Williams, V., Webb, J., Dowling, S., & Gall, M. (2019). Direct and indirect ways of managing epistemic asymmetries when eliciting memories. *Discourse Studies*, 21(2), 199-215.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445618802657>

Peer reviewed version

License (if available):
Other

Link to published version (if available):
[10.1177/1461445618802657](https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445618802657)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)
PDF-document

This is the accepted author manuscript (AAM). The final published version (version of record) is available online via Sage at <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445618802657> . Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>

Cover Sheet: **Paper for ‘Discourse Studies’.**

Direct and indirect ways of managing epistemic asymmetries when eliciting memories.

Val Williams, Joe Webb, Sandra Dowling, Marina Gall.

Corresponding author: Val Williams

Norah Fry Centre for Disability Studies, 8 Priory Road, University of Bristol

BS8 1TZ (Address for proofs and offprints)

Val.williams@bristol.ac.uk

0117 3310971

Other authors: joe.webb@bristol.ac.uk; s.dowling@bristol.ac.uk; marina.gall@bristol.ac.uk

Short title: **‘Managing epistemic asymmetries’**

The authors have no conflict of interests to report. The data in this paper were collected as part of research about disabling practices funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, Grant No ES/M008339/1

Biographical note Val Williams is a Disability Studies professor, who combines disability research with the systematic analysis of talk. She has previously published accounts of the fine-grained detail in conversations between people with intellectual disabilities and their support workers. Joe Webb is also a CA analyst, who has strong interests in the interactional consequences of questions, and in the application of Conversation Analysis to dementia talk. Marina Gall and Sandra Dowling are members of the team, who worked with disabled people to create practices which are better fitted to include them.

Acknowledgements We would like to acknowledge the support given in analysis by our co-investigators Professors Charles Antaki and Celia Kitzinger, and to thank all the people with dementia and their supporters who took part in this research.

Direct and indirect ways of managing epistemic asymmetries when eliciting memories.

Abstract

This article aims to explore how epistemic status is negotiated during talk about the life memories of one speaker. Direct questions which foreground 'remembering' can lead to troubled sequences of talk. However, interlocutors sometimes frame their first parts as 'co-rememberings', and the sequential positioning of these can be crucial to the outcome of the talk. We draw on almost 10 hours of video data from dementia settings, where memory is a talked-about matter. Our focus is on 30 sequences which are initiated with a question or other first part taking a K- stance, selecting one person as next speaker, and topically relating to the recipient's past life. We show how Type Two knowables can be used alongside markers of tentativeness, to jointly construct the recipient's epistemic primacy.

Key words Epistemics, epistemic primacy, co-remembering, dementia, questions, reminiscence, Type Two knowables, asymmetries in talk, support practices.

1. Introduction

Co-remembering or referring to a shared past event is a mundane, routine practice in which we all regularly engage, and can be used for various social goals (Bolden and Mandelbaum, 2017; You, 2015). At the same time, talk about past experience or memories can be deeply linked with identity, 'a co-constructed performance of self' (Crichton and Koch, 2011) and remembering takes on a particular significance for some people with acquired impairments, in the face of a loss of the narrative of one's life. This is particularly true of people with dementia whose interactions with others may help to maintain their worth and identity (Cowdell, 2006), creating 'personhood' (Kitwood, 1997), goals which are articulated in English dementia policy (Department of Health, 2015).

The focus of this article is the sequential effect of first parts which are designed to elicit the personal life memories of the recipient, and over which a speaker would be expected to have epistemic primacy (Raymond and Heritage, 2006). It is a delicate task to design questions in such a way that this primacy is respected, especially when the respondent's own account lacks detail or specificity. Moreover, the questioner may in fact already know that detail, and has to manage the potential threat of that knowledge to the respondent. In this situation, there are various options open to the questioner, and we explore the sequential effects of a) indirect questions which focus on memory, such as 'Do you remember?'; b) direct questions where the questioner claims that they are 'knowledge minus' (Heritage, 2010; 2012) in respect of the personal memories of the respondent; c) indirect routes where a speaker lays claim either to generic topical information, or to previous conversational disclosure from the other person. All these strategies in some senses make memory itself a talked-about topic, and the act of remembering (or recalling) a jointly constructed activity, often prompted by the person with dementia's conversation partner. However, in some instances the possibility of not remembering is built into the formulation of the question, creating threats to the 'face wants' (Goffman, 1967) and identity of the respondent. We were therefore particularly

interested to look for strategies which might create a more symmetrical and equal interaction between the two parties.

In this paper we analyse data from dementia groups, where reminiscence and talk about the past is 'on the agenda'. Older people have a rich resource of past memories to draw on when conducting a conversation (Boden and Bielby, 1986) and regularly interweave past and present in order to negotiate conversation topics, and to manage interpersonal aspects of conversation such as affiliation. Instead of examining identity as a personal characteristic, this article follows the tradition of Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) to consider how identity becomes relevant on a moment-by-moment basis in talk. As we shall show in this article, past identity claims can co-exist alongside threats to present identity status in reminiscence talk. Middleton (1997) for instance discusses how people are co-opted into the act of remembering, and how the relevance of certain memories can be negotiated in talk. There has long been interest in how these rights to manage identity in talk are eroded when speakers are treated as 'confused' (Shakespeare, 1998) with less than full membership rights as conversational partners and dependent on 'how others perceive and interact with them' (Crichton and Koch, 2011: 102).

This article positions both identity and memory as phenomena that are 'talked into being' (Goodwin, 1987; Shaw and Kitzinger, 2007: 119). As Heritage (2012) has pointed out, participants in interaction regularly orient to each person's privileged epistemic status, or their right to their own memories ('epistemic primacy': Raymond and Heritage, 2006), although in routine conversation, epistemic access to any topic is relative, often shared, and shifting (Heritage, 2012: 4). As will be explored, it is those moments of sharing which seem key to the successful completion of memory talk in these contexts. We point therefore to a phenomenon which is of very general relevance to the task of managing respect for epistemic primacy.

When talking with a person known to have dementia, we found that memory was often a foregrounded matter, and that the possibility of not remembering was frequently built into the

formulation of questions about the life memories of the person with dementia. We are particularly interested in the epistemic status of each speaker, and how routine ways of managing epistemic asymmetries are managed in this context. Our goal in this analysis is to distinguish the precise ways in which a successful conversation about another person's past life could be achieved without undermining his or her epistemic rights and current identity status.

2. Questions

Questions are one of the bedrocks of conversation sequences, typically in initiating position, and often a mark of the institutional rights of one participant in the interaction; as Hayano (2013: 395) comments, 'questions are a powerful tool to control interaction: they pressure recipients for response, impose presuppositions, agendas and preferences...'. There are many institutional practices which are constructed precisely by their reliance on question-response sequences (Stokoe and Edwards, 2010 on police interrogations; Antaki, Houtkoop-Steenstra and Rapley, 2000, on the delivery of survey questions; Clayman and Heritage, 2002, on news interviews). Some of these practices display particular patterns of question-answer which define the event for participants (Sidnell, 2010). Specifically, Sidnell highlights the strategy used regularly by interrogators, where they follow up an initial yes/no question with further topically related probes.

The types of questions we focus on here regularly fulfil the function which Schegloff (1980) refers to as a 'pre', or a preliminary to a larger action - a way of ensuring that the other party understands and recognises the reference. As Williams (2011: 65-74) notes, a routine way of bringing someone into the conversation is to refer to shared memories or joint experiences. This type of opening reference can be done in fact by the use of declaratives, without necessarily using typical question formats (Sidnell, 2010). A candidate understanding, or an other-initiated repair for clarification, can also serve as a way of offering someone a slot to talk about their own memories (Goodwin, 1987). Crichton and Koch (2011: 107) give an example of reminiscence talk with a person with dementia, whose

partner creates space for her to 'remember' by pausing after a prompt question 'What's the story about...?' then giving a more specific prompt when this one fails. By doing this type of interactional work, a speaker can position the respondent as someone with shared memories, albeit someone who has privileged access to these memories. Questions can thus serve multiple functions, and one of the respondent's problems is to work out, in Ehrlich and Freed's (2010) terms, 'why do you ask?' Pomerantz (2017) points out that respondents routinely work out what the purpose of the question was, and respond accordingly. Responding to a question is not straightforward, and a question designed to open up talk, for instance, can easily be misconstrued.

These matters are discussed in the growing literature where CA is used to examine conversations with people with dementia diagnoses (Chatwin, 2014). Kindell et al. (2016) review existing studies which examine communication and interactions with people with dementia (Lindholm, 2008; 2015 and Lindholm and Wray, 2011). Various, CA has explored some of the repair strategies which are carried out by the non-disabled conversational partner (Watson, 1999); the conduct of telephone conversations with a person with dementia (Jones, 2015); the use and elicitation of familiar proverbs and sayings by people with dementia (Lindholm and Wray, 2011); assessment in memory clinics (Jones et al., 2016).

All of these studies turn our attention from the deficits of the person with dementia, towards the interactional strategies needed within a two-way conversation, by both parties. Wilkinson (2008) comments on the importance of the co-constructive role of the conversation partner and Jones (2015) for instance comments that some of the routine interactional practices which maintain conversation may pose problems when in interaction with someone with dementia: "The co-participant in any given conversation will often use 'ordinary' interactional practices that are straightforward in their everyday interaction, but that are inapposite when conversing with someone with memory impairments" (p. 557). Misalignment, as Jones terms it, between the two conversational partners can occur not just *because of* the cognitive deficit, but by questions that can be ill-fitted to the competence of the person with dementia.

In the following, we shall be particularly interested in the ways in which questions about a person's own life can contain within them particular epistemic claims, and what this might imply for the way in which epistemic rights (Raymond and Heritage, 2006) are managed in situ. In the light of debates about the validity of epistemics in conversation analysis (Lynch and Wong, 2016; Heritage, 2018), we would agree with Heritage that matters of epistemics are routinely relevant and observable in talk, and we have ourselves previously argued (Williams, 2011) that epistemic primacy (the right which any person has to claim 'prime' knowledge about one's own life) is particularly important to analyse when it is under dispute, unclear or challenged, a key focus in this paper. We are interested in how both parties in talk display accountability towards managing the turn-by-turn assumptions about 'who knows what'.

3. Method

The video data on which this paper is based were collected as part of a large (*name of funder*) study on social practices and change in the context of disability. Specifically, this part of our project collected in total 9 hours, 57 minutes of naturally occurring data of interactions with 28 people with dementia. Although we also collected data from people with intellectual disabilities, at home in school or in activity groups, this article focuses solely on the data from people with dementia, which were collected largely in activity groups, some of which were referred to as 'memory cafes'. As Chatwin (2014) and Webb (2017), we framed the difficulties we observed not as communicative deficits of dementia itself, but more as the ways in which interaction could fit or misfit (Garland-Thomson, 2011) the participants in our study. In other words, we follow the foundational insights of CA (Sacks, 1987) in considering the achievement of smooth interaction as an accomplishment for which both parties have responsibility, and we wished to develop ideas about how interaction can be shaped so that it supports people with dementia to be conversational partners.

The collection of video data was mainly carried out by the second author (Webb) who spent many days familiarising himself with the contexts, and becoming a known participant in the groups. Any study like this will have ethical issues to overcome, and our study followed a strict protocol approved by (*Name of Ethics Committee*), to ensure that people assessed as lacking capacity to consent on their own behalf had personal consultees who could give consent on their behalf. Permission to record events or conversations was always sought at the time, and so consent was continually re-negotiated with all participants. Additionally, participants were invited to take part in feedback sessions, where their video material was re-played to them and discussed.

The collection of 30 sequences on which this paper is based are all initiated with questions which topically relate to the recipient's past life, and which to varying extents adopt an overt knowledge-minus stance.

4. Findings

4.1 'Opener' questions which lead to trouble

The interactional achievement of reminiscence talk seems unremarkable until it goes wrong. Our interest in opening up interactional spaces for reminiscence talk was sparked by one such occasion. A frequent form of opener was a 'Do you remember' or 'Can you remember' question, designed to orient the recipient to some aspect of their own experience. This formulation was used for instance when two members of staff (Sandra and Meg) were talking with Jim, an older man with dementia.

Extract 1: Can you remember?

becomes a talked-about matter, and thus Sandra orients to Jim's incompetent identity in the here-and-now, creating him as an inadequate interlocutor, in the very act of attempting to orient him towards his past professional identity.

In the event, Jim neither provides the possible literal response of 'no' (I don't remember), and nor does he provide a response which would have conformed to the action agenda of the question (Hayano, 2013: 402-4) by naming his job, but instead delivers the non-conforming response 'work' with a slight laugh, evident on the video. Effectively this could be heard as a response to Sandra's opening instruction to 'tell a bit about his job', and is taken as a joke by Sandra, maybe a way of saving face for Jim. 'Work' could be heard as a synonym for the word 'job', but also as 'hard work' – i.e. Jim's account of his job. As Lindholm (2015) notices, face-saving responses are frequent in such interactional contexts.

'Can you remember' in Extract 1 overtly targets the recipient's ability to remember. An alternative formulation, 'Do you remember' could for instance refer to matters outside the epistemic domain of the recipient and might function very differently. For instance, 'do you remember' in that context could be heard as 'Was this type of thing part of your experience?' to which a relevant response is 'no'. Conversely, when the matter to be remembered specifically relates to the life of the recipient and their ability to remember is called into question, as in Extract 1, this can lead to a complex and sensitive negotiation of epistemic asymmetries (Stivers et al., 2011).

4.2 Using a direct question to prompt a response

Immediately following Extract 1, the conversation with Jim continued. Sandra had already responded with laughter to the trouble with which her first question was received, while Meg then took up the next question in a more serious tone, marking her distance from the laughter by a 'though' in the following extract (line 14). We became interested here in how the talk moves on towards questions which initially give Jim a tighter framework in which to respond, and how both Meg (at line 19) and Sandra (line 29) are led into an

acknowledgement that each of them is more 'K+' about Jim's past life than they had initially indicated.

Extract 2

14 Meg I (know) did you enjoy it though Jim? Did
15 y[ou]
16 Jim [Yeah]
17 Meg enjoy your work.
18 Jim Yeah=
19 Meg =I remember you ↑told me what you used to do ((nodding))
20 Jim .hhh (y[eah])
21 San [What] was your title (0.5) of work
22 (0.9)
23 San What was your title.
24 (2.4)
25 Jim No ti↓tle
26 San No title. >So what was the job that you done.
27 (1.1)
28 Jim Engin↑eer
29 San Enginee:r. And was that- if I'm right in saying >was that<
30 for an airconditioning,
31 (1.1)
32 Jim It was, ↑yeah
33 San For airconditioning.=
34 Meg =Mmm.
35 Meg [(I)]
36 San [And] that took you: () all over the w↑orld didn't it?
37 Jim All over the place

Any question, as Hayano (2013) comments, contains presuppositions. Further, a turn can function as a question even when not deploying a question format. Although it is in declarative mode, Meg's 'I remember you told me' at line 19 functions as a 'my side' question (Pomerantz, 1980) which reinforces the project of 'Do you remember?' allocating Jim another slot in which to respond. It is also, hearably, a hint to Jim to refer back to what he has already said. Referring to past talk is effectively what Crichton and Koch's (2011) participants also do, in order to continue a past conversation about someone's own life. The explicit 'I remember you told me' reverses the 'Do you remember?' and positions Meg as having explicit knowledge about Jim's past career, albeit what Pomerantz (1980) called a 'type 2 knowable'; Meg does not claim that she has experienced the job itself, and does not display yet that she knows exactly what the job was, only that she had been told previously (n.b. one may remember that they were told something, without remembering specifics). Note also that at this point, none of the parties has actually named Jim's job. Sandra and Meg continue with the next formulation of the question which comes from Sandra, with the self-corrected 'what was your title?' in lines 21-3. Again, Jim gives a non-conforming response, effectively questioning the proposition entailed in the question that his job would have had a 'title'. Repeating this with a smile, Sandra then reformulates the question to something very like the opening, now 'so what was the job that you done?' Finally this produces a response from Jim at line 28 'Engineer'.

Thus far, one can see how the question formats which have been adopted have shifted from the generic and less entitled opener 'I wanted you to tell me', through to more explicit formulations requiring Jim to name his job 'Can you remember what your job was' 'what was your title', and offering him the opportunity to talk around the situation, with a 'Did you enjoy'. Each time the question appears to fail in its interactional goal, it is re-designed and one can see how that recipient design is shaped by the particular point reached in the conversation,

with trouble, pauses, non-conforming answers and laughter, resulting in a reformulation towards something which positions the questioners as incrementally more K+, despite the continued push in the questions for Jim to actually articulate his own job role.

Finally at line 29, as soon as Jim has supplied the word 'engineer', Sandra repeats the term, a form of third position acknowledgement which functions as an information receipt (Schegloff, 1997: 499-545; Svennevig, 2004). Note that there is no 'oh-prefacing' of her response, which would be typical for a news receipt, and there is no upward intonation (engineer?) which would have suggested a question to be confirmed (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012). Without pausing, she immediately increases the specificity of the question to Jim, drawing on her own knowledge of Jim's past career in a delicately formulated way, taking account of Jim's epistemic rights ('if I'm right in saying was that for an air-conditioning...'). This lexical prompt displaying the questioner's K+ status is only built into the question once Jim has himself named his own profession. Doing this type of reminiscence talk displays the sensitivity with which speakers manage any possible epistemic incongruence. The interactional task is to support a person's epistemic right to their own life domain, while running the risk that a prompt will imply that the questioner might know more about the other's life than they do themselves. We have several examples where the third position turn reveals the 'known answer' status of the question (Heritage, 2018: 30); for instance, on one occasion a man is asked for the name of his wife, and after pausing he does supply a name, which is then repeated by the facilitator, with a 'that's right'. This pattern seems very much like a memory test (Hellerman, 2005). Epistemic intrusion can be a sensitive matter, and the precise point in the sequence when this occurs seems to depend on Jim's success in finally giving a preferred response to the original question about his job.

4.3 Using a type two knowable to elicit claims to knowledge

Unlikely or creative accounts of one's past life again figure in the following, where the importance of sequential positioning is even clearer. The precise point at which questions are asked to prompt memories is important for Jim in Extract 2. It is also important for Rob in

the following sequence; unlike the attempt to launch in with a ‘Do you remember?’ question, preceding Extract 3, Rob’s identity as a piano player has been roundly emphasised throughout the interaction. Jan has spent some time showing Rob some piano music, and asking him what the notes mean, when she finally asks him a specific question about Kenya at line 26.

Extract 3 Playing the ivories

01 Rob it’s called playing the ivories
02 Jan ((*hand movements as if playing the piano*))
03 Jan play - tinkling the ivories yeah (0.3)
04 Rob and we know where the ivories come from
05 Jan yeeah er (.)afric - african elephants
06 Rob yeah
07 Jan ↑ye↓ah(.) I don’t think they ↑do
08 I don’t think they’re made
09 of ivory any more I think they’re probably
10 just the old ones made of ivory now
11 Rob ((*nods head*))yes when we were in Kenya
12 Jan ↑ye::ah
13 Rob there was a concert or- organised by (.)
14 er um (0.2) you know they all (.)
15 Jan travel arrangements travel agents
16 Rob suddenly got (0.1)even the Queen when
17 she was there
18 Jan ↑yes
19 Rob and the - the girl guides

20 Jan ↑o:h ↓right
21 Rob em er and I was in the -
22 Jan boy scouts ↑yea
23 Rob yes (.)and er (0.1) you know they say
24 'give us a tu::ne'
25 ((plays with fingers as if on piano))
26 Jan → oooh Rob you know when you know when you
27 went to Kenya
28 Rob yes
29 Jan and you're saying about about the queen
30 in Kenya (.)are you thinking of of
31 Treetops
32 Rob (.)
33 yes that's where they stayed at
34 Jan yeah the Kenyan resort where the queen stayed
35 did you ↑go to Treetops
36 Rob well I (0.2) er the thing is that all my (0.3)
37 sepia (0.1)
38 Jan yes
39 Rob photos are pretty awkward [for me
40 Jan [yes to look at
41 Rob and I played the piano (0.1) er and I I er
42 talked to er (.) the Queen
43 Jan yes (*sits back with a smile*)
44 Rob when she was a girl
45 Jan yeah

Rob's talk about 'playing the ivories' is taken up by his conversational partner, Jan, who replaces the term used by Rob by the idiomatic expression 'tinkling the ivories', oriented to by both as a reference to a phrase which might jokingly be used about a musician. Note that this plays here to Rob's epistemic primacy, not only to have greater knowledge about his own life, but also about the terms and issues associated with the domain of piano playing. His next turn also orients to his greater level of access to piano playing, as it is Rob who produces the next first pair part in line 4 'and we know where the ivories come from'. The 'we know' as a preamble puts Jan in second position, but simultaneously refers obliquely to a possible past sharing of information, something that Jan should be able to recall. The roles of questioner and respondent have at this point been reversed.

It is Jan then who provides a response to *Rob's* question, in starting to discuss where ivory now comes from, but her turn works around neatly to another turn slot for Rob, by her reference to 'just the old ones made of ivory'. Rob's embodied yes (a nod) immediately takes this up, and he then shifts the topic stepwise (Jefferson, 1984) using what Jefferson identified as a pivotal utterance to form the new topic. The topic of African ivory is effectively closed with the nod and the 'yes' at line 10, which opens up the topic of 'when we were in Kenya'. Note Jan's 'ye::ah' in response, orienting to this shift as potentially relevant to the matter under discussion.

So far, what is remarkable in this extract is Rob's continued dominance of first-position turns. Down to line 27, Jan is constantly in second position and responds minimally to Rob's talk, orienting to Rob's epistemic primacy and her own relative lack of knowledge. It is at line 27 that this changes, at the point where she uses a slight pause to self-select in order to direct Rob towards some more specific talk about his experiences with the Queen in Kenya. Effectively, she uses the same strategy here as we have already noted elsewhere, and which is illustrated by Sandra in Extract 2, where the reference is to a shared conversation, something which both parties are called on to remember:

27 Jan Rob you know when you know when you went to Kenya

28 Rob yes
 29 Jan and you're saying about about the queen
 30 in Kenya (.)are you thinking of of
 31 Treetops
 32 Rob (.) yes that's where they stayed at

Since the conversation about Kenya has been introduced by Rob himself a few lines earlier, this 'type 2 knowable' does not have the same thrust as Sandra's in Extract 2. It is more perhaps a display of ongoing understanding of the present conversation, something that is routinely done to demonstrate and reinforce intersubjective understanding, by providing a 'gist' or summary of what is being said. What moves it into maybe a wider or past frame of reference here is the explicit mention of 'Treetops'. While it may be publicly available information that the Queen stayed at 'Treetops' it is unlikely that both Jan and Rob would know this unless they had talked about it previously. Whatever the case, the acknowledgement by Rob in line 28 allows Jan to carry on to not only summarise Rob's previous story, but to clarify his reference to the Queen, to her staying at Treetops, and then to the possibility that Rob as a boy scout may have also gone to the same place.

There is evidence here that Rob hears this line of questioning as some kind of verification of his story, since his response is not to agree or disagree that he went to Treetops, but to refer to the physical evidence of the photos he possesses from his childhood. Just like a witness in court proceedings (Sidnell, 2010) Rob accounts for his inability to verify this memory. However, he soon moves back to a straightforward assertion that he both played the piano, and talked to the Queen as a girl. This response at lines 36-39 re-casts Jan's question 'Did you go to Treetops?' as implying that if he could agree that he was in the same place as the Queen, his account of playing the piano for her might indeed be circumstantially reliable. As with some other story-tellers (Williams, 2006), when people's accounts run the risk of being taken as unreliable or fantastical, one way of managing this is for a speaker to supply

circumstantial, locational and dramatic detail around the veracity of their claim. In the present context, then, in talk involving a person with dementia, it seems that in Extract 3 epistemic primacy might be something that needs to be achieved, indeed jointly accomplished, rather than simply assumed. Jan's previous discussion with Rob about his life, her prior knowledge, and her skilful questioning here have enabled Rob, with very few narrative resources of his own, to develop a picture of a particular moment in his past. So much depends on the sequence, the positioning of specific questions and prompts in the wider interaction and activity of the moment.

4.4 Displaying epistemic primacy by rejecting the premise of a question

When type 2 knowables (i.e. past, shared information) are routinely used in these contexts to prompt or elicit personal memory talk, that can occur in the service of diverse activities in the here-and-now (Buchanan and Middleton, 1995). In Rob and Jan's case, the activity involved looking through piano music, and some time had been spent in Rob demonstrating to Jan how musical notes were to be interpreted. Thus, his own skills as well as memories had been on display. In the following extract, the activity in progress was the completion of a crossword. Rik is the member of staff, sitting beside Gordon whose gaze is fixed on the crossword in his hands.

Extract 4

- 01 Gor letters beginning with T
- 02 Rik trade
- 03 Gor yeah trade (1)
- 04 Rik firing away today
- 05 Gor yeah (.) ↑signal. Seven letters (0.5) G (.)
- 06 blank N blank blank [blank E
- 07 Rik [G blank N signal
- 08 Gor seven (1) sihgnal (.) uhm (2)

09 Rik →you weren't in signals ↑were you? ha ha
10 Gor →no I weren't in signals
11 Rik (...)
12 Gor →transport mate transport
13 Rik transport
14 Gor yes
15 Rik we'll come back to that
16 Gor yes logistics mm right okay

As Bolden and Mandelbaum (2017: 26) note, 'the activity of co-remembering [is] as deeply social – not just in terms of what is remembered, but also in terms of the uses for which memory can be deployed.' Here, co-remembering is at the service of completing the crossword, which Gordon is holding as he reads out clues to Rik, who is repeating back the crossword clue, occasionally giving a candidate answer (as in line 2). Rik's remark 'firing away today' in line 4 is received with a 'yeah', as an evaluative commentary on how the activity is going, not necessarily an evaluation just of Gordon's contribution. The crossword clue that concerns us here is the one read out by Gordon in lines 5-6, and then repeated with some pauses, marking the ongoing nature of Gordon's thinking about the answer in line 8 'seven (1) sihgnal (.) uhm'. Rik uses that pause at the end of line 8 to self-select at line 9, with a shift to a new action, namely a negatively tilted question about the job which Gordon had previously done. The term 'signals' which is in the crossword clue becomes a pivot on which to form this stepwise move. Using a word which is being discussed in a crossword or quiz may of course be heard as a device to help solve the clue, orienting Gordon to the possibility of solving the clue by thinking about his past experience. Rik's laughter could indicate that the question was premised on Gordon's privileged access to this field of knowledge, and Gordon's subsequent denial that he was 'in signals' (line 10) although aligned in terms of preference with the question, reframes his past job as 'transport'.

Effectively, in this activity context, Gordon justifies his inability to find the crossword clue for 'signals'.

Thus, we can see how talk about someone else's past life can be elicited by a K+ questioner, albeit using question formats which are tentative, negatively tilted and which exhibit sensitivity in honouring the other person's epistemic primacy. In fact, there is nothing specifically in the talk which could alert us to the fact that one of these participants (Gordon) is a client with a dementia diagnosis, while Rik is an occupational therapist. The only suggestion of their roles may be in the orientation Rik shows towards reminding Gordon of his work life, and making it relevant to the present activity. However, Gordon's quick reformulation and naming of his own job do identity work by positioning him as a competent conversationalist, as well as having been a competent transport worker. The 'co-constructed performance' in Crichton and Koch's (2011) terms can be seen here in action, and the opportunity afforded Gordon to discuss his own version of his life history is created both by the tentativeness of Rik's question, but also by the evident link it has with the activity context in which it emerges. Talk about reminiscence can be seen to have a function in the here-and-now, and is always as Bolden and Mandelbaum (2017) suggest, 'deeply social'.

5. Discussion

This paper has highlighted some of the ways in which co-remembering can be used as a resource to prompt reminiscences, particularly when the other speaker shows evidence of problems in remembering details which are in their own epistemic domain. Specifically, we have examined the interactional trouble that can occur when questions of the 'Do you remember' variety seek a naming response; conversely, the use of questions which rely on Type 2 knowables (Pomerantz, 1980), or references to past, shared conversations, can be a more productive resource in these contexts. Parties in the talk regularly orient to the precise positioning of these questions in the flow of the talk, and both speakers display particular sensitivity to epistemic rights and primacy.

Such a strategy of referring to co-remembered information via a previous shared conversation is not specific to dementia contexts. Anyone might remind someone else that they had previously mentioned a particular matter, or they might make it clear in their question that the other speaker had disclosed something to them. One could speculate that these indirect means of prompting reminiscence might be chosen when there is more likelihood of forgetting, rather than the direct face-threatening 'Can you remember' questions. One of the interesting reflections arising from this paper is therefore the parallel with this phenomenon as it appears in other contexts, to accomplish different actions. In courtroom witness interrogation, Sidnell (2010) shows how yes/no questions to establish the facts are regularly followed up by further probes (wh-questions) about the details of an event. This pattern is remarkably similar to that explored in Extract 2 in the current paper, where Jim's naming of his own past job was immediately followed by some more probes to explore his memories. While we are not drawing direct comparisons between these contexts, the parallel between the patterns of questioning is of interest. It is remarkable how questions can become extremely face-threatening, when they imply that a speaker does not have access to his or her own past life story, and no amount of re-structuring can really eliminate that effect.

Managing veracity claims is an ever-present task for these interlocutors, as for instance when a speaker mentions interacting with the Queen as part of his life story. As in Lindholm (2015), talk with people with dementia can be fraught with 'confabulations' or matters which seem either fantastical or unlikely, but is also perfectly possible in mundane conversations outside institutional settings. Lindholm (ibid) found that interlocutors managed these moments in the conversation in many different ways, and the current paper adds to that array by showing how a skilled interlocutor can deflect the talk towards some shared, related topic which is in the public domain, thus re-positioning the other as a reliable speaker, with a relevant and believable narrative. That can be done either by re-casting the original story as factually possible, by re-directing the speaker towards another version of his story, or by

referring to related information, thus maintaining topical relevance. All of this is both about keeping a conversation going, while also doing the work of respecting and enhancing what someone else says about their life (Crichton and Koch, 2011). Matters of face management are always present in these conversations.

As Bolden and Mandelbaum (2017) point out, co-remembering is not necessarily done for its own sake, but is often carried out in the service of other interactional goals, to verify some information, solve an argument, or complete a story for a third party. In the data analysed here, we have seen reminiscence talk occur informally within other activities, where the goal might be to complete a practical task such as gardening, or to decide on a pub visit. In the current paper, we showed how a crossword puzzle could give rise to a question which probed someone's past employment history. Unlike the more formal 'reminiscence therapy' sessions, activity contexts such as this can allow a range of responses to be taken as functionally adequate, relevant, or even consequential for the task.

It is well established that speakers are treated as having the right to narrate their own experiences and to know and describe their own thoughts (Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Pomerantz, 1980; Sacks, 1984). These rights are part of what Shakespeare (1998) described as membership rights, and speakers routinely achieve current, here-and-now identity status (what Zimmerman, 1998 referred to as 'discourse identity') via such personal narration. However, in some contexts, as this paper shows, these rights have to be navigated carefully and tactfully, and this navigation is visible in how each turn is taken up in subsequent talk. Epistemic rights can overlap and interweave, when one speaker's memories of their own life are challengeable by others. This situation results in both speakers having to navigate the epistemic space by placing themselves in a K- position, even when subsequent turns demonstrate their shared knowledge. This allows the first speaker to own his or her story, as well as creating space within which the framework of co-remembering can be filled in, confirmed or disconfirmed.

The data on which this paper is based arises from a study about disabling practices, where we are concerned to identify how practices are 'ordered' precisely because that interactional order may be shown to be exclusionary, or could become more inclusive. We hope therefore to add to the stocks of professional knowledge with the current findings about epistemic primacy, references to past conversations and the importance of doing reminiscence talk in the service of other tasks and activities. More than anything, the speakers in our data showed sensitivity to the precise moment in the talk to introduce a question, while designing their next turn very carefully to attune it to what the other speaker had just said. The concept of 'recipient design' not only threads through CA, but is a very relevant matter for dementia talk, and CA findings may help practitioners to operationalise that concept in practice.

References

- Antaki, C., Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. and Rapley, M. (2000) "‘Brilliant. Next Question...’: High-Grade Assessment Sequences in the Completion of Interactional Units", *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 33(3): 235-262.
- Antaki, C. and Widdicombe, S. (1998) *Identities in Talk*. London: Sage.
- Boden, D. and Bielby, D. (1986) 'The Way it Was: topical organization in elderly conversation', *Language & Communication*, 6 (1): 73-89.
- Bolden, G. & Mandelbaum, J. (2017) 'The use of conversational co-remembering to corroborate contentious claims', *Discourse Studies* 19 (1): 3-29.
- Buchanan, K. and Middleton, D. (1995) 'Voices of Experience: Talk, Identity and Membership in Reminiscence Groups', *Ageing and Society*, 15 (4): 457-491.
- Chatwin, J. (2014) 'Conversation analysis as a method for investigating interaction in care home environments', *Dementia*, 13 (6): 737-46.
- Clayman, S., & Heritage, J. (2002) *The News Interview: Journalists and Public Figures on the Air*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Cowdell, F. (2006). Preserving personhood in dementia research: A literature review. *International Journal of Older People Nursing*, 1(2): 85-94.
- Crichton, J. and Koch, T. (2011) 'Narrative, Identity and Care: joint problematisation in a study of people living with dementia'. Chapter 5, pp 101-118 in *Discourses of Deficit*, eds. C. Candlin and J. Crichton, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.
- Department of Health. (2015) Prime Minister's 2020 Challenge on Dementia, Department of Health: London.
- Ehrlich, S. and Freed, A. (2010) 'The Function of Questions in Institutional Discourse'. pp 3-1 in *Why do you Ask?* eds A. Freed and S. Ehrlich, Oxford University Press,
- Garland-Thomson, R. (2011) 'Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept', *Hypatia* 26 (3): 591–609.
- Goodwin, C. (1987) 'Forgetfulness as an Interactive Resource', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 50 (2): 115-31.
- Hayano, K. (2013) 'Question Design in Conversation'. Chapter 19, pp 395-414 in J. Sidnell and T. Stivers (eds) *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hellermann, J. (2005). 'The sequential and prosodic co-construction of a 'quiz game' activity in classroom talk', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37(6), 919-944.
- Heritage, J. (2010) 'Questioning in Medicine' pp 42-68 in *Why do you Ask?* eds A. Freed and S. Ehrlich, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heritage, J. (2012) 'Epistemics in Action: action formation and territories of knowledge', *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45 (1): 1-25.
- Heritage, J. (2018) 'The ubiquity of epistemics: a rebuttal to the 'epistemics of epistemics' group', *Discourse Studies*, 20 (1): 14-56.

Heritage, J. and Raymond, G. (2005) 'The terms of agreement: indexing epistemic authority and subordination in talk-in-interaction', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 68 (1): 15-38.

Jefferson, G. (1984) 'On stepwise transition from talk about a trouble to inappropriately next-positioned matters'. Chapter 9, pp 191-221 in *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Eds J. Atkinson and J. Heritage, Cambridge University Press.

Jones, D. (2015) 'A family living with Alzheimer's disease: the communicative challenges', *Dementia*, 14 (5): 555–573.

Jones, D., Drew, P., Elsey, C., Blackburn, D., Wakefield, S., Harkness, K & Reuber, M. (2016) 'Conversational assessment in memory clinic encounters: interactional profiling for differentiating dementia from functional memory disorders', *Aging and Mental Health*, 20 (5): 500-509.

Kindell, J., Keady, J., Sage, K. and Wilkinson, R. (2016) 'Everyday conversation in dementia: a review of the literature to inform research and practice', *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 52(4):392-406.

Kitwood, T. (1997). 'The experience of dementia', *Aging & Mental Health*, 1(1), 13-22.

Lindholm, C. (2008) 'Laughter, communication problems and dementia', *Communication and Medicine*, 5 (1): 3–14.

Lindholm, C. (2015) 'Parallel Realities: the interactional management of confabulation in dementia care encounters', *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 48 (2): 176-199.

Lindholm, C. & Wray, A. (2011) 'Proverbs and formulaic sequences in the language of elderly people with dementia', *Dementia*, 10 (4): 603- 623.

Lynch, M. and Wong, J. (2016) 'Reverting to a hidden interactional order: Epistemics, informationism, and conversation analysis', *Discourse Studies*, 18 (5): 526-49.

Middleton, D. (1997) 'The Social Organization of Conversational Remembering: Experience as Individual and Collective Concerns', *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 4 (2): 71-85.

Pomerantz, A. (1980) 'Telling my side: "Limited access" as a "fishing" device', *Sociological Inquiry*, 50: 186-98.

Pomerantz, A. (2017) 'Inferring the purpose of a prior enquiry and responding accordingly', pp 61-77 in G. Raymond, G.H. Lerner, & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Enabling human conduct: Studies of talk-in-interaction in honor of Emanuel A. Schegloff*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Raymond, G. (2003) 'Grammar and social organization: Yes/no interrogatives and the structure of responding', *American sociological review*, 939-967.

Raymond, J. and Heritage, J. (2006) 'The Epistemics of Social Relations: owning grandchildren', *Language in Society*, 35, 677-705.

Sacks, H. (1984) 'On doing "being ordinary"', pp. 413-429 In JM Atkinson and J. Heritage (Eds.) *Structures of social action: studies in conversational analysis*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Sacks, H. (1987) 'On the Preferences for Agreement and Contiguity in Sequences in Conversation' pp 54-69 in G. Button, & J.R.E. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and Social Organisation* Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Schegloff, E. (1980) 'Preliminaries to preliminaries: "Can I ask you a question?"', *Sociological Inquiry* 50 (3-4): 104-52.

Schegloff, E.A. (1997) 'Practices and Actions: Boundary Cases of Other-Initiated Repair', *Discourse Processes* 23 (3): 499-545.

Shakespeare, P. (1998) *Aspects of Confused Speech: a study of verbal interaction between confused and normal speakers*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Shaw, R. and Kitzinger, C. (2007) 'Memory in interaction: an analysis of repeat calls to a home birth helpline', *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 40(1): 117-144.
- Sidnell, J. (2010) 'The Design and Positioning of Questions in Inquiry Testimony' Chapter 2, pp 20-41 in A. Freed and S. Ehrlich (eds) "Why Do you Ask" The Function of Questions in Institutional Discourse. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stivers, T., Mondada, L. and Steensig, J. (2011) 'Knowledge, morality and affiliation in social interaction'. Chapter 1 pp 3-24 in T. Stivers et al (eds) *The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stokoe, E. and Edwards, D. (2010) 'Asking ostensibly silly questions in police-suspect interrogations'. Chapter 6, pp 108-32 in A. Freed and S. Ehrlich (eds) "Why Do you Ask" The Function of Questions in Institutional Discourse. Oxford: OUP.
- Watson, C. (1999) 'An analysis of trouble and repair in the natural conversations of people with dementia of the Alzheimer's type', *Aphasiology*, 3 (3): 195-218.
- Webb, J. (2017) 'Conversation Takes Two: analysing interactions with people with dementia'. *Disability & Society*, 32 (7): 1102-1106.
- Wilkinson, R. (2008) 'Conversation analysis and Communication Disorders', Chapter 6 in M. Ball, M. Perkins, N. Muller and S. Howard (eds) *The Handbook of Clinical Linguistics*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Williams, V. (2005) "'Did you solve it yourself?": evaluation of narratives of self-identity by people with learning disabilities', *Communication and Medicine* 2(1): 77-89.
- Williams, V. (2011) *Disability and Discourse: analysing inclusive conversation with people with intellectual disabilities*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- You, H-J. (2015) 'Reference to shared past events and memories', *Journal of Pragmatics* 87: 238-250.

Zimmerman, D. (1998) 'Identity, Context and Interaction', Chapter 6, pp 87-106 in C. Antaki and S. Widdicombe (eds) *Identities in Talk*. London: Sage.