

NOTES ON A DISPLAY OF EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY

*A rejoinder to John Heritage's
rebuttal to »The epistemics of Epistemics«*

MICHAEL LYNCH

Mel27@cornell.edu

Revised draft: April 2018

PRELIMINARIES

What follows is a rejoinder to a rebuttal. The rebuttal was drafted by John Heritage and posted online (www.Academia.edu) in 2016, and a revised and retitled version was published in 2018 as part of a special issue of the journal *Discourse Studies* (Volume 20, No. 1). Both drafts of Heritage's paper, as well as the other papers in the rebuttal issue took aim at a special issue of the same journal that Doug Macbeth and I co-edited: "The epistemics of Epistemics" (Volume 18, No. 5, October, 2016).¹ The present paper originally was drafted in reaction to the 2016 version of Heritage's rebuttal, and it too was posted online in 2016. Two other papers by authors of the "epistemics of Epistemics" special issue also were posted online (Macbeth, 2017; Lymer et al., 2017). We have not attempted at this point to publish our papers on Heritage's rebuttal in print journals. Before drafting them, we were informed by

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Graham Button, Jonas Ivarsson, Oskar Lindwall, Gustav Lymer, Doug Macbeth, and Jean Wong, for their suggestions and helpful comments on earlier drafts.

the Editor of *Discourse Studies* that the journal would not be accepting further contributions to the debate, and it seemed unlikely that another journal would offer space to carry on a further round of argument that began elsewhere. And so, for the time being, the debate is being continued online. Our reasons for continuing this debate should be evident in what follows. This rejoinder originally was drafted following the online publication of Heritage's (2016) rebuttal, and then was revised following the publication of the rebuttal issue in 2018. It remains focused on Heritage's (2018) contribution to that issue, although other papers in the rebuttal issue are briefly mentioned. I am leaving for later a more extensive focus on additional issues raised by those papers.

I will not devote much of the present paper to characterizing "epistemics" in CA, or to rehashing arguments in our 2016 special issue. To more fully understand what this dispute is about, readers who are unfamiliar with the background must do a considerable amount of reading. I realize that this will cut down on the number of interested readers, but my hope is that at least a few will work through the series, starting with a sampling of articles on epistemics, followed by the articles in our special issue, then Heritage's rebuttal to those articles, and finally this rejoinder. I found from my own reading of Heritage's rebuttal that it is necessary to read or re-read the relevant publications he cites in order to fairly evaluate what he says. But, in order to get started here, allow me to quote from the first paragraph from a chapter on "Epistemics in conversation" in a recent handbook:

Within Conversation Analysis (CA), research into epistemics focuses on the knowledge claims that interactants assert, contest and defend in and through turns-at-talk and sequences of interaction. The topic involves a remarkable confluence between the disciplines of Psychology, Linguistics and Sociology that finds a singular and unique expression within conversation analytic investigations. (Heritage 2013: 370)

As Heritage (2013: 372ff.) makes clear, Interest in this topic is not new in CA, discourse analysis, or related areas of linguistics.

For example, several decades ago, William Labov, in a discussion of “general principles of discourse analysis,” stated that “[t]he first and most important step in the formalization of discourse analysis is to distinguish *what is said* from *what is done*.” He observed that “many speakers habitually use statements to ask for confirmation,” and he asked how it is that “we regularly and reliably recognize these as requests, and not as assertions?” To answer that question, he formulated “a simple and invariant rule of discourse,” which “depends upon the concept of ‘shared knowledge’” such that in “any two-party conversation, there exists an understanding that there are events that A knows about, but B does not, and events that B knows about but A does not; and AB-events that are known to both.” According to the rule, “[i]f A makes a statement about a B-event, it is heard as a request for confirmation” and “[i]f B makes a statement about a B-event (“I’m sleepy”), it is not heard as such a request. But if he utters a statement about a B-event (“You were up late last night”) it is heard as requesting a confirmation, “Is it true that ...” (Labov, 1972: 121).

Geoffrey Raymond’s concise summary of Heritage’s framework (2018: 65–66) is similar in some respects to Labov’s formalization, though it is integrated with a conversation analytic account of adjacency pair organization and deploys a distinction between “epistemic stance” (the overt grammatical form of an utterance, akin to Labov’s “what is said”²) and “epistemic status” (the participants’ presumptions about the immediately relevant differential in knowledge and information). Raymond’s summary makes clear that Heritage’s general framework assumes that information transfer, implemented through adjacency pairs initiated by interrogatives (requests for information) and declaratives (assertions of information), is a ubiquitous function in ordinary conversation, and is a “default” basis for whatever else is done in and through such an exchange. A key proposal in the framework is that the recipient’s (and overhearing analyst’s) assumptions about relative epistemic status is crucial for understanding whether the action in question (akin to Labov’s “*what is done*”) is a declarative or interrogative.

In the past decade, Heritage's framework has been used in a growing number of publications, and is often traced back to two articles on assessment sequences by Heritage and Raymond (2005) and Raymond and Heritage (2006). More recently, it was the subject of a "featured debate" in the journal *Research on Language in Social Interaction* (ROLSI), consisting of two articles by Heritage (2012a, b) and three commentaries on those articles (Clift, 2012; Drew, 2012; Sidnell, 2012), followed by Heritage's (2012c) response to the commentaries. In the judgments of those of us who eventually contributed to the 2016 special issue of *Discourse Studies*, the ROLSI 'debate' celebrated epistemics without much attention to what we believed were serious and puzzling problems with it. These problems included the ubiquitous relevance assigned to "knowledge" and "information exchange," and about the presumptive evidence marshaled for "epistemic status." We also were concerned with the way the epistemic analytic framework was deployed as an interpretive scheme for "animating" the specimen transcripts used to document it. After drafting a set of articles that raised questions and re-analyzed materials presented in publications on epistemics, we invited Heritage and Raymond to comment on them in the special issue, but they declined to do so and apparently prevailed upon the Editor of *Discourse Studies* to devote another entire issue to their own and others' rebuttals and to close debate at that point. While the debate may be closed in the pages of *Discourse Studies*, it is far from closed; indeed, as noted earlier, it was continued online during the interval between the 2016 and 2018 special issues of that journal.

HERITAGE'S REBUTTAL

Heritage's (2018) "Rebuttal" begins with assertions about a "coordinated attack" on his research launched by the authors of articles in the special issue of *Discourse Studies* on "the epistemics of Epistemics." He briefly mentions that most of the papers in that issue were "launched from the standpoint of post-analytic ethnomethodology," citing my book, *Scientific Practice and Ordinary Action* (Lynch, 1993) in reference to that "standpoint".³ After briefly listing some of the topics of

criticism presented in our special issue, he proclaims that the criticisms have no merit and contribute nothing of value to CA. He then complains about the tedious burden of having to address such criticisms: “Rehashing and litigating claims and counter-claims about texts do not advance our knowledge of social interaction and are likely to prove even more tedious to the bystander than they are to the principals” (p. 17). (There was a time when “criticism” was associated with the “growth of knowledge” [Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970], but those times were long ago.) He adds that “... the extent of these attacks, the allocation to them of a whole special issue of a reputable journal, and the sheer density of their conflation, confusions, misquotations and misrepresentations appear to warrant” the effort he invested in his rebuttal (p. 17). Then, having obtained another “whole special issue” of the same journal for his and his colleagues rebuttals, he goes on for another 39 pages.

Heritage’s image of being attacked is consistent with being on the alert for deceptive maneuvers by the attackers and countering them with deceptions of one’s own devising. As a combatant in such a literary martial art, Heritage avoids any concession or other show of weakness that the adversary might exploit. While it is tempting to go along with this picture of a battle (or, more mildly, litigation) where adversaries aim to get the best of one another, I think another less fanciful picture is more appropriate, which is that of an argument in which there are serious issues at stake, if only in a restricted academic field. I expect that my saying this might also be construed as a cynical maneuver in a battle over academic turf, but hopefully at least a few readers will proceed with good-faith assumptions about what my colleagues and I were arguing.

It is easy to get the impression that we are attacking Heritage personally: our articles in the 2016 special issue focus mainly on his publications, several of which are co-authored with others such as Geoffrey Raymond and Steven Clayman. In addition, two of our papers (Macbeth et al. 2016; Macbeth and Wong 2016) address a line of his research stretching back for 35 years on the “change of state token” (or particle) ‘OH’

(Heritage, 1984, 1998, 2002). So, why do we focus so much on *his* publications?

First, it is difficult to avoid an extensive engagement with Heritage's research when addressing epistemics in CA. First, he is widely recognized, and rightfully so, as the source of (as in the above quote) the "singular and unique expression [of epistemics] within conversation analytic investigations."⁴ Second, although epistemics in CA is a relatively novel development, as Heritage says in his rebuttal (p. 34) he and Raymond "systematized" his previous work on 'oh' along with some of Raymond's prior work on interrogatives when preparing their initial publications on epistemics. Consequently, earlier papers by Heritage on 'oh' and related topics are important for understanding the analytical system that he and Raymond constructed.

Despite their focus on Heritage, the articles we wrote for the special issue do not simply amount to an attack on a *person*. In addition to addressing differences between epistemic analysis and sequential analysis, we provide a reanalysis of exemplary fragments of conversation. Our papers suggest that the problems with Heritage's analysis are systematic and have empirical consequences: they arise from the system he and Raymond constructed, codified, and conceptualized. We do not believe that the problems we identified arise from an incompetent deployment (either by Heritage or ourselves) of an otherwise well-constructed analytical framework, but rather from the framework itself. We did more than argue this point on *a priori* grounds, as substantial portions of the articles in our special issue demonstrated what we believe to be intractable difficulties that arise when that system is implemented in analyses of exemplary fragments of recorded interaction. In what follows, I will attempt to focus once again on some of the substantive questions raised by our papers in the 2016 special issue, but before doing so it will be necessary to contend with a couple of red herrings in Heritage's rebuttal.

RED HERRING #1:

“POST-ANALYTIC” ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, the online version of Heritage’s rebuttal (2016) targeted “post-analytic” ethnomethodology, and the 2018 publication mentions that it is the “standpoint” assumed by most of the criticism in our special issue (p. 15). Both versions of his rebuttal treat this “standpoint” as a completely negative and hostile attack on CA. At the start of his conclusion, Heritage (2018: 43) asserts: “According to Lynch (1993), CA has become professionalized and positivistic, subscribing to the use of logico-empirical methods, and deploying terms derived from linguistics and cognitive science to perform ‘formal analysis’. In all these ways, CA is allegedly apostate from the radical initiatives fostered by Garfinkel and his students.”⁵ Maynard and Clayman’s (2018) contribution to the rebuttal issue also associates the papers in our 2016 special issue with earlier writings of mine (some of which were co-authored with David Bogen) which supposedly provide “similar critiques regarding unwarranted formalism and scientized pretensions ... directed against leading conversation analysts including Schegloff (Lynch, 1993: 248–254) and Sacks himself (Lynch, 1993: Chapter 6; Lynch, 2000a; Lynch and Bogen, 1994)” (Maynard and Clayman, 2018: 127). Such assertions imply that there is a contradiction between our more recent critical treatments of Heritage’s epistemics, which invoke programmatic writings by Schegloff and Sacks as leverage, and the earlier writings that critiqued the latter. Two decades ago, I did propose a “post-analytic” approach to science studies and ethnomethodology (Lynch, 1993: 311ff.; Lynch and Bogen, 1994; 1996: 262ff.), but partly to avoid confusion with poststructuralism I haven’t used the term since then. In any event, a brief word may be in order to avoid further confusion.

Simply put, post-analytic ethnomethodology would eschew a “principled distinction between professional analysis and members’ intuitions” (Lynch and Bogen, 1994: 66). This does not mean that the distinction would be ignored, but that members’ analyses would be presumed to have methodological

(i.e., constitutive, praxiological) adequacy, and that professional analysts would be unable to claim on *general methodological grounds* that their “scientific” analyses are more correct and rigorous than mere vernacular or intuitive understandings. The critical account of CA was directed at the emergence and reification of the idea that CA is an inductive method that enables professional analysts to develop technical knowledge that encompasses vernacular practices and discerns their normative organization, and further that a mastery of the CA’s scientific techniques is a precondition for critically assessing professional characterizations of ordinary interactional practices. Although current CA has travelled down that path for a long time, there remains a tension within the field that is articulated in many of the quotations in our special issue from Schegloff, in which he articulates the critical necessity to recover the practices that participants themselves deploy and recognize from within the production of orderly interaction. Our contributions to the 2016 special issue were animated by *that* tension, and they did not address broader question on the possibility of developing a sociology that does not privilege technical analysis over vernacular understandings. Again, it is (or, at least, once was) a fundamental and radical insight in CA that “actors” also are analysts (in a broad sense of the word “analysis”), and that such analysis is endogenous to the production of conversation.

In any event, none of the papers in our special issue even mentions “post-analytic ethnomethodology.” It certainly was not a significant topic during the weekly conference calls and occasional face-to-face meetings among the authors of articles in the 2016 special issue and others.⁶ The introduction to our special issue also states explicitly that, notwithstanding any past or present interest in divergences between ethnomethodology and CA, “[a]rguable divergences from EM’s [ethnomethodology’s] program are not germane to the articles in this Special Issue. Instead, the aim of these articles is to affirm the premises of CA, as best articulated and exemplified by Sacks’, Schegloff’s, and Jefferson’s writings and the corpus of CA studies” (Lynch and Macbeth, 2016: 497; see also Button and Sharrock, 2016).

Of course, Heritage may continue to maintain that I covertly persuaded my colleagues to adhere doggedly to the premises of my “standpoint” — an unlikely prospect, given our different academic backgrounds and interests — but such a speculation mainly provides a distraction from the issue at hand, which is the divergent path that *epistemics* has taken from the fundamental premises of CA, as originally set out by Sacks, and repeatedly argued by Schegloff, throughout his long career.

RED HERRING #2:

CONTROVERSY ABOUT “PROGRAM”

In the introduction to the special issue, we refer to the *Epistemic Program* (EP) “for convenience” as a way to address a recent development in CA that had recently drawn considerable attention (Lynch and Macbeth, 2016: 494). We did not anticipate controversy about the word “program” (though we did expect controversy about what we said *about* the particular program). Apparently, the word “program” was objectionable in some quarters.⁷ In his rebuttal, Heritage (p. 16) asserts that “[t]here’s no such thing as an ‘epistemic program’ (EP) within CA,” and for support he cites Steensig and Heinemann’s (2016: 604–605) critical commentary in our special issue. But, if one bothers to read the cited pages, it should be clear that their discussion is not nearly as blunt or categorical as is his assertion that there is *no such thing*. First, they observe that Heritage and others who employ epistemic analysis do not use the word “program” (p. 604). (We did not suggest that they do.) They add that Heritage has used a more “modest” conception of “the epistemic order,” a domain that takes its place alongside turn-taking, sequence organization, repair and so on (p. 604). (It is not so modest in scope if we consider it alongside Goffman’s “interaction order.”) But then Steensig and Heinemann go on to acknowledge that, at least in some of his papers, Heritage asserts that epistemics is “of *fundamental* relevance,” as a “*primary* and *unavoidable* element of action formation” (p. 605, their emphasis). They also refer to Sidnell’s comment that the epistemic order is “more basic” than such domains as turn-taking, repair,

and recipient design: “one set of principles and assumptions that make these and other domains what they are” (Sidnell 2012: 59, quoted on p. 605). Further, they refer to comments by Drew (2012) as cautiously “acknowledging the programmatic nature” of Heritage’s use of epistemics (p. 605), and they also mention the increasing number of publications that build upon Heritage’s work on the subject that use the words “epistemics and knowledge” in their titles (p. 605). They then acknowledge that the “articles in this Special Issue undoubtedly point to crucial problems: in some of Heritage’s work, there are claims of epistemic omnirelevance along with an over-emphasis on epistemic issues that leads to a neglect of sequential analysis” (p. 605). And, they credit us for being “right in pointing to the danger of reverting to a focus on information exchange and to the simplifications inherent in the K+/K- terminology.”⁸

In his rebuttal, Heritage (2018: 47 n.20) acknowledges that Steensig and Heinemann criticize his views on epistemics in action formation for being “overplayed,” and he mentions that they recommend a more circumscribed approach to specific phenomena; an approach he characterizes as “epistemics lite” and rejects. Raymond echoes and elaborates upon this point in his rebuttal paper. After mentioning that Steensig and Heinemann treat Heritage’s view as “extreme,” Raymond objects that to

treat Heritage’s claims in terms of their ‘radicalness’ instead of their accuracy is to privilege readers’ beliefs about what is real or common over what can be revealed via ‘close looking’ (Sacks, 1992). Similarly, to suggest compromise as a basis for resolving such disputes is to privilege social relations and conceptual accommodation over disciplined inquiry. (Raymond, 2018: 83, n. 4)

As we argued in our special issue, and I shall continue to argue here, we did ‘look closely’ at his and Raymond’s exemplary transcripts and their characterizations of them, and we did not find Heritage’s ambitious schema very helpful for understanding what the parties were *doing* in those exchanges. Instead, we found that Heritage and Raymond’s overriding emphasis

on the relevance of knowledge and information-transfer, and on struggles over “territories of knowledge,” often obscured what otherwise seemed salient to the local organization of the unfolding conversations.

What we called the “Epistemic Program” seemed to be a fair characterization of Heritage’s (2012a,b; 2013) summary arguments and of the systematic vocabulary he and others deployed in their analysis. Specific features included mechanical metaphors (a hydraulic engine, a see-saw, a ticker that operates incessantly), and a code (K+/K-) to denote the relative epistemic states of speakers and recipients as well as changes in such states. Heritage (2012a: 7; 2013: 378) succinctly presents some of these features in the form of a graphic model representing a gradient in epistemic stance. And, as an analytical strategy, he uses particular lexical items and other linguistic and sequential features to “index” particular epistemic states and changes of state or status relative to the recipient and the topic or “domain” at hand. These features are accompanied by generalizations about the incessant operations of the “ticker” and the omnirelevance of epistemic status. And, as noted earlier, Heritage and Raymond’s conceptual framework has been picked up by others, elaborated further, and been viewed as worthy of special issues and sections of journals. Consequently, despite his denials, our use of the word “program” did seem to pass the “duck test.”⁹

I am not sure why Heritage is so averse to taking credit for a “program”. It could be that he supposes that our use of the word is part of a rhetorical effort to drive a wedge between his approach and the concepts and analytical procedures that have become accepted in CA. Whether or not Heritage’s epistemics is compatible with CA is an argument worth pursuing, because I do believe that there are significant differences between them, and that those differences have empirical consequences. But, rather than get hung up on the word “program,” I will follow Raymond’s lead and call it an “analytical framework” so that we can move on to more serious matters.¹⁰ What follows is an attempt to do so.

SERIOUS QUESTION #1:

HOW DOES THE EPISTEMIC ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK (EAF) CONCEPTUALIZE AND ANALYZE KNOWN-IN-COMMON CONTEXT?

In his rebuttal, Heritage dismisses our critical discussion of his attempt to demonstrate the overriding role of epistemic status in action formation by asserting that we are “uninterested in the truth or otherwise of the claim, preferring to argue *a priori* that it is based on outmoded, un-ethnomethodological and non-CA thinking” (p. 40). He adds that “[i]n this context, it is simply mystifying to find ethnomethodologists, of all people, in an apparently unanimous denial of the role of known-in-common context as an aspect of action production and recognition” (p. 40). There is a simple solution this mystery, which is to recognize that rejecting Heritage’s particular array of constructs does not require denying the crucial importance of “known-in-common context” for understanding actions in conversation. Heritage himself *almost* acknowledges as much. In his rebuttal (p. 38) he quotes Garfinkel (1967: 40) on the point that an “auditor” (what we would call an “overhearer”) of an ordinary conversation cannot adequately grasp the sense of many of its expressions without knowing or assuming “something about the biography and purposes of the speaker, the circumstances of the utterance, the previous course of the conversation, or the particular relationship of actual or potential interaction that exists between user and auditor.” After noting that what Garfinkel observes about the unstated contextual basis for understanding seems “undeniable,” Heritage goes on to say that those observations “set an agenda for analysis infinitely more complex than issues of epistemic stance and status – an agenda that we are far indeed from addressing in a meaningful way at the present time” (Heritage, 2018: 38).

Heritage does not pursue this concession any further, but it is worth pursuing. On this point we agree: that taking into account epistemic stance and status (to the extent that they can be taken into account by an “auditor”) does not

come close to encompassing “the role of known-in-common context as an aspect of action production and recognition.” In our special issue on epistemics, we do not suggest that we know better than Heritage does on how to carry forward this “agenda for analysis.” Instead, we express doubts about the agenda and attempt to show why we remain unconvinced by the analysis and do not see it to be necessary for further progress in CA. If Schegloff is to be believed, such progress requires disciplined (not necessarily disciplinary) restrictions on what can be demonstrated by an overhearing analyst about what participants in a conversation (or other activity) are doing at a given moment – that is, what they are doing together, publicly in *interaction*. Given the impossibility of specifying all that an obstinate “auditor” might demand about the actual and possible backgrounds for understanding what the parties are doing, the challenge is to show analytically that what *might possibly* be relevant is *demonstrably* relevant in the conversation. Giving the name “epistemics” to an entire “order” that subsumes knowledge, information, expertise, entitlements to tell stories, “ownership” of specific topics, and many other matters, does not solve the problem of relevance, it simply places an open-ended list of occasional relevancies under a single name. Moreover, there is reason to suppose that “epistemics” glosses over relevant differences between, for example, the various ways knowledge, information and witnessed events are made relevant and conveyed in conversation. Sacks (1992, V. II: 245) pithily expressed one such difference in one of his many brilliant lectures: “It’s extremely difficult to spread joy. It’s extremely easy to spread information.” It also is the case that various conceptions of knowledge, belief, opinion, knowhow, expertise, skill, personal experience, information and misinformation are tied up with heterogeneous arrays of local circumstances and practices.

SERIOUS QUESTION #2:

ARE EAF INFERENCES FROM COLLECTIONS

DEMONSTRABLE IN SINGULAR CASES?

Heritage (2018) and other contributors to the rebuttal issue denigrate our basic competency with professional conversation analysis, and claim that we reject methods of working with collections composed of fragments that exhibit similar structures in favor of untutored interpretations of singular cases. Steensig and Heinemann (2016) also (though again more thoughtfully) address what they call the “collection method,” and add that it “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” (p. 598). Although we agree with Rod Watson (2008: 201) that assembling collections in CA involves a practice of “equivalence classing” that is problematic (and also interesting) from an ethnomethodological point of view (also see Anderson and Sharrock, 1984), our reason for focusing on singular cases had a more immediate practical rationale. We did not have access to Heritage and Raymond’s collections, and could not examine how those collections were assembled, and so we assembled our own collection from their published instances.

Our reanalysis of singular cases drawn from major publications on epistemics did not arise from a general ethnomethodological preference for single-case analysis. Instead, it was oriented to a test of descriptive adequacy that Schegloff formulated, and which remains as relevant as ever for CA publications. We examined whether those exemplary cases “yield[ed] convincing analysis of singular episodes of conversation” (Lynch and Wong, 2016: 536, quoting Schegloff, 1991a: 153). This empirical test raises a further question, which is what counts as “convincing analysis,” and who is entitled to be convinced or not? Heritage makes much of his own entitlements, and he demeans our ‘epistemic status’ by asserting that “fundamental errors” lie in our “understanding of CA techniques and of its analytic armamentarium” (p. 28).¹¹ However, he addresses what he calls our “attempts at

‘re-analysis’ of certain sequences” (p. 16) in a very perfunctory, dismissive, and misleading way, and largely fails to defend the specific characterizations of his that we re-analyzed. Within the limits of a publication format, Schegloff’s test allows others to read transcribed excerpts and to assess the adequacy of an author’s descriptions. In our special issue (Lynch and Wong, 2016: 543), we invited readers to take the time to go through Heritage’s characterizations of the instances we re-analyzed. This invitation remains open to readers of Heritage’s rebuttal who have not yet carefully read the relevant publications. At the very least, I expect this exercise should demonstrate that we did more than argue on *a priori* grounds. We concluded, to borrow a line Heritage used in a different context, that when subjected to Schegloff’s test EAF characterizations appeared to result from “ad hoc stipulation ‘in the midst’ of analysis” (Heritage 2012a: 2). Our doubts about EAF characterizations of the cases selected for publication implicated the integrity of the collections from which they were drawn (Lynch and Wong, 2016: 542). However, rather than reject the use of collections in CA on *a priori* grounds, we are prepared to accept insights derived from them as long as they “yield convincing analysis of singular episodes.”

Our argument thus does not amount to a prohibition on the use of collections in CA, though the assembly and use of collections rarely is transparent to readers of publications that only include selected illustrative fragments. *If* it is still the case, and we believe it should be, that a distinctive feature of CA is that publicly presented materials and commentaries on them can be criticized in detail (Sacks 1984: 26), then the assembly and use of collections is a black box unless they also are made public.¹² Trust in the integrity of collections can be enhanced (though never absolutely secured) by the presentation of exemplary cases that support generalizations drawn from the collections. But, when readers find that the exemplary cases do not clearly support such generalizations, the question should arise as to whether the readers are incompetent or the analysis somehow misses the mark.¹³ In brief, we were not

arguing in favor of single case analysis rather than analysis with collections; rather, we were arguing that, *however derived*, analytic findings in CA should be held accountable to singular cases. This test of the adequacy of professional conversation analysis is long-standing and, apparently, accepted *in principle* by Heritage, Raymond, Drew and other contributors to the rebuttal issue.

SERIOUS QUESTION #3:

IS THE EPISTEMIC ORDER HIDDEN?

Heritage repeatedly insists, not only in his rebuttal to us, but also in his (2012c) response to the comments by Drew (2012) and others in the ROLSI issue, that there is nothing hidden about epistemic status and related aspects of the epistemic order. In his rebuttal to us, Heritage asserts, “Of course interaction is in fact permeated with ‘hidden’ and ‘extraconversational’ stuff” (2018: 37). The scare quotes complicate the assertion by suggesting, perhaps, that the ‘extraconversational’ stuff actually is not ‘hidden’, but is evidently part of the interaction it permeates and thus ‘intraconversational’. Just how such “infinitely ... complex” (p. 38) contextual stuff manifests “right out there on the surface” of recorded talk is one of the most puzzling issues in the EAF.

In his rebuttal, Heritage constructs a “contradiction” between two of the articles in the special issue that emerges despite the extensive collusion among the authors: “While Lynch and Wong worry about epistemics as a ‘hidden order’, Lindwall et al. (2016: 507 et seq.) take up a seemingly contradictory position: that epistemics is not ‘hidden’ at all but is already ‘out there’ in preceding sequences” (p. 36). Lymer et al. (2017: 1) address this “contradiction” by arguing that Heritage “misses a central point” of their argument (in Lindwall et al., 2016), when he attributes to them *his own claim* that *epistemics* is “out there” in the sequences under analysis. They observe that their earlier paper argues that analytic assignments of epistemic status are *unnecessary* for understanding and characterizing the actions in the fragments that Heritage uses to demonstrate

the workings of the “epistemic order,” *and* that in the cases they reanalyzed there is no unequivocal and independent basis for assigning epistemic status—at least not by an overhearing analyst. In their most lengthy re-analysis, Lindwall et al. (2016: 511ff.) cast doubt on Heritage’s assignments of epistemic status to the participants in a recorded phone call that he presents in the form of a fragment taken from a lengthy recording that they examined (a digital copy of the recording was available online). In his rebuttal, Heritage fails to engage seriously with their challenge to such assignments, and he fails to address the broader question about the value of the programmatic distinction he draws between epistemic status and epistemic stance for characterizing the participants’ actions in particular cases.¹⁴

Steensig and Heinemann (2016: 606) express the worry that our arguments “seem to reject the analytic relevance of epistemics outright and entirely.” They recognize that Heritage sometimes (I would say “often”) makes over-the-top pronouncements about the fundamental, continual, pervasive, and unavoidable relevance of epistemics and epistemic monitoring as driving forces in conversation (see the quotation from Heritage [2012a: 24] in Lindwall et al. [2016: 505]), but they plea for a more modest version of epistemics. As noted earlier, articles in our special issue questioned Heritage’s treatment of epistemics as a unitary domain – a distinctive and coherent *order* that is fundamentally and ubiquitously relevant in analyses of participants’ actions and understandings. In our view, such a version of epistemics is an abstraction that glosses over an open-ended array of occasionally relevant contextual matters; an abstraction that subsumes informational, cognitive, linguistic and relational matters under the sign of “K” (for ‘knowledge’). There is also the question of how participants’ epistemic stances and alignments are evident to non-participant analysts of recorded conversations. As Heritage and Raymond (2005: 34, n. 10) themselves acknowledge: “without clear evidence of the parties’ relative rights to knowledge *independent* of the talk, we cannot evaluate the extent to which parties assert those rights in the talk” (emphasis in original). They add that, because of

this they are “obliged to focus on those cases in which the assertion of these rights emerges as a matter that the parties are addressing by talking.” But, after reviewing the exemplary transcripts of *those cases* presented in their publications, we are not convinced that many (if any) of them show that the parties to the specific conversations address and assert the epistemic rights, territories, and statuses that Heritage and Raymond say that they do. As elaborated at length in our special issue, all too often, presumptions about the ubiquity of epistemics ‘inform’ their analyses to such an extent that the resulting commentaries strike us as highly questionable.

SERIOUS QUESTION #4:

HOW DOES EAF USE *INDEXICALS* TO *INDEX* EPISTEMIC STATUS?

As discussed in the previous section, Heritage insists that epistemic status, and associated conceptions of epistemic authority, epistemic rights and entitlements, and territories and asymmetries of information, are “out there” for all to see – materially available in the transcribed fragments of recorded conversations presented in EAF publications. At the same time, these “practices” as he calls them are “rarely the objects of consistent, conscious participant orientation” (Heritage, 2018: 34). How, then, do they become evident to the professional conversation analyst? One of Heritage’s methods for making these fugitive practices visible is through *indexing*. Accordingly, participants and overhearing analysts alike use recurrent linguistic and interactional tokens and turn-designs as signs that “index the superior access, knowledge and rights to evaluate” (p. 33). These tokens and forms also operate as means for upgrading or downgrading claims to epistemic authority, for marking a preceding question as “inapposite”, or for claiming independent access to a referent. As discussed at length in the articles in the special issue by Macbeth et al. (2016) and Macbeth and Wong (2016), Heritage draws upon his research on *oh* and *oh*-prefaced turn-construction units to index particular aspects of the epistemic order.

In the face of our criticisms, Heritage does not defend the way he uses indexing, but instead reiterates it. He acknowledges (2018: 33) that *oh* is an especially clear case of an “indexical expression” – a word or token that is subject to varied contextual and expressive uses on different occasions. Heritage surely knows that indexical expressions have long been regarded as “nuisances” that bedevil efforts to purify natural language for systems of formal logic, to implement machine translation programs, and to stabilize words and codes for use as indicators in coding schemes and questionnaire designs (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970). What Heritage appears unable or unwilling to acknowledge, however, is that *his* interpretive enterprise also tries to stabilize the indexical expression *oh* so that particular recurrences of that expression in naturally occurring conversations can be used by professional analysts referentially as a “proposal” that *indexes* changes in the speaker’s state of knowledge from K- (not knowing) to K+ (knowing). What is in question is not that speakers recurrently use the expression *oh* when receiving news, acknowledging the receipt of information, and so forth. What is in question is Heritage’s use of *oh* to index possibly relevant contextual assumptions or presuppositions about epistemic rights and status. To do so, he needs to establish a precise and invariant correspondence between a given occurrence of that expression and *particular* contextual matters that are relevant to, and furnish the relevance for, *just* that occurrence.

Some evidence for how Heritage (2018) does, or at least attempts to, develop the indexical *oh* into an index can be found in his rebuttal article. On the basis of his earlier research, he assigns *oh* with a general meaning – a speaker’s indication of a “change of state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness” (p. 23) – that is “particularized” in specific sequential contexts. This conception of a core meaning that is contextually specified differs from a conception of an indexical expression as a token that is specified on different occasions of use with different meanings, or with no particular ‘meaning’ or a suspended ‘meaning’ that only becomes apparent in retrospect.

His conception of *oh* as an indexical expression with a core meaning enables Heritage (2018: 33–34) “to attempt to describe a variety of ways in which the ‘change-of-state’ meaning of *oh* is particularized in a variety of sequential positions and sequence types.” He goes on to suggest that such “particularizations have real and significant implications for sequence organization” and that their analysis “goes some considerable distance in their specification” (p. 34).¹⁵ This notion of “‘change-of-state’ meaning” enables any given instance of *oh* to be treated as a “generic proposal” of a change-of-state of *some kind*, the kind being determined in context (Heritage 1984: 324; quoted in Macbeth et al. 2016: 555). Consequently, an occurrence of *oh* in a transcript should lend itself to being treated as an index of a proposed “change of state,” the particular nature of which is to be searched for in the particular sequential context. To put this simply, using *oh* as an index treats it as an invariant signifier of a correlated change of state (or “proposed” change of state) of some kind that is independent of the talk (not necessarily as an actual change of ‘mental’ state, but as a signified “meaning” of a “proposed” changed of state); a change of state that becomes embedded in the talk through its correspondence to the token *oh* and its sequential position.

Oh is by no means the only index that is used in EAF analysis. In the rebuttal, Heritage briefly recounts another, *positional* index of epistemic privilege that he and Raymond developed for their 2005 paper on assessments. He first recounts some distributional findings from their empirical research on assessment sequences:

Put simply, the empirical phenomena we encountered were (i) that first assessments are rarely upgraded¹⁶ in assertiveness (for example, through the use of negative interrogatives) but frequently downgraded by tag questions and evidentials, while (ii) second assessments are frequently upgraded through a variety of practices, but rarely downgraded. (p. 23)

These observations about what “rarely” or “frequently” occurs in a collection of instances are then “upgraded” into a strong grammatical rule:

... the notion [is] that going first with an assessment is inherently more assertive than going second. This idea is plausible because a first assessment sets the evaluative context with which a second must come to terms. If this is the case, we would expect downward adjustments in assertiveness by first speakers who have fewer or more attenuated rights to assess an assessable, and/or upward adjustments by second speakers who have more rights. For the same reason, upgraded first position and downgraded second position assessments would be less common. (p. 34)

“First position” assessments are now endowed with an “inherent” property relative to “second position” assessments. They are “adjusted”, not in relation to a sequentially prior assessment, but in relation to what a hypothetical speaker with more or less “rights” would do in the same slot. That property, in turn, is usable as an index for the “assertiveness” a speaker conveys with the utterance, even if the speaker happens to “downgrade” it in deference to the higher epistemic status of the interlocutor. Degrees of “assertiveness” thus come with the territory of “first position” but are modulated in reference to epistemic status. This is by no means the end of the story, as the analyst must still independently determine whether a first assessment is upgraded or downgraded in relation to a counterfactual alternative that might have been used in that place to establish a different epistemic stance. Moreover, when analyzing ongoing interaction, the assignment of “first position” and “second position” to fragments from longer sequences can be tricky, as two of the articles in our special issue demonstrate. By delving into the lengthier transcripts and digitized recordings of the phone calls from which fragments were drawn Lindwall et al. (2016: 511–516) and Macbeth and Wong (2016: 577–579) show that “first position” in a fragment is not necessarily the relevant “first” in a longer sequence. Consequently, the epistemic status indexed by a “first position” assessment becomes questionable along with its ‘firstness’.

SERIOUS QUESTION #5:

WHAT ROLES DO INFORMATION AND COGNITION HAVE IN EPISTEMIC ANALYSIS?

In the face of our argument that his analysis exhibits cognitivist tendencies, Heritage strongly denies engaging in causal explanations of communicative actions.¹⁷ But, since we do not accuse (or praise) him for conducting causal analysis, his disavowals are beside the point.¹⁸ Nor do we say that he closely follows an established program of cognitive science. And contrary to his assertion (p. 48, n. 23), we do not *make much of the fact* that his (2012b) term “epistemic engine” was previously used by cognitivist philosophers Patricia and Paul Churchland – we simply mention that fact briefly and in passing (Lynch and Wong 2016: 528), and later add that “Heritage does not explicitly embrace cognitivist conceptions of information processing in the way, for example, that Churchland and Churchland ... do” (p. 533). We also explicitly say that Heritage’s analysis “does not explicitly attach itself to the cognitive sciences,” and argue instead “it is cognitivist in the way it departs from CA to delve into motivated exchanges of information in social interaction” (Lynch and Wong 2016: 528). However, in the following passage from our article, we *do* quote what *he* has to say about “cognitive process”:

Heritage (2005: 185) does explicitly invoke ‘cognitive states’ and ‘cognitive process’. He treats ‘cognitive process’ (he uses the singular) as relevant to epistemics in two ways. First, he treats it as a topic or domain that participants in interaction ‘represent ... in their descriptions of everyday experiences and events’. Such representations are of interest for the way they ‘*are driven by a desire to evidence the normality and reasonableness of the objects of cognition ...*’ (Heritage, 2005). Second, he asserts that ‘cognitive process’ is *embodied in interaction*, particularly with ‘*the response particle oh, which is virtually specialized to the task of this embodiment*’ [p. 189]. (Lynch and Wong 2026: 533, emphasis added)

We also argue that Heritage tends to deploy a default conception of information exchange when analyzing particular

cases.²⁰ In his rebuttal, he denies that he does so: “I have so far strenuously resisted the idea that an interest in Q-A sequences commits me to a view of interaction that identifies it with an exclusive and overwhelming interest in information exchange. I certainly do not take that view” (p. 41). As he often does, he overstates the position he attributes to us before rebutting it. I invite readers to find where we state that Heritage is committed to “an exclusive and overwhelming interest in information exchange.” We do say that he *emphasizes* information exchange, and that he tends to read transcribed utterances accordingly. We also refer to some very strong statements that *he* makes about the importance and ubiquity of information exchange in conversation, and about the relative neglect in CA of the long-standing conception in linguistics and information science of questions as requests for information (Heritage 2012b: 31).

Briefly summarized, Heritage objects to what he reads as our assertion, or perhaps insinuation, that he is a cognitivist who trades exclusively in an outmoded conception of communication as an exchange of information from a sender to a receiver. We did not suggest that he fully subscribes to a branch of cognitive science, to the exclusion of an interest in communicative action, or that he trades in causal explanations tracing back to mental ‘factors’. Instead, we argued that the strong focus in epistemics on “knowledge”, the transfer of information between speakers and recipients, and the incessant monitoring of knowledge is substantively cognitivist.

DENIED ISSUE #1: ‘INFORMATIONISM’

There are numerous denials in Heritage’s rebuttal; far too many to take up in a paper of reasonable length. I found some of these denials astonishing, calling to mind a line from Marx: *Who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes?*²¹ One such denial was in connection with the topic discussed in the above section: “... I am supposedly an ‘informationist’ because I think that discerning whether one is being asked something or told something is an important thing to get right. It should be noted right away that such a claim is not ‘informationist’ or even about

'information' per se" (p. 39). The astonishing thing is that his denial conspicuously avoids the expressions he otherwise uses to speak of, for example, a "genuine information request" (p. 32), and "actions of giving and requesting information" (p. 39). So, then, leaving aside the matter of whether Heritage is an "informationist" in the way he *thinks*, how is the way he writes about "discerning whether one is being asked something or told something" (p. 39) not about "information"? Elsewhere, he is quite explicit about the general and ubiquitous salience of information in his conception of talk:

I am suggesting that giving and receiving information are normative warrants for talking, are monitored accordingly, and are kept track of minutely and publicly. It could, in principle, be different, but it is not. As noted earlier, the idea that "information" is a key element in communication, motivating and warranting contributions to talk, is not new. But this does not mean that it should be ignored. (Heritage 2012b: 49)

DENIED ISSUE #2: TERRITORIALITY

Another such denial had to do with a recurrent theme of agonistic struggle in EAF analyses. Referring to his research on assessments with Geoffrey Raymond, Heritage asserts: "What we were not concerned with is the notion, alleged by the EoE group, that interaction is a site of constant agonistic struggles over epistemic turf. Such struggles can emerge of course, but rarely. The sequences we described were, notwithstanding the stances we identified, overwhelmingly occupied with agreement, sometimes of a heartfelt kind" (p. 34).

We had indeed formed the impression that struggles over epistemic territories were a recurrent and central, far from "rare" if not constant, theme in his and Raymond's programmatic discussions and exemplary analyses. For example, while introducing epistemics in CA with a discussion of previous treatments of epistemic territories, such as Goffman's "information preserves" and Kamio's "territories of information," Heritage (2013: 383) observes that participants in interaction "relentlessly" police boundaries between their epistemic

domains. He adds that some analysts suggest that epistemic territories are “patrolled and regulated in much the way that ethologists argue that animal territories are.” Moreover, “to fail to maintain such territory is to risk deracination and, at the limit, even depersonalization.” A less elaborate, but similar summary also is presented in Heritage and Raymond’s (2005: 34) article: “we have suggested that rights to evaluate states of affairs are indeed ‘ordinarily patrolled and defended’ by individuals in routine conversational practices through which these rights are ranked by speakers relative to one another.”

We also noted that vigilance and competition over territory are introduced into Heritage and Raymond’s particular commentaries on exemplary sequences of interaction, even in cases where such competitions do not seem to be particularly salient. One instance where such forced salience seemed striking is in the following commentary on a fragment of a transcribed phone call between two sisters. One of the sisters (Emma) asks the other about a trip from which she (Lottie) has just returned. Here is what Heritage and Raymond have to say about an extract from the call:

[This] case points to the use of “oh”-prefacing as *a means of countering a recipient’s upgraded claim of access* to a referent that began as *the speaker’s informational preserve*. By inquiring into Lottie’s trip (to Palm Springs), Emma casts her as having direct and immediate experiential access to its events that Emma herself lacks. Emma, however, meets Lottie’s enthusiastic initial assessment of the trip (“Oh:: Go:d Wonderful Emma,”) with an “oh”-prefaced, negative interrogative “Oh idn’it beautiful do:wn the:re,,” which *embodies a competitive claim to primacy* in assessing the attractions of the location.

- 1 Emm: .h ^How wz yer tri:p.
 2 Lot: Oh:: Go:d wonderful Emm[a],
 3 Emm: -> [Oh idn’it beautiful do:wn the:re,
 4 Lot: Oh:: Jeeziz ih wz go:rgeous:..
 5 Emm: Wh’t a ni:ce ^wut time’djih git i:n. Jst a li’l whal ago?

Lottie herself then responds to this assessment with a further and *equally competitive “oh”-prefaced agreement that underscores*

her own claims to primacy in the matter. This competitiveness is also evident in the referent shifting that is part of the sequence. The sequence begins with Lottie’s evaluation of her recent trip; Emma’s assessment at line 3 shifts the referent to its general locale, a knowledge domain to which Emma has some claim. In turn, Lottie’s response at line 4 uses the past tense (“wz”) to shift the referent of her assessment back to *her own arena of expertise*—the recently completed trip. (Heritage and Raymond 2005: 27, emphasis added)

The commentary is interlaced with references to competition, claims to primacy, and maneuvers to gain territorial advantage. These references are shoe-horned into salience by means of indexing mediated by structural features such as “‘oh’-prefacing”. Heritage also presents and discusses the same fragment in his 2012a and 2012c articles, suggesting in the 2012c article that Emma “turns the tables” on her sister in line 3 by shifting the referent from trip to place. He once again introduces this fragment in his rebuttal, but there his commentary conspicuously lacks the emphasis on competitive maneuvering.

At line 1 with the question about the trip, Emma is clearly the less knowledgeable party (both in terms of status and stance): she was not on the trip, and the interrogative syntax of her question takes up a stance that is congruent with that. But her second interrogatively formed utterance at line 3, with its shift from the past tense (addressing Lottie’s trip) to the present tense (targeting the contemporary charms of Palm Springs more generally), evokes a potentially more egalitarian epistemic situation. Similarly, its framing as a negative interrogative takes a distinctly more knowledgeable stance than her question at line 1. Thus across two turns on aspects of ostensibly the ‘same topic’, there is a shift in relative epistemic stance and status. (Heritage, 2018: 37)

This latest commentary makes the sequence out to be “occupied with agreement” and the achievement of an “egalitarian epistemic status,” with little suggestion of the competition emphasized in the 2005 commentary. Perhaps both commentaries can be made out to be congruent with each other and

with the transcript, but the second one surely is more congruent with Heritage's denial of any particular interest in struggles over epistemic territory.

CONCLUSION

Our papers in the 2016 special issue took issue with a number of aspects of epistemic analysis, such as the exaggerated claims about omnirelevance and invariance, the use of surface features of utterances to index underlying individual states and statuses, the over-emphasis on information transmission both in programmatic statements and particular analyses, and the tendency to impose a picture of territorial contest over knowledge claims in apparently banal exchanges. Heritage insists that we have gotten it all wrong, and that the epistemic order is "out there" and for the most part easily recognizable by participants and analysts alike. We do not expect to convince him otherwise, but we are confident that others will want to consider what our papers present independently of Heritage's effort to trump what we actually say with his display of epistemic authority in this restricted domain of knowledge.

NOTES

1. The special issue contained an introduction (Lynch and Macbeth 2016), four articles that critically discussed and reanalyzed fragments of transcript presented in publications on "epistemics" in conversation (Lindwall et al. 2016; Lynch and Wong 2016; Macbeth et al. 2016; and Macbeth and Wong 2016), and two commentaries on those articles by Button and Sharrock (2016) and Steensig and Heinemann (2016).

2. Labov apparently uses the phrase "what is said" in a 'literal' way, since the vernacular intelligibility of "what is said" doesn't necessarily imply "in so many words."

3. This is the only mention of "post-analytic ethnomethodology" in Heritage's (2018) version of his rebuttal. The term was in the title and was more extensively discussed in the

introduction and conclusion of the earlier version published online (Heritage, 2016).

4. Authors of other articles in the rebuttal issue also construe our special issue as a personal attack on Heritage, but they also give singular credit to him for developing a comprehensive and highly influential approach to epistemics in CA.

5. In a note, Heritage (2018: 48 n.24) mentions “other critiques of errors attributed ... to Sacks, Schegloff, and others,” citing Anderson and Sharrock (1984), Coulter (2005), Lynch (1993) and Lynch and Bogen (1994), but makes no mention that the criticisms are not about “errors” and are explicitly presented in the context of deep and abiding appreciations of the brilliant and innovative approach developed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson. For example, Lynch and Bogen (1994) credit Sacks with a distinctive treatment of a formulaic account of scientific method as a matter of observing, and then describing what was observed in natural language so that others can see for themselves what was observed. Lynch and Bogen not only credit Sacks with a successful attempt to build a sociological program along such lines, they credit him with the brilliant insight that the formula of observe-report-replicate describes an *instance* of social action-formation (akin to what Garfinkel later formulated as “instructed action”), and that the formula provided for the possibility of *adequate scientific descriptions* of ordinary actions as well as of scientific methods.

6. Informal discussions among some of the group began prior to 2013. I joined a discussion at the 2013 International Institute of Ethnomethodology and CA meeting that year, and participated in the regular conference calls and occasional meetings the continued in the years since then.

7. Other contributors to the rebuttal issue also object to the word “program”. The only clear reason for such an objection is presented in a footnote of Bolden’s article in the rebuttal

issue, where she denies that her research is part of a “‘program’ or agenda to discover epistemic phenomena.” She insists instead that her account “evolved inductively through a close examination of each case, the collection as a whole, and the subcollections within the collection” (Bolden, 2018: 160, n.4). In the same special issue, Raymond (2018: 64) presents a concise summary of Heritage’s “analytic framework,” and he also (p. 76) refers to Heritage’s “theory”. Although Raymond also objects to the word “program”, it is less clear why he does so.

8. The K+/K- notation is used in epistemic CA as a way to denote that a given participant in a conversation is more knowledgeable (K+) or less knowledgeable (K-) than the interlocutor about a particular referent, news item, or domain that is immediately relevant. See, for example, Heritage (2013: 277-278).

9. The “duck test” is a vernacular account of inference from appearance: “if it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck.”

10. Geoffrey Raymond (2018: 64), who co-authored with Heritage some of the key articles on epistemics, refers to Heritage’s “analytical framework” in his rebuttal article (see note 7, above). Although his article is anything but friendly toward our special issue, we are grateful for his provision of an alternative term that takes ownership of what we meant by “epistemic program.”

11. Heritage (2018: 28) follows this assertion with a corrective directed at Macbeth et al. (2016), in which he reminds his readers that “for the past 40 years, CA transcripts have followed Jefferson’s initiative in assigning a new line to pauses following complete-turn constructional units (or TCUs).” He then goes on to define “TCUs” as “units that have come to syntactic, pragmatic and intonational completion ... and that therefore give no immediate indication of continuation.” The

issue Macbeth et al. (2016: 552ff.) raise is whether a particular instance of the expression *oh* in a transcript should have been denoted as a complete turn construction unit, and thus placed on its own line of transcript as a “free-standing *oh*,” or formatted as a prefatory part of a longer turn. Macbeth et al. point out that Heritage (1984: 324) places a “free-standing ‘oh’” on its own line followed by a period, but in his presentation of a longer fragment of the same transcript (p. 329), the ‘*oh*’ is followed by a comma, a notational convention that Jefferson recommended for marking continuing intonation. The pause that follows in both versions of the transcript is denoted as a micropause (a very brief pause of a tenth of a second or less), and so it seems plausible to suppose that this *oh* could have been heard as projecting a continuing utterance. If heard to be doing so it would not be “free-standing” (also see Macbeth, 2017: 8).

12. Schegloff (1996) provides an exceptional description of how he assembled a collection of next-turn repeats by a recipient, and of how he developed a set of distinctions between different actions performed through the use of such repeats.

13. One of the recurrent themes that runs through several of the articles in the rebuttal issue is that the ‘collections method’ is essential to CA. This claim is made most stridently by Clift and Raymond (2018). However, their demonstration of the virtues of that method (pp. 100–101) itself exposes some of the hazards with its use, as a comparison they draw between fragments of two different conversations begs the question of how the equivalence class they draw has any bearing on the local production of the sequence they re-analyze. We intend to say more about this in a later paper.

14. Even though Raymond (2018), Clift and Raymond (2018), and Bolden (2018) also discuss fragments drawn from a longer phone call that Lindwall et al. (2016: 511–516) re-analyze, they do not directly address the main argument Lindwall et al. make about Heritage’s (2012a: 23) assignment of “epistemic status” to

the participants in the exchange. We will take up this issue in more detail in a later paper.

15. If we are entitled to read Heritage correctly (which, he asserts, we are not competent to do), what he says here about “real and significant implications for sequence organization” has a puzzling relationship to what he strongly denies having said about such “particularizations”: “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 1984a: 234) as if it were an (of course, faulty) representation of how oh works in actual concrete sequences of interaction” (Heritage, 2018: 46, n.12).

16. Macbeth et al. (2016: 562) observe that this conception of an “upgraded” first assessment differs from the second assessments that Pomerantz (1984) analyzes. See note 20 for an instance where the identification of “first position” and syntactical indications of “upgrading” get entangled with assignments of epistemic stance and status.

17. In their contributions to the rebuttal issue, Drew (2018) and Maynard and Clayman (2018) echo and elaborate upon Heritage’s denials of “cognitivism”. I will address their articles at length elsewhere, but much of what I say here applies to their denials as well as Heritage’s.

18. Heritage asserts that his work on epistemics focuses on overt communicative interactions and not hidden causes, and charges us with falsely imputing causal analysis to his treatment. To substantiate that charge he focuses on the word “shaping” in a characterization made by Macbeth and Wong (2016: 575), and objects that their use of that word misleadingly implies causality:

... there is a fundamental distinction between the claim that there are ‘asymmetric claims and endowments operating in the

background, *shaping* our ways of speaking (and hearing)' on the one hand, and that particular aspects of conduct (e.g. turn design) *communicate* certain 'asymmetric claims and endowments.' The distinction turns on whether the objective is to describe a causal process ('shaping' etc.) or a communicative one. (Heritage, 2018: 36, emphasis in original)

In a footnote (p. 47, n. 17) he adds that our papers repeatedly fail to recognize this distinction between causal and communicative processes, in contrast to his own work, which "aimed to establish relationships between communicative practices and routine states of epistemic relations as a *communicative matter, not as a cause of behavior*." But, then, elsewhere in his rebuttal he says this: "Thus a choice on such a minutia as the selection between the definite and indefinite article is *shaped by parties' beliefs about the knowledge of their interlocutors*, knowledge that they can be held accountable for, and will tend to track accordingly" (p. 18, emphasis added). Are we to suppose that, in this case, "parties' beliefs about the knowledge of their interlocutors" are "right out there on the surface of interaction" (p. 41)? And, if Macbeth and Wong's use of "shaping" describes a "causal process," why would Heritage's explanatory use of that term not also do so? My take on this is that neither use of the term necessarily implies a causal process, but that from the point of view of an analyst faced with a transcript, the "beliefs" in question that *shape* a grammatical "choice" cannot also be "right out there on the surface" with what they shape.

19. In his objections to the charge of "cognitivism," Heritage emphasizes that his work on oh treats that token "not as some kind of direct portal through which cognitive states enter conversation" (2018: 24). His discussion of "representations" of "cognitive process" does make clear that he is treating these as communicative references rather than direct conduits. However, this is not so clear when he says "[c]ognitive process is not something which speakers simply report, it is also something which they embody in talk-in-interaction." He then discusses how oh "is heavily deployed in interactions

involving information transfer and in interactional events that involve the embodiment of cognitive events such as noticing, remembering and understanding” (2005: 188). It may be possible for a speaker to feign or defer the expression of such “cognitive events,” but the analytical procedure of treating oh as an index of “knowledge transfer” treats the expression as sign corresponding to a cognitive content, whether this “content” is presumed to be a neurological change “in the head” or a corresponding meaning in the signified “space” of oh-semantics.

20. In his article in the rebuttal issue, Raymond (2018: 63) situates “declaratives (which in their default usage convey information) and interrogatives (which in their default usage request it)” as central to the sequential organization of the EAF.

21. An online search for the origins of this quote quickly gets complicated. The consensus seems to be that it appeared in the Marx Brothers’ movie *Duck Soup*, but that contrary to the common attribution to Groucho (who would say something like that), it was said by Chico (who usually didn’t get such good lines). The attribution is complicated by the fact that Chico’s character at the time (Chicolini) was impersonating Groucho’s character (Rufus T. Firefly). Consistent with the accent of Chico’s character, an online script for *Duck Soup* renders the quote as: “Who ya gonna believe, me or your own eyes?”

22. Heritage places a footnote here (also numbered 19 in his rebuttal). Referring to line 3 in the transcript, he says: “Since this is a first positioned assessment and it is upgraded with the use of a negative interrogative, Emma’s turn design embodies the stance that she is more knowledgeable about Palm Springs in general (Heritage and Raymond 2005), although we do not know whether this is congruent with her epistemic status or whether, indeed, there would be agreement between the two women on this matter.” This bit of commentary illustrates two problematic features of epistemic analysis: (1) the designation

of first and second positions in ongoing interaction, and (2) the designation of upgraded and downgraded forms. Emma's adjective "beautiful" seems calibrated in degree of 'superlativeness' to Lottie's adjective "wonderful," and also appears to be congruent with the shift in referent from trip to place. It is "first positioned" only if we suppose that the change in reference makes her evaluation a *first* assessment, rather than a *second* assessment that plays off of Lottie's prior assessment. Pomerantz (1984: 98, n8) discusses an exceptional case in her corpus, in which a second assessment shifts the reference of the first, but in her analysis it remains *second* to the prior assessment. Lottie's "gorgeous" in line 4 retains the reference to the place that was the destination of the trip in Emma's prior line, and follows the sequential pattern of upgraded second assessments that Pomerantz (p. 66) characterizes as a display of strong agreement. Accordingly, Emma's "beautiful" is both a second to Lottie's "wonderful" and a prior for Lottie's "gorgeous" in a sequentially organized riff of superlatives. As for the designation of upgrading and downgrading, Heritage's interpretation that Emma's assessment is "upgraded" by means of her use of a negative interrogative, and that it thereby "embodies the stance that she is more knowledgeable," involves a very different conception of upgrading than Pomerantz entertains. The *upgrading* is not done in relation to an assessment in the prior turn, but is instead indexed by a structural feature of the self-same turn. The trouble is that both the assignment of "first position" and the implication of "upgrading" have a very thin local basis, and appear to derive from a rather mechanical application of abstract analytical structures (particularly oh-prefacing) to the details of this very interesting case.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, R.J. and W.W. Sharrock (1984) Analytic work: Aspects of the organisation of conversational data. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 14: 103–124.
- Bolden, Galina (2018) Speaking ‘out of turn’: Epistemics in action in other-initiated repair. *Discourse Studies* 20(1): 142–162.
- Button, Graham and Wes Sharrock (2016) In support of conversation analysis’ radical agenda. *Discourse Studies* 18(5): 610–620.
- Clift, Rebecca (2012) Who knew? A view from linguistics. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 69–75.
- Clift, Rebecca and Chase Wesley Raymond (2018) Actions in practice: On details in collections. *Discourse Studies* 20(1): 90–119.
- Coulter Jeff (2005) Language without mind. In H. te Molder and J. Potter (eds.), *Conversation and Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 79–92.
- Drew, Paul (2012) What drives sequences? *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 61–68.
- Drew, Paul (2012) What drives sequences? *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 61–68.
- Drew, Paul (2018) Epistemics in social interaction. *Discourse Studies* 20(1): 163–187.
- Garfinkel, Harold (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Garfinkel, Harold and Harvey Sacks (1970) On formal structures of practical actions. In: J.D. McKinney and E.A. Tiryakian (eds.) *Theoretical Sociology*. New York, NY: Appleton-Century Crofts, pp. 337–366.
- Heritage, John (1984) A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement. In: J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 299–345.
- Heritage, John (1998) Oh-Prefaced responses to inquiry. *Language in Society* 27(3): 291–334.
- Heritage, John (2002) Oh-prefaced responses to assessments:

- A method of modifying agreement/disagreement. In C. Ford, B. Fox, & S. Thompson (eds.), *The Language of Turn and Sequence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 196–224.
- Heritage, John (2005) Cognition in discourse. In: H. te Molder and J. Potter (eds), *Conversation and Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 184–202.
- Heritage, John (2012a) Epistemics in action: Action formation and territories of knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 1–29.
- Heritage, John (2012b) The epistemic engine: Sequence organization and territories of knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 30–52.
- Heritage, John (2012c) Beyond and behind the words: Some reactions to my commentators. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 76–81.
- Heritage, John (2013) Epistemics in conversation. In: Sidnell J and Stivers T (eds) *Handbook of Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 370–394.
- Heritage, John (2016) Epistemics, conversation analysis, and ‘post-analytic’ ethnomethodology: A rebuttal. Draft Paper, Department of Sociology, UCLA. Posted online in October 2016. No longer available (superseded by Heritage, 2018).
- Heritage, John (2018) The ubiquity of epistemics: A rebuttal to the ‘epistemics of epistemics’ group. *Discourse Studies* 20(1): 14–56.
- Heritage, John and Geoffrey Raymond (2005). ”The terms of agreement: Indexing epistemic authority and subordination in assessment sequences.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 68(1): 15–38
- Labov, William (1972) Rules for ritual insults. In D. Sudnow (ed.), *Studies in Social Interaction*. Englewood Cliffs, NY: Free Press, pp. 120–169.
- Lakatos, Imre and Alan Musgrave (eds.) (1970) *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lindwall, Oskar, Gustav Lymer and Jonas Ivarsson (2016) Epistemic status and the recognizability of social actions.

- Discourse Studies 18(5): 500-525.
- Lymer, Gustav, Oskar Lindwall, and Jonas Ivarsson (2017) Epistemic status, sequentiality, and ambiguity: Notes on Heritage's rebuttal. Available online at: <http://radicalethno.org/documents/lymeretal.pdf> (accessed 20 April 2018).
- Lynch, Michael (1993) *Scientific Practice and Ordinary Action: Ethnomethodology and Social Studies of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, Michael and David Bogen (1996) *The Spectacle of History: Speech, Text, and Memory at the Iran-Contra Hearings*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lynch Michael and Doug Macbeth (2016) The epistemics of Epistemics: An introduction. *Discourse Studies* 18: 493-499.
- Lynch Michael and Jean Wong (2016) Reverting to a hidden interactional order: Epistemics, informationism, and conversation analysis, *Discourse Studies* 18: 526-549.
- Macbeth, Douglas and Jean Wong (2016) The story of 'Oh', Part 2: Animating transcript. *Discourse Studies* 18: 574-596.
- Macbeth, Douglas, Jean Wong and Michael Lynch (2016). The story of 'Oh', Part 1: Indexing structure, animating transcript. *Discourse Studies* 18: 550-573.
- Maynard, Douglas and Steven Clayman (2018) Mandarin ethnomethodology or mutual exchange? *Discourse Studies* 20(1): 120-141.
- Pomerantz Anita M. (1984) Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds), *Structures of Social Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 57-101.
- Raymond, Geoffrey (2018) Which epistemics? Whose conversation analysis? *Discourse Studies* 20(1): 57-89.
- Raymond, Geoffrey and John Heritage (2006). The epistemics of social relations: Owning grandchildren. *Language in Society* 35: 677-705.
- Sacks Harvey (1984a) Notes on methodology. In: J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

- Press, pp. 21–27.
- Sacks, Harvey (1992) *Lectures on Conversation*, Vols. I & II. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sacks, Harvey, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (1974) A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation. *Language* 50(4), 696–735.
- Schegloff, Emanuel (1988) Goffman and the analysis of conversation. In P. Drew and A. Wooton (eds.), *Erving Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order*. Oxford: Polity, pp. 89–135.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. (1996) Confirming allusions: Toward an empirical account of action. *American Journal of Sociology* 102(1): 161–216.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. (1997) Whose text? Whose context? *Discourse & Society* 8: 165–187.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. (2007) *Sequence Organization in Interaction: A Primer in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. (2010) Commentary on Stivers and Rossano: “Mobilizing response”. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 43(1): 38–48.
- Sidnell, Jack (2012) Declaratives, questioning, defeasibility. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1): 53–60.
- Steensig, Johan and Trine Heinemann (2012) Throwing the baby out with the bath water? Commentary on the criticism of the ‘Epistemic Program’. *Discourse Studies* 18(5): 597–609.
- Stivers, Tanya and Federico Rossano (2010) Mobilizing response. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 43(1): 3–31.
- Watson, Rod (2008) Comparative sociology, laic and analytic: Some critical remarks on comparison in conversation analysis. *Cahiers de praxématique* 50: 197–238.