminology and Heritage’s scales and tables uncritically, without considering whether the exchange of information and participants’ putative epistemic status are matters of concern in their data.

As CA is maturing as a discipline, attempts at expanding the field, methodologically as well as theoretically, are important, as are the principled debates that may follow from such attempts. The critical and cautionary reading that the papers in this special issue present of the ‘Epistemic Program’ is clearly necessary. But the accusations of analytic neglect, of ‘cognitivism’ and ‘informationism’, the expressed scepticism about working on collections that is also part of the criticism may be detrimental to this necessary discussion. More detrimental yet is that the papers in this special issue in their critique of the ‘Epistemic Program’ seem to reject the analytic relevance of epistemics outright and entirely. In doing so – and should the rest of us follow – CA as a discipline risks throwing the baby out with the bath water. Because there is after all an alternative ‘Epistemic Program’ to that formulated and critiqued in this special issue; an alternative version which we think is more tenable: In this version, social territories of knowledge are matters that participants in interaction display

and orient to, so that epistemics is closely connected to morality and issues of affiliation and identity construction (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998; Bergmann, 1998; Stivers et al., 2011). This version of the ‘Epistemic Program’ relates to issues of membership categorisation and other basic social factors in interaction, while at the same time being explicit about linguistic expressions. It attempts to see how territories of knowledge play a role in interactants’ organisation of ordinary activities. We see a straight line from Sacks’ lectures on ‘doing being ordinary’ (1984, 1992b: 215-221) and on entitlements to have experiences (e.g. 1992b: 242-248), over Pomerantz’s (1980) type 1 and type 2 knowables and much of Heritage’s work on *Oh*, to work from this century, e.g. on ‘owning grandchildren’ (Raymond & Heritage, 2006), the whole interface of epistemics and morality (e.g. Stivers et al., 2011), and on change-of-state marking in different languages (e.g. Koivisto and Heinemann, forthcoming). It is *this* ‘Epistemic Program’ that we think will stand the test of time, rather than the somewhat extreme version that is presented and ultimately shot down in this special issue. Meanwhile, the watchful eyes of the authors in this special issue (and others) will hopefully prevent too many of us from falling into the ‘cognitivist’ or ‘propositionalist’ traps that are out there, so that we do not lose track of ‘what is, *or was*, radical about CA’ (Lynch and Wong, 2016: 4).

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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