How do Participants in Discussion Groups Co-construct Knowledge?

By

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Abstract

This thesis explores how participants in discussion groups co-construct knowledge. The data for the research comprises transcripts of interviews with small groups who are given one of three topics to discuss. The interviews follow the concept of a question route, as outlined in traditional Focus Group practices. The analysis was undertaken using a combination of discourse analysis and micro-analysis.

The thesis raises three primary research questions and three secondary questions. The first primary questions asks what are the underlying organizational principles that are observable amongst participants of discussion groups. The thesis shows that the group moves through three distinct stages: individual knowledge claims, a group discussion, and displaying a preference for closure. The first of these stages exists at the level of the individual whereby a participant makes a knowledge claim in response to the moderator's question. The second stage sees the other group participants engage with the epistemic content of the individual participant's knowledge claim. Finally, upon reaching an acceptable consensus, the participants display an unwillingness to alter the consensus-based knowledge claim by resisting any attempts at either expansion of the topic or by the introduction of a new knowledge claim. This resistance takes the form of minimal responses or not acknowledging the knowledge claim was made. Eventually, the moderator treats this non-engagement as a cue to begin the next question. The second question asks how participants in the discussion groups support the individual knowledge claims they make. The thesis argues that the claims can be arranged within an explicit taxonomy, based on how the participants present their claims. This taxonomy is arranged into three strands: unsupported claims, sourced claims, and justified claims. The sourced claims and justified claims are further sub-divided based on the nature of the source and the nature of the justification. The third question asks how participants arrive at consensus. The participants can be observed to display a preference for avoiding or mitigating disagreement and a preference for agreement. Participants avoid disagreement by ignoring the claims of another participant. This is type of ignoring whereby participants acknowledge that the other participant has issued an utterance but do not engage in the epistemic content of the utterance. A second way that participants avoided disagreement Is by shifting the focus from the source of potential disagreement within the utterance onto another aspect of the utterance that is less problematic. The participants display

a strong preference for agreement amongst themselves. The participants are observed to agree with each other even in instances when this agreement is at odds with an earlier knowledge claim or takes place in an utterance where there is not any content with which to actually agree. A major contribution of this thesis is the development of the concept of the 'Interpersonal Engine', which is proposed in opposition to the 'Epistemic Engine' as the key motivator behind group consensus-building. The secondary questions in the thesis explore the institutional nature of the discussion groups, the role of the moderator, and how a knowledge claim can be defined. This thesis shows that, despite there being no actual institution, the participants displayed qualities of institutional talk. The quality of institutionalism was talked into being by the participants and the moderator. Participants oriented towards the moderator as having the right to terminate topics under discussion; however, the moderator only did so when participant participation had become minimal. The issue of what is meant by the term 'a knowledge claim' is discussed. The definition used throughout this thesis is that a knowledge claim is a claim that permits progressivity.

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Introduction

1.1 Aims of Research

My aim in this study was to examine the ways in which groups constructed consensus-based knowledge. I have shown that this takes place in a three-stage sequence and that participants across groups deploy similar categories of knowledge claim and strategies, or preferences, that are deployed to move towards consensus and away from any potential disagreement.

1.2 Methodology

In terms of methodology, I was inspired by conversation analysis but also social epistemology, CA, argumentation evaluation, and focus group studies. I recorded the seven groups using three Kodak digital cameras that were set up around the rooms where the recording took place in a manner to allow a clear visual on the faces of all the participants and the moderator. This meant that on occasions when the audio data was unclear, I was able to observe the speaker's mouth to aid in my attempt to understand the words spoken. The visual recording also allowed a clear understanding of the role of glances or any other pertinent non-verbal communication in the conversations. In addition to the three digital cameras, I also placed a Panasonic Dictaphone at the center of each table. These recording devices proved more than adequate as a means of recording the interviews.

I created three discussion topics:

1. Discussion Topic 1 (DT1) What does it mean to be a moral person?
2. Discussion Topic 2 (DT2) Is Kobe a good place for people from overseas to raise children?
3. Discussion Topic 3 (DT3) How do you promote student autonomy in your classes?

The reason for creating these three topics was to see if they generated different types of knowledge claims. DT1 is based on questions on morality. These questions were variations on questions asked in books on ethics and morality (Mackie 1977;Thompson 1994; Shermer

2004) I was interested to see if the questions would generate hypothetical answers, given the fact that morality questions tend to be couched in conditionality. DT2 looks at Kobe, Japan, where I live. I generated all the questions myself without any references to other sources. The questions in the question route explore reasons why non-Japanese residents of Kobe like it (or do not like it) and is it a good place to raise children. This type of question was of interest as I felt it would encourage subjective answers. DT3 asked about student autonomy. As all the people I was interviewing were, or had been at some point, teachers (all participants save two were ESL teachers. Of the two exceptions, one was a university glass blower instructor/trainer, and another taught history at university, and had also been a trainer for financial advisors). As this discussion centered around professional behavior and reputation, I was interested to see what type of knowledge claims this would generate.

1.2.1 Conversation Analysis Influences

Sidnell (2013) outlines the basic principles of using conversation analysis (CA) as a method of analyzing spoken English. More specific than Sidnell's general principles , Ten Have (2007:128-139) outlined four types of interactional organization that are seen as helpful to a beginning analyst, although, as a basic checklist, they are helpful starting points. These areas are turn-taking organization, sequence organization, repair organization, and the organization of turn-design. These specific organizations were good 'hooks' to begin the analysis of the data. More directly related to my research question was Clift (2016) who takes an in-depth look at territories of knowledge and authority. The initial analytic stage was very circular, it involved moving into the specific examples and then comparing and contrasting to other examples and repeating this. Looking at the transcripts at the very outset of the analysis was very daunting and so the analytic 'hooks' suggested by ten Have were useful as places to start at the very beginning.

1.2.2 Non-CA influences and the problem of unmotivated looking

One of the central beliefs of CA is that of unmotivated looking in the early stages of analysis. Unmotivated looking is the idea that the CA researcher will look at the data without a pre-formed research question, but, rather, will seek to tease as yet undiscovered practices out of the data (Schegloff 1996). One problem I faced with the idea of unmotivated looking was that I was observing the data with a preformed ideas of how groups acted and how argumentation proceeded (with regards to argumentation, I am suggesting that the knowledge

claims made by the participants in the interviews were akin, but not identical to the types of argument made in argumentation theory). The way that groups act is described by group dynamics, a sub-discipline of psychology (Forsyth 2006, Arrow, McGrath, and Berdahl 2000, Hogg 2001). It would be impossible to deny the influence of group dynamics on how I viewed the video data as I transcribed it. The work on how groups form, create norms, and form or resist consensus informed my interpretation of the data. The same can be said of argumentation theory and genre analysis. Argumentation theory identifies "structures of common types of argument used in everyday discourse, as well as in special contexts like those of legal argumentation and scientific argumentation" (Walton, Reed, and Macagno. 2008:1). Genre analysis seeks to identify the purpose of a genre, the intended audience, and discover patterns and themes within the genre. In essence, argumentation theory and genre analysis are seeking the underlying structure and organization of a practice, and group dynamics explores the interaction of groups. When I began to transcribe the data, as the first stage of familiarization, I was looking for examples of group dynamics, argumentation theory, or evidence of genre. Where these approaches would be at variance with CA theory is that I, as a researcher and therefore a non-emic participant, am making judgements on the group based on information that is not formed from within the group but is information from outside academics who have made such decisions without viewing the actual groups being analyzed. CA must draw its conclusions from within the data, and I have not done that: my initial observations were colored by non-CA work. However, this is not something I view as problematic. A significant influence on how I came to view the process of knowledge co-construction came from the field of social epistemology. List (2011) feels that there is a "mechanism for aggregating group members' individual beliefs or judgements into corresponding collective beliefs or judgements endorsed by the group as a whole" (2011: 221). List sees his process as having three stages,

Figure 1.1. The Aggregation Procedure. List. 2011.

Had it not been for List's work, I would not have considered the sequential nature of the process that eventually established itself as:

1. **Individual knowledge claims**
2. **Group discussion**
3. **Signal of completion.**

The methods of micro-analysis within CA are useful, and my primary method of analysis but, I am willing to accept that group dynamics, argumentation theory, and genre analysis are all valid research methods for describing language and human interaction, so there is no mismatch.

1.3 Transcription

There is a tension between what information is needed in the transcription process and making the final, public-facing transcript as readable as possible. As my method of analysis was heavily influenced by Conversation Analysis, my initial reaction was to use the Jeffersonian approach to transcription that is the predominant approach in CA. Initially, I would begin the transcription process by writing out the first drafts using standard spelling for each word and ignoring any features such as micro-pauses, latching, or over-lapping speech so that it would look like Example 1 below. Then, once I had completed this version, I would go back over each transcript and begin to add features in which CA is traditionally interested so that it would now look like Example 2 below.

Example 1 – Stage One standard transcription

1	Mod:	So, it has a higher retention rate because of
2		the higher number of foreign people living
3		here.
4	Brian:	(Nodding).
5	Carl:	Yeah.

Example 2 – Stage Two Jeffersonian transcription

1	Mod:	So,..it has a::::: higher retention rate?
2		because of the highe::r number of foreign
3		people, living here?
4	Brian:	(Nodding).
5		(1.0)
6	Carl:	Yeah.

The Jeffersonian approach offered much more detail into the spoken interaction. It allowed the transcriber to note features such as micro-pauses, gaps, stress, and elongation. However, the standard transcription was offering as much insight into the research questions as was the Jeffersonian transcription. Furthermore, the standard transcription had two advantages over the Jeffersonian transcription approach; it was significantly quicker to produce a completed transcript and it was considerably more readable. However, examining turn-taking remained important to the analysis. "The three turn-taking phenomena typically captured in transcripts are: simultaneous, overlapping, and contiguous utterances" (Jenks. 2011: 48). These three phenomena continued to be represented in my transcription process with the appropriate Jeffersonian symbols.

Another transcription issue was that of intonation. Jenks (2011:55) states that research into intonation has shown, "how intonation is used to project speakership, elicit a response, interject, and interrupt, request for clarification, complete each other's turns, and signal listenership" and these were all features I looked at during the analysis stage. In addition, the turn-construction unit (TCU) and transition-relevance place (TRP) were very important to the analysis and so unit-final intonation was represented in the transcripts. Hepburn and Bolden (2011: 61) mention five types of unit-final intonation that are used in CA transcription

1. A period – falling intonation
2. A question mark – strongly rising intonation
3. A comma – slightly rising intonation
4. An inverted question mark – an intonation rise between that of a comma and a question mark
5. An underscore – level intonation at turn end.

However, I only used the first three of these intonation features. The inverted question mark intonation either did not appear in my data, or I, as of yet, lack the sophisticated transcriber's ear to differentiate it from the strongly rising intonation (?) and the slightly rising intonation (,). Regarding the underscore, as symbols of rising and falling intonation were available in the transcription process, I viewed level intonation at turn end as the default setting. In short, the Jeffersonian transcription approach offers a vast array of tools, most of which were not relevant to my research questions, and so I only adopted six that were:

Simultaneous speech – double brackets – [[example]]
Overlapping speech – single bracket – [example]
Contiguous utterances – equal sign – Speaker A: Shall we go? =
Speaker B: =Yes.
Strongly rising intonation – question mark - ?
Slightly rising intonation – comma - ,
Falling intonation – a period - .

1.4 The Definition of a Knowledge claim.

One of the central concepts discussed in this thesis is that of a knowledge claim. On the surface, this may appear to be a reasonably transparent term, however, there are a number of potential interpretations, and these will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five drawing upon examples from the data. At this point, I will give a summary of four of the potential interpretations and briefly explain the reasons for not selecting these before outlining the definition of a knowledge claim that I will be using throughout this thesis.

A knowledge claim is an utterance that expresses the speaker's knowledge, understanding or opinion. The information in the knowledge claim does not have to be 'justified and true'. The utterance does not have to be a grammatically complete clause or clause complex. One possibility is to count an utterance as a knowledge claim if other participants in the interaction orient to it as such. However, my data show that it is common for a speaker's utterance to be ignored by all the other participants. This means that an utterance that a speaker may have intended to be a knowledge claim has not been treated as a knowledge claim by the other

participants. In many cases, when transcribing the data, I interpreted an utterance as a knowledge claim only to find that the other speakers did not respond to it as such. In other words, my status as an observer led me to an interpretation that was not supported by evidence internal to the interaction.

This led me to the conclusion that in identifying knowledge claims I was identifying utterances that had the potential to be responded to as knowledge claims by the participants, whether or not they did so. Whereas this involved an element of subjectivity, I was able to follow three guiding principles. First, the utterance had to respond to the question posed. Second, it must make possible a response, whether agreement, disagreement or modification. Finally, the utterance must have the potential to lead to the epistemic closure of the topic. That is, it must offer new information. Using these principles, I was able to be confident in my identification of knowledge claims.

1.5 Outcomes

The most important outcome of my study is a framework for analyzing how groups co-construct consensual knowledge claims. This framework has the potential to be applied to other data, especially market research data.

In this chapter I shall outline the research outcomes with regards to the three main research questions:

Research Question One: What organizational principle can be proposed to account for how discussion groups progress from initial response to a question to the conclusion?

I have found that there is a three-stage sequence that occurred in the discussion groups

1. **Individual knowledge claims**
2. **Group discussion**
3. **Signal of completion.**

The first stage involves the speakers making an individual knowledge claim (as opposed to a co-constructed knowledge claim that is representative of the whole group). All the knowledge claims in the data could be placed in a taxonomy of knowledge claims that identified categories of knowledge claims and the features of the knowledge claims that made them

identifiable. This taxonomy is detailed in Chapter Two. Once made, this knowledge claim is either ignored by other speakers (which was the main obstacle for knowledge claims becoming the basis for group consensus) or the members would take the knowledge claim and process it towards becoming their consensus. The preferences that influenced the manner in which the speakers went about producing consensus are detailed in Chapter Three. The final stage in the sequence was participants signaling a readiness to close the sequence to the moderator. This was achieved by minimal responses, extended silences, and a general resistance to any attempts at expansion.

Research Question Two: How do participants who make a knowledge claim support their knowledge claims?

Participant's knowledge claims came in three categories: justified, sourced, and unsupported. The justified knowledge claims saw the participant present their knowledge claim as a rational claim for another person to believe based on the content of the claim itself. The sourced knowledge claims sought to present the knowledge claims as worthy of belief based on the source of the knowledge. The unsupported claims are claims that are not accompanied with supporting reasons but are often claims in regard to exemplars of the topics under discussion. There is a noticeable preference for speakers to use supported claims, either justified claims or sourced claims, over unsupported claims.

Research Question Three: How is consensus arrived at? How is it recognized? What appears to be the 'engine' that drives it?

In the discussion groups, there was an observable move towards consensus and avoidance of any potential for disagreement. These commonly repeating preferences fell into three groups, each with recognizable features, a preference for agreement, a preference to mitigate any disagreement, and a preference for cautious epistemic advancement. These preferences are outlined in Chapter Three. Furthermore, there were examples of participants making advances that were non-epistemic advances. These advances owed more to interpersonal concerns than any epistemic considerations. This leads to the conclusion that the epistemic engine (Heritage 2012a, Heritage 2012b) is not the only driving force behind conversation and that there is also an interpersonal engine. These two engines are not in competition with each other and may represent the ends of a spectrum.

In addition, I shall outline the research outcomes that relate to three secondary questions.

Research Question Four: To what extent is the character of the discourse affected by the previous relationships between participants?
All the participants were long standing friends of both the moderator (who is also the researcher) and one another. This led to all the groups being pre-formed groups, each participant knowing every other participant and the moderator. On occasions this led to very casual conversations. However, sometimes the participants would utilize qualities that were recognizable as features of institutional talk, despite there not being any actual institution. With this regard, the previous relationships of the participants had no impact as the institutionality was talked into being by the participants.

Research Question Five: What is the role of the moderator in the discussion group?
The moderator was the primary source of turn allocation at the start of each question unit: a question unit is the term I use to describe the time in the discussion that begins with the moderator asking a question from the established question route through to the time when the moderator asks the next question from the question route. The moderator would ask the question and then the gaze of the moderator coupled with the participants played a large role in the allocation of the first respondent. On occasions when the participants were reluctant to engage with a response, the moderator had to select the next speaker. Finally, there was a negotiated interaction between the moderator and the participants as to the end of the question unit. The participants would signal an unwillingness to continue, and the moderator would orient towards this as being the signal to ask the next question.

Research Question Six: What is a knowledge claim?
Central to the thesis is the concept of a knowledge claim. It became clear that this was a phenomenon that was 'easy to identify but hard to define'. I considered four candidate definitions for the definition of a knowledge claim but decided the most flexible definition was of most benefit to the analysis.

1.6 Review of Module One and Module Two

Module One was initially designed to be the module that laid out the methodology, although I did modify the methodology for Module Three (as outlined below). Module One introduced the main research question – How do groups construct knowledge claims? The

method of investigating this question was by generating data using focus groups to discuss three discussion topics and then by analyzing the data according to the methods espoused by conversation analysis. The topics were chosen so as to avoid the need for any specialist knowledge and allow all participants an equal epistemic access to the topics.
Module Two was a pilot study of the question routes and the method of analysis. This module involved three focus groups. However, I no longer refer to these as focus groups and prefer the term 'discussion group'. The question routes produced enough data for me to develop an initial taxonomy for individually produced knowledge claims. A second finding was a basic framework for the approaches participants undertook in the formation of consensus which I would further refine in Module Three. Module One and Module Two were useful and necessary steps in the research process. Module Three represents a second level of evolution from the first two modules and the next stages of research will evolve further as a consequence of the methodological lessons that I learnt in Module Three.

1.7 Summary of Module Three

Next, I will summarize how this thesis is organized. This thesis makes the case for a three-stage approach to the way that pre-formed groups reach consensus. They begin with individuals making supported knowledge claims in response to the moderator's question. The second stage sees the participants begin to debate and modify those individual claims. The third stage sees an acknowledgement of the consensus by the group which leads to the moderator moving on with the next question.

Chapter Two discusses the taxonomy of knowledge claim presentations. This chapter looks at how individuals, when making a presentation of knowledge claims, usually include a supporting statement for that knowledge claim. This support can take the form of either a justification or a sourced support. The justification comes in three forms, reasoning, frequency, and endoxa. The reasoning is a type of support whereby the speaker seeks to show that their knowledge claim is based on a reasoned analysis. It is not to say that the speaker is saying there knowledge claim is logical, but it represents the speaker publicly defending their knowledge claim as being a reasoned out claim and it is therefore a reasonable claim to make. When a speaker supports their claim with frequency, they are making an argument that as a knowledge claim frequently takes place it is therefore reasonable to make the claim. The support by endoxa is supporting a knowledge claim that because many people undertake a

course of action it is therefore reasonable for a speaker to make such a knowledge claim. The second strand of support for a knowledge claim comes in the form of a sourced support, namely a report of knowledge by a person. This takes the form of either a self-sourced claim (firsthand experience) or an other-sourced claim (another person). The self-sourced claims are when a participant shows they have personally experienced something that allows them to make the knowledge claim. What proved most interesting about these self-sourced claims was that they were often used by a participant as a way of making a statement about themselves specifically and then using that statement to generalize about a specific population of people, for example, people who are not from Kobe, or tourists in general. When a speaker used another source, it was either a specified or unspecified source. A specified source was named, the person or the television program. An unspecified source was not specifically named, but rather referenced, for example, “I was looking into this”, or “I heard that…”. These individual knowledge claim presentations were either taken up by another member of the group, or, if ignored, the moderator would ask another participant. The role of the moderator in moving the individual stage to the group stage was only necessary if no other participants took up the prior knowledge claim.

Chapter Three discusses how the groups move through the individual claims and begin to finesse them to form a group consensus. Three phenomenon are repeatedly observable. Firstly, the groups display a preference for agreement, even when this results in a speaker agreeing with a statement that contradicts what that self-same speaker has just said. Agreement trumps consistency. Secondly, the participants display a preference to mitigate any potential disagreement. One way this is achieved is by ignoring what has just been said by another participant and moving on to a new knowledge claim. Another way that disagreement is mitigated is by participants finding a part of the knowledge claim that they can agree with and ignoring the part that they do not agree with. A third preference the groups display in their movement towards consensus is a cautious approach to tabling certain knowledge claims. This can be achieved through a higher-than-normal use of hedging or by a speaker making a disavowal of their own claim. Finally, the role of the moderator is crucial to the achievement of consensus. Members refuse to engage with new topics when either another member or the moderator raises them and will remain silent, or only minimally engage with any attempt to initiate a new knowledge claim on the same topic.

Chapter Four is an examination of the three-stage sequence, the taxonomy of knowledge claims, and the preferences leading to consensus formation as they occur in actual question routes. This chapter takes three question routes, one from each of the discussion topics, and shows the sequence involved in the formation of consensus as it occurs in each of the three question routes. In addition, the transcript of each question route has details regarding the knowledge claims and preferences included within it, so that the transcription becomes the medium for the analysis.

Chapter Five discusses the main findings from the research. It begins by discussing the way that advancement in the discussion groups towards closure can be driven by a concern for the epistemic content of the utterances, or it can also be driven by the preference for consensus that is a result of the interactional concerns of the group members. It looks at Heritage's concept of the epistemic engine (2012a, 2012b) and posits that a second engine, an interpersonal engine works to help pre-formed groups form consensus. The second discussion in Chapter Five explores the extent that the discussion groups can be described as institutional talk. There are clearly observable dimensions of institutional talk but also clearly observable instances of ordinary conversation. The institutionality is talked into being as there is no actual institution present. All examples of institutional talk (as defined by Drew and Heritage 1992) occurred around the moderator's turns. Turn allocation was shared amongst all participants (including the moderator) but only the moderator decided when a topic was finished, and the new topic would therefore begin. Although, the moderator's choice to end a topic was usually a reaction to the participants actions. A central idea in this thesis was the concept of the knowledge claim. Finally, Chapter Five takes the findings of Chapter Two and Chapter Three and shows that these two chapters represent distinct stages in a unified process of consensus formation. Chapter Five shows that the formation of consensus in a pre-formed group takes place over three stages; the individuals candidate knowledge claim, the group working towards consensus (including the moderator) and then the completion of consensus which is signaled to the moderator who ends the topic.

Chapter 2

A Taxonomy of the Individual's Presentation of Knowledge Claims

2.1 Introduction

This thesis establishes the sequential order of the formation of knowledge amongst participants in discussion groups. The sequential order put forward is in three stages,

1. Individual knowledge claims
2. Group discussion
3. Signal of completion.

Chapter Two addresses the first of these stages by examining the way that participants make their individual knowledge claims and presenting this in a taxonomy of the individual's presentation of knowledge claims. The role played by the individual group members in presenting their knowledge claims is described in this chapter. At this stage, the individual, not the group, presents a knowledge claim to the group before the group then addresses this knowledge claim. The knowledge claims fit into a taxonomy based upon how the individual speaker supports the knowledge claim being made. This taxonomy is based upon the work in Module Two but represents a refinement of the taxonomy. This refinement is based upon the additional data gathered for Module Three. How the group addresses the knowledge claim is the focus of the next chapter.

The first of these stages, the input stage, is performed by individuals and not the group. Each individual expresses their belief and the next stage, the aggregation procedure, is the procedure through which the individual beliefs become a collective belief. List's work is entirely theoretical, but it does resemble the sequence I am putting forward that is based upon data.

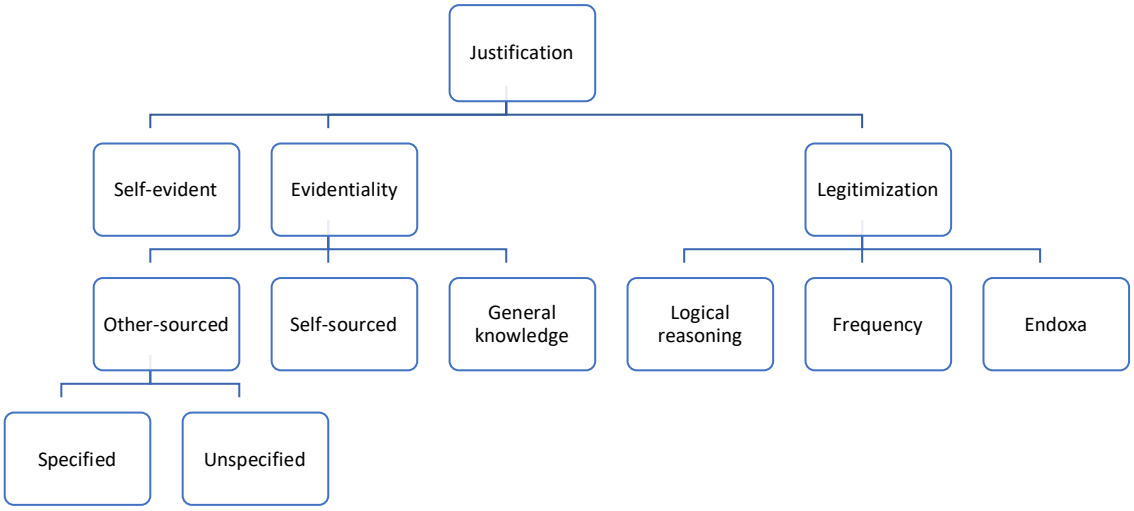
This chapter will briefly outline the refinements made to the names of categories in the taxonomy since Module Two before describing each category in more detail. This greater detail is based in part upon more data, and in part upon further analysis.

2.2 A Refinement of the Taxonomy

Module Two was a pilot study to establish how participants co-constructed knowledge claims. One of the primary findings was the taxonomy of knowledge claims. This taxonomy laid out the different ways that participants supported their knowledge claims. The taxonomy

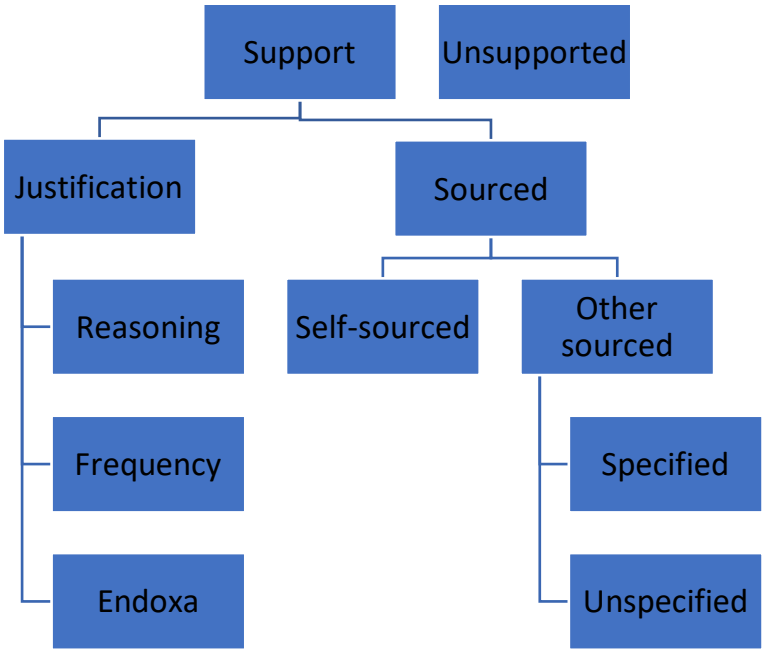
established in Module Two can be seen in Figure 2.1. There are three strands of justification: Self-evident (which had no categories), Evidentiality, and Legitimization. Evidentiality has three categories: General knowledge, Self-reportage, and Other-sourced, which has two sub-categories. Another strand was Legitimization with its three categories: Logical reasoning, Frequency, and endoxa (see below for discussion of this term).

Figure 2.1. Module 2 - Strands, categories, and sub-categories of justification in Module 2



The new taxonomy in Module Three (Figure 2.2) is largely the same as the taxonomy in Module Two (see Figure 2.1) but without the category of Self-evident. The self-evident knowledge claims were reclassified as unsupported knowledge claims, as the identifying linguistic feature was that they were not justified but were simple statements of a speaker's belief. The names of some categories were changed. The Evidentiality side of the taxonomy was renamed 'Sourced', and 'self-reportage 'was renamed 'self-sourced', and 'other-sourced' was renamed 'other-sourced'. The 'legitimization' category was renamed 'Justification' and 'logical reasoning' was shortened to 'reasoning'. I believed this represented a more accurate description of these categories and sub-categories. Furthermore, it avoided using terms that were associated with well-established areas of research but in a way that differs from this well-established usage, for example, evidentiality is associated with the work of Aikhenvald (2004). However, it would be misleading to use the term 'evidentiality' in a way that was only very loosely related to her work.

Figure 2.2. categories, and sub-categories of justification



2.3 The New Taxonomy

Having more data for Module Three allowed me to refine, not only the names of the categories in the taxonomy, but also my understanding of the categories themselves. This next section will outline my current understanding of what linguistic features define each category. I will detail what features are representative of each category using central examples and then providing some outliers that provoke discussion. The taxonomy contains two categories – *justification* and *sourced*. The sourced category relies on firsthand knowledge (Self sourced) and testimonial knowledge (Other sourced). To some extent, this category can be described as evidential, in so much as it is related to the source of the knowledge claim, or the *evidence* for the claim. However, it is different from 'evidentiality' as it is not based upon grammatical forms. The justification category relies upon knowledge that is not based upon evidential knowledge but is constructed by the speaker using reasoning, or by suggesting it is a recurring knowledge claim (frequency), or that it is a knowledge claim made by a significant number of people (endoxa – see below for a detailed description of this term). In the descriptions of each category, I will give examples that are central to my understanding of each category before looking at some more problematic examples and discussing what insights they provide into the mechanism.

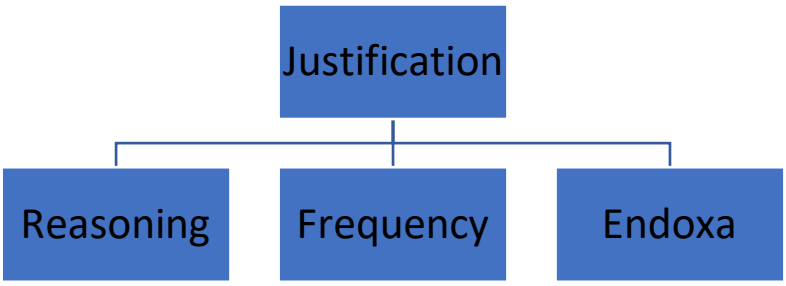
2.3.1 Support – Justification

The justification category has three sub-categories: reasoning, frequency, and endoxa. These sub-categories are not reliant upon a source of information to support a knowledge claim but are more reliant on the speaker's appeal to the concept of what is rational or presented as being rational. Putnam (1981: 201) outlines a link between fact and rationality. Putnam suggests, "[F]act (or truth) and rationality are interdependent notions. A fact is something that it is rational to believe, or, more precisely, the notion of a fact (or a true statement) is an idealization of the notion of a statement that it is rational to believe. 'Rationally acceptable' and 'true' are notions that take in each other's wash. And…being rational involves having criteria of relevance as well as criteria of rational acceptability." The fact that a speaker will justify a knowledge claim, and that justification is spoken immediately before or after the knowledge claim, shows that the speaker is orienting towards the rational justification as being relevant to the knowledge claim.

The use of the term 'rational' or 'rationality' is contentious, especially in the cognitive sciences. Stanovich (2011: 6-16) refers to the Great Rationality Debate which takes place between what is known as the strong definition and the weak definition of rationality. The strong definition is used to describe "optimal rationality" (Stanovich. 2011:4), that is, *the most* rational of all options available. According to this understanding of the term *rational*, an actor can make a choice that is rational, but not optimally rational, and still be described as *irrational*. However, the manner in which I will use the term 'rational' is more in keeping with what is described as the weak definition, i.e., acting in accord with reason (Stanovich. 2011: 3).

The three sub-categories within justification represent the speaker's effort to support a knowledge claim by representing it as a rational belief to hold based upon what the speaker says in support of the knowledge claim.

Figure 2.3 Justification



Reasoning

The reasoning subcategory has two observable features. Firstly, the use of words or terms that indicate a cause-and-effect relationship, such as *this means that, which means, so, because, and that's why*. Secondly, this category tends to be sequentially constructed, either by constructing a list of supporting reasons (see excerpt 2.1), or by using a *general to specific* discourse structure (see excerpt 2.2).

In 2.1, Carl is responding to the moderator's question "Why do so many foreign residents settle in Kobe for the long-term?" The other participants have given their answers before Carl. Carl makes his knowledge claim that one reason for the popularity of Kobe among foreign residents is that "Yokohama and Kobe. Highest per capita of foreigners" (L1-2). He uses the phrases *which means* (L4), and *which also means that* (L8) to mark two reasons that support his knowledge claim. Carl then uses the expressions *it doesn't make it* (L12) and *it makes it* (L14). This structure clearly indicates causality and believing in causality is obviously rational.

[2.1	They're more English friendly.	Kobe 2]
1	Carl:	**But Yokohama and Kobe.**
2		**Highest per capita of foreigners**.
3	Mod:	Is that right?
4	Carl:	**Which means** you may not move because
5		of that but it may give you some small
6		sense of warmth, or (1.0).
7	Brian:	Comfort. Yeah.

8	Carl:	Comfort. **And that also means that** Yokohama
9		and Kobe traditionally
10		speak better English than other towns
11		because they're more English friendly.
12		**It doesn't make it a final decision maker**
13		but after you live here
14		**it makes it comfortable not to leave** or
15		possibly want to move here.
16	Mod:	**So, it has a higher retention rate**
17		**because of the higher number**
18		**of foreign people living here?**
19	Brian:	((Nodding)).
20	Carl:	Yeah.

This excerpt is notable for two reasons. Firstly, it shows the sequential knowledge of justification through reasoning and how this approach uses language that clearly marks the reasoning process (*this means, it makes it,*) . But, in addition, the candidate summary offered by the moderator (the offer is indicated by the rising intonation), being accepted by Carl and Brian, shows that consensus is achieved through the co-construction of group participants.

Excerpt 2.2 is another central example of the language used in reasoning. Brian is responding to the moderator's question, "a moral act is any act that gives rise to the greatest happiness of the greatest possible number. To what extent do you agree with this?" Brian disagrees with the definition of a moral act within the moderator's question. He thinks there is a potential problem for basing morality "on a sheer numbers kind of thing" (L2-3). As his reason, he cites the example of minorities or underprivileged people (L5-6) and marks this as a reason to justify his knowledge claim using 'because'.

[2.2 it can get a little scary Morality 3]

1	Brian:	But I think, when you base your morality
2		just on a, on a,
3		like a sheer numbers' kind of thing,
4		I think it can get a little scary

5		sometimes **because** I think of minorities,
6		or underprivileged people,

In this example, two additional features are of note. Firstly, knowledge claims are not always explicit. Brian is responding to the moderator's question. But the moderator is asking a question (*to what extent*…) and not actually making a knowledge claim. Secondly, Brian is signaling that he sees aligning with the moderator's question as problematic. Putting these two points together highlights a problem in my research – what constitutes a knowledge claim? A question is technically not a knowledge claim, but it is clearly orientated to as being one by participants. They agree or disagree with questions, or they can align or disalign with questions as if they perceived the questions to be knowledge claims. Contained within each question is a statement that is understood to be the knowledge claim. Taking an opposite stance to a question is technically not a knowledge claim. Yet, the participants orient towards it as being such: they offer support for their disagreement or disalignment as if it were a knowledge claim. What this means for the researcher is that a pragmatic understanding of what is meant by the term 'a knowledge claim' will be of greater service than a strict grammatical observance of declarative statements.

Excerpt 2.3 is an example that is not quite so clear but does seem to fit into the category of reasoning. Again, the moderator makes a statement and then asks a 'do you agree' question. Bert disagrees. This disagreement, although simply a 'no', serves as his knowledge claim – Bert does not view Bill Gates' wealth as immoral. He signifies a clear reasoned justification using the word 'because' (L5). However, his response in L7-8 appears to support his knowledge claim but it is the nature of the support for the knowledge claim that is less clear than using the word 'because'.

[2.3	Good luck to him	Morality 2]
1	Mod:	Some might feel that the level of wealth
2		enjoyed by some, such as Bill Gates,
3		is immoral. Do you agree?
4	Bert:	I would say no. I think that he is
5		entitled to that **because** of his ideas
6		he was able to build the company.

7 And I think in a free world, free market,
8 he's uh, free to have that.
9 Good luck to him.

In order to examine this example in more depth, we can look at his justification structure as consisting of four components.

1. I would say no. **Knowledge claim – it is not immoral**
2. I think that he is entitled to that **because** of his ideas he was able to build the company. **Support> justification> reasoned**
3. And I think in a free world, free market, he's uh, free to have that. **Support> justification> reasoned**
4. Good luck to him. **Evaluation> positive**

My interpretation is that the third component has obviously similar features as the second component, but without being as clear an example as the second component. Bert's use of 'and' sets the information up as additional and not contrastive. He uses the word 'have' which mirrors the word 'entitled'. Finally, his positive evaluation (good luck to him - L9), which evaluates Bill Gates and not the morality of his wealth, acts as a sequence closing aphorism (Schegloff. 2007: 193). Closing the sequence suggests Bert is not orienting towards a need for self-repair. This is sufficient information to conclude that component 3 is support>justification>reasoned but it also indicates that although some members of this category can be identified by recognizing key words or phrases that indicate reasoning (*this means, because,* or *it makes it*) not every example can be so easily identified.
Excerpt 2.4 is an example of the justification preceding the knowledge claim. So far, all the knowledge claims have had their support take place after the knowledge claim has been made. In this example, the speaker, Curtis, gives two reasons why he disagrees with the knowledge claim made by the moderator *before* he explicitly disagrees with the moderator. The moderator asks a question (L1-5) that implies a link between immorality and unemployment and Curtis gives two reasons why he does not agree that the link exists before saying morality among the rich and poor is probably the same.

[2.4 The morality of unemployed people Morality 2]
1 Mod: Right. Ok. Ok so, next question.

2		In areas of high unemployment,
3		crime rates are often above the national
4		average. What do you think this says about
5		the morality of unemployed people?
6		5.0
7	Bert:	Desperation.
8	Dora:	Yeah, I think that, yeah.
9	Andrea:	Yeah.
10	Dora:	That's one factor, yeah. How much desperation
11		there is in that situation.
12	Curtis:	**Uhm, (1.0) I don't think**
13		**it's possible to general,**
14		**the statistics (1.0) aren't evenly distributed**.
15		These kinds of statistics.
16		Even in regions of high unemployment,
17		even in areas of low income,
18		**it's still a minority of that population**
20		**which causes the majority of the crime.**
21	Andrea:	(Nodding)
22	Curtis:	**So, it's probably the morality (2.0) doesn't**
23		**change so much because rich people**
24		**do different kinds of crimes.**

This excerpt can be seen to have five stages.

1. Lines 1-5 the moderator ask the question and, in effect, establishes the knowledge claim the other participants must discuss.
2. Lines 7-11. The other participants offer an answer to the moderator's question that aligns with the knowledge claim contained within the question.
3. Lines 12-15. Curtis reasons that the statistics involved in the moderator's knowledge claim are questionable. At this point, Curtis is choosing not to align with the other participants and the moderator. This is before his knowledge claim in L22-24.

4. Lines 16-20. Curtis reasons that it is not all people living in areas of low income that commit crime, but rather, it is a small minority. This is also before his knowledge claim in L22-24.
5. Lines 22-24. Curtis concludes that morality cannot be deduced from income; a knowledge claim in direct contrast with that of the moderator's question. He uses the words *so* and *because*, which are central indicators of the reasoning category.

Excerpt 2.4 also further reinforces the centrality of the moderator's question as the starting point for the formation of knowledge in the group. The moderator's question is that which one group of participants (L7-11) align with but also that with which Curtis actively disagrees. It is another example of participants understanding that contained within the question is a stance. But this is not shared by all the participants in this example. Lines 7-11 sees the participants Andrea, Bert, and Dora answer the question, and thus interpret it as a question and only as a question. Curtis disagrees with knowledge claim underlying the question, and thus interprets the question as a stance and not as a question. For the researcher, this means that a question or a knowledge claim must be classified through the responses of the participants.

Reasoning practices seek to show that a KC is justified by the rational steps taken to build it, thus showing, as Putnam said, that it is rational to believe this knowledge claim is true. However, in 2.5 where Edward makes the KC that morality is socially constructed, the logic he uses to construct this knowledge claim is that there is no alternative (L9).

[2.5 Morality is socially constructed]

1	Mod:	So, it's, you would say morality
2		is normative.
3	David:	I reckon different people are going to
4		have different social norms,
5		so it's all relevant.
6	Edward:	Yeah, I would say so,
7		it could be a socially constructed thing.
8		Well, it has to be a socially constructed
9		thing. **What else could it be?**

The moderator does not ask a question, but states that the participants "would say morality is normative" (L1-2). David (L3-5) sates that there are different social norms. This is a rejection of align the simplicity inherent within the moderator's suggestion. Edward is now faced with two choices; address the moderator's suggestion or address Edwards rejection. His answer clearly chooses to address the moderator's suggestion and accepts it by reasoning that there is no other alternative.

Endoxa

Regarding the meaning of the term *endoxa,* Renon (1998) lists a number of different ways Aristotle uses the term in his writings. However, there is a general consensus as to the meaning of the term when it is used in contemporary argumentation theory. Karbowski (2015) states his belief that, "[e]veryone is more or less agreed that the set of *endoxa* includes the set of beliefs accepted by the majority of human beings or the wise". Bolton (2003) argues that *endoxa* are "generally accredited" beliefs that are thus seen as persuasive. Renon puts forward one interpretation of *endoxa* along these lines, stating that *endoxa* are "opinions that may be esteemed according to criteria of consensus or approval" (1998: 96). *Endoxa* are not arguments based on what is true but "what is known or widely accepted by everybody" (Walton, Reed, and Macagno. 2008). In general, *endoxa* are arguments that are based on being widely held and not on being based on evidence for the belief itself. When a speaker justifies their KC using *endoxa*, they do so by marking the knowledge claim as being based in a widely held opinion.

Excerpt 2.6 is a clear example of an endoxic support to a knowledge claim. Earlier in the discussion, the group had discussed the fact that internet searches using Google on Kobe tended to produce results for basketball player Kobe Bryant. Austin and Brian are both computer programmers and web designers, so they did produce a brief discussion on this issue that required me to follow-up on in order to seek clarification. Brian made the knowledge claim that this was because Japan still used Yahoo as the main search engine. The point was that inside Japan, most internet searches on the word *Kobe* would yield searches on the city, but outside of Japan they would yield searches on the basketball player and that this imbalance has skewed the search algorithm. Austin supported Brian's knowledge claim by

stating the rest of the world uses Google. As the rest of the world prefers Google, this is a widely held preference.

[2.6 The rest of the world Kobe 2]

Austin: And **the rest of the world** uses Google

Similar to 2.6, excerpt 2.7 uses the size of the 'parts of the world' as a metonym for a widely held opinion.

[2.7 In parts of the world, violence is considered to be OK Morality 1]

1	Dave:	I was just reading that in **large**
2		**parts of the world**, violence is
3		considered to be just ok.

In 2.8, the group had been discussing why foreign people came to Kobe. Brian and Austin made the knowledge claim that tourists came to try the famous Kobe beef. However, the moderator asked for a specific example to support this knowledge claim (L1-2). Brian (L6) says his workmates *all* asked this question. This example is not an example of other sourced support. Although the source of the information is other people, it is not the source that is supporting the claim, it is the size of the sample – *all*.

[2.8 Just the beef. Kobe 2]

1	Mod:	Beef, just the beef, **have you met anyone**
2		**who's said they've come here for the beef**?
3	Austin:	Yes.
4	Brian:	**My workmates**
5		When I said I was living in Kobe
6		**they all told me,**
7		"How's the beef?" ((Whispered voice)).
8		That's the first thing that came up.

A less central way of expressing endoxic support for a knowledge claim is the impersonal 'you'. The impersonal 'you' has a number of different uses (see Myers and Lampropoulou, 2012). One of those is "people in general" (Biber *et al.,* 1999: 330). In the two examples below (2.7 and 2.8), the impersonal 'you' is used as a pronoun for an entire category. In 2.9, Austin is answering the moderator's question about why so many foreign people choose to settle in Kobe. Austin uses the impersonal 'you' to represent all foreign people trying to settle in Japan. Lines 1-7 outline the hardships endured by the category of all people seeking to settle in Japan. Austin makes the knowledge claim (L8-11) that once any person in that category has settled in Kobe then life becomes easier.

[2.9	Now I'm in Kobe	Kobe 2]
1	Austin:	And it just gets more difficult and every
2		step just has another level which **you**
3		gotta, you know, pay this, do this,
4		oh that's not the right way to do it and,
5		you know, like **you** get, I mean,
6		it's difficult.
7		I mean that's the difficulty about Japan.
8		I think once **you** settled
9		and say I'm now in Kobe,
10		what's the difficulty?
11		I dunno, I dunno what the difficulty is
12		now.

The same use of the impersonal 'you' can be seen in excerpt 2.10. In this example, Alan, is talking to a group of teachers about student autonomy. He uses the impersonal pronoun as a reference for either teachers in general, or all the teachers in the room. The knowledge claim that he makes (L9) is that a specific type of student excels. Interestingly, the knowledge claim and the support are the same clause – *you notice those types of student really take off.* The 'you' refers to all members of the relevant category, and the verb (*notice*) is in the present simple tense and thus signifies a general truth. Together this can be represented as – all members of this category will notice, as a general truth, those types of student really take off.

[2.10 Those types of student Autonomy 1]

1	Alan	But,(0.6) especially when **you** start giving
2		directions and **you** see that the two types
3		of student the ones that shake their heads
4		like uh huh uh huh and they just wanna
5		look like they know what **you** are doing or
6		what you're saying and then there's the
7		one that they get what **you're** saying and
8		then as **your** class is going it goes and
9		then **you** notice
10		those types of student really take off.

These were the only examples of impersonal 'you' as endoxa in the data. Both examples used the impersonal 'you' to build towards the knowledge claim that came at the end of the sequence. Further research is needed to discern if this is the preferred pattern of use for the endoxic impersonal 'you'.

Frequency

The final sub-category of justification is *frequency*. It is a simple one to describe. It works by supporting the knowledge claim by expressing frequency. In 2.11, the knowledge claim is that the Kobe ex-pat community is a close knit one and the members often meet up with one another by accident. Carol supports this knowledge claim by referring to the high frequency with which she meets other ex-pats in Kobe.

[2.11 The Kobe ex-pat community is a close knit one Kobe 1]

1	Carol:	When I leave my apartment, I do **often** bump
2		into one, two, or three people.

In a discussion (2.12) which asks participants to morally compare hypothetical actions in hypothetical situations to each other, Curtis makes the knowledge claim that one hypothetical example is more moral than the other. When another participant asks him to justify the claim, he does so by stating that the reaction undertaken is a common reaction and this commonality makes it understandable.

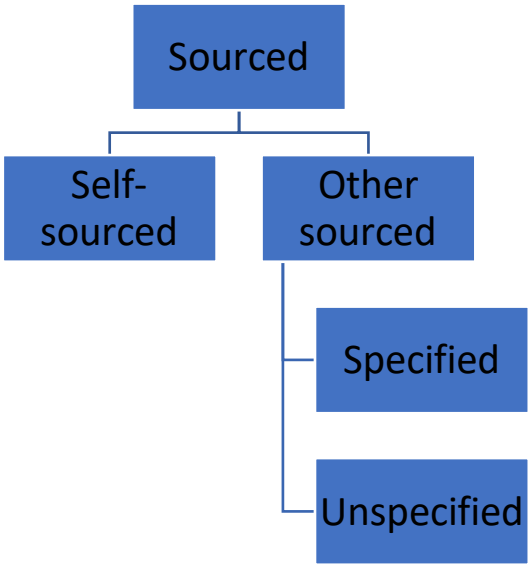
[2.12 It's common Morality 2]

Curtis: It's, it's, the reaction is, **it's common**,

2.3.2 The Sourced Category of Support

This next section outlines the category of sourced support for knowledge claims. Sourced support knowledge claims are knowledge claims that are supported by showing the source for the knowledge claim as opposed to the justification category of support that relied upon presenting a rational case for believing the knowledge claim to be at least plausible. The sourced category has two sub-categories – self-sourced and other sourced (see figure 2.4). This section will outline how each type of knowledge claim can be identified and how it is used.

Figure 2.4 Sourced Support



Self-sourced

A self-sourced can be identified when an individual displays that their access to a knowledge claim is through their own experience. In 2.13, the moderator asks the group if students have a responsibility to the classroom as a whole or just to themselves. Brian makes the knowledge claim that it is to the classroom as the students interact with each other. His

access to this justification is his own experience as a teacher – “at least the way I ran classes, or the way I teach people”.

[2.13	The way I teach	Student autonomy 2]
1	Mod:	Do you think there is a student responsibility
2		to the classroom? Or do you think there is
3		only a student responsibility to the
4		individual student?
5	Brian:	**Has to be in the classroom** because ah
6		somethings they do have to work together
7		with others, **at least the way I ran classes,**
8		**or the way I teach people**, you know,

Brian is using his personal experience for a dual purpose. Firstly, by using first-hand experience as the source of knowledge, it places this insight firmly within the realms of his epistemic territory (Kamio.1995). Secondly, his use of “at least” serves to mitigate any potential disagreement as he is limiting the knowledge claim that he has made – “has to be in the classroom” to his own experience. Self-sourced support allows a speaker to present their knowledge claim as a subjective knowledge claim based on personal experience and not as an objective fact. This mitigates any potential for disagreement.

In 2.14, the group has been discussing why people visit Kobe. Austin and Brian have suggested that the famous Kobe beef is a draw for visitors. The moderator (L1-2) asks Austin and Brian if they have personal experience with this.

[2.14	Just the beef.	Kobe 2]
1	Mod:	have you met anyone who’s
2		said they’ve come here for the beef?
3	Austin:	Yes.
4	Brian:	My workmates
5		When I said I was living in Kobe
6		they all told me,
7		“How’s the beef?” ((Whispered voice)).
8		That’s the first thing that came up.

Austin simply affirms that he has met people who have come to Kobe just for the beef. Brian's story (L4-7) is slightly different from Austin's affirmation, his workmates directly told him which makes clear that he had direct experience of the factual evidence, and this is exactly what the moderator asked. This example shows that a self-sourced support can be provided as a way of supporting a potential challenge to a knowledge claim. In this example, Brian made the knowledge claim that beef was

Self-sourced as a permission for subjectivity

In excerpt 2.15, Carl is addressing the question as to why so many foreign residents in Japan choose Kobe as a place to live. In L5-7, Carl summarizes his own experience. First, his job brought him to Osaka (near Kobe), secondly, he then moved to Rokko Island (east Kobe), before finally settling in Kitano (central Kobe and a very convenient, comfortable location). Each of the three steps in his journey towards central Kobe represent a choice based on an improvement in local knowledge. His job brought him to Osaka from the USA (he did not state that in this group discussion, but all the people present knew he was from the USA) and this stage of his journey he had no information about Japan. Next, he moved to Rokko Island, but the vague nature of this move is indicated by the word "somehow". It is reasonable to assume that at this second stage, he was better informed about Japan and therefore a decision to move was based on improved knowledge. Finally, "after I got to find out more" , he moved to Kitano, at the peak of his informedness. Carl then proceeds to discuss the choices made by some people in L11-25. Notice how closely the story of these other people mirrors his own story. The parts in bold represent Carl's generalized opinion of what other people conclude and the underlined parts represent Carl's firsthand experience upon which he draws to build his generalization. The knowledge claim is an example of the question and the answer both being needed to construct the knowledge claim. The moderator asks if it is possible for people to inadvertently discover they like Kobe after they have been posted in Kobe. Carl states that his firsthand experience is exactly the same as that in the moderators question. He grew to like living Kobe despite not planning to live there (L6-8). He uses this personal experience to make assumptions about other people in general.

[2.15 I like Sannomiya. Kobe 2]

Mod: Do you think people don't plan to come here, they just get sent here for one reason or another and they find they like it?

Carl: Um, I think **several people** come to Japan and, and you have a job, my job was in Osaka, somehow after that I migrated towards Rokko Island, and then I liked Kitano after I got to find out more, cos Rokko Island there's no mountains and it's surrounded by sea. Sannomiya's near here but you have the mountains and the sea. But **some people** come, and **they** have a choice, maybe in Osaka, Tokyo, or Kobe and then that's a big prefecture and then **they** narrow it down after **they** live here to where they want to live here more precisely based on rent, size, location, so, so sometimes **people** will come here and say, "I want to move to Kobe directly", usually unless, you know, P&G, and you have to live in Sannomiya, companies like that. You may be looking for a job and your job takes you to where you want to be. But once you live here then I think **people** have more of a choice. **"OK I don't want to live in Osaka, I like Kobe. Where in Kobe, I like Kitano, I like Sannomiya"**

In Carl's story, Carl narrows down his choice as the information about his surroundings increases. When Carl tells the story about the unnamed 'other people' he assumes they would make the same decisions as he would. His story about his own experience gives him permission to tell the same story about other people. He has established his credentials as a

person who has experienced a change in circumstances in Japan. These circumstances are not oriented towards as being unusual. Thus, having positioned himself within the experiential bell curve, he can now narrate stories about that bell curve with the security of having already established himself as being within the bell curve.

The same pattern as 2.15 can be seen in 2.16. Austin, when asked why he chose to live in Kobe, self-reports on his personal experience: it was easy to find accommodation because he had a friend in Kobe. Having asserted that Kobe was an easy part of Japan to find accommodation for him personally, he begins to generalize about how difficult it is to find accommodation in Japan.

[2.16 Kobe was convenience Kobe 2]

1	Austin:	For me, Kobe was convenience because
2		a friend lived here so that,
3		and Japan's a little bit,
4		**Japan's very difficult to see in**
5		**from the outside**. You know, **you can't just**
6		**google how to find a place in Japan**
7		cos it's a little complicated. And,
8		because my friend was living here and he
9		had a connection with Carl I was able to
10		get here. But, ah, **it's hard to get in to.**
11		**It's very hard to get into.**

Speakers can use self-sourced as a form of evidentiality to justify making a generalization that otherwise would represent a risky expenditure of conversational capital. Initiating the generalization through self-sourced can indemnify the speaker against the risk.

Other-sourced

When a speaker justifies their knowledge claims with other-sourced, they are claiming the knowledge claim is based on a source of information other than their own personal experience. This could be having read about the topic in a book or having seen a documentary about the topic. Other-sourced has two sub-categories: specified and unspecified. If a speaker cites the source, then it is specified other-sourced, as in 2.17. Brian quotes Solzhenitsyn, but

he struggles to get the wording to his satisfaction and warns us that it is not a word-perfect quotation.

[2.17 All men's hearts		Morality 3]
1	Brian:	And I tend to do a more of a **Solzhenitsyn**
2		type-thing, when it comes to morality,
3		which is to say, and **he said**,
4		and it's just going to be a rough quote,
5		like, **it would be easy if there were**
6		**just evil people doing evil things**
7		**in a small group, and you could wipe them**
8		**off the face of the Earth, it would**
9		**be great.** But **he said, all men's hearts**,
10		**all people's hearts**, he went right
11		in. **There's a sliver of everyone's heart**
12		**where there's some evil.**

Other-sourced need not ascribe a knowledge claim to another human, as seen in 2.18, where Curtis uses a sign as a source.

[2.18 I saw some sign		Morality 2]
1	Curtis:	**I saw some sign**,
2		"The people who hid Anne Frank were
3		breaking the law but being moral".

A speaker need not attribute the source of knowledge to a source not currently involved in the conversation. In 2.19, Austin attributes the previous speaker with saying exactly what he wants to say. Then, having said that the previous speaker has made his point, Austin goes on to make the point again anyway but in a differently worded way, which is a typical move to establish epistemic independence while doing agreement.

[2.19 Carl's sort of answered Morality 3]

1 Austin: **Carl's sort of answered what I was going**
2 **to say,** that the the autonomous aspect
3 of, uhm, especially if it's got something
4 that's dangerous, so people can't really
5 go off on their own unless they really
6 understand the processes and they have
7 the right training

Other-sourced has a second sub-category: unspecified. When a speaker refers to a source but does not name it, this is unspecified, as in 2.20. Ben informs the group participants of his discomfort at having lived in Tokyo. Ben is making a knowledge claim about his feelings, which is that he never felt comfortable. Carol states that she has heard this but does not cite the source. Carol is not supporting Ben's knowledge claim, she is making a new knowledge claim. Her knowledge claim is that she has heard an unspecified source or sources make the same knowledge claim that Ben has just made.

[2.20 I never really felt comfortable in Tokyo Kobe 1]

1 Ben: I never really felt comfortable in Tokyo.
2 Carol: **I've heard that.**
3 Ben: It was just too much
4 Carol: **I've heard that.**

When Carol says, "that", the two choices of interpreting "that" are: Carol has heard from other people about Ben's experience, or that Carol has heard that feeling Tokyo is "just too much" is a common experience. Ben and Carol have been friends for over three decades, and so it is more likely that if Carol was quoting a source for the first explanation, she would name that source because, it would be a shared friend, and it sounds sinister to tell someone that you have an unnamed source who is reporting on your feelings. A much less problematic interpretation of "that" is to view it as referring to the generally unpleasant feelings produced by living in Tokyo. Therefore, Carol's utterance is most likely that she has heard many people dislike the experience of living in Tokyo. As there are no challenges to Carol's utterance, it would seem that her utterance is perceived by the other speakers to be unproblematic.

Brian (2.21) cites other-sourced as his source of knowledge and then leverages this epistemic authority he has from his unnamed source to make a series of assertions. The other participants do not question any of the facts he asserts, which suggests he correctly judged the authority he could leverage from his source. This example serves to show that a very brief indication of other-reportage, or evidential source, can 'do work' for a long stretch of speech, and Brian makes several claims in this example that are all reliant upon the other-sourced information he uncovered.

[2.21 I looked at this stuff. Kobe 2]

1	Mod:	Crime?
2		Would you say Kobe is safer than other cities or as safe as other cities?
3	Brian:	Depends on what part you go to. Kobe is interesting in the fact that
4		there are so many *Yakuza* here, which are the Japanese mafia, uhm,
5		and I can tell you, **I looked at this stuff**, it is pretty interesting.
6		140, 000 Yakuza in Japan, they have to register.
7		It's weird for us, they organize crime here and they want it that way,
8		if we just (laughs), it's a little different.
9	Mod:	Well-organized crime.
10	Brian:	Yes, well organized crime.
11	Austin:	Here's our paperwork. It's all stamped.
12	Brian:	So, they don't want the street kinda gangs that are all disorganized.
13		They kinda tolerate the more organized stuff so long as they're
14		organized. Like the whole saying, if you walk in the dark stay in the
15		dark, walk in the light, don't bother the dark, and light.
16		And so, if organized crime kinda stays in their own sector
17		they don't mind it as much, ahm,
18		and so you have a lot less carry over in crime here.
19		Uhm, but one of the interesting things is 140, 000,
20		40, 000 out of those 140, 000 live in Kobe.
21	Mod:	That's substantial.
22	Brian:	Yes. The highest percentage of, of Japanese mafia live in Kobe.
23		Big thing is the port. They have a lot of shipping business I'm sure,

24		and the port of Kobe is actually busier than the port of Osaka.
25		Which is crazy.
26	Austin:	Really?
27	Mod:	That's interesting.

In L5, Brian asserts epistemic authority by citing unspecified other-sourced (I looked at this stuff). Here, the verb *looked into* has an important role. This can be seen by comparing the three phrases below

1. I looked at this stuff
2. I heard about this stuff
3. I glanced at this stuff

The word 'stuff', which is vague and casual, is in all three sentences, and so clearly it is the verb in each of the three sentences that creates the difference. In 1, the verb denotes a vague degree of scrutiny. Sentence 2 suggests indirect, unverified knowledge, and 3 denotes a lack of scrutiny. Of the three, (1) represents a serious and rational claim to epistemic authority through the unnamed testimonial knowledge of another; it is not as passive as (2) and (3) and thus represents a greater investment by the speaker and, consequently, should someone wish to question his epistemic authority, such questioning would be a risky use of conversational capital.

Brian uses his epistemic authority to make KCs about the number of yakuza members in Japan (L6), the fact that they must register (L6), the number of yakuza in Kobe (L20), and the relationship between the yakuza and the port of Kobe (L23-24). These claims *sound* factual, and such factual reporting does support the idea that Brian has *looked into this stuff*. However, in lines 12-17, Brian states that "they" tolerate crime as long as it is organized. Precisely who this "they" is not stated clearly, but the context does suggest that this is the Japanese government, or at least, the Kobe government. This is quite a controversial claim and yet it remains unchallenged. L16-18 present the conclusion – Brian is suggesting that there is less crime in Kobe because there is such a strong *yakuza* presence in Kobe. The responses from the moderator and Austin (26-27) express interest and not disagreement. Indeed, their responses suggest a transition from not knowing to knowing. This is the point where disagreement would be appropriate were it to be coming as Brian has indicated the end of his

turn with a turn-ending assessment (L25 - *which is crazy*). The willingness on the part of the moderator and Austin to accept such a conclusion is a testament to the impact of other-sourced.

In L8, Brian laughs, and the moderator and Austin align with Brian by making a joke about what Brian was laughing at. At this point, Brian's authority extends beyond his license to recount facts from his unnamed source. Brian has made organized crime laughable, and other participants have aligned with this judgement. There is a question as to whether or not this is other-sourced or self-sourced.

This sentence tells us that Brian is self-reporting on an action that he undertook. However, Brian does not explicitly state that the knowledge that he is relying upon did not come from himself. One possible understanding of the verb *to look into* is to investigate. It is obvious to all participants that Brian does not have the personal resources to undertake such research into the causes of the low rates of crime in Kobe. Rather, it is information that the unspecified other source detailed that Brian is calling upon to construct his opinion. The source of the information is other-sourced, but the grammatical construction of the phrase denoting access to evidence (in this case testimonial knowledge) places the self as the agent of the action of investigation into the issue. The evidentiality in this example is driven by pragmatics and not grammar. It is not possible to create a list of stock phrases that will give a learner of English insight into the evidential basis of other speakers' knowledge claims

Other-sourced and dialogue as instantiation

During the discussions, participants would occasionally speak, not as themselves, but as another person, perhaps representative of a whole group. This representative direct speech serves as a type of other-sourced, although it is not actual direct speech. This is what Tannen (2007) describes as reported speech as constructed dialogue. In particular, Tannen (2007:113) states that, "[s]pecific dialogue is often constructed to illustrate an utterance type that is represented as occurring repeatedly". There is no actual 'other' being reported, the other is being represented through a constructed dialogue. Nevertheless, it is a dialogue that never happened. Recognition of this category is dependent upon surface features, such as "students say" or "they say". Of course, these are dialogues that are constructed by the speaker and not

memorized dialogues that actually took place, but they are being represented as if they *were* actual dialogues that occurred and therefore the source of the information is the other person who 'said' it. In 4.6, Bill assumes the voice of a student. Bill is talking about a common challenge he has faced teaching Japanese university students. He explains, from the imagined first-person perspective of a student, how he envisages a student's internal monologue to sound (L4). L5 makes clear that Bill believes this to be an idea representative of a category, the category of students for he makes no attempt to qualify either "students", or "*this* idea", indicating his belief in the universality of the idea in the category of student, and therefore, showing that the voice on L4 is not representing his own idea, but the belief of all students. Charles gives a positive evaluation of Bill's suggested solution (L17) that serves as an endorsement of Bill's belief that this idea is held by all students: a solution cannot be accepted if the problem it solves is not agreed upon. Dave (L21 & L23) also endorses Bill's solution, saying, "it fits for Japan".

[2.22 Time to grow up. Learner Autonomy 1]

1	Bill:	I think, often times, that a common challenge that I've had,
2		maybe not so much at this university
3		but I've had in the past is this idea of,
4		**"I can't fail. The instructor won't fail me".**
5		And students have this idea.
6		They don't necessarily have that Darwinian drive that will promote
7		innovation and ingenuity that I think is kinda necessary
8		to kinda power autonomy.
9		**"Why bother trying to be autonomous,**
10		**why bother trying to go above and beyond**
11		**because I'm going to pass**
12		**because we all know this is college and everyone passes**
13		**if you show up to at least two-thirds of the classes."**
14		Um, so I think, ah, yeah, inculcating fear,
15		I don't know, cos fear and autonomy
16		might seem to be a little bit ah opposed.
17	Charles:	It's a good motivator.
18	Bill:	But basically saying, you know,

19		**“time to grow up and become autonomous because if you don’t**
20		**there’s a good chance you’re going to fail”.**
21	Dave:	But like you said, it fits for Japan.
22	Bill:	Yeah.
23	Dave:	I mean, we all agree. Exactly, yeah, that’s a Japan thing.

Both Charles and Dave see the enactment of a student’s internal monologue as an accurate and appropriate enactment. They do not display any misaligning actions or phrases, nor do they orient to what Bill has said to be new information. This knowledge is not something the other participants are learning from Bill: Bill is talking within the sphere of common knowledge amongst the participants. He is reporting on the knowledge claim of an entire category (students) by voicing what he believes to be the belief held by this category, and the other participants express an understanding of this and agree with it.

What makes this type of other-sourced so noteworthy is that it is an internal monologue of an entire category of many individuals. Two obvious points need to be stated: the speaker who is reporting on this testimonial knowledge cannot realistically claim to have access to this knowledge, and secondly, no large group, such as university students, thinks as a monolith. These two points are obvious, and yet the other participants orient towards accepting the representative direct speech as a perfectly acceptable method of other reportage.

This harkens back to the earlier point about the interdependency of categories of justification. This excerpt is clearly an example of other-sourced and yet, it is also a type of self-sourced for it is Bill (and the other participants who accept his knowledge claim) claiming that he knows, and can know, the minds of a whole category. Representative direct speech, being, so often as it is, representative of the internal monologues of a third party, is a self-reported assumption of what others would say if they were asked. In the example given, this source of evidence is justified through the acceptance of the speaker’s peers in the group.

In 2.22, the instantiated dialogue represented a dialogue between participants of a small group – teachers and students. In 2.23, Dora is not afraid to use instantiated dialogue for a much more ambitious project: representing the voice of all society.

[2.23 Let's work together Morality 2]

1 Dora: So, morality tends to put us into
2 a kind of, "OK, let's work together
3 instead of separately or individually"
4 kind of mood.

Instantiated dialogue can be used to represent real people – teachers and students, or abstract concepts – society as a whole.

Unsupported Knowledge Claims

In the taxonomy outlined in this chapter, the third category is 'unsupported knowledge claims'. On the surface, this may seem like the simplest category to describe, but it has proven to be the most problematic. Identifying the recognizable traits is simple enough, a knowledge claim that remains unsupported is an unsupported knowledge claim. The difficulty arises when I try to analyze the purpose behind the speaker's decision to not support a knowledge claim.

One use of the unsupported knowledge claim is as a cautious entry into the discussion. The examples in 2.24 and 2.25 show two variations of the cautious use of an unsupported claim. In 2.24, Austin, being the first respondent, cannot know the opinions of the other participants and so he observable avoids a strong commitment to the knowledge claim that he makes. The moderator asks the question and the first person to answer is Austin who replies with an unsupported knowledge claim – slightly conservative values (and the synonyms that he subsequently produces). Contained within his answer (L3-9) are a number of hedging techniques and vague language, which in Chapter Three I identify as disagreement avoidance preferences. In addition, the moderator initiates a potential expansion sequence twice (L10 and L12), but Austin only offers a minimal response and resists the expansion. The unsupported knowledge claim appears at the beginning of the question sequence and is accompanied by cautious phrasing. His choice of words – those type of things, and that type of thing, allow the speaker to maintain that his answer contains an incompleteness that need not preclude any future ideas put forward by other participants.

[2.24 Slightly conservative Morality 2]

1	Mod:	so, what would you understand that phrase,
2		a moral person, to mean?
3	Austin:	Slightly conservative values.
4		A touch of conservative values.
5		Not so, not on the, not on the right or
6		something sort of in the middle
7		but leaning on the conservative side,
8		uhm, ah, old world values so to speak,
9		you know those type of things.
10	Mod:	Family values?
11	Austin:	Family values
12	Mod:	Back to basics?
13	Austin:	Yeah, yeah, all that type of thing.

In 2.25, the speaker explicitly states that his unsupported claim is a simplified version of what he really wants to say (L8). Again, he is the first speaker to answer the moderator's question and is a cautious statement. The speaker also, by suggesting his answer is a basic and therefore incomplete answer, avoids the potential for disagreement with future knowledge claims as the speaker has left space within his answer to include other knowledge claims.

[2.25 the easy simple thing Autonomy 1]

1	Mod:	so, can I ask,
2		when the phrase learner autonomy is mentioned,
3		what comes to mind?
4	Charles:	First thing, the easy simple thing
5		is students doing things by themselves
6		without the need for a teacher. (1.0)
7		That's basically the first thing.
8		It's much ah, deeper, complex,
9		but I think that's
10		the first thing you think of.

This represents one type of unsupported knowledge claim. There are two commonalities in the unsupported knowledge claims – both occur as a first response to the moderator's question, and both contain cautious language. Until other participants express their opinions, the first respondent must remain cautious. This is achieved by giving a cautious and unsupported knowledge claim and displaying an incompleteness about the answer.

A second type of unsupported knowledge claim can be seen in 2.26. It is an unsupported knowledge claim that becomes supported when it is challenged. Curtis makes his unsupported knowledge claim (L1-3) and, despite the agreement of two participants, the moderator challenges Curtis (L6).

[2.26	pretentious and condescending	Morality 3]
1	Curtis:	But if someone describes themselves
2		as a moral person then I think that
3		they're ah pretentious and condescending
4	Bart:	Yes
5	Andrea:	Yes
6	Mod:	Even though they might actually be
7	Curtis:	Even though they might actually be moral
8		It seems when you may be stating it
9		or emphasizing it
10		takes away some of the morality from the person

It can never be known if Curtis would have offered a support for his knowledge claim had it remained unchallenged, but it can be seen in 2.18 that unsupported claims risk being challenged by another participant or the moderator. The response to a challenged unsupported claim is to issue support for it, in this case it is a reasoned justification.

A third type of unsupported claim occurs in a list. In the two examples (2.27, 2.28), the moderator has asked the participants to discuss what might attract tourists to Kobe. I have included both these examples as they are both answers provided to the same question at the same point in the discussion group about Kobe, but are by two different groups, and yet the similarity is striking. Both groups co-construct a list of unsupported knowledge claims

regarding attractions for tourists in Kobe. The lists include only famous places, and it is this quality of exemplar status that allows the knowledge claims to be stated without being supported. Every person in each group would know that these places are very well-known in Japan and would therefore not feel the need to explain or support their inclusion in the list of attractions. It is the status of being an exemplar of a category and not the inclusion in the list that allows the knowledge claims to remain unsupported.

[2.27 We have the airport Kobe 1]

1	Carol:	And we've got the Shin Kobe Shinkansen,
2		which is also
3	Alan:	Yeah, oh Shinkansen station
4	Carol:	Nice
5	Alan:	Nowadays nearly every train
6		stops at Kobe whereas
7	Carol:	and we have Kobe airport
8	Alan:	Yeah
9	Carol:	Right? We have the airport

[2.28 The yen is weak Kobe 2]

1	Carl:	I think foreign exchange rates,
2		a lot of tourists come
3		cos the yen is week.
4	Brian:	Yeah.
5	Mod:	Yeah.
6	Carl:	And of course, the temples,
7		and the shrines.
8	Brian:	The *Ijinkan*.
9	Austin:	So, you're saying just Kobe.
10	Mod:	Just Kobe in particular,
11		not necessarily Japan,
12		but Kobe in particular.
13	Brian:	The harbor's nice,

In Chapter Five, I discuss a number of difficulties involved in identifying what a knowledge claim is. In excerpts 2.27, and 2.28, the knowledge claims are the unsupported examples of tourist attractions in Kobe. What makes them knowledge claims is that they are offered by the participants as answers to the moderator's question and are thus co-constructed knowledge claims. The set of co-constructed knowledge claims in the list format can be represented as

Question + Answer = Knowledge claim, for example,
What attracts tourists to Kobe? + The temples. = The Temples attract tourists to Kobe.

Unsupported knowledge claims are produced significantly less than supported knowledge claims. However, three types of unsupported knowledge claims were observed, and each type served a purpose. The first type was a cautious first step in answering the moderator's question that proffers incompleteness as a way to include, or at least not disagreeing, with future knowledge claims by other participants. The second type of unsupported knowledge claim occurs before another speaker challenges that unsupported knowledge claim and the first speaker then counters the challenge by supporting their original knowledge claim. Finally, a third type of unsupported knowledge claim exists in the form of a list.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter explores the first stage of the three stage sequence in the production of knowledge claims by participants in discussion groups, that is, the individual knowledge claims at the stage before they are discussed by the group as a whole.

I have placed these individual knowledge claims into a taxonomy of the individual's presentation of knowledge claims. This taxonomy has three categories: justification, sourced, and unsupported. Most knowledge claims were supported and there were comparatively very few unsupported knowledge claims. The taxonomy is an updated version of the original taxonomy in Module Two.

The justification category sees participants support their knowledge claims by an appeal to the rationality of their arguments. Justified support has three sub-categories: reasoning, frequency, and endoxa. There are certain surface features of these sub-categories that make them identifiable. Knowledge claims that are dependent upon a logical relationship, such as cause and consequence, are knowledge claims that I have placed in the reasoning sub-category. Examples of the type of surface features that make such claims as recognizably part of this sub-category are *because/cos*, *and so*, and, *so what I'm saying is*. Frequency, or frequency supported knowledge claims, are supported knowledge claims support a belief by suggesting that because it is a frequently occurring action or result it is a reasonable belief to hold. Examples of the type of surface features that make such claims as recognizably part of this sub-category are *often* or *it's common.* Endoxa, or endoxically supported knowledge claims are claims that rely upon there widespread nature to be seen as justifying a knowledge claim. Examples of the type of surface features that make such claims as recognizably part of this sub-category are in *large parts of the world*, *the rest of the world*, or the use of the impersonal 'you'.

The sourced category is a more evidence based category. The two sub-categories are self-sourced and other-sourced. The self-sourced category sees the speaker use their firsthand life experience as supporting evidence for their knowledge claim. Often self-sourced knowledge claims are used as a permission giving device for the speaker to move from an anecdote that was specifically about themselves, and based within their own epistemic territory, to making assumptions about other people in general on the assumption that, "if I do it, it is reasonable that other people would too". Other-sourced supported knowledge claims can rely on other people, newspapers, or even signs for the source of the information. It is testimonial knowledge that allows a speaker to make a knowledge claim without a need for firsthand knowledge.

Unsupported knowledge claims were much less commonly occurring than supported knowledge claims and this may suggest a preference for producing supported knowledge claims. The data showed unsupported knowledge claims to occur in three ways. First, an unsupported knowledge claim could occur as the first answer to the moderator's question and represented a cautious approach to answering the question on the part of the speaker. The

second type of unsupported claim occurred before a second speaker challenged the first speaker's unsupported knowledge claim, forcing the first speaker to support their original claim as a counter to the challenge. It is not possible to say whether or not the first speaker would have supported their knowledge claim had it not been challenged. Finally, some unsupported claims were made as part of a list, but it is the fact that they were exemplars of the category being described by the list that meant it was not necessary to support the knowledge claims.

Chapter Three

Consensus Formation

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two presented a model of how individuals in the discussion groups present and support their knowledge claims. Chapter Three discusses the next stage in the process: how the group forms consensus. The three-stage sequence is as follows

1. Individual knowledge claims
2. Group discussion
3. Signal of completion.

I will look at how the three consensus forming practices outlined in the pilot study in Module Two line up with the data from the new discussion groups. I will also look at how the new data shed light upon the concept of 'ignoring' that I had not observed in the pilot study. This chapter addresses the issue of consensus forming in the following stages

1. Consensus forming practices
2. Closing.

3.2 Passive and active consensus

In this section I distinguish between two kinds of 'consensus': active and passive. I define consensus as agreement that is reached by the group as a whole. This agreement may be active, in the sense that all the participants explicitly agree with the knowledge claim in play. Alternatively, it may be passive; in passive consensus one or more of the participants fails to challenge the knowledge claim even though they have opportunity to do so. In this way, consensus is achieved without explicit agreement from all the participants.

In the discussion groups it is commonplace for some of the participants to agree explicitly with a knowledge claim while others remain silent, even when invited to contribute by the moderator. This silence, I argue, can be treated as constituting passive consensus.

This conclusion requires some justification, as silence is often taken as an indicator of a dispreferred second pair part, which in this case would be disagreement. However, I believe that there is evidence to consider failure to contribute as evidence of agreement rather than of disagreement. One aspect of the evidence is that throughout the discussion groups there were instances of disagreement and nothing to suggest that disagreement would be problematic for these friendship groups. [outside the discussion groups, the same individuals could be observed disagreeing with each other in a friendly way]

Another piece of evidence is that on some occasions, when pressed by the moderator, the 'silent' participants did make comments, as in the following examples. ….. The utterances by Austin and Bill explain their failure to contribute to the discussion and suggest that their silence represented tacit agreement rather than tacit disagreement.

Austin: Carl's sort of answered what I was going to say. [Autonomy 2]
or
Bill: I think everyone has sort of said what I was thinking. [Autonomy 1]

Bearing the possibility of passive consensus in mind, in the next section I look at consensus forming practices in the discussion groups.

3.3 Consensus forming practices

The emergent nature of group consensus is messy and "[g]roups often develop their conflict-handling and consensus-attaining procedures "on the fly," settling on norms by trial and error, and often with considerable turbulence." (Arrow, McGrath, and Berdahl. 2000: 105). Yet, despite this messiness, I observed three preferences used by participants in the pursuit of consensus. These three strategies were

i. Agreement preference – an expected high degree of agreement and a willingness to agree even when doing so is incongruous with the views expressed
ii. Disagreement mitigation – an attempt to reduce the impact of a potential disagreement
iii. Careful epistemic advancement – a cautious tabling of knowledge claims

These are the three preferences I have observed taking place in consensus formation within the discussion groups. However, as the consensus emerges, it is not necessary for all three strategies to be continually present in the formation of the group's consensus. One of the three preferences will come to the fore and then fade as another one steps forward. Yet, most of the group discussions have at least one of these three preferences in play, sometimes more than one simultaneously. There were a few passages in which it was not easy to say what was going on, often these involved jokes or personal anecdotes that appeared to have strayed off topic. This was to be expected, given that all the groups were pre-formed groups of people who had known each other for decades.

3.3.1 Agreement preference

The first preference is agreement preference. This preference is one that is expected in groups creating a consensus. The participants agree with each other in ways laid out by Pomerantz (1984). Of interest is not so much the ways that speakers agree with each other in a group. It is the intensity of displays of agreement. In the example below, taken from Pomerantz (1984), a single agreement takes place.

C: She was a nice lady – I liked her.

G: I liked her too.

(Data from Pomerantz 1984:67)

In the data, the participants will continue to agree with each other multiple times. Going on record as being in agreement only one time with another speaker often does not seem to suffice. Participants observably undertake a persistent display of agreement and use multiple approaches to agreement. Additionally, participants explicitly voice agreement even when the propositions they are stating are not compatible, that is, one participant can be observed agreeing with a second participant who is making a knowledge claim that challenges or contradicts the knowledge claim made by the first speaker.

The first example of agreement is in line with Pomerantz's observations and illustrates the expected simple and upgraded agreement tokens. Examples such as this constitute the vast majority of instances of agreement. In excerpt 3.1, Carl states his belief regarding the reason for tourists to visit Kobe. Brian gives a basic agreement (L4). Carl continues to support his own claim and Austin agrees with Carl, firstly, by completing Carl's sentence (L11), and then by using the word 'plus', which accepts what has been said before as well as adding to it. All three participants are now on the record as being explicitly in agreement with a single idea.

[3.1	Kobe's a sidekick	Kobe 2]
1	Carl:	I don't feel that Kobe's their main
2		destination. It's one of their
3		several destinations.
4	Brian:	Yes
5	Carl:	And when they do come here
6		they come for the beef,
7		but they don't come to Japan
8		to come to Kobe.

9		They come to Japan to probably go to
10		Kyoto or.
11	Austin:	Tokyo.
12	Carl:	Kobe's a sidekick that they're
13		not going to miss probably
14		so that's their main reason.
15	Austin:	Plus, it's close to other central,
16		capital sort of areas,
17		you know, Osaka, Kyoto, so I mean...

Pomerantz (1984) shows that a speaker's first assessment displays knowledge of that topic and that a second speaker's agreement can be seen as that second speaker also displaying access to the topic at hand. In the data, third speakers (in this case, Austin) unsurprisingly also produce evaluations that display access to the knowledge claims, and therefore, all participants are on the record as being knowledgeable about the topic and as being in agreement about how to evaluate it.

Whereas excerpt 3.1 showed all participants in agreement with a single evaluation and thus attaining consensus, excerpt 3.2 shows a different path to consensus. In this excerpt, the four participants, Andrea, Bert, Curtis, and Dora, are attempting to define a moral person. Curtis begins by stating that humility is a factor in being moral. This is met with an 'oh' by Andrea, which serves as a withholding 'oh' (Heritage.1984) and is oriented to being so by the other participants, as is evidenced by the lengthy silence. Heritage argues that "[b]y producing, and hence overtly withholding "oh"-projected talk that is due next, a speaker may induce a coparticipant to initiate or accomplish sequentially relevant activities that the withholding speaker would rather not initiate or request" Heritage. (1984: 335). Such a withholding should invite other participants to contribute something. However, no other participant enters the conversation at this point, despite the 4.0 second opportunity to do so. At this point, a potential, and reasonable, interpretation that would be available to the participants, is that Andrea does not agree with what Curtis has said. Curtis then remodels his definition, without reference to humility, and Dora agrees. In fact, Dora agrees with Curtis before he has completed his second definition. The point at which Dora agrees represents a risk for Dora given that Andrea has already indicated a potential disagreement with Curtis and that Curtis has not yet finished his turn. Curtis (L10) could be going to say, "is not as moral as someone

who has humility" and therefore link it back to his initial knowledge claim about humility. Dora agrees again after he completes his turn. By the end of line 11, the situation is that Dora agrees with Curtis and that Andrea possibly disagrees with Curtis. Bert then makes the additional knowledge claim that systems of belief impact morality. Bert looks at each of the other three participants in turn, and each participant responds to Bert's gaze by nodding. It is unclear whether this is nodding as receipt or as agreement at this point but Andrea orients towards it as a definition based in the idea of moral relativity and Bert agrees with this evaluation. At this point (L25), Dora is on the record as agreeing with Curtis, Andrea and Bert are on the record as agreeing with each other and Andrea has signaled a possible disagreement with Curtis. It is this state of affairs that makes what happens next in the discussion so interesting. Dora (L26-28) makes an evaluation that ties the opinion of Curtis and the opinion of Bert and Andrea together. Bert and Andrea had voiced a definition that relied upon a social system and Curtis saw morality as being the responsibility of an individual. These two interpretations are not (in the form presented within the discussion) in agreement as epistemic statements. However, Dora points at Curtis and then states that her summary of what has been said to date represents what "everyone has said". Bert and Andrea then signal agreement with Dora (L29).

[3.2	Humility is part of being moral	Morality 2]
1	Curtis:	I guess ethical, I guess moral,
2		I guess it's difficult, I guess you,
3		what is it,
4		I guess humility is part of being moral
5	Andrea:	Oh
6		4.0
7	Curtis:	Somebody who thinks about
8		how their actions affect others
9	Dora:	Right
10	Curtis:	is a moral person
11	Dora:	Yeah
13	Bert:	It also depends on the system of belief,
14		like what religion they come from,
15		(Bert looks at Andrea who starts nodding)

16		Christian
17		(Bert looks at Dora who starts nodding),
18		Muslim, et cetera. And they have their
19		(*looks at Curtis who starts nodding*)
20		own particular frameworks
21	Andrea:	So, what's moral to one person
22		isn't necessarily
23	Bert:	Moral to another,
24	Andrea:	Yeah
25	Bert:	Yeah
26	Dora:	Just the interactions between people and how
27		(points to Curtis) as everyone has said,
28		how those actions impact others.
29	Bert:	Yeah. (Andrea nods).

What this excerpt shows is a preference for consensus that overwrites the actual epistemic stance taken by the participants. Andrea would appear to be in opposition to the view held by Curtis; this is supported by her agreement with Bert's definition that, on the face of it, is in opposition to the stance taken by Curtis. Yet, Dora pulls these two contrasting groups together to form consensus. This consensus is a working consensus, but there is no epistemic basis for a consensus and the participants do not make it clear how this newfound consensus would work: the ideas should be in opposition and none of the participants bridges the two concepts. The consensus is formed without a basis in knowledge claims. This group has displayed a preference for consensus over a detailed attendance to the views actually given. A preference for agreement trumps epistemic stance.

Having looked at a simple example of agreement in a group, and an example (3.3) where participants organize an agreement position without actually having any shared positions, the next excerpt displays a preference for agreement that also includes apparent self-contradiction. In other words, it constitutes evidence that participants will indicate agreement event when the knowledge claims they have produced are incompatible. As this is a particularly long example, I have divided it into two parts. There are three participants, Austin, Brian, and Carl, plus the moderator. In the first part, Austin makes the knowledge

claim that Japanese people use very simple Japanese when talking to non-Japanese people. Brian adds to this "or they run away" (L4). Brian's use of the word "or" suggests he sees it as an additional choice not as a disagreement, and Austin treats this utterance as such with his upgraded agreement (L5). However, the point Austin is making is that Japanese people do engage with non-Japanese speakers and that this engagement is carried out with consideration. Brian had suggested that Japanese people engage or escape interaction with non-Japanese people. Austin then proceeds to return to his first stance. At this point, Austin has made a knowledge claim and then agreed with a differing knowledge claim. Brian's knowledge claim is not compatible with Austin's. Austin is not claiming that Japanese people may sometimes interact with non-Japanese people, if he were doing so, then Brian's knowledge claim would be compatible. Austin uses the present simple tense to indicate a permanence of behavior, and he does not incorporate any hedging with regards the likelihood of this behavior. Austin's stance is that Japanese people are considerate towards non-Japanese people, and this is manifested in the way they talk to non-Japanese people. In line 7, Austin mimes a downward motion with his hand, and Brian produces an upgraded gestured agreement – the same gesture but with an accompanying and appropriate sound. (a whistle that starts high-pitched and slides to a lower pitch). Brian and Austin then agree twice that alcohol helps the interaction. This interaction between Austin and Brian is closed when Austin uses a sequence closing third – yeah.

[3.3 Part 1 Language training wheels Kobe 2]

1	Austin:	I mean, Japanese have a thing were they
2		look at a westerner **they put their**
3		**language training wheels** on anyway so.
4	Brian:	**Or they runaway**.
5	Austin:	**Yeah, or they totally avoid you**, **they're**
6		**very easy on you**. Well, they do it for me.
7		They dumb it down (mimes going down).
8	Brian:	(Makes a falling sound and copies Austin's
9		mime).
10	Austin:	(pointing at his glass of water and speaks
11		Japanese very slowly) *Mizu*.
12		(Laughs and then everyone else laughs,

13		as if in response) It gets very dumbed
14		down (uses down mime again) you know.
15		But you know in a drunken situation
16		though, I mean, I dunno, it just gets.
17	Brian:	That helps too.
19	Austin:	Yeah, I think with a foreigner you
20		just see Japanese people get looser
21		and their friendliness. You know,
22		all those walls sorta come down.
23		Alcohol helps.
24	Brian:	Everywhere.
25	Austin:	Yeah.

This first part of the sequence appears to represent a sequence of agreements. Brian's statement that Japanese people will effectively shun non-Japanese people is not what Austin was saying. Austin is portraying Japanese people as kind, which makes this section of the interaction appear self-contradictory.

4	Brian:	**Or they runaway**.
5	Austin:	**Yeah, or they totally avoid you**, **they're**
6		**very easy on you**. Well, they do it for me.

Austin makes two statements that are mutually contradictory: Japanese people engage with foreigners and make conversation easy for them; and Japanese people avoid conversation with foreigners. One interpretation that allows this exchange to remain compatible with Austin's stance on how Japanese people treat non-Japanese is that Brian's assertion is a joke. If Austin and Brian viewed this exchange as a joke, then the epistemic content of the joke remains isolated from the epistemic content of the 'actual' interaction. A joke stance could owe its humor to its incompatibility and may even serve as an upgraded agreement, in that, to think otherwise is comparable to a joke. This interpretation does allow Austin to retain a unity of stance.

In the second part of the excerpt, the moderator turns the same question to Carl, who has been living in Kobe the longest. In this excerpt, the reason I decided to view it as one long excerpt rather than as two separate, and therefore unrelated, excerpts can be seen. In part one of the excerpt, Austin and Brian had engaging in the act of agreement, despite not actually agreeing on the main point that Austin was making. In this second part of the same excerpt, Carl adopts the agreeable view of Kobe, despite clearly not having a purely agreeable view of Kobe, and Brian continues to offer agreement, despite clearly not holding to any knowledge claims that are made by Austin. Brian offers a contribution that would appear to contradict Austin (line 4) but then offers several agreement tokens (line 8-9, line 17, line 24), in spite of apparently disagreeing with the knowledge claims made by Austin. The preference for agreement when there is no substantial case for agreement persists. Carl opens by saying there is nothing negative about Kobe and going on record that he agrees with Brian's comments that were in agreement with Austin. As Austin had been describing positive aspects of life in Kobe, and Brian had agreed with him, by stating that there are not really any negative aspects to Kobe, Carl is in agreement with Austin and Brian. After Carl has stated that there are no negative aspects to life in Kobe, Brian then offers a potential downside to Kobe (L32-33). Carl disagrees, and unusually, does not support his disagreement. Carl simply says, "Nah" and moves on with his next knowledge claim. This is one of the very few instances in the data in which a speaker makes an unsupported knowledge claim. Carl, following immediately on from his unsupported disagreement, then lists a downside that is embedded in a positive aspect of Kobe and Brian agrees without upgrading or modifying. This sequence is repeated two more times, an unsupported claim with a weak agreement. When Austin agrees with Carl, he does so by adding to Carl's claim (and tsunami - L43). The next part of Carl's misaligned agreement is that he says apart from the city taxes, the local taxes, the food and the expense, Kobe has nothing wrong with it. It is hard not to think of Monty Python's, "What have the Roman's ever done for us?" sketch when observing Carl's answer that apart from the high city taxes, the high local taxes, the bad food, and it being very expensive, there are no real negative sides to living in Kobe.

[3.3 Part 2 Language training wheels Kobe 2]

26 Mod: Well, you've been here longer than anyone.
27 Carl: I don't think there's any negatives
28 really, that's why we talked about living

29		here, cos of all the positives.
30		More English, more foreigners
31		(points to Brian), near the station.
32	Brian:	What about pharmacies being clogged up
33		these days with foreigners
34	Carl:	Nah. Actually, it's more expensive
35		cos it's convenient.
36	Brian:	Yeah.
37	Carl:	It's convenient
38	Brian:	Yeah
39	Carl:	It's high quality.
40	Brian:	Yeah.
41	Carl:	Also, it's safe from earthquakes because
42		we're close to the mountain so it's safer.
43	Austin:	and tsunami
44	Carl:	and tsunami, so really, it's only
45		city taxes and local taxes and food and
46		it's just more expensive than
47	Mod:	The city tax is high,
48		the city tax is high.
49	Carl:	but really, I don't think there's=
50		(looks at Brian)
51	Brian:	(Shakes his head).
52	Carl:	=there's many other negatives, you know.

The preference for agreement in these exchanges resulted in participants agreeing at particular stages in the utterance that do not yet warrant agreement. Although projectability (Sacks et al, 1974) may account for the second of the two examples below, it cannot account for the first, although I will explain below why I do not believe projectability offers a sufficient explanation.

In the first example, Brian shakes his head as a response (presumably signaled by Carl's 'don't') but it is at a point that cannot be considered a complete independent clause (Ford & Thompson. 1996: 143) and therefore there is no surefire way that Brian can know how Carl

will finish his utterance when he begins his agreement. The number of reasonably possible ways that Carl could have completed his utterance that Brian would not have agreed with are high.

49	Carl:	but really, I don't think there's=
50		(looks at Brian)
51	Brian:	(shakes his head in agreement)
52	Carl:	=there's many other negatives, you know.

In this second example below, Dora offers an agreement at a point of grammatical completeness. However, Curtis could just as easily have been about to say, "is not a moral person", or "is not enough to be a moral person". Given that Curtis had just said that someone who declares themselves to be a moral person could not be a moral person, there is good reason to suspect that Curtis may have been about to give a second disqualifying condition for being a moral person. Projectability is not enough to account for Dora's pre-emptive agreement at this point.

Curtis:	Somebody who thinks about how their actions affect others=
Dora:	Right
Curtis:	=is a moral person

In this section I have argued that there is a preference displayed by the participants for agreement in the building of consensus. Some cases are obvious and simply involve the addition of agreement markers of different kinds. In the more interesting cases, there are explicit markers of agreement even when the opinions expressed are not compatible with each other. In one of the examples, one speaker even produces two incompatible statements, one representing his own view and the other that of another participant, as if they were the same point but does so in the service of consensus and to the detriment of epistemic reasonableness. Finally, I have shown that a preference for agreement leads speakers to produce an agreement marker before the completion of a knowledge claim and before the completion is predictable. This is strong evidence for the preference for agreement in pre-formed groups. In the next section, I shall examine instances of disagreement and suggest two ways that the speakers mitigate this.

3.3.2 Disagreement Mitigation

In court cases, an outcome is reached through an adversarial system with a defense lawyer and a prosecution lawyer. In the discussion groups, there was no sign of such an adversarial approach to reaching an outcome that produced consensus. In fact, participants in the groups sought to mitigate any potential disagreements. The two approaches I observed were

1. **Ignoring**
2. **Stance drift**

'Ignoring' is a preference whereby other participants fail to engage with the epistemic content of a speakers utterance, thereby stymying any potential for epistemic advancement. There is still a recognition of the previous speaker having had a turn-at-talk, but the next speaker does not advance the proposition of the knowledge claim and instead moves to a new topic. Stance drift is the approach used by participants to drift to a new interpretation of a knowledge claim when explicit disagreement had arisen. When a speaker makes a knowledge claim that is treated as problematic, the speakers reorient to a new (and plausible) understanding of the knowledge claim that is not problematic and produces consensus among the members.

Ignoring

When a group first is exposed to an individual speaker's knowledge claim, there is no guarantee that this claim will transition into the claim that serves as the basis for the group consensus on this issue. In the data, the most common obstacle to a group accepting a knowledge claim and transitioning it towards becoming the basis of the group consensus was not disagreement (indeed, only two examples of explicit disagreement were observed) but rather it was the other members of the group simply not taking the knowledge claim any further.

A difficulty I faced in exploring this topic was defining exactly what I meant by the practice 'ignoring'. Typically, ignoring is not an action as much as an absence of an action. However, the term as I use it refers to 'epistemic ignoring', that is, a second speaker does not disagree with or modify the previous speaker's knowledge claim and instead casts it to one side by either offering a new candidate knowledge claim for consensus or by selecting a new speaker. The ignored knowledge claim is not disagreed with and can even receive a token agreement. The proposition receives no epistemic advancement, and , in some examples, there are

observable moves towards an end-of turn move. It is this ignoring of the potential for epistemic advancement that is the central concern of the practice of ignoring, and not a simple lack of recognition by the next speaker that the prior speaker had completed an utterance that contained a knowledge claim.

In excerpt 3.4, the group are responding to the moderator's question regarding the reasons for the popularity of Kobe as a tourist destination. There are a series of rapid-fire knowledge claims proffered up by Carl (L1/KC1), Carl (L6-7/KC2), Brian (L8/KC3), Brian (L13/KC4) all of which receive no epistemic advancement from any other participants and only token acknowledgment in Lines 5 and 6. Only Austin's knowledge claim (L17/KC5) receives any epistemic advancement from another participant from Brian (L19) and, after a discussion on Kobe beef, the participants go on to form a consensus that Kobe is not a central draw for tourists with Carl re-presenting Austin's original knowledge claim. I have noted the knowledge claims in the transcription in order to highlight the rapid-fire nature in which they are made.

[3.4 The yen is weak Kobe 2]

1	Carl:	**I think foreign exchange rates, <u><-KC1</u>**	
2		a lot of tourists come	
3		cos the yen is week.	
4	Brian:	Yeah.	
5	Mod:	Yeah.	
6	Carl:	**And of course, the temples**,	
7		**and the shrines**.	**<u><-KC2</u>**
8	Brian:	**The *Ijinkan***.	**<u><-KC3</u>**
9	Austin:	So, you're saying just Kobe.	
10	Mod:	Just Kobe in particular,	
11		not necessarily Japan,	
12		but Kobe in particular.	
13	Brian:	**The harbor's nice**,	**<u><-KC4</u>**
15		when they redid it.	
16	Austin:	Well, I happen to think that	
17		**they just go from town to town <u><-KC5</u>**	

18		and Kobe's just a place to go.
19	Brian:	A bus stop. Yeah.
20		((a prolonged discussion on Kobe beef))
21	Carl:	**I don't feel that Kobe's their main**
22		**destination. It's one of**
23		**their several destinations.** **<u><-KC5</u>**

Excerpt 3.5 sees a slightly different take on the practice of ignoring a knowledge claim: an upgraded agreement that appears to be agreement but masks the forthcoming act of ignoring. The participants are discussing reasons why foreign residents chose to settle in Kobe and Austin states that he feels Kobe is one of the more relaxed cities in Japan (L1-4/KC1). He concludes his turn with an evaluation, "*easy*", although it is not clear in the transcript whether this evaluation relates to how easy Kobe is or how easy it was for him to get a house, both being viable interpretations. However, Carl (L8) gives an upgraded agreement (Pomerantz. 1984) without making it clear to which of the two potential interpretations his agreement applies. This is the interesting point of this example; Austin's evaluation is vague and so an upgraded agreement is not warranted. Carl appears to agree with Austin but then goes on to make a new knowledge claim that does not build upon Austin's. Epistemically, Carl ignores Austin's knowledge claim, despite having signaled agreement.

[3.5 Plus I got a house. Kobe 2]

1	Austin:	So, it had that, **it just seemed a little**
2		**bit ah (1.6) kinda relaxed**
3		**and easier for what Japan's busy**
4		**lifestyle is**, **<u><-KC1</u>**
5		so (1.2) yeah. ((Shrugs)).
6		Plus I got a house.
7		**Easy.**
8	Carl:	**Yeah, really simple.** **<u><-Upgrade</u>**
9		**I think people just migrate by work** **<u><-KC2</u>**

Carl's upgraded agreement is not so much of an agreement as it is a listening receipt. It could also represent Carl's recognition of a need to place something between his knowledge claim

and Austin's preceding knowledge claim. This is more evident in excerpt 3.6. The participants are discussing what they think the term "a moral person" means. Austin makes his knowledge claim that a moral person is a person with "slightly conservative values" (L3). Austin and the moderator then discuss exactly what this means before the moderator then glances towards Carl, who interprets this as being selected to speak. He does not make any comment on the epistemic content of Austin's knowledge claim but only comments on the brevity. He then directs Brian to answer the moderator's question. At this point, had Brian returned to Austin's knowledge claim of "slightly conservative values" Austin's knowledge claim would not have been ignored. Instead, Brian chooses to begin a new definition of a moral person without any reference to Austin's definition. This would mean that, were Austin to return to his initial knowledge claim, it would represent a considerable investment of conversational capital with both of the other participants (excluding the moderator) having epistemically ignored what he had said. Indeed, were Austin to pursue his own knowledge claim, it could be interpreted as a disagreement with the other two participants, but a disagreement with their ignoring of his knowledge claim.

[3.6 Slightly conservative values. Morality 3]

1	Mod:	So, what would you understand that phrase,
2		a moral person, to mean?
3	Austin:	**Slightly conservative values.** **<u><-KC1</u>**
4		A touch of conservative values.
5		Not so, not on the, not on the right or
6		something sort of in the middle but
7		leaning on the conservative side,
8		uhm, ah, old world values so to speak,
9		you know those type of things.
10	Mod:	Family values?
11	Austin:	Family values
20	Mod:	Back to basics?
21	Austin:	Yeah, yeah, all that type of thing.
22		Probably someone like that, uhm, (2.0),
23		yeah, somewhere in there
24	Mod:	Ok (looks to the other participants).

25 3.0

26 Carl: **Short and explicit. Good.** (3.0) **Brian?**

27 Brian: A moral person. Hmmmm (2.0) I think

28 **a person that has the right**

29 **motivation to do good things**

30 **in the world** **<u><-KC2</u>**

The next two excerpts look at the role of the moderator in the ignoring of a participant's knowledge claim. The first way that participants can ignore other participants is when the members of the group orient towards a position that consensus has been achieved but another member questions this consensus view. Rather than answering this challenge to the consensus, the members just ignore it. In excerpt 3.7, Curtis (L11-12) directly challenges the consensus formed by the group. The group had agreed that their main concern with morality was individual freedom of choice (this discussion is not included in the excerpt). Curtis is explaining that the idea of freedom of individual choice is an issue with the idea of public health and vaccinations (this was just before the COVID-19 outbreak). Curtis states that protecting public health is a moral act and therefore the morality of protecting public health is at odds with the morality of individuals having the choice to remain unvaccinated. He then directly puts this question to the group (L11-12). The other participants ignore this question for seven seconds (L13). This prolonged silence is recognized by the group as being unusual when all the participants, except Curtis, laugh. The laughter is not simultaneously undertaken by the participants but is invited through gaze and smiles (See Glenn 2003). At this point, the moderator moves on to the next question. No participant attempts to return to the question raised by Curtis.

[3.7 Where does the choice come here Morality 2]

1 Curtis: Yeah, dangerous.

2 It protects everybody but

3 if you don't have a certain percentage

4 of people trying it, you, ah,

5 that sort of vocal minority,

6 might affect,

7 so it's a moral act to protect everybody

8		but uhm, how, if you don't,
9		if too many people choose not to do it
10		then it's a wasted effort.
11		**So, where does the, where does**
12		**the choice come here?**
13		**7.0**
14		**(Everyone laughs)**
15	Mod:	**OK, now, next,**

This group did not engage with the new avenue opened at a point when epistemic closure had already been attained. The group, by ignoring the question raised by Curtis, are able to prevent any epistemic advancement without having to disagree. Ignoring was used to stick with a pre-formed consensus instead of engaging with the potential for a new avenue of discussion. This example saw the participants use ignoring in the service of maintaining the status quo.

In 3.8, the moderator asks a question (L1-4) which is a follow-up question to Brian's answer to the initial question, which asked the participants what they thought was meant by student autonomy. Brian explicitly and immediately answers this follow-up question (L5). He then supports his knowledge claim with self-supported knowledge claim. The moderator offers a listening receipt (L12) but then gestures to the other participants and returns to the original question about student autonomy and does not offer the others any chance to expand upon Brian's follow-up answer. Carl responds by giving his definition of student autonomy and thus ignoring Brian's most recent knowledge claim.

[3.8	Has to be in the classroom		Student Autonomy 2]
1	Mod:	Do you think there is a student	
2		responsibility to the classroom? Or do you	
3		think there is only a student	
4		responsibility to the individual student?	
5	Brian:	**Has to be in the classroom because <-KC1**	
6		somethings they do have to work	
7		together with others, at least the way	

8		I ran classes, or the way I teach
9		people, you know, unless it's one on one
10		class I uh think that there is
11		responsibility to the people around you.
12	Mod:	**Yeah, right, OK. Ok right.**
13		**What about you guys**
14		((motions to other participants))
15		Student autonomy.
16	Carl:	Student autonomy. In the first I just
17		think it means that basically they are
18		individual work so they have whatever
19		assignment it is but they're responsible
20		to finish that assignment

The moderator seems to have the authority to close down an avenue for epistemic advancement but, nevertheless, still opts to have something in between the end of the previous speakers turn and his selection of the next speaker. The listening receipts (L12) are similar to Carl's evaluation of the brevity of Austin's answer in that they are not involved in opening a discussion of the immediately preceding knowledge claim but serve to mitigate the potential harm of epistemically ignoring a knowledge claim.

Excerpt 3.9 is almost the opposite of Excerpt 3.8. In Excerpt 3.8, the moderator ignored the participants knowledge claim. In 3.9, the moderator attempts to continue the topic, but Austin employs a sequence-closing third (Schegloff. 2007) and, in addition he breaks eye contact with the other participants and the moderator and looks down at the table. After a silence, the moderator moves on to the next question, displaying that he oriented towards the sequence-closing third as ignoring his attempt to expand the sequence. It is a form of mitigation as it avoids explicit rejection or disagreement.

[3.9 Or the airport. Kobe 2]

1	Austin:	Plus, **it's close to other central,**
2		**capital sort of areas**, **<-KC1**
3		you know Osaka, Kyoto, so I mean...
4	Mod:	**Or the airport maybe**?

5	Austin:	**Yeah, the airport. ((breaks eye contact))**
6		(2.0)
7	Mod:	**OK. Right. The next question is…**

Ignoring proved to be the principal obstacle to a great many knowledge claims as each group started moving towards consensus. Ignoring is not the act of refusing to recognize that a previous speaker has undertaken and completed an action: a speaker doing nothing is a speaker doing something. It is the practice whereby a speaker undertakes a new knowledge claim or directs another speaker to undertake a new knowledge claim without offering any epistemic advancement in furtherance of the previous speaker's knowledge claim. This serves to remove the ignored knowledge claim from the table (no example existed of an ignored knowledge claim being 'resurrected' and moved back into contention for the basis of the group consensus). The fact that when a speaker does ignore the knowledge claim of the previous speaker, they often choose to place something in between the previous turn and the ignoring does seem to suggest that speakers recognize this as something that could cause loss of face to the previous speaker. The use of listening receipts, superficial agreements, and an evaluation of the brevity of the knowledge claim show the next speaker orients towards a need for a face-saving act. This act of epistemic ignoring may also serve as a means of avoiding disagreement. Rather than a speaker disagreeing with the previous speaker, the new speaker simply continues with their preferred answer to the question. By ignoring the potentially contentious knowledge claim, the next speaker is able to avoid disagreeing but still produce the differing knowledge claim. Ignoring is a subtle and effective action for the avoidance of potential disagreement.

3.3.3 Stance drift

In the data there were only two examples of explicit disagreement, and both examples were instigated by the moderator. The strategy deployed by the participants to avoid this disagreement growing was similar in both cases. In both cases, the participants were able to find a reinterpretation of the initial knowledge claim that had been questioned by the moderator. The participants' stance drifted from the initial and problematic understanding of the knowledge claim to a second interpretation. The group was able to achieve consensus around this second interpretation.

In 3.10, there are two knowledge claims: (1) foreigners like Kitano because of the history and (2) foreigners like Kobe because of the level of English. The conversation does not present these as alternatives but as slight variants of the same thing and thus the interaction 'drifts' from one stance to the other. Rather than orienting to the potential for disagreement by focusing on Austin's explicit disagreement (L10), the participants work to find an interpretation that affords agreement without the need to address the disagreement. The participants drift towards the consensus suggested by the moderator (L32-34) and mitigate the potential source of disagreement.

The participants are discussing reasons why so many foreign residents settle in a part of Kobe called Kitano (which historically was the only part of Kobe that foreign merchants were allowed to settle during Japan's period of international isolation). Brian mentions the history and makes the claim that this historicity is a reason for Kitano being so popular with modern day foreign residents (L1-2). The moderator questions this knowledge claim (L3-9) and Austin quite explicitly disagrees with Brian (L10). Brian offers context to his claim and begins to tell a self-sourced story that becomes sidetracked (L15 represents the lengthy anecdote that is unrelated to the discussion). Carl states that Kobe and Yokohama, having the highest rate of foreigners in Japan, will **traditionally** (line 25) have a higher rate of English ability, and that this would contribute to foreign residents staying. Brian agrees with Carl. This use of the word "traditionally" harkens to the historical ingredient that Brian had earlier referred to and that threatened the emergence of disagreement. Carl has tied the traditional high levels of English spoken in Kobe (and this is well known to most residents of Japan) to Brian's claim of the importance of history as a draw for foreign residents to Kobe. The moderator then offers a summary of what Carl and Brian have been agreeing upon (L32-34) and Carl and Brian explicitly agree. The potential for disagreement has drifted from a rejection of the draw of the historical quality of Kitano to an agreement that the historical nature of Kitano leads to better spoken English, which is a draw to lead foreign residents to live in Kitano. Interestingly, Austin, who had disagreed with Brian, remains silent throughout the stance drift.

[3.10	Kitano's got the history.	Kobe 2]
1	Brian:	Yep. Kitano's got the history.
2		Foreigners like that. **<u><-KC1</u>**
3	Mod:	**Do you think? People, people keep**

4		**saying that but uhm,**
5		**one of the things I don't understand is,**
6		**when you say Kitano's got the history**
7		**and foreigners like that,**
8		**how does that factor into**
9		**your decision to live in the Kitano area.**
10	Austin:	**It doesn't.** **<u><- Disagreement</u>**
11	Brian:	Well, it depends because
12		when I lived in a place before,
13		I lived in Amagasaki, and
14		there weren't a lot of foreigners there,
15		…((Brian discusses Amagasaki))
16	Carl:	But Yokohama and Kobe.
17		Highest per capita of foreigners.
18	Mod:	Is that right?
19	Carl:	Which means you may not move
20		because of that but it may give you
21		some small sense of warmth, or=
22		(1.0).
23	Brian:	=Comfort. Yeah=.
24	Carl:	=Comfort. And that also means that
25		Yokohama and Kobe **<u>traditionally</u>** speak
26		better English than other towns
27		because they're more English friendly.
28		It doesn't make it a final decision maker
29		but after you live here it makes it
30		comfortable not to leave or
31		possibly want to move here.
32	Mod:	**So, it has a higher retention rate**
33		**because of the higher number**
34		**of foreign people living here.**
35	Brian:	(Nodding).
36	Carl:	Yeah.

The stance drift in the previous example is similar to the stance drift in the mitigation of potential disagreement in excerpt 3.11. Carol makes the knowledge claim that Kobe is a fashionable place (L1-2) and the moderator challenges this claim. Ben (L5) also questions the claim. Alan (L7) offers the existence of a fashion museum as a candidate for support of Carol's claim but then backs away from it (L12). At this point (L12), the group consensus does not look to moving in the direction of supporting Carol. Carol then shifts the focus of her knowledge claim from the actual proposition it contained to the source of the proposition – people who aren't from Kobe. Ben and Alan (L17-19) agree with this reformatted knowledge claim and consensus is reached by the group and disagreement has been avoided.

(3.11) [Kobe is a fashionable place Kobe 1]

1	Carol:	**They always say Kobe is a fashion,**
2		**fashionable. <u><-KC1</u>**
3	M:	**Mmmh do you think that's true?**
4		**Kobe is a fashionable place?**
5	Ben:	More fashionable than Osaka?
6	M:	Yeah, I mean, what's different
7	Alan:	They have a fashion museum in Kobe
8	Carol:	Yeah, on Rokko Island
9	Alan:	But I mean, I don't … mmmh.
10	M:	But it doesn't leap out at you,
11		I mean, I don't go around Kobe and go
12	Alan:	Personally, I've never been in it
13	Carol:	But a lot of people who aren't from Kobe
14		they do come to Kobe
15		because **they do say** that people in Kobe
16		do kind of present themselves differently
17	Ben:	I've heard that. Absolutely
18	Alan:	Yeah
19	Ben:	That is true

In excerpt 3.10, Austin's disagreement (L10) is very explicit, whereas the disagreement in excerpt 3.11 is more of an 'atmosphere' of disagreement. There is no explicit disagreement phrase, but it is very clear that the group is working towards a disagreement with Carol's claim. Carol's claim-saving shift on line 13, beginning with "but" that shows that she orients towards the previous interaction as having tones of disagreement about it.

In both of these examples, it was the moderator, and not a fellow participant who instigated the disagreement. One interpretation of this is that the group preference for agreement is not shared by the moderator. Additionally, the group members do not seek to sanction the moderator for instigating disagreement. The participants align with the moderator's upsetting of the apple cart as being a warranted act. In both these examples, the participants treat the moderator has being in a different role from the other participants, as somehow having different rights. The preference for consensus need not include the moderator and so the moderator is seen as an out-of-group participant.

Stance drift mitigates a source of potential trouble by sidestepping it and drifting towards a new stance that is treated as coming out of the stance that originally had the potential to cause trouble. There are three components to stance drift, a potential source of trouble, an alternative but similar knowledge claim to the potential trouble source, and an active agreement regarding this new knowledge claim on the part of the participants. The new knowledge claim is a reasonable claim that shares some relevance either to the original knowledge claim or the support for the knowledge claim.

3.4 Careful Epistemic Advancement

Careful epistemic advancement is a strategy the participants used during the group discussions that appeared at a very early stage of the consensus forming process, and it may be that this strategy is the mechanism that lays the groundwork between the individual knowledge claims and the formation of the groups consensus. There is a preference for progressivity in multi-party conversation (Stivers. 2006). The strategy of careful epistemic progress is a process of deliberate hesitancy built into the progressivity. It is a noticeably high concentration of hedging, concept checking questions, and disavowals by the speaker of what the speaker has just said.

In 3.12, Brian has been asked what he thinks of the term, "student autonomy". His initial answer revolves around the USSR, which provokes the moderator to ask a concept checking question. Brian's response contains a noticeable degree of hedging techniques (which are in bold text in the excerpt), and he finishes by asking the moderator if his answer makes sense. Such a question, whilst having a preference for a positive answer, also serves to recognize that a negative answer is conceivable, it is, after all, a yes/no question.

[3.12 Sort of an analogy Autonomy 2]

1	Brian:	Uh, that's in terms of, well,
2		I'm **trying** to do an example of a country
3		**almost** like a classroom **in a way**.
4	Mod:	**Sort of** an analogy.
5	Brian:	Yeah, exactly.
6		And so the students **could be** those
7		autonomous regions where they have
8		a lot of freedom to do
9		a lot of **things** that they want
10		but there's still **some** responsibility
11		to the country that they're in.
12		**Does that make sense?**
13	Mod:	Yeah
14	Brian:	So, it's almost like a classroom where you
15		could let the learners go off and do their
16		thing (1.5) but there's some connection to
17		the classroom, yeah.
18	Mod:	Uh huh.

None of the other two participants interact with Brian's analogy. Brian has, by undermining his own analogy, made their interaction unnecessary. Brian is undermining his own analogy by checking if it makes sense for the moderator, therefore suggesting it is plausible that his analogy does not make sense. Only the moderator is interacting with Brian and those interactions (L13 and L18) are minimal. Although this could be seen as a failed attempt at conversational advancement, the strategy does make it easier for the other participants to not

interact without it being a face threatening act as, after all, Brian himself has been so uncertain about his own analogy. Interestingly, the only time Brian was certain was in his agreement with the moderator. Eventually, the moderator turns to the other participants, but the interaction in the excerpt plays out for a few more exchanges with minimal responses from the moderator, and zero involvement from the other two participants

In excerpt 3.13, Carl is working towards the knowledge claim that there are "unique but small circumstances that I think that's true" (the 'that' is the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number of people – L11-12). The amount of hedging that takes place in Carl's build up to his knowledge claim is significant. Finally, Carl completes his knowledge claim with a qualification as to the limits of his knowledge claim (L13) and then a weak disavowal.

[3.13 It's hard to know why Morality 3]

1	Carl:	uhm, or **sometimes** you **may** want to
2		do **something** in an environment,
3		a get together, a gathering,
4		a lecture, a speech
5		but, **you kind of** (1.0) **somehow**,
6		by not jumping in,
7		or by somebody else taking a stand
8		they **may** have a moment
9		**but I don't know how** that's
10		for the greater good so,
11		there are **unique but small circumstances**
12		**that I think that's true,** **<-KC**
13		**but I don't think it's always true**.
14		**But it's hard to know why.**
15	Austin:	So, basically just the greater good right?
16	Mod:	Well, …

Carl's knowledge claim was very carefully advanced . Upon the completion of his turn, the next speaker ignores Carl's knowledge claim and addresses the moderator for clarification and the moderator answers Austin. Carl's knowledge claim is abandoned .

A speaker can disavow their own opinion as soon as they have said it. This is also known as paralipsis which Mercica (2020: 61) describes as, "I'm not saying; I'm just saying, and no one can hold me accountable for what I'm not saying". In 3.14, Dave has just written down a definition, as per the moderator's request, and he begins to disavow his own definition (L1-2) and Eric (L3) empathizes.

[3.14 The more I look at this Morality 1]

1 Dave: You see, **the more I look at this**
2 **the more likely I am to change it**.
3. Eric: Yeah, I know.
4. Dave: Which doesn't make me happy.

In 3.15, Bill introduces a term with a disavowal (L2) and Charles and Dave immediately approve of the term.

[3.15 I don't wanna say deprogram Autonomy 1]

1 Bill: So, I've worked pretty hard to,
2 **I don't wanna say de-programme them.**
3 Charles: That's a fine word.
4 Dave: That's right,
5 you've got to de-programme them.

In both of these examples, the disavowal by the speaker of what they have just said produces a supportive response from the other participants. The first response is a weak supportive response, one of understanding. The second example is a strong supportive response, Charles and Dave are explicitly agreeing with Bill. This speaker's disavowal invites epistemic progressivity but does not actually take the risk of making the knowledge explicitly. The speaker gets to put the knowledge claim on the table without being responsible for how the other participants orient towards the claim. A disavowal is a risk-free way to place an idea before a group without formally being accountable, but the speaker is still able to discern the stance of the other participants to the tabled idea.

3.5 Consensus Attainment

One of the most important features of consensus is understanding how a group displays its belief that consensus has been reached. Two approaches were apparent in the data: non-participation and refusal to engage in a disagreement.

Non-participation occurred in the group discussions, at points where the participants had been interacting with one another. These were points when the participants stopped talking with one another and the moderator had to break the extended silence.

In 3.16, Bert and Andrea are discussing issues related to morality and compliance. Bert lays out an initial position (L1-2) and Andrea extends this position by adding a modification (L3). Bert accepts this modification and completes it with a vague placeholding suggestion (*something*). Andrea does not reject Bert's, but rather adds a more specific understanding of the suggested realization. It is possible to understand the meaning of Andrea's L5 suggestion as other initiated repair of Bert's vague suggestion on L4, or that Andrea's suggestion for Bert is a candidate answer. However, what is important is that this excerpt shows the participants are aligned and in-tune with one another. It is this in-tune alignment that makes the extended silence (L6) all the more remarkable. If they had something more to say, there is no reason to suspect either would hold back but they both opt for non-participation. When the moderator begins to ask the next question, neither Andrea nor Bert orient towards this as being a dispreferred outcome.

[3.16 Being damaged Morality 2]

1	Bert:	You have to do what's being told or an educated person says this
2		because they have more knowledge than you do so you follow the
3		rules=
4	Andrea:	=Until you realize=
5	Bert:	=Something=
6	Andrea:	=You're being damaged.
7		4.0
8	Mod:	Right. OK. Well, that brings us on to the next question.

Excerpt 3.17 differs from the previous example in that it is an interaction between a participant and the moderator. Austin trails off his turn in L1 and the moderator offers another suggestion. Austin had suggested that being close to large urban areas in Japan such as Osaka

and Kyoto were important. The moderator suggests an airport, which is important for its utility and not its size. Austin does not disagree with the suggestion of the moderator but simply refuses to expand on it any further. The moderator takes this as a lack of interest on Austin's part to pursue the topic of the airport and begins the next question. Austin does not initiate repair on this new turn. This example has an additional point of interest as it is a participant not taking up a possible new line of discussion that has been proffered by the moderator. This suggests that the participants see limits to the authority of the moderator. The moderator can initiate new topics, but the participants see themselves as having autonomy in the ending of topics.

[3.17 The airport maybe Kobe 2]

1	Austin:	Plus, it's close to other central,
2		capital sort of areas, you know, Osaka, Kyoto,
3		so I mean
4	Mod:	Or the airport maybe?
5	Austin:	Yeah, the airport.
6		3.0
7	Mod:	OK. Right. The next question is…

In 3.18, the participants signal the end of the topic using both a prolonged silence (or in this case two) and identical discourse markers. Brian completes his turn (L1) with an assessment of the story he has just told. This marks a fitting point for an end-of-turn. Yet, after a silence, Brian continues using the discourse marker '*yeah*'. Carl mirrors this choice. This use of *'yeah'* is not turn-initial, and not turn-medial. Wong (2000) does suggest that 'yeah' can be a disfluency marker, but her research reflected non-native speaker use of the term. Brian is not seeking to continue his turn, and Carl is not seeking to initiate a new turn. These *yeahs* are not performing any interpersonal role (Fung & Carter 2007). Both use downwards intonation, consistent with an end-of-turn move. The second silence (L5), followed by the moderator initiating the next turn, a new topic, without either Brian or Carl seeking to reassume control of a turn tells us that the moderator was correct to interpret the L3 and 4 utterances as turn-ending signals.

[3.18 Other parts of Japan Kobe 2]

1	Brian:	You don't always get that with other parts of Japan.

2		2.0
3	Brian:	Yeah
4	Carl:	Yeah
5		1.0
6	Mod:	Ok. We've talked about the good sides of foreign people living in
7		Kobe. What are some of the challenges that foreign people living in
8		Kobe

Another way that participants signaled consensus was by refusing to engage in any disagreement with the prevailing consensus. In excerpt 3.19, Curtis has just suggested that the consensus is wrong by giving an example. The group had agreed (including Curtis) that a moral action needed to be a free choice. Curtis then gave an example of a coerced action that was more moral than the free choice and then challenges the group consensus (L1). The moderator allows an extended silence to take place at this point of potential disagreement. Yet, none of the participants take it up, and Curtis does not pursue his topic. Instead, the silence is evaluated with laughter. Here, the laughter occurs after the silence, and not before. The place of the laughter tells us that it is orientated towards the silence and not the challenge Curtis had made. This is a face-saving act for Curtis on the part of the group. They have rejected his challenge to the consensus, but, as Curtis remains part of the group, they do not sanction him. The group had not planned to ignore the challenge made by Curtis, there was simply no one member who initiated a response to Curtis, either to agree or disagree.

[3.19 Everyone laughs Morality 2]

1	Curtis:	So, where does the where does the choice come here?
2		7.0
3		(Everyone laughs)
4	Mod:	OK, now, next,

The decision to view a topic as having "become finished" is largely achieved in the group discussions by a "non-engagement" strategy. The participants just decide, as individuals, not to pursue a new turn. The participants will reject attempts by the moderator to continue the topic, they will reject challenges to the existing consensus, and they will not engage in any end-of-turn indecision. This has advantages. Firstly, it does not represent a face-threatening

act to any member of the group. Secondly, no individual has to take responsibility for ending the topic, or, conversely, for refusing to end it. This in turn serves as a method of mitigating any potential for disagreement in the group. Thirdly, it does not necessarily close down any return to the topic at a later date. Should a participant wish to return to a topic at a later date, they can do so without it being a face-threatening act: no member is responsible for the end-of-topic decision. The emergence of consensus attainment is an example of the 'on the fly' approach mentioned by Arrow, McGrath, and Berdahl (2000). Silence is a potent force in a group discussion.

3.6 Conclusion

In reaching consensus, participants display three preferences, a preference for agreement, a preference for disagreement mitigation, and a preference for cautious epistemic advancement. These three practices can simultaneously occur. The preference for a cautious epistemic advance revolved around three practices: a disavowal of their own knowledge claims, intense hedging, and concept checking with the moderator and with other members of the group. The act of disavowal can be observed when a speaker makes a knowledge claim and then indicates through the act of disavowing that same knowledge claim that they are not necessarily aligned towards their own knowledge claim. During the group discussions, the participants also display a preference to mitigate any potential disagreement. This preference manifested in two ways: ignoring knowledge claims made by other speakers and engaging in stance drift. The practice of ignoring, rather than being a total refusal to acknowledge the previous knowledge claim of the prior participant, is an epistemic ignoring. The participant acknowledges that a previous speaker had completed a knowledge claim and then does not attend to the epistemic content of the utterance and instead began an entirely new knowledge claim. The act of ignoring a prior speaker's knowledge claim was frequently observed in the data. The mitigation of any potential disagreement is undertaken by engaging in stance drift which occurs when a first speaker makes a knowledge claim, and a second speaker disagrees with this knowledge claim. It is the second speaker who instigates the disagreement mitigation that takes place in their response to the first claim. The second speaker identifies some dimension of the initial knowledge claim that represented a potential trouble source and then utilizes this dimension to construct a similar but different knowledge claim. The group members then drift towards an agreement with this new interpretation of the first knowledge claim. This helps to avoid any potential disagreement. Participants have two approaches

available when displaying a preference for agreement. These two preferences are an intense sequence of agreement, and the use of the interpersonal engine.

The first of these takes place when group participants display intense agreement that serves to display affiliation with another speaker. The agreement with a single knowledge claim was repeated multiple times by the same speaker even when this agreement was with the knowledge claim with which they had already voiced agreement in a previous turn. Although this type of utterance does take the characteristics of an agreement, it serves more like affiliative encouragement.

Chapter Four

Three Case Studies

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four examines the way the individual knowledge claims (discussed in Chapter Two) and the strategies for constructing consensus used by the group (discussed in Chapter Three) combine to create group consensus by looking at three examples of question units taken from the data. A question unit is the name I give to the passage of speech that begins from the point that the moderator asks a question from the question route until the point that the moderator asks the next question from the question route.

As stated in Chapter One, I see the discussion groups as progressing through three sequential stages in the attainment of consensus:

1. Individual knowledge claims
2. Group discussion
3. Signal of completion.

At the start of the question unit, the moderator presents a question from the question route. Then individuals make knowledge claims and, once the group begins to debate one of these claims, they move towards consensus. Once the group are content that they have reached a satisfactory agreement then they signal to the moderator that they are no longer going to produce any epistemic progress and the moderator begins to ask the next question from the question route, thus ending the question unit.

The three case studies were selected for three reasons. Firstly, the three case studies do not contain any disjunctive discussions, irrelevant anecdotes, or extended jokes. Some of these anecdotes and jokes could tend towards the vulgar. As all the members of the pre-formed groups had known each other for between ten and thirty-odd years, these type of jokes were not out of place amongst such old-friends. However, out of context, this type of humor could misrepresent the participants. Secondly, these three case studies contain excerpts that have been examined in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. This means that extensive analysis need not be repeated in this chapter, and instead the focus can remain on the structure of the

sequence. Finally, the three case studies I have selected are each taken from one of the three discussion topics.

Case Study One – What is Learner Autonomy?
Case Study Two – What is a moral Person?
Case Study Three – Why do foreign residents settle down in Kobe?

One concern I had was how representative of the group discussions in general were the fragments chosen for the three case studies? The group discussions on each topic were surprisingly similar in the way the participants addressed their discussions, in both the content of the discussions and the language used (which is an interesting possibility for future research but far beyond the scope of this thesis). In order to address this issue, at the end of each case study I have included an example of similar language used by other participants in a different discussion group but participating in the same question unit. The remarkable similarity between the two samples is briefly commented on but, the similarity largely speaks for itself, and serves to highlight the representativeness of the three question units selected as examples of the data used in my research.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to establish the sequential order of the group discussion as being

1. **Individual knowledge claims**
2. **Group discussion**
3. **Signal of completion.**

Selecting a case study from each of the three topics shows that the sequential ordering occurs in all three types of discussion. A secondary concern of this chapter is to show how the support for knowledge claims adheres to the taxonomy outlined in Chapter Two and how the preferences for consensus outlined in Chapter Three manifest themselves in the case studies. In order to facilitate this secondary consideration, in the transcript of Case Study One only, examples of the taxonomy of support and preferences for consensus will be highlighted as **bold text** and named on unnumbered lines below in ***bold, italicized text***.

4.2 Case Study One – What is Learner Autonomy?

Case study One looks at the question which asks participants what they understand by the term "Learner Autonomy". There are three participants, Austin, Brian, and Carl, as well as the moderator. All four people have known each other for a minimum of ten years at the time of recording. Their teaching experience is as follows:

1. Austin had taught glass blowing at universities in Australia and Italy.
2. Brian had taught History at university in Japan, he had been a trainer of financial advisors in the USA, and was currently instructing self-employed people on how to design their professional websites.
3. Carl had been a teacher at university in Japan for almost thirty years and had owned a restaurant and a nightclub that required him to lead staff training.

All participants in this discussion knew this information about each other before the group and participants orient towards this information in the discussions, although it may not always be apparent.

After the moderator asks the question and waits for a response (L1-5) there are the three stages on the path to consensus formation.
The first stage – individual knowledge claims - takes place in lines 6-55 and sees the moderator and Brian negotiate the relevance of Brian's individual knowledge claim without any meaningful interaction on the part of the other two participants. Then the moderator ends Brian's turn and asks another participant to self-select as next speaker, which Carl does. Carl defines autonomy as being a useful freedom that needs certain constraints and supervision (L56-100).
The second stage – group discussion – takes place in lines 101-237 and sees Austin agree with Carl's individual knowledge claim. This starts the group to citing examples from their own teaching experience that support Carl's definition of learner autonomy.
The third stage – signal of completion – takes place in lines 238-263 and sees Austin and Brian begin a pre-closing sequence, and then a prolonged silence before the moderator asks the next question from the question route which ends the question unit.

Stage One – Individual knowledge claims

The moderator opens the question unit with the question from the question route. The moderator looks at each participant while asking the question and continues to move his

glance across the participants during the six-second gap (L5). However, Austin looks at Brian, and then Carl, observing that Austin is looking at Brian also looks at Brian. Brian orients towards this gaze work as being a signal for him to start speaking. This is how the first speaker is chosen. Brian begins with a self-sourced support. He states that he has studied state autonomy and, although there is some back and forth with the moderator as to the relevance of this, he uses this self-reported expertise as justification to make an analogy about learner autonomy in the classroom. His analogy is that people in a country need to work together and so people in a classroom need to work together and although each individual should have some freedom, it should not be forgotten that they need to work with others. The moderator takes a central role in turn allocation. The moderator acknowledges Brian's last utterance but does not ask any more follow-up questions (L56). Instead, the moderator explicitly asks the other participants to contribute. This asymmetry of power in relation to turn allocation is a feature of institutional talk and this will be discussed in Chapter Five. Carl makes no reference to Brian's individual knowledge claim; effectively ignoring it. Instead, Carl presents his individual claim, and importantly, Carl's knowledge claim runs counter to that made by Brian. Brian had suggested autonomy was independence but that should go hand-in-hand with an ability to participate in teamwork. Carl makes the knowledge claim, using the strand of justification and its sub-strand reasoning, that autonomy is freedom but that it should not be total freedom and requires some control and supervision. Carl's reasoning is extensive. He makes multiple supporting claims. One example is from lines 65-67. This is a very canonical example of reasoning – using the word 'cos'. His knowledge claim is that students are responsible to finish assignments because they cannot ask the teacher for help:

*they're responsible to finish that assignment **cos** I mean they can't ask the teacher for questions or guidance*

And again (L83-90), Carl is entirely reliant on the word "because" to signify a reasoning justification to his individual knowledge claim:

*it's completely different from group work and pair work **cos** they're not autonomous at all **because** they're getting help from peers and in ah the work environment it might be a little different **because** you can't just throw them in there and say do it.*

What marks this particular case study as being different from others is the remarkably long turn-at-talk which is taken by Carl. Having been invited to self-select by the moderator his turn is unusually long. There are three reasons why he may have avoided interruption. Firstly, his speaking speed is very fast, and this often operates as a rush-through. Secondly, his utterances are not always grammatically complete. Additionally, Carl uses a lot of conjunctions in his turn (24 conjunctions in a 273 word long turn). This incompleteness may deter other speakers from self-selecting to speak as they may not see a recognizable transition-relevance place (TRP). As Schegloff (2007: 4) notes of a TRP, "it is not that speaker transition necessarily occurs there; it is that transition to a next speaker becomes *possibly relevant* there" (italics in original). Carl's fast paced, conjunction heavy, grammatically unclear turn makes it more difficult for other speakers to see the possibly relevant places to self-select to take a turn, including the moderator.

Both Brian and Carl have made individual knowledge claims by the completion of the first stage (L100), and they have supported their individual knowledge claims using support identified in the taxonomy detailed in Chapter Two.

1	Mod:	When you hear the expression
2		"learner autonomy",
3		what are your first impressions?
4		What do you first think of?
5		6.0
6	Brian:	**I guess** everyone is looking at me, hah.
		Careful epistemic advancement
7		I studied the autonomous regions
		Supported – self-sourced
8		of Russia and
9	Mod:	They would have had learners there
10	Brian:	And, but I'm saying the autonomy part.
11	Austin:	They're quite robotic
12	Brian:	Yeah, yeah, you've got some freedom
13		but there's also control related to that.
14		**Does that make sense?**
		Careful epistemic advancement - disavowal

15	Mod:	Yeah, so when you say there is
16		some freedom and some control,
17		where does the control come from?
18	Brian:	Well, in Russia's case,
19		the central planners of the government.
20	Mod:	Ok, and that's in terms of the learners?
21	Brian:	Uh, that's in terms of,
22		well, I'm **trying** to do
23		an example of a country
24		**almost** like a classroom **in a way**.
25	Mod:	**Sort of** an analogy.
26	Brian:	**Yeah, exactly.**
		Agreement preference
27		And so the students could be
28		those autonomous regions
29		where they have a lot of freedom
30		to do a lot of things that they want
31		but there's still some responsibility
32		to the country that they're in.
33		**Does that make sense?**
		Careful epistemic advancement - disavowal
34	Mod:	Yeah
35	Brian:	So, it's **almost** like a classroom where
36		you **could** let the learners go off
37		and do their thing (1.5) but
38		there's some connection to the classroom,
39		yeah.
40	Mod:	Uh huh.
41	Brian:	They can't be running around
42		and just uh doing anything they want.
43	Mod:	Do you think there is a student
44		responsibility to the classroom?
45		Or do you think there is only

a student responsibility to the
individual student?
Brian: **Has to be in the classroom because ah**
somethings they do have to work together
with others,
at least the way I ran classes,
or the way I teach people, you know,
Supported – self-sourced
unless it's one on one class,
I uh think that there is responsibility
to the people around you.
Mod: Yeah, right, OK.
Ok right.
What about you guys
(motions to other participants).
Student autonomy.
Carl: Student autonomy.
In the first I just think it means that
basically they are individual work
so they have whatever assignment it is
Justification - reasoning
but they're responsible to finish that
assignment **cos** I mean they can't ask
Justification - reasoning
the teacher for questions or guidance
but it means that they have to figure
Justification - reasoning
out any solution or whether it's
an essay or questions or individual
project all or most of the work
and if there's something they don't know
they research it but like if it's
something they really don't know

75		**they would ask the leader and**
76		**the leader would be a teacher**
		Justification - reasoning
77		in the classroom setting.
78		I'm not really sure what I do here so,
79		in the project they're just clarifying
80		some things they may be fuzzy on
81		**so help along the way.**
82		**So that's what I consider,**
		Justification - reasoning
83		it's completely different from
84		group work and pair work
85		**cos they're not autonomous at all**
		Justification - reasoning
86		because they're getting help from peers
87		and in ah the work environment
88		it might be a little different
89		**because you can't just**
90		**throw them in there and say do it.**
		Justification - reasoning
91	Austin:	Hmmm (nodding)
92	Carl:	So, in a work environment
93		maybe at some stage middle stage ok
94		you're on your own today and learn
95		and they come back for mistakes
96		and guidance but after they've learnt
97		they're somewhat autonomous to what they
98		do but there's no way they can just
99		be thrown in there and say
100		"there you go" without any directions

Stage Two – Group Discussion

The second stage begins with Austin making a very clear agreement with Carl's knowledge claim. No example exists in the data that shows a case in which two participants agree and consensus is not ultimately reached. Austin begins with self-sourced support by detailing his firsthand experience of the necessity of supervision as a component in autonomy especially the mention of "supervisors supervising supervisors". Brian (L154-186) then gives his self-sourced support for Carl's knowledge claim despite it being in opposition to his own initial claim. Earlier, Carl had initiated the idea of the need for supervision. Austin and Brian really seize on this aspect of autonomy.

101	Austin:	**Carl's sort of answered**
102		**what I was going to say** is
		Other-sourced - specific
103		that the, the autonomous aspect of,
104		uhm, especially if it's got something
105		that's dangerous so people can't really
106		go off on their own unless they really
107		understand the processes
108		and they have the right training in which
109		they can uhm not lose
110		their hands and stuff
111	Brian:	((Laughing and nodding)) Right
112	Carl:	((Laughing and nodding))
113	Austin:	Or burn their whole arm off
114	Mod:	Was that a realistic possibility in your,
115	Austin:	**Um yeah. Very much so.**
		Self-sourced
116		If **you** didn't have
117		the right protective glasses
118		**you** could burn your eyes out
119		looking in a furnace
120	Mod:	Looking?
121	Austin:	So, Looking.

122		And if **you** just inhale a certain,
123		say, **you** could inhale
124		and burn all your lungs out so,
125		and even more dangerous one that **people**
126		didn't even consider was that
127		**they're** dehydrated
128		and getting very, very hot
129		and **they're** drinking very cold water
130		and **they** could drink cold water
131		and go into shock, because the body
132		was just, uhm, the thermal constraints
133		on the organs and that,
134		so **they** were hot, and **they** have water
135		but it shocks **their** whole body
136		but to be at that stage where
137		**they** can actually go off and do that,
138		it takes some time, ah,
		Justification – endoxa
139		still we would have, we would have, ah,
140		supervisors supervising supervisors,
141		you know?
142	Mod:	Yeah, yeah.
143	Austin:	Now it's, ah, so it would be ah...yeah.
144	Brian:	Careful process
145	Austin:	Yeah, yeah. A careful process.
146	Brian:	I mean, pointing back to Austin, ahh,
147		**talking about the financial teaching**
148		**I did, or instruction**,
149		**or whatever you want to call it, uhm,**
		Careful epistemic advance
		Knowledge claim – self sourced
150		that sort of thing, really,
151		we were careful

152		cause you get sued in the US. Or.
153	Austin:	Yeah
154	Brian:	Or big trouble if you misadvise people
155		or told them the wrong things,
156		or on purpose lie to them,
157		you know, with the sale.
158		Say you get some young people who say,
159		**“It doesn’t matter as long as**
160		**they sign the paper”,** right?
		Other-sourced unspecific
161		And those are the important things
162		**that you have to tell people**,
163		**“No you can’t do that” right?**
164		**There are very important rules**
165		**to learn first before you say**
		Supported – Justification – Endoxa
166		“Ok Now, go and learn how to sell things.”
167		In the other part of the spectrum,
168		the web site design that I help people,
169		that stuff, that stuff, I tell people,
170		“Go and screw up, you’re not going to hurt
171		anything, you’re not going to hurt
172		anybody, website, you’re in the back end,
173		you can’t break your stuff bad enough that
174		I can’t fix it for you”.
175		So, I think it’s like glass blowing
176		(points at Austin) with you,
177		maybe financial advising a little bit,
178		you have to have certain things met,
179		requirements almost met,
180		before you get involved,
181		but uh, with web design
182		**and mostly English,**

183		**unless you've learnt the wrong English**
184		**and you're talking to the wrong person**
185		**and it usually does get you in**
186		**too much trouble, right?**
		Careful epistemic advance
187	Carl:	**Yeah. "You're talking Russian**,
188		**not English"**
		Preference for agreement
189	Brian:	(Laughs) Right.
190	Mod:	There's immediate feedback.
191		What about uh, I mean,
192		you've mentioned in certain types of
193		ideas, uhm, in finance you
194		have to restrict the autonomy.
195	Brian:	Yes.
196	Mod:	Whereas with English teaching
197		you can give a greater degree of autonomy,
198		and with the web site design.
199		Glass blowing, safety constraints
200		mean you really don't give them
201		a lot of autonomy.
202	Austin:	Yeah, but that's, that's mainly
203		at the university level
204		where there is insurance issues and such,
205		if you take it to a factory
206		like say you went to Italy
207		and you messed up,
208		there's no one watching you there.
209		It could be the first day of your,
210		you know, "Hey I'm going to",
211		there's an apprenticeship,
212		so you go and do your apprenticeship
213		and you can mess up really bad

214		and you know,
215		that becomes your lesson in autonomy
216		so that's your, **"Oh, I burnt my hand"**
		Other-sourced unspecified
217	Brian:	(Laughs) **"Maybe don't be so careless".**
		Agreement preference
218	Mod:	**Yeah, like four fingered carpenters**
219		**have learnt a lesson.**
		Agreement preference
220	Austin:	Yeah, pretty much.
221		It's very hands on
222		and sometimes hands come off.
223		So, yeah, that can happen
224		but that's very old school mentality,
225		trial by fire, you know?
226	Brian:	Yeah, yeah.
227	Mod:	I'm not sure I would enjoy that.

Stage Three – Signal of completion

The third stage of the sequence involves participants initiating a signal of intent to close to the moderator. The participants do not explicitly state that they are finished but rather 'fizzle out' until the moderator orients towards this low energy state as the point to transition to the next question in the question route, thus ending this question unit. Austin and Brian produce the same agreement two times in lines 228-237, and, as Schegloff notes, "preferred responses tend to lead to closing sequences" (Schegloff. 2007:117). Austin continues the theme of injury caused by unsupervised autonomy and, although the other participants and the moderator all laugh at this extended anecdote (L243), there is no attempt by either Carl or Brian to become involved in the discussion again. Austin repeats the same phrase about this approach being 'old school' on line 249 that he did on line 224 and this much repetition (L228-250) leads Austin to actually trail off towards the end of his own utterance, which he makes while glancing down at the tabletop not at the moderator or the other participants. At this stage, all three participants are gazing downwards (L252), and a long silence is treated by the moderator as the signal to ask the next question.

228 Austin: Yeah. (1.0)
229 But I think if you're a student
230 and you understand that
231 there is no safety rail on this,
232 uhm, you'll learn very fast.
233 (hand gesture going up)
234 Brian: **Naturally.**
235 Austin: **Naturally, yeah.**
Agreement preference
236 Brian: Wise people will stand back a bit
237 and be careful.
238 Austin: Oh yeah. Of course.
239 They realize the danger and,
240 and you know the people around them
241 who are students will say,
242 **"Hey! Look at where my arm used to be"**
Supported – other-sourced - unspecified
243 ((Everyone laughs with pained expression))
244 Austin: That's because I did that
245 ((mimes pointing))
246 You know?
247 "Look at my phantom limbs."
248 You know?
249 Yeah. But that's very old school.
250 Now it's not really like that,
251 (mumbled almost inaudibly).
252 (2.4)((Everyone looking downwards))
253 Mod: Ok, let's move on to the next question.

Case Study One gives a clear example of the three-stage sequence. The first knowledge claim, made by Brian is challenged by the moderator. This may contribute to the other speaker choosing to ignore this knowledge claim, but more data and more research would be needed

to study the impact of a moderator's challenge on the decision to accept or ignore another participants knowledge claim by other participants. The signal to the moderator of a readiness to close the question unit is achieved by Austin repeating an anecdote. Aphorisms and jokes are recognized as sequence closing moves (Schegloff 2007), the jokey and aphoristic nature of Austin's anecdote make it a recognizable sequence closing move.

The two excerpts below show a common similarity between how participants discuss learner autonomy. Both the previous group and the group used in the case study discuss learner autonomy by explaining what their students think by representing their students using direct speech. In both groups, the students were only given a direct voice in the representative dialogue when the students were addressing a problem.

Previous group	Case study group
I think often times that a common challenge that I've had, maybe not so much at this university but I've had in the past is this idea of, "I can't fail. The instructor won't fail me". And students have this idea.	…if it's something they really don't know they would ask the leader and the leader would be a teacher in the classroom setting. I'm not really sure what I do here so, in the project they're just clarifying some things …that becomes your lesson in autonomy so that's your, "Oh, I burnt my hand"

4.3 Case Study Two – Why do foreign residents settle down in Kobe?

Case Study Two is taken from the discussion group that addresses the question as to why so many foreign residents chose to live long term in Kobe, Japan. There are three participants, Austin, Brian, and Carl, as well as the moderator. All four people had known each other for more than ten years at the time of recording. However, we had all lived in Kobe since before that, ranging from twelve years to over thirty years. The question used in this case study is the first question in the question route – What features of Kobe attract tourists?

This question unit unproblematically follows the sequence:

1. **Individual knowledge claims**
2. **Group discussion**
3. **Signal of completion.**

Stage one, the individual knowledge claims, takes place over lines 1 to 30. Stage two, the group discussion, takes place over lines 31 to 81. Stage three, the signal of completion, takes place over lines 82 to 88.

Stage One – Individual knowledge claims

Immediately after the moderator's question begins this question unit, Austin answers with an unsupported knowledge claim and Brian agrees with him, despite the lack of support by Austin. As stated in Chapter Two, I am asserting that unsupported knowledge claims indicate the speaker's belief that supporting their knowledge claim is superfluous. There really would be no need for a resident of Kobe to support such a knowledge claim due to the fact that Kobe Beef is famous around the world and there is a large number of restaurants in the city center prominently advertising Kobe Beef. After the joke about Kobe Bryant, the participants begin stating physical places in Kobe (as opposed to Kobe Beef) that draw in lots of tourists. They make four more unsupported knowledge claims that are more akin to a list than a series of reasoned arguments. At this point, the participants have not been engaging with the content of each other's knowledge claims and, beyond a minimal response by Brian on line 20, they are ignoring each other's knowledge claims.

1	Mod:	Right, so, first real question.
2		The number of overseas tourists is increasing
3		every year.
4		What features of Kobe attract tourists?
5	Austin:	Beef.
6	Brian:	Hm. Beef's big.
7	Austin:	Maybe they think Kobe Bryant lives here.
8		((Everyone laughs))
9	Austin:	Cos he certainly makes it harder to
10		search for Kobe on the Internet.

11	Mod:	Yes, he does, doesn't he.
12	Brian:	Although he's named after the city I heard.
13	Austin:	Yeah.
14	Brian:	So, he's probably the best advertisement
15		they have. In a way.
16	Austin:	Yeah.
17	Brian:	A strange way. And the beef.
18	Carl:	I think foreign exchange rates,
19		a lot of tourists come cos the yen is weak.
20	Brian:	Yeah.
21	Mod:	Yeah.
22	Carl:	And of course, the temples, and the shrines.
23	Brian:	The Ijinkan ((an historical area in Kobe)).
24	Austin:	So, you're saying just Kobe.
25	Mod:	Just Kobe in particular, not necessarily Japan,
26		but Kobe in particular.
27	Brian:	The harbor's nice, when they redid it.
28	Austin:	Well, I happen to think that they just go
29		from town to town and
30		Kobe's just a place to go.

Stage Two – Group discussion

Stage two begins with Brian agreeing with the knowledge claim made by Austin. This is the not the first agreement with an individual's knowledge claim but, as a restatement, it is the first non-minimal agreement. Austin and Brian begin to agree that Kobe is not the main draw for tourists but that they end up in Kobe on the way to somewhere else. There is a brief discussion about the realities of people really being interested in Kobe beef before Carl restates the knowledge claim Austin and Brian have been making about Kobe. Interestingly, Carl presents this restatement of Austin and Brian's idea as if it were new information – "I don't feel that Kobe's their main destination. It's one of their several destinations" (L51/52). Carl continues to make this point and Brian and Austin agree with him and therefore it is clear that consensus has been achieved in the group.

31	Brian:	A bus stop. Yeah.
32	Austin:	And they go like,
33		“Oh, Kobe beef. I like beef. I’ll go”.
34		You know? It’s not like Osaka or,
35		((Austin looks at Brian))
36	Brian:	Yeah. It’s like a day stop I’d say.
37	Austin:	There’s nothing really on the map about it.
38	Brian:	Beef.
39	Austin:	Yeah, just beef.
40	Brian:	What’s that.
41	Mod:	Beef, just the beef,
42		have you met anyone who’s said
43		they’ve come here for the beef?
44	Austin:	Yes.
45	Brian:	My workmates ((they are based in The USA)).
46		When I said I was living in Kobe
47		they all told me,
48		“How’s the beef?” ((Whispered voice)).
49		That’s the first thing that came up.
50	Austin:	Yeah.
51	Carl:	I don’t feel that Kobe’s their main
52		destination. It’s one of their
53		several destinations.
54	Brian:	Yes
55	Carl:	And when they do come here
56		they come for the beef,
57		but they don’t come to Japan
58		to come to Kobe.
59		They come to Japan to probably go to
60		Kyoto or.
61	Austin:	Tokyo.
62	Carl:	Kobe’s a sidekick that they’re

63		not going to miss probably
64		so that's their main reason.

Stage Three – Signaling of completion

Austin expands the knowledge claim that Kobe's main attraction is being on the way to Tokyo so that it includes Kobe also being near to other big cities, such as Kyoto or Osaka. At this point, the moderator offers a new expansion possibility (L68), but Austin responds with a minimal response, breaks eye contact, and then a silence leads to the moderator orienting towards this as an end of this question unit and he then asks the next question, ending the question unit. Austin's resistance to the moderator's attempt to open an expansion sequence shows the participants retain independence of the moderator when answering and that any power asymmetry exists only with regards to the act of questioning.

65	Austin:	Plus, it's close to other central,
66		capital sort of areas,
67		you know, Osaka, Kyoto, so I mean,
68	Mod:	Or the airport maybe?
69	Austin:	Yeah, the airport. ((breaks eye contact))
70		(2.0)
71	Mod:	OK. Right. The next question is…

Case Study Two displays a very clear adhesion to the sequence I have identified in the group discussions. What marks it as different from Case Study One is that it was not the first or second knowledge claim that was taken by the group as the basis for forming their consensus; it was the sixth. Even then, Austin and Brian were in agreement with each other, but it was not until Carl began presenting the knowledge claim (Kobe is just a place to stop off at on the way to somewhere else) as if he were the first person to present this knowledge claim that explicit consensus was attained with the group. The three-stage sequence proved applicable but the number of individual knowledge claims on the path to consensus was much more than in other question units.

In the two examples below, what is interesting was the speed and brevity with which the participants in the different groups offered Kobe beef as the first answer to the question about what features attract tourists to Kobe.

Previous group	Case study group
Mod: What features of Kobe in particular is contributing to the rise in tourism in Kobe? Carol: Kobe beef … Ben: …what would attract people to Kobe? That's a really good question actually. Carol: (emphatically) Kobe beef!	Mod: What features of Kobe attract tourists? Austin: Beef. Brian: Hm. Beef's big.

The two excerpts below are very similar in that they are both lists of tourist attractions in Kobe that are co-constructed by the participants of the group. Whether or not a list constitutes a series of unsupported claims is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. What makes these two excerpts stand out is that they both occurred at almost exactly the same point during the first question unit in discussion. Again, highlighting the similarities between the two groups is for the purpose of showing the representativeness of the case studies chosen.

Previous group	Case study group
Alan: You know, I don't know what that's going to bring in. But if you see the photographs of Kobe in a web site, there's the Kobe tower (listing on fingers), uuuh Carol: Venus Bridge Alan: Venus Bridge, the Harbourland, the hotel Ben: and Kitano (looking at Carol) Carol: and Kitano Alan: and these guys are all (mimes taking photographs) and Kitano Mod: Yes, around here, very much so. Alan: Yeah, I mean these are the pictures we see	Carl: I think foreign exchange rates, a lot of tourists come cos the yen is weak. Brian: Yeah. Mod: Yeah. Carl: And of course, the temples, and the shrines. Brian: The Ijinkan ((an historical area in Kobe)). Austin: So, you're saying just Kobe. Mod: Just Kobe in particular, not necessarily Japan, but Kobe in particular. Brian: The harbor's nice when they redid it.

and that's what you get. Carol: Yeah, Ikuta Jinja, some kind of Alan: Yeah Carol: Motomachi, the Shotengai, I think (looks at Ben) the shopping	

4.4 Case Study Three – What is a Moral Person?

Case Study Three is from the discussion group that addressed moral questions and this excerpt is dealing with the question, "What does it mean to be a moral person"? Involved in the group discussion are four participants, Andrea, Bart, Curtis, and Dora, as well as the moderator. All participants and the moderator are co-workers at a university in western Japan. They have worked together for several years but have also known each other from different university contracts held before this current one.

What marks this case study as slightly different than Case Study One is that, although it follows the three stages I have identified in strict order, it does not finish with the first signal of completion.

Case Study One followed the structure:

Individual knowledge claims

Group discussion

Signal of completion.

Whereas Case Study Two follows the structure:

Individual knowledge claim

Group discussion

Signal of completion

Individual knowledge claim

Signal of completion

Stage One – Individual knowledge claims

The first stage in the group formation of consensus is the making of individual knowledge claims. The taxonomy of individual presentations of knowledge claims covers this stage of

consensus development. This question unit begins with the moderator asking the participants to define a moral person. As the moderator asks this question (L1-5) he looks at each participant starting with the first participant on his left and going clockwise until the question finishes at which point his gaze is fixed upon Bert. The question is repeated twice but the moderator produced a rush-through (Schegloff 1996) between the end of the first question TCU (L4) and the beginning of the second question and this most likely accounts for the fact that none of the participants answered the first question. The gaze work by both the moderator and Bert at the transition of speaker at L5/6 accounts for Bert being the first of the participants to answer. Bert's answer is hedged and unsupported. The moderator minimally acknowledges the answer but leaves space for participants to continue, either with Bert continuing his turn at talk or with another speaker taking a turn at talk. This results in a prolonged gap (L9) which indicates a problem with the answer. At this point, three interpretations are available. Firstly, the participants are unsure of how to proceed as this is the first question in the question route. The participants may feel that they are expected to each express their opinion in a round-robin style. Furthermore, given that the choice of Bert as first speaker was achieved through the gaze work of both Bert and the moderator, the other participants may be waiting for the moderator to initiate similar gaze work. Curtis draws a sharp intake of breath (L10) which draws the attention of the moderator who then looks at Curtis who then begins speaking. This highlights the orientation of the participants towards the moderator as being representative of an institutionality that they themselves talk into existence. At no point do the participants take a turn at talk without involving the moderator. Bert orients towards the fixed gaze of the moderator at the end of the question to be a cue for his answering. Any of the participants could have taken a turn at talk during the five second gap (L9). Curtis attracts the gaze of the moderator with his intake of breath and does not begin speaking until the moderator's gaze is upon him. His first utterance in the form of a grammatically complete turn appears to agree with Bert, however, he is ignoring Bert's knowledge claim. The knowledge claim Curtis makes (L11-13) does not relate to Bert's knowledge claim, it does not advance, modify, or disagree with it. Instead, it offers a negative condition in qualifying as a moral person, namely describing oneself as moral. At this point, two individuals have made knowledge claims. The first one has been overlooked by the introduction of a second unrelated knowledge claim.

1	Mod:	So, we'll begin with the opening question,
2		a very vague question to begin with.
3		When you hear the phrase, "a moral person"
4		what comes to mind? When you hear the phrase,
5		"a moral person", what comes to mind?
6	Bert:	I suppose it's a person that follows
7		the norms of a particular society.
8	Mod:	Ok.
9		5.0
10	Curtis:	((Intake of breath)) I feel that way too.
11		But if someone describes themselves
12		as a moral person then I think that
13		they're ah pretentious and condescending

Stage Two – Group Discussion

The second stage in the formation of consensus is the group discussion, or as List (2011) calls it, "the aggregation procedure". The previous two knowledge claims have not yet had any interaction with the other participants. However, Bert and Andrea offer minimal agreement (L14-15), and this settles which of the two individual knowledge claims will be discussed. Even minimal agreement with an individual knowledge claim pushes it over the edge. The moderator's challenge to Curtis's knowledge claim prompts him to finally support it (justification – reasoning – "it seems"). This leads to Andrea completing the support for Curtis and Curtis confirms that Andrea's contribution is in line with his knowledge claim. Andrea's laughter (L23) prompts Bart and Dora to start laughing as well. This laughter is not treated as disaffiliative by any participants and the fact that they look at each other as they laugh suggests a cohesiveness from affiliative laughter. Curtis offers a formulation, "humility is part of being moral" and such a summary is treated by the other speakers as a pre-closing sequence.

14	Bert:	Yes
15	Andrea:	Yes
16	Mod:	Even though they might actually be.
17	Curtis:	Even though they might actually be moral.

18 It seems when you may be stating it
19 or emphasizing it takes away some of the
20 morality from the person
21 Andrea: And that act in itself is not moral
22 Curtis: Yeah
23 Andrea: Hahaha
24 Andrea, Bart, Dora: (look around at each other and laugh)
25 Curtis: I guess ethical, I guess moral,
26 I guess it's difficult, I guess you,
27 what is it (2.0) I guess
28 humility is part of being moral

Part Three – Signal of completion

Andrea responds to Curtis's formulation with an impressed sounding noise and then Andrea, Bart, and Dora all nod. Agreement by all participants has been reached. A four-second gap follows. This minimal response coupled with a prolonged silence should have signaled the moderator to step in and introduce the next question.

29 Andrea: Huhhh ((sounding impressed))
30 Andrea, Bart, Dora: (nodding)
31 4.0

Stage One and Stage Two – Individual Knowledge Claims and Group Discussion

Interestingly, Case Study Three, at this point deviates from the basic structure in Case Study One, but not the sequential nature of the structure. The response types in lines 29-31 should have led to an ending of the question unit. Consensus with all members of the group has been reached and it would be keeping within norms for the group to wait for the moderator to raise the next question and end the current question unit. However, Curtis makes a new individual knowledge claim and does not mark it as either an additional part of the knowledge claim that is the group consensus, nor does he mark it as a knowledge claim set up to challenge the consensus. Instead, Curtis begins to make his knowledge claim and Dora agrees with it (for a

more detailed discussion of this see Chapter Three). Dora's response is critical and is well contrasted with the excerpt below:

1	Curtis:	So, where does the, where does the choice
2		come here?
3		7.0
4		(Everyone laughs)
5	Mod:	OK, now, next,

In this excerpt, the group had already formed a consensus when Curtis came up with an example that challenged the consensus before asking the group how his example challenges their focus on choice. This questioning of the consensus is a dispreferred response and, as such, should lead to expansion (Schegloff 2007). However, in a move that displays a preference for consensus over expansion, the group choose to ignore his question and laughed which the moderator takes as a signal to move on to the next question. This excerpt suggests that, once consensus has been reached, groups do not want to tend to potential expansion. However, in Case Study Two, Dora's responses (Lines 34 and 36) serve to give Curtis an audience for his new knowledge claim. Therefore, despite a consensus having been reached and Lines 29-31 signaling a preference on the part of Andrea, Bart, and Dora for epistemic closure, Curtis potentially opens an expansion by introducing a new knowledge claim and Dora, by agreeing, gives Curtis support in doing so. The question unit could have ended there but Curtis and Dora kept it going. This ushers in a flurry of new individual knowledge claims, three in total, all of which receive agreement. Curtis makes an unsupported knowledge claim, and he may have intended to add the support, as he had done with his previous knowledge claim, but Bart interrupts him with his own new knowledge claim. Bart's knowledge claim is unsupported until Andrea completes it with a reasoning justification. Dora then makes another new knowledge claim, also supporting it with a reasoned justification. This receives some agreement and then Bart makes another new knowledge claim, also using a reasoned justification, also receiving agreement from other participants.

32	Curtis:	Somebody who thinks about
33		how their actions affect others
34	Dora:	Right

35	Curtis:	is a moral person
36	Dora:	Yeah
37	Bart:	It also depends on the system of belief,
38		like what religion they come from
39		(looks at Andrea who starts nodding)
40		Christian,
41		(looks at Dora who starts nodding)
42		Muslim, et cetera.
43		And they have their
44		(looks at Curtis who starts nodding)
45		own particular frameworks.
46	Andrea:	So, what's moral to one person
47		isn't necessarily=
48	Bert:	=Moral to another,
49	Andrea:	Yeah
50	Dora:	Just the interactions between people and how
51		(points to Curtis) as everyone has said,
52		how those actions impact others.
53	Andrea:	Hmm (nodding)
54	Dora:	If it
55		It puts morality into question.
56		And there could be good reasons
57		for some actions
58		but they have to struggle with those decisions
59		and the consequences of those decisions
60		and that's how you measure one's morality.
61		On the struggle you have
62	Bert:	Yeah
63	Dora:	Yeah (shrugs shoulders)
64	Bert:	Also, I think the definition of morality
65		changes over time.
66	Dora:	Hmm
67	Bert:	(looks at Mod) In the past particular,

68		I think gay rights, it was immoral to be a gay,
69		lesbian or homosexual.
70	Andrea:	Yes
71	Dora:	Yes
72	Bert:	Whereas in today's environment
73		that would be perfectly moral
74		to express your own sexuality

Stage Three – Signal of Completion

Having completed the three individual knowledge claims, all of which received a degree of agreement from other participants, the group again starts to wrap up the question unit. Andrea qualifies the most recent knowledge claim and Bert repeats Andrea's response. Dora and Bert then produce a minimal response and by line 80, there is no potential for an expansion and after the silence, the moderator ends the question unit.

75	Andrea:	In some places
76	Bert:	In some places, yes, not in Saudi Arabia
77		(Everyone laughs)
78	Dora:	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
79	Bert:	Yeah, in some places
80		2.0
81	Mod:	Ok. Right. Good. Uhm.
82		Let's move onto the next question.

This case study showed that, although the sequence progressed in order, from individual claim to group discussion to signaling readiness to close, unless the moderator closed the sequence, a participant could proffer a new individual knowledge claim. This suggests that this is a sequential preference. Again, this is also evidence of a perceived notion of institutional talk on the part of the participants. The participants do not end the question unit but will expand it in a position suited for a question unit completion. This quality of institutional talk will be addressed in Chapter Five in more detail.

In the two excerpts below, participants in the two groups conclude that morality is contextual and not objective. Once again, this is intended to serve to show the representativeness of the question unit chosen for the case study.

Previous group	Case study group
Dave: Yeah, because it depends on the people you are with. If you're with a group of deviants then not very much is immoral or… Mod: So, it's, you would say morality is normative. Dave: I reckon different people are going to have different social norms, so it's all relevant.	Bart: It also depends on the system of belief, so, what's moral to one person Andrea: isn't necessarily Bert: Moral to another,

4.5 Conclusion

The case studies highlight the preference to adhere to the three-stage sequence outlined at the start of this chapter,

1. Individual knowledge claims
2. Group discussion
3. Signal of completion.

In addition, the case studies give clear examples of how the participants use the support from the taxonomy outlined in Chapter Two and examples of the three preferences (agreement preference, preference for disagreement mitigation, and preference for careful epistemic advancement) from Chapter Three. Finally, the roles played by the moderator and the participants are complementary but not overlapping. Both participants and the moderator work together but do not occupy the same position in regard to their epistemic rights. The moderator has full epistemic rights over the questions but not the answers. The participants have full epistemic rights over the answers but not the questions. The central role played by the moderator in the completion of the question route is seen only at the point where the question itself has the potential to be asked but does not influence the participants answering of the questions, whereas the participants do not ask the question but have full control over

the answering process including the decision to refrain from further participation or a rejection of any attempt by the moderator to expand a sequence.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Two and Chapter Three have presented a series of frameworks for examining how the discussion groups that I convened arrived at consensus around knowledge claims. In addition, each chapter has presented an account of the discussion group discourse in the light of these frameworks. This chapter will look at four areas of interest that have been raised by this data:

1. The role of consensus in the progressivity of the discussions.
2. The extent to which these discussion groups can be seen as institutional talk or as ordinary conversation.
3. What is a knowledge claim? How can a researcher identify an utterance as being a knowledge claim?
4. How do groups form knowledge claims? Is there an observable process?

Section 5.1 explores the role of consensus in shaping opinion amongst group members and looks at how the participants have a preference for agreement that sometimes serves as the driving force behind conversational progressivity instead of the epistemic engine that Heritage (2012a, 2012b) has posited as the driving force behind conversation. Participants will agree with another speaker before the speaker's utterance is completed to the point of being understandable. The second section explores how elements of institutional talk and ordinary conversation are present in these discussion groups, and specifically at how the role of the moderator is the source of this institutional talk. The third section discusses a central idea to this research, the notion of what constitutes a knowledge claim. Some candidates for the definition are discussed but examples from the data are used to show why these candidate definitions are not applicable. A working definition is then given, as is a potential definition for future research, which takes as its basis the taxonomy outlined in Chapter Two. Finally, the fourth section looks at the process through which groups reach consensus on knowledge claims. This section links the individual knowledge claims outlined in the taxonomy in Chapter Two and the strategies deployed in Chapter Three. This section outlines a three stage sequence in the production of consensus amongst the participants in the group discussions.

5.2 Consensus as an engine

There is an acceptance that conversation is driven forward by epistemics (Drew 2012, Heritage and Raymond 2005, Heritage and Raymond 2012, Heritage 2012a, Heritage 2012b). Indeed, Heritage (2012a) refers to epistemics (specifically the epistemic imbalance within conversations) as being the engine that drives conversation. However, based on my research, I argue that epistemics is not the only engine to drive conversation: this research suggests that the desire for consensus also drives conversation towards epistemic closure. This consensus is clearly not a consensus that forms around an epistemic imbalance. As has been shown in Chapter Two, participants orient towards the information as being 'already known' and not as new information redressing an epistemic imbalance. Consensus forms around propositions that are likely to lead to consensus rather than propositions that the individual favors. As the consensus is formed, participants who have not yet contributed to the consensus will become consensus contributors. One way this takes place is by an existing contributor pursuing consent from non-contributors. This was often achieved through very subtle gestures, such as a slight nod of the head or a holding of gaze. Indeed, gaze work was very important in the formation of consensus. Other times, the speaker was willing to agree to a proposition in direct contrast to their previous Knowledge Claims in order to attain consensus.

The preference for consensus overrides the epistemic engine. However, it seems unlikely that this would be an extremist preference for consensus: individuals would not prefer to agree with an outrageous or ridiculous proposition. The data suggests that when consensus is given preference, the proposition is not an outlandish one. Consensus is formed around a Knowledge Claim that *emerges* as the one most likely to produce consensus. Future research could examine what factors are common to the proposition that is eventually taken up as the consensus forming proposition. At the moment, the data suggests that the first proposition that gains agreement from one other participant is usually the one that achieves consensus. If this is borne out by future research, it would have a very profound impact on knowledge formation in small, pre-formed groups. Firstly, in order to gain influence over a pre-formed group, it is merely necessary to be the first to propose a cogent idea, one that fits within the acceptable range of the groups belief system. Secondly, body language could be more important than logic or rhetoric in gaining assent from the first group member. Having proposed a reasonable idea and gained consent through rehearsed body language cues, the group will begin to coalesce around this idea.

This is very important for professional marketing research that uses focus groups. Such marketing research uses focus groups primarily for the purpose of gathering actionable information. If such information is based on the desire to sustain group harmony and not upon the underlying epistemic content, then it is unlikely to be useful information to base future marketing campaigns upon for it is highly specific to the group at the moment they are discussing the issues at hand. Marketing research groups would need to be aware of the impact on the data that is potentially produced by having a sizable subset of the focus group as being a pre-existing group. Such a group is more likely to be influenced by their unconscious desire to agree with one another than the need to produce epistemically driven information. This consensus-preferring sub-group could then influence the other participants. Unless the market researcher was paying attention to how the agreement was researched, instead of the nature of the agreement (as is the main purpose of their job), the research would be potentially misleading. Marketing researchers need to be aware of this phenomenon when selecting their groups.

In this excerpt (5.1), the participants are discussing what qualities are necessary in an individual in order for that individual to be deemed moral. Agreement occurs even when there is evidence that participants in fact disagree i.e., they appear to change their minds; agreement occurs before a knowledge claim has been fully stated; agreement can be sought and given non-verbally or paralinguistically. And finally: agreement is independent of the knowledge claim itself. You can refer to an example for each but put them in the order you want them in and make each point explicitly.
Bert offers belief systems as a candidate for morality and offers religion as an explanatory example of belief systems. The other participants signal their agreement with Bert's KC by nodding their heads. Of particular interest is the agreement of Curtis (L7).

[5.1 Particular Frameworks Morality 3]

1	Bert:	It also depends on the system of belief, like what religion they come
2		from (looks at Andrea who starts nodding)
3		Christian,
4		(looks at Dora who starts nodding)
5		Muslim, et cetera.

6		And they have their
7		(looks at Curtis who starts nodding)
8		own particular frameworks.
9	Andrea:	So, what's moral to one person isn't necessarily=
10	Bert:	=Moral to a,
11	Andrea:	Yeah

In L1, Bert suggests morality will depend upon a system of belief. He illustrates this point with religion as an example of religion as a system of belief and looks at Andrea. Bert then illustrates his idea with an example of a religion and looks to Dora. Each participant begins to nod as soon as Bert's glance falls upon them. Bert holds his glance until a nod is observable. The participants orient towards the glance (L2 & L4) as requesting a response. Each participant responds by nodding. Bert does not treat this as problematic and, in fact, moves his gaze on as the nod begins, observably reacting to the nod as a signal to break the gaze. This can be seen as a three-part move:

Step	**Act**	**Actor**
1	Glance	Speaker
2	Nod	Listener
3	Continue speaking	Speaker

What makes the glances at L2 and L4 different from the glance at L7 towards Curtis is that the first 2 glances occur at points of grammatical completeness, a recognized Turn Transition Place (TTP), whereas the glance at L7 is at a point of grammatical incompleteness. There is no action undertaken by Bert other than the glance. There is no 'special glance accompanying special intonation'. However, at this point of the glance, there has not yet been made a proposition with which the other participants can agree. The agreement is anticipatory/pre-emptive. This agreement does not seem beholden unto a K+/K- framework (Heritage. 2012a. 2012b). It is initiated by the glance of Bert, mirroring the glance-nod exchange exhibited by the other members of the group. The agreement offered by Curtis (as a nod) is supportive, not to a proposition, but to a speaker. It is not an epistemically driven act but is an interpersonally driven act.

Similarly, Andrea's utterance (L9) can be seen as the second part of an enthymeme (an argument in which either the main premise or minor premise remains implicit). Her utterance would make a fitting conclusion to an enthymeme:

Bert	Lines 1-8	Premise – Morality can vary between moral frameworks.
Andrea	Line 9	Conclusion – Therefore, what is moral for one person, may be immoral for another.

It would certainly be noncontroversial to represent Andrea's utterance as the conclusion to an enthymeme were it completed. Yet, Bert's latched agreement (L10) occurs at a non-grammatically complete position, therefore a non-recognized TTP. What Bert says cannot be described as a traditional backchannelling act: completing another's sentence serves as a token of understanding. Furthermore, Bert's utterance does not achieve grammatical completion and yet is still able to instigate an agreement response from Andrea. But like the nod of Curtis (L7), there is no actual recognizably complete proposition to agree with. This agreement token is pre-emptive, and outside of a recognizable TTP. The language used by the speakers is that of "constructing agreement", but the actual propositions remain outside of the language used. Agreement can be said to have been prioritized over a proposition upon which to agree. This does lead to the intriguing conclusion that an agreement in a conversation can be independent of the knowledge claim that is seeking agreement.

A further example of the interpersonal drive in conversation can be seen in Excerpt 5.2. This excerpt displays a shared knowledge where none actually exists. Curtis begins to offer a definition of a moral person. Curtis does not even get to the predicate of his sentence before Dora's first utterance, which is an agreement. What makes the agreement on L5 an indicator of shared knowledge is the absence of any change-of-state token. Dora's agreement is evaluative. Her evaluation of the correctness of Curtis's KC must arise from pre-existing knowledge.

[5.2 Somebody who thinks. M3]

1	Curtis:	Somebody who thinks about
2		how their actions affect others=
3	Dora:	=Right=

4	Curtis:	=is a moral person
5	Dora:	Yeah

Dora's first utterance (L3) could be interpreted as backchanneling, and it does not cause Curtis to surrender his turn-at-talk. However, looking at how Dora uses "Right" in the rest of this discussion group shows she does not use "Right" as a backchannel but as a term of agreement. In excerpt 5.3 below, she uses 'Right' four times, and three of those four are as terms of agreement, with the fourth use only uncertain due to the unclear nature of what Andrea said before. Dora backchannels once (L13) using "Uh hm".

[5.3 It depends on the individual. M3]

1	Andrea:	So, its, it depends on the individual
2		so it's how the individual is affected right?
3	Dora:	**Right**
4	Andrea:	There has to be some specific choice.
5	Dora:	**Right.**
6	Andrea:	But also, happiness is subjective as well, right?
7	Dora:	Yeah
8	Andrea:	And who decides what happiness is?
9		2.0
10	Andrea:	So, my intentions as an individual,
11		my intentions might be to make as many people happy as
12		possible, however, this lack of choice (points at Dora).
13	Dora:	(nodding) Uh hm
14	Andrea:	Kinda negates this
15	Dora:	**Right**
16	Andrea:	(Unclear what was said)
17	Dora:	**Right**
18	Bert:	(Unclear data) the individual can suffer for the greatest good
19		I mean disrespects the individual's morality,
20		their right, their rights.
21	Dora:	Uh hm

By looking at the two excerpts, it can be observed that Dora uses “Right” as a token of agreement, and that, when she uses it in her interaction with Curtis, she used the agreement token before the predicate of Curtis’s sentence and was agreeing with him before he had delivered a knowledge claim. However, Dora’s agreement is not prefixed with any change-of-state token. Dora was in agreement with a knowledge claim of which is consistent with her agreeing with a shared knowledge claim rather than with her changing her mind or being convinced to be in possession. Her agreement presumes a shared knowledge status.

In Excerpt 5.4, the four participants again show preferences for shared information on three separate occasions. In this conversation, the participants are reading 5 cards with immoral acts on them and being asked to put them in order of most ‘morally understandable’. This is a deliberately vague term, designed to provoke discussion among the participants and when they asked the moderator for more information, I declined to offer any. The conversation begins with Dora selecting a particular card (*this one* L3) and suggesting that it should be the card in last place, thus making it the least understandable act. The act on the card is “a bank robber shoots and kills a security guard whilst attempting to escape from a bank robbery”.

[5.4 Decide and compromise M3]

1	Mod:	Yeah, as a group. Please decide and compromises where compromises
2		need be.
3	Dora:	Well, my first instinct is to put this one last.
4	Bert:	Yes.
5	Dora:	Only cos it was a shooting or killing in the act of an illegal act. So…
6	Bert:	I would agree.
7	Andrea:	It’s selfish too.
8	Curtis:	I think it’s down near the bottom, but it is understa=
9	Dora:	=It’s understandable.
10	Curtis:	It’s understandable because it’s self-preservation.
11	Dora:	Right. Obviously, the person suffers in many other ways (laughs) but…
12	Curtis:	He’s trying to=
13	Bert:	=To protect himself.
14	Curtis:	(Tilts his head and appears unsure)

15		He's doing his job, in a way.
16	Andrea:	But it depends on the circumstances of the bank robbery.
17		Maybe the bank robber was forced by somebody else to rob the bank?
18	Curtis:	Uh, well, uh, I mean (upwards tone).
19	Dora:	Destitute and he needed the money for something.
20	Andrea:	No, I'm, for me, not destitute, but, for me, bank robber is generic
21		but we don't know the back-story of the bank robber,
22		um, (1.0) you know, there's that story about the guy who had that
23		collar around his, that bomb around his neck (mimes a collar) and
24		robbed a bank. And actually, he was forced to rob the bank.
25		But, I mean, yeah, nothing's clear.
26		Obviously, nothing is clear. But uhm
27	Curtis:	Down, down towards the bottom.
28	Burt:	We can move it later.
29	Dora:	Yeah, the back-story is not as clear with this one,
30		whereas with the others maybe the back-story is a little more clear so, uh.

Dora makes her KC on L3 that *this* card should be in last place and Bert explicitly agrees (L4). Then Dora explains she choose this card because it contained a killing in pursuit of an illegal act and Bert agrees with this explanation. On L7, Andrea agrees with Bert and Dora, and orients towards their approach to justifying their choice by describing it as "*selfish"*. Andrea's statement, "It's selfish too" indicates her agreement by using "*too*". The trouble begins on L8. Curtis begins to suggest that the act is understandable when he is interrupted by Dora who completes his sentence for him indicating agreement. What is unusual about this act of agreement is that it is directly in contradiction to Dora's previous statement. The purpose of the activity is to rate the cards in order of moral understandability. Dora chose *this* card to be in last place, and therefore as the least morally understandable act, and then immediately agrees with Curtis that *this* card is morally understandable, suggesting that agreement takes precedence over propositional consistency. Curtis expresses his opinion that what makes it understandable is that it is an act of self-preservation. Dora continues to agree with Curtis, indicating that the first agreement was not a failure of understanding but a deliberate choice. Curtis then begins an utterance which is completed for him by Bert. Bert makes a statement

(*to protect himself*) that is a reformulation of what Curtis said earlier. Bert has displayed a preference to return to the previous stance. Up to this point of the conversation, the tone of the conversation has been one of apparent agreement, even if the participants are not actually, and propositionally, agreeing with one another. However, from lines 14-26 the participants face a patch of disagreement. This disagreement is mitigated by Andrea in L25 as being due to a lack of contextual clarity (*nothing is clear*) and again on L26. Curtis takes this disagreement mitigation one stage further by suggesting a concrete act: moving *this* card towards the bottom. Burt suggests procrastination as a solution to the disagreement and Dora agrees with this and justifies it.

The consensus in this excerpt is an agreement to avoid a disagreement. Initially, a shared information consensus was available (up to L13) but lines 14-26 offered uncertainty. The speakers co-constructed agreement where it did not truly exist. This baseless agreement quickly broke down. The group therefore agreed to delay decision-making on this topic. The reason for this delay was given as a factor outside the groups control – the contextual lack of clarity was to blame, not the members. By placing responsibility for the failure to maintain the agreement on outside factors, the group does not need to explore possible disagreements amongst members, even though those disagreements had become observable.

In excerpt 5.5, Brian and Carl ignore a disagreement (L8). Brian makes three minimal agreements (yeah – L10, L12, and L14). Carl then lists a series of negative points before saying there are no other negative points. Brian agrees with this (L25).

[5.5	Cos of all the positives	Kobe 2]
1	Carl:	I don't think there's any negatives really,
2		that's why we talked about living here,
3		cos of all the positives. More English,
4		more foreigners (points to Brian),
5		near the station...
6	Brian:	What about pharmacies being clogged up
7		these days with foreigners
8	Carl:	Nah. Actually, it's more expensive
9		cos it's convenient.
10	Brian:	Yeah.
11	Carl:	It's convenient

12	Brian:	Yeah
13	Carl:	It's high quality.
14	Brian:	Yeah.
15	Carl:	Also, it's safe from earthquakes because
16		we're close to the mountain so it's safer.
17	Austin:	and tsunami
18	Carl:	and tsunami,
19		so really, it's only city taxes and local
20		taxes and food
21		and it's just more expensive than
22	Mod:	The city tax is high; city tax is high.
23	Carl:	but really, I don't think there's
24		((looks at Brian))=
25	Brian:	((Shakes his head)).
26	Carl:	=there's many other negatives, you know.

The engine driving this sequence cannot be epistemic. Brian and Carl have equal epistemic access and equal epistemic rights – they both know the same things about Kobe (they live within a few hundred meters of each other). Brian displays a preference for agreement and does not attempt to defend his idea about the pharmacies. His agreements are minimal suggesting a lack of real engagement in the issue. Finally, his agreeing shake of the head (L25) occurs at a point of grammatical incompleteness – *I don't think there's*. For Brian to present an agreement at this point suggests that he is inclined to agree with whatever Carl would say next, for there is no way that it is possible to predict what Carl was planning to say next.

There are two characteristics of these discussion groups that are important when considering the interpersonal engine. The first is that these groups are pre-formed, insomuch as the groups were all friends of each other and of the moderator. This may have influenced the desire on the part of the individuals to avoid disagreement and prefer consensus. A second consideration is that there was no real motivation to engage in a disagreement. The goals of the discussions were simply to allow the participants to voice their opinions on the questions and there was no consequence for not getting to the bottom of the issues. However, there

would be potential consequences for friends who disagreed over issues during a discussion group which was not vital to their well-being and was, in fact, a favor to a friend. The participants who had agreed to participate were all friends of mine and friends of each other. Considering these two characteristics may offer some insight into the type of group environment that would give rise to a preference for consensus over genuine epistemic engine.

The data suggest that a certain environment may produce a group in a discussion that is not exclusively driven by the epistemic engine of Heritage (2012a, 2012b). These pre-formed groups will gravitate towards consensus by agreeing with a knowledge claim before the knowledge claim has been fully stated. The data Heritage looked at (*ibid*.) was largely (although not exclusively) between lawyers and defendants, doctors and patients and from a variety of other institutional environments. It may be that in such conversations, epistemics is the only available engine to drive the conversation forward, the interpersonal engine not being available to people who do not know each other. I see the interpersonal engine and the epistemic engine not as mutually exclusive ideas, but rather as two different motivational forces behind conversations that need not always be equally available to participants. I believe that a spectrum exists which sees purely epistemic action at one extreme and purely interpersonal action at the other extreme, with most communication taking place at various positions between these two extremes.

Pure epistemic Pure interpersonal

5.3 Institutional talk or Conversational talk

When comparing institutional talk and ordinary conversation, Drew and Heritage "do not accept that there is necessarily a hard and fast distinction to made between the two" (1992: 21). This was borne out by the discussion groups I held. The discussion groups had elements of both institutional talk and conversational talk. In terms of context, there were elements of both – the groups were set up, asked to meet at a specific time, and given questions (i.e., institutional); on the other hand, they consisted of friends (i.e., conversational). The extent to which that context influenced the talk is not known. The group discussions,

although not focus groups, did follow the semi-structured question route prescribed for focus group research. The purpose of a question route is "to encourage participants to have a conversation in response to a question, building on one another's comments, rather than directing each comment to the moderator" (Krueger & Casey. 2009:36). From this perspective, the question routes were successful. The groups did build on one another's answers, although not always. What the groups did not do however, was instigate topics, nor did they end topics explicitly. The moderator was the only speaker who was involved in topic allocation, in that the questions developed for the question route were what drove the sequences to conclusion.

The discussion groups had characteristics of institutional talk as well as ordinary talk. At this point, I will define what I mean by 'institutional talk'. When defining the characteristics of institutional talk Drew and Heritage (1992:29-53) identify six dimensions of institutional talk and I will analyze the group discussions using these six dimensions. The six dimensions are as follows

1. Lexical or word choice
2. Turn design
3. Sequence organization
4. Overall structural organization of the interaction
5. Turn-taking organization
6. Epistemological and other forms of asymmetry

All six dimensions were observable in the discussion groups, but some less so than others. Regarding the lexical choices made by the participants, the participants were perfectly content to use vague language (Channell. 1994), swearing, and even make quite vulgar jokes on the rare occasion. It was different from the lexical choices suggested by Drew and Heritage (1992). As they had based their finding upon legal and medical interactions this is to be expected. Legal and medical discussions will necessitate the use of technical terms. The three topics chosen for the discussion groups were

1. Why do so many foreign residents choose to live in Kobe?
2. What does learner autonomy mean to you?
3. What does it mean to be a moral person?

These three topics were non-technical topics, that did not require specialist vocabulary. This is not to suggest that the participants were not careful in progressing their ideas at certain points, but this cautiousness manifested itself through the use of ordinary language.

The choice of discussion topics also influences how the participants interacted with the sixth of Drew and Heritage's dimensions of institutional talk – epistemological asymmetry. All participants had equal epistemic access and therefore equal epistemic rights in the discussions. Even the moderator, who was the only person who could be seen to represent the institutionalism in institutional talk, had equal epistemic access and epistemic rights to the participants (in fact, during the first discussion group about Kobe, the moderator had been in Kobe the shortest amount of time).

Drew and Heritage (1992) see turn design as addressing two features; selecting an action and the selection of how the action is to be realized in words. Heritage and Drew recount a story in which a new mother, whilst being visited by a health visitor, can be observed to design her turns to the visitor as an evaluator from an institution. As Heritage and Drew (1992) point out, "[one] important dimension of asymmetry between the participants in an institutional interaction arises from the predominantly question – answer pattern of interaction that characterizes many of them" (1992: 49).

I observed participants orient towards the moderator as an institutional evaluator, as can be seen in the two examples below (5.6 & 5.7). In 5.6, the moderator had asked a group of four participants a question about learner autonomy and Alan is the last of the four participants to answer. He asks the moderator to repeat the question again and then Alan apologizes to the moderator for asking him to repeat the question.

[5.6 repeat the question Autonomy1]

1 Alan: Can you just repeat the question again)=

2 Mod: =Yeah=

3 Alan: =sorry I just wanna make sure

Alan's apology was unnecessary for two reasons, firstly, it is a perfectly reasonable request. Secondly, as the moderator had already begun to answer when Alan interrupted to apologize it is clear the moderator was not treating the request as a source of trouble. It is especially formal as it is followed by an explanation that represents Alan's concern with correctly answering the question. In this exchange, Alan orients towards the moderator as being owed

both an apology and a justification for the request. His second turn (L3) is designed to show both respect and a willingness to align with the authority (which is a perceived authority only) of the moderator. This manifests in relation to the question-answer sequence, which is the only source of asymmetry in the exchange. The moderator can ask questions of the participants that are not limited to a type of question. The participants only ask two types of question to the moderator, questions seeking clarification, and questions as to the moderator's evaluation of their answer.

Excerpt 5.7 is a much more pronounced example, in which the participant orients towards his own answers as being problematic and displays an asymmetry with regards to the moderator. Brian had been asked about examples of learner autonomy in the classroom and begins to talk about the autonomous regions of Russia.

[5.7	Does that make sense	Kobe 2]
1	Brian:	you've got some freedom but
2		there's also control related to that.
3		Does that make sense?
4	Mod:	Yeah, so when you say
5		there is some freedom and some control,
6		where does the control come from?
7	Brian:	Well, in Russia's case,
8		the central planners of the government.
9	Mod:	Ok, and that's in terms of the learners?
10	Brian:	Uh, that's in terms of, well,
11		I'm trying to do an example of a country
12		almost like a classroom in a way.
13	Mod:	Sort of an analogy.
14	Brian:	Yeah, exactly.
15		And so the students could be
16		those autonomous regions where they have
17		a lot of freedom to do a lot of things
18		that they want but there's still
19		some responsibility to the country
20		that they're in.

21		Does that make sense?
22	Mod:	Yeah
23	Brian:	So, it's almost like a classroom where
24		you could let the learners go off
25		and do their thing (1.5) but
26		there's some connection to the classroom,
27		yeah.
28	Mod:	Uh huh.
29	Brian:	They can't be running around and
30		just uh doing anything they want.

Brian explicitly asks the moderator for an evaluation on two occasions (Does that make sense? - L3 & L21) and this displays a belief that the moderator has the right to evaluate his answer. This gives the turn sequence an IRF structure, a structure associated with asymmetry, especially in a classroom (see Coulthard & Brazil. 1992). The moderator asks Brian to account for his discussion of Russia when the question was about learner autonomy (L9 - *OK, and that's in terms of the learners?*). Brian does not directly answer the moderator's question and instead justifies his strategy (L10-12 *Uh, that's in terms of, well, I'm trying to do an example of a country, almost like a classroom in a way)*. Brian starts to answer the question directly but treats this strategy as problematic before abandoning this approach and explaining his reference to Russia is an analogy. The moderator than offers a candidate suggestion that Brian is involved in a metaphor of a country as a classroom and Brian accepts this and then begins to explicitly relate the autonomous regions of Russia to students in a classroom. The moderator offers minimal responses to Brian (L22 & L28) and Brian then begins to talk about students (L29-30) as if they are a metaphor for the autonomous regions of Russia. The source and target of the metaphor have reversed in this exchange as the participant designs his turn to better correspond with the moderator's question. This is evidence that this participant perceives an asymmetry of power in the moderator/participant relationship.

The overall structure of the interaction and the turn-taking organization are effectively the same thing in these group discussions – the moderator asks questions, and the participants answer these questions until such a time as the moderator moves on to the next question until the moderator ends the interaction. The organization, and the turns are completely under the

control of the moderator and this question-answer sequence/turn structure does inculcate an asymmetry of power. At no point in any of the discussion groups did any participants resist the moderator's decision to close a topic and move to a new topic by asking the next question. Below are three examples of how the moderator closes down one topic and opens up the next one in the same turn. All three examples are from different groups. The language used is the language of an institutional representative.

(1)Mod: Ok. Right. Good. Uhm. Let's move onto the next question
(2)Mod: Well, we'll be coming back to that again
(3)Mod: OK. Right. The next question is not so much about tourists as it is about people like us who've settled down in Kobe

The moderator uses - *let's, we*, and *us* and this language is the language of an actor setting themselves up as a representative of an institution (Drew and Heritage. 1992). Also, the moderator evaluates the previous response (1), displays control of future turns (2), and displays the epistemic right to make an evaluation on the part of the participants (3) when he says, "people who have settled down in Kobe" without asking any of the participants if they considered themselves 'settled'.

The participants and the moderator all orient towards the moderator as having a greater degree of power in the power asymmetry. One common phenomenon observable when a TV reporter interviews a politician is that the reporter asks a question and the politician responds by saying, "The question we really should be asking is…", or "The question I am interested in is…". At no point in the group discussions did anything remotely close to this occur. This is not owing to an epistemic asymmetry the moderator and all participants have equal epistemic access, and the topics were chosen to achieve this. The most reasonable explanation is that the participants view these discussion groups as institutional talk in and around the question stage, or in any interaction with the moderator, but when interacting with one another, the participants do not display any evidence of viewing their talk as institutional talk.

Finally, institutional talk is goal orientated (Drew & Heritage. 1992: 22). These discussions were not goal orientated but were participation orientated. This may have influenced the talk. The participation was *in lieu* of a goal. This may have led participants to focus more on

participation than on what they were saying. In excerpt 5.8, Dave has just finished a very long, rambling answer that recognizably did not have relevance to the question asked. Lines 1-2 represent his ending of this turn. Charles (L4) sarcastically sanctions Dave and Alan laughs, presumably in alignment with the only laughable action, namely the comment by Charles. In response, Dave says that he will no longer speak. The moderator gives a minimal recognition of the sequence and then begins the next question.

[5.8 Thanks for your life story. Learner Autonomy 1]

1 Dave: If you give them more choice and selection. 2
I don't know.
3 (1.4)
4 Charles: Thanks for your life story.
5 Alan: Ha ha.
6 Dave: That's it. I'm done my talking.
7 Mod: Yes. Do you think that…

What I have not included in 5.7, is the extraordinarily long, highly irrelevant turn taken by Dave in the moments leading up to the start of 5.7. It is the length and irrelevance that I interpret as indicating a focus on participation over epistemic content. This is recognized by other speakers as is evidenced by their sanction. The moderator does not ask any follow-up questions and quickly moves on to the next question, displaying a lack of interest.

It should come as no surprise that these discussion groups contained elements of institutional talk and elements of ordinary conversation. What was of interest was that the institutionalism was not born of the existence of an actual institution but was acted into existence by the way that the participants behaved towards the moderator and how the moderator accepted this behavior. This minimal institutionalism is reminiscent of Tajfel and Turner's minimal group paradigm. Tajfel and Turner (1979) showed how members of a group came to show loyalty to a group, and preference over non-group members just by being told that they were in a group and therefore the loyalty was not born of an actual necessity but of a perceived necessity. The institutional nature of the institutional talk in the discussion groups was not caused by the existence of an actual institution but by the existence of a role – the moderator – that is

traditionally a member of an institution. The language used by the moderator shows that this institutional role is not resisted by the moderator.

A metaphor I found helpful was that of a roulette wheel. However, in this case, the number is not randomly chosen, instead the participants can choose to put the ball on any number that they all agree upon. They also remain free to change this choice as long as the wheel is spinning. Only the moderator can control the wheel. The institutionality of the talk was only present in any interaction with the moderator. The institutional talk framed the participants' answers. However, when the participants engaged with one another, it became clear that they were not engaging in institutional talk, but ordinary conversation with their friends. their talk became less constructive of an institution.

This work provided further evidence that conversation and institutional talk are not clearly defined categories, and I have identified a context in which speakers seem to switch from one to the other. I have shown that some features of institutional talk are present but not others. This is evidence of how institutions can be constructed through talk. This is not to say all institutions are only constructed through talk. However, in the group discussions that had no actual institution, and where the moderator was a peer and a friend, and where no epistemic asymmetry was present, participants still chose to deploy dimensions of institutional talk in their discussions. It may be that what we currently call 'institutional talk' is more reliant on perceived social roles than it is on institutions, but that, as much of the initial research into institutional talk was carried out in institutions (i.e., doctor/patient or lawyer/client relationships) that the institutionality rose to prominence in the research findings.

5.4 What is a knowledge claim?

Trying to identify what a knowledge claim is was a central idea to my research. However, there is no consensus in the literature regarding the idea of what constitutes a knowledge claim. There are some problems in identifying what constitutes a knowledge claim which are illustrated in excerpt 5.9.

In excerpt 5.9, Brian and Carl are responding to the moderator's question regarding negative attributes of Kobe. L1-2 is a question. But it is difficult to decide whether or not it represents a knowledge claim. One the one hand, it contains a knowledge claim, and it has downward intonation, which could be indicative that it is not intended as a question (although not all

questions necessarily have rising intonation. See Chen 2012). On the other hand, it can be interpreted as not being a knowledge claim as it is too non-committal to be making any claim. Carl (L3) says "Nah". If this is a rejection, then that implies Carl oriented towards the previous utterance as a knowledge claim. But if it is a rejection of a knowledge claim, then it represents a knowledge claim in itself – *It is not the case that the pharmacies being clogged up is a negative aspect of Kobe*.

[5.9	pharmacies being clogged up	Kobe 2]
1	Brian:	What about pharmacies being clogged up
2		these days with foreigners.
3	Carl:	Nah. Actually, it's more expensive
4		cos it's convenient.
5	Brian:	Yeah.

Looking to the philosophy of epistemology for a definition did not provide an answer. Epistemology only deals with the concept of knowledge. The concept of knowledge as being justified true belief was centuries old, but the Gettier problems had challenged this assumption. Gettier (1968) had introduced the notion of luck into a justified true belief and since then, epistemology has debated the importance of luck in the definition of knowledge. The definition of knowledge is currently bound up with the concepts of truth and luck. Epistemology cannot help with the definition of a knowledge claim in my research as I am interested in the language used to construct knowledge claims. A knowledge claim need not be true it need only be *claimed as true* or *represented as being true*.

There were four other ways to identify a knowledge claim that I considered: a grammatically complete sentence, a tone unit, other participants orienting towards an utterance as a knowledge claim, and the propositional content of the utterance. Yet, there were problems with all of these approaches to defining a knowledge claim. The first of these, a grammatically complete sentence, was clearly not fit for purpose. The choice of a grammatically complete sentence would owe more to the bias of written language in linguistics (Linnell. 2005). In the spoken language produced in the data, the participants did

not always produce grammatically complete sentences. The following example highlights the difficulty of attempting to define a grammatically complete sentence.

In the first I just think it means that basically they are individual work ***so*** *they have whatever assignment it is* ***but*** *they're responsible to finish that assignment* ***cos*** *I mean they can't ask the teacher for questions or guidance* ***but*** *it means that they have to figure out any solution* ***or*** *whether it's an essay or questions or individual project all or most of the work* ***and*** *if there's something they don't know they research it* ***but*** *like if it's something they really don't know they would ask the leader* ***and*** *the leader would be a teacher in the classroom setting.*

The number of conjunctions make it difficult to decide if this is one long sentence. Furthermore, this utterance is rife with grammatical errors, or what should be termed as grammatical errors were this a written text. However, ordinary conversation should be expected to contain ungrammatical language. Therefore, the impracticalities of defining where one sentence ends and the next one begins, coupled with the occurrence of what should be seen as grammatical errors means that selecting a grammatically complete sentence is not a useful way to define a knowledge claim.

The next potential way to define a knowledge claim is the tone unit. However, my primary focus is specifically on the language used by participants to construct knowledge claims, i.e., the words. There is no doubt that research into group constructions of knowledge claims would benefit in the future from incorporating prosodic elements into the analysis. The work of Walker (2013) and Persson (2013) on incorporating prosodic elements into micro-analysis were especially interesting. Walker (2013) shows how the phonetical and prosodic elements of talk-in-interaction are important features of a speaker's turn-taking management. Persson (2013) outlines the role played by prosodic elements in sequence closing formulations. However, at present, I am interested in a way of identifying a knowledge claim that is related to the spoken words used by the participants.

Another option for defining a knowledge claim is to view a knowledge claim as anything that other participants orient to as being a knowledge claim, for example, by agreeing or disagreeing with it. This would certainly be in keeping with the philosophy of conversation analysis. Unfortunately, how other participants orient to a speaker's utterance is not always a

reliable way of identifying that a speaker has made a knowledge claim. One common feature of the group discussions was that when a speaker made an utterance it could be completely ignored by the other participants. The following sentence – when I think of a moral person, I think of a person who has at least good intent – can comfortably be described as a knowledge claim. However, when Brian makes this knowledge claim (L3-4) Carl and the moderator acknowledge that Brian has spoken but they do not orient towards Brian as having made a knowledge claim.

[5.10	At least good intent	Morality 2]
1	Brian:	Yeah, your intent. And I think a lot of
2		that is hidden from most people seeing it
3		**When I think of a moral person, I think of**
4		**a person who has at least good intent.<-KC**
5	Mod:	Right, ok.
6	Brian:	How's that? (Gestures to Carl)
7	Carl:	Ok, pass the ball.
8	Brian:	Yeah
9	Carl:	That's a little bit of a difficult one.
10		If somebody says they're a moral person
11		first, I, I wouldn't believe it.

Brian makes his knowledge claim (L3-4) then the moderator acknowledges Brian's utterance but does not evaluate the content. Brian then selects the next speaker by gesturing to Carl (L6). Carl then acknowledges the turn allocation (OK, pass the ball) but he does not make any reference to the content of what Brian said. Carl then begins to formulate a completely new definition of a moral person from scratch without orienting towards Brian's knowledge claim. But it seems perfectly reasonable to view what Brian said - *when I think of a moral person, I think of a person who has at least good intent* – as a knowledge claim. As a researcher creating and looking at the transcripts, I am not processing the language in real time, in fact, I am engaged in a micro-analysis of the language. Therefore, as a researcher, I can reasonably see how this can be construed as a knowledge claim. In contrast to my after-the-fact and non-real time analysis, the participants do not orient to Brian's statement as a knowledge claim, but it seems incontrovertibly a knowledge claim. Within the methodology used by CA, the

participants are given primacy of decision making as to how an utterance is to be described by how it is oriented to by these other participants. Such an approach does not offer an evaluation of how to describe an utterance that is made but not responded to by other participants. However, a researcher can make a reasonable evaluation of this utterance.

Finally, the propositional content of the utterance was another method that can be considered. The concept of a proposition can be interpreted in a strict sense, relating to the predicate of a sentence or it can be interpreted using the lay understanding, something offered for consideration or acceptance (Mirriam-Webster.com) and yet there are two problems with adopting this first approach. Hanks (2015) says that although propositions have traditionally been described the "primary bearers of truth conditions" (2015:3) that this idea is archaic and this idea of truth is something that proves to be very difficult to define, describe, and work with, especially following the Gettier Problems. Secondly, Linell (2005) discusses the ways that the primacy of the written language has caused propositions to be linked with the idea of grammatical sentences (which I have addressed above). Using a proposition in the strict sense as the basis of a knowledge claim ultimately comes back to the problem faced by using a grammatically complete sentence.

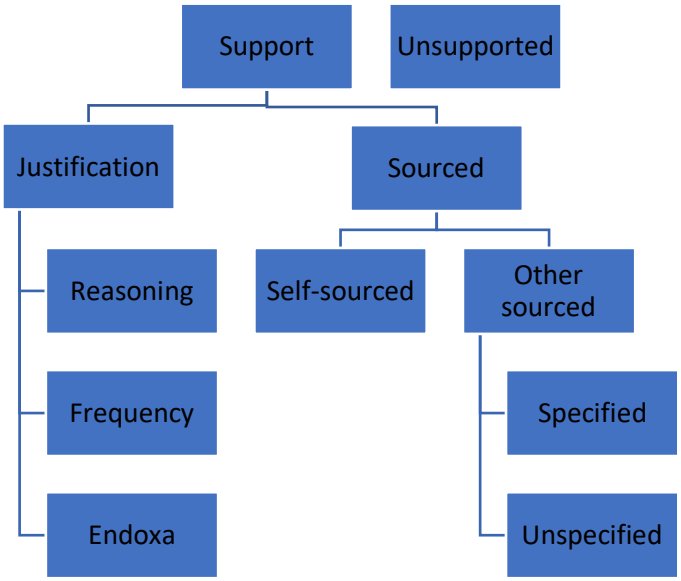
It is the lay interpretation of proposition that I chose to investigate. Yet this does not provide a foolproof method and I have needed to rely upon my judgement as to what I view as a knowledge claim made by participants. The challenge in this approach is consistency. As such, I have predominantly relied upon the two concepts that are the potential for progressivity and the potential for epistemic advancement (see Chapter 2 for full discussion of this term). Progressivity (Stivers 2006) focuses upon progression of sequences. Therefore, I have to analyze an utterance and determine if that utterance makes a progression of sequence possible or if it acts as a sequence closing move. Epistemic advancement focuses on the pursuit of epistemic closure. Epistemic closure is a satisfactory completion of a topic wherein the completion is based upon the topic and not the turn sequence (Kruglanski. 2006). Therefore, I have to analyze an utterance and determine if that utterance makes a progression of the topic towards epistemic closure possible. Although these two qualities can serve as helpful guides, there is still a need to rely upon what is a recognizable knowledge claim. On this issue, Hester and Francis (2001:213) describe recognizability as "a situated

accomplishment" and the recognizability of knowledge claims relies upon the context within which they are made.

At present, I am left with the unsatisfying conclusion that, although I do not feel I have been able to create a robust definition of a knowledge claim, I am confident that I was able to correctly identify the knowledge claims I referred to in this research as being knowledge claims. It may be that any definition of what a knowledge claim is would have to encompass so many potential forms of expressing knowledge claims that it would be like a map with a scale of 1:1.

Finally, one idea I have for future research regarding a definition of a knowledge claim is to view it as an idea that receives support according to the taxonomy of support as detailed in Chapter Two and seen in figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3. Categories, and sub-categories of justification



This approach to defining a knowledge claim has three advantages. Firstly, it aligns with multi-party co-construction of knowledge claims. Secondly, it relies on what is said and not how other participants react to what is said. This means it is observable and also allows for a knowledge claim that is ignored by other participants to be treated as a knowledge claim by the researcher. Finally, it does not rely upon the truth content but on the appearance of reasonableness. This concept of reasonableness is a central finding in the research. Speakers

are disposed towards giving supporting reasons to their ideas. The ubiquity of support for the knowledge claims shows that it is something that speakers view as important. This support may act as a signal that a participant views their knowledge claim as deserving consideration by other speakers. It also suggests that speakers wish to appear rational in their knowledge claims and therefore by presenting such utterances as rational, supported knowledge claims, it is hoped that other participants will engage with them. The extent to which participants engage with supported knowledge claims versus engagement with unsupported knowledge claims is an interesting idea for future research. The concept of unsupported knowledge claims is the main weakness of this approach, however, given the numerically overwhelming preference for supported knowledge claims in the data, this need not prove to be a major impediment.

5.5 How do groups form consensus regarding knowledge claims.

My research shows that there are three stages in the formation of consensus regarding knowledge claims. These stages are:

1. Individual knowledge claims
2. Group discussion
3. Signal of completion.

These stages always occur in the sequential order outlined above. The first stage begins with the moderator asking a question from the pre-written question route. An individual answers the question with a knowledge claim. The research suggests that gaze work was central in deciding who the first speaker would be. Either the moderator would be looking at a participant at the end of his question or the other participants would all look at another participant. This was not something I planned as the researcher/moderator and only noticed when looking at the data. However, it is an important consideration for future research. When the first participant has completed their knowledge claim, two courses of action are available. Another individual can choose to discuss this knowledge claim. They can agree or modify the knowledge claim. If this course takes place, then the group is moving towards consensus. The second course of action that can take place at this juncture is for another participant to ignore the knowledge claim of the prior participant. This form of ignoring is a refusal to take up the epistemic content of the prior speaker's knowledge claim rather than to ignore the utterance entirely. Most examples in the data of a current speaker ignoring the prior speaker's knowledge claim involved the current speaker acknowledging the prior speaker's turn, but not

the content of that turn, for example, occasionally, the current speaker would make a positive evaluation of the brevity of the prior speaker's turn but not address the content. The next stage is the group members discussing and modifying the initial knowledge claim. Eventually, the group decides they have reached a consensus. This is not explicitly stated. The participants will stop engaging with each other. They will also only minimally respond to the moderator and do not initiate any further sequences. After a prolonged silence, the moderator orients towards the minimal responses and prolonged silence as being a preference to begin a new topic, or at least, a preference to not continue with the old topic. One variation of this sequence was seen in one of the groups. At the point in the sequence where the participants signal completion, one participant attempted to expand the topic or challenge the consensus. When the participant attempted to challenge the consensus, his attempt was ignored, and the prolonged silence caused the moderator to begin the next question unit. On the other occasion, the participant (and it was the same participant) introduced a new knowledge claim and it was not ignored. A second participant responded to this introduction of a new knowledge claim and this, in turn, opened up a series of other new knowledge claims to be introduced. This suggests that the point in the sequence where the participants signal completion requires further investigation. It could be that this one individual, who twice introduced new knowledge claims at the point where the rest of the participants signaled completion, was unique. Alternatively, it could serve as a warning for moderators in groups that seizing on the minimal responses and prolonged silences with too much haste may result in important discussions being lost. Although there is no evidence upon which to reach a conclusion on this, I strongly suspect it is the latter.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter addressed four questions:

1. The role of consensus in the progressivity of the discussions.
2. The extent to which these discussion groups can be seen as institutional talk or as ordinary conversation.
3. What is a knowledge claim? How can a researcher identify an utterance as being a knowledge claim?
4. How do groups form knowledge claims? Is there an observable process?

The role of consensus in the progressivity of the discussion groups was at times central, and at other times, the epistemic concerns of the group took a central role. On occasions, individuals displayed a clear preference to agree with other members of the group. Participants were willing to risk appearing inconsistent in their utterances in order to agree with the members of their group. This interpersonal engine drove the discussion groups forward at times to the detriment of consistent epistemic concerns. This may be owing to the pre-formedness of the groups. The existence of the interpersonal engine is not seen as an alternative to the Heritage's epistemic engine (Heritage 2012a, 2012b). I suggest that the types of discourse examined by Heritage (lawyer and client encounters or doctor and patient encounters) were the types of encounter that were only concerned with the epistemic imbalance – the non-expert was consulting the expert in order to acquire answers to a question. In the group discussions I observed, all the members shared equal epistemic rights, epistemic access, and there was no expert/non-expert dynamic. It is for these reasons that a non-epistemic, interpersonal engine is possible, and, ultimately, observable.

Whether or not these discussion groups constitute institutional talk owes more to certain qualities of the talk than the existence of an actual institution. Participants would orient to a perceived power asymmetry between themselves and the moderator. One way they would do this was to they would never explicitly tell the moderator that they had finished discussing a question from the question route, although the participants would frequently both initiate and end talk with one another. Instead of ending a question unit, the group would signal a preference for no longer discussing the question through minimal responses and extended silences. All this served to project a perceived institutionality that was talked into being but did not actually exist. This may have its basis in the epistemic rights afforded the roles of moderator and participant which manifested itself as behavior often associated with institutional talk.

In order to examine how participants discussed knowledge claims, it was necessary to decide what constituted a knowledge claim. Attempting to define knowledge itself was a project over two thousand years old and still unfinished, more so since the Gettier Problems (Gettier 1968). The four candidates for identifying a knowledge claim that I considered were – a grammatically complete sentence, a tone unit, other participants orienting towards an utterance as a knowledge claim, and the propositional content of the utterance. Finally, I decided to use the last of these four options and chose to focus on the lay interpretation of what a proposition is, namely, an idea that contains information that can be agreed with or

disagreed with. This relied heavily on the subjective judgement of the analyst but, given the highly contextual nature of the utterances made by the participants of the discussion groups, this proved the best approach.

Finally, the way that the discussion groups formed knowledge followed a three-stage sequence. After the moderator asks the question, which opens the question unit, the participants make individual knowledge claims until agreement on the part of other members gains sufficient impetus that the individual knowledge claim becomes recognizable as the consensus opinion of the group. The individual knowledge claim that becomes the basis for consensus may be the first one made, or it may be one among a list of many. The biggest obstacle to a knowledge claim becoming the candidate for the group consensus is that another participant ignores the knowledge claim before making a fresh knowledge claim of their own. Eventually, the participants will reduce the amount of participation in the discussion and will only reply with minimal responses, reject attempts at sequence expansion and avoid eye contact. At this point, the moderator will start to ask the next question from the question route, effectively ending that question unit.

Chapter Six
Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

My primary aim in this study was to examine the ways in which groups constructed knowledge claims. I achieved this by holding semi-structured group discussions on three topics. I analyzed these topics and identified some key practices and preferences used by groups in the pursuit of consensus. This chapter outlines the research questions and the outcomes related to those questions. In addition, I outline further implications and applications of this study before going on to discuss some limitations of the study. Finally, I explore some possibilities for future research that are implicated by the study.

In terms of the methodology, I used in my thesis, my methodological influences (which are described in more detail in Chapter One) are drawn from three strands of research. Firstly, the generation of my data for analysis is entirely taken from the approach used by market-led focus group research (Barbour 2007; Fern 2001, Krueger & Casey 2009; Litosseliti 2003; Morgan & Krueger 1998). This strand of the research was laid out in more detail in Module One. The second strand of methodological influence, specifically with relevance to Chapter Two and the establishment of the taxonomy of knowledge claim presentation, drew inspiration from the work on evaluative language, evidentiality, and epistemic stance. In particular, frameworks for knowledge claims were laid out in earlier work by Chafe (1996) in regard to academic English, and Bednarek and Caple (2012) in regard to newspapers. These frameworks were helpful as a basis for creating my own framework for the presentation of knowledge claims by the participants. The third strand of influence in my methodology was that of conversation analysis. This method of analysis was of most use for examining the processes and sequences used by group participants in the formation of consensus. In particular, I attended to the four types of interactional organization (ten Have 1999; Hepburn & Potter 2021; Hutchby & Woofit 2008; Schegloff 2007) which are turn-taking organization, sequence organization, repair organization, and the organization of turn-design.

The most important outcome of my study is a framework for analyzing how groups co-construct consensual knowledge claims. I established a framework for exploring the manner in which discussion groups co-constructed knowledge claims. This framework has the potential to be applied to other data, specifically the use of groupwork, such as classroom groups or market research focus groups. This framework could also be applied to the concept

of the epistemic engine (Heritage 2012a, 2012b) and suggests that there is an additional engine that compliments Heritage's concept of the epistemic engine, and this is the interpersonal engine. This interpersonal engine places a priority, not on an epistemic-based progressivity but upon a progressivity based upon the maintenance of the friendly relationship between the participants of a group. There are also implications for the discussion of what are the main determiners in how discourse in discussion groups progress. The central role played by the moderator in the progressivity of the discussion groups is one such determiner and the importance of the moderator's role is clear in the data. The moderator controls the progressivity from one question unit to the next question unit, and this is never controlled by the participants. This in turn has implications for institutional talk, which can be observed in the discussion groups, despite there not being any actual institution present, other than the one talked into being by the participants themselves. The participants clearly orient towards the discussion groups as having some qualities of institutional talk.

In this chapter I shall outline the research outcomes with regards to the three main research questions:

> **Research Question One:** What organizational principle can be proposed to account for how discussion groups progress from initial response to a question to the conclusion?
>
> **Research Question Two:** How do participants who make a knowledge claim justify such claims?
>
> **Research Question Three:** How is consensus arrived at? How is it recognized? What appears to be the 'engine' that drives it?

In addition, I shall outline the research outcomes that relate to three secondary questions.

> **Research Question Four:** To what extent is the character of the discourse affected by the previous relationships between participants?
>
> **Research Question Five:** What is the role of the moderator in the discussion group?
>
> **Research Question Six:** What is a knowledge claim?

The next section addresses the three main research questions.

6.2 Research Outcomes

This section looks at the three main research questions. It also summarizes the three secondary research questions that came to light during the research.

Research Question One

What organizational principle can be proposed to account for how discussion groups progress from initial response to a question to the conclusion?

A brief summary of the answer to this question is that a three stage sequence begins when the moderator asks a question, the participants individually offer candidate answers until a member of the group modifies the answer in a way that sparks further modification from the other members. Once the group has attained a working consensus, they indicate this to the moderator by minimal answers and body language and the moderator selects the next question from the pre-assigned question route.

I have shown that groups co-construct knowledge claims by taking an individual's knowledge claim and discussing it in more detail, often adding to it, until they reach a point where the members of the group have achieved either active consensus among all members or active consensus among most members and a passive consensus among the remaining non-committed members. These non-committed members have the opportunity to actively disagree but do not. The biggest impediment to an individual's knowledge claim being selected was not disagreement but being ignored by other participants. Other participants would acknowledge the utterance was made but would ignore the content of the knowledge claim and begin to make their own, new knowledge claim. When this happened, participants largely did not return to make the ignored knowledge claim a second time or defend the knowledge claim. Once a knowledge claim was ignored, it did not appear again. At some point during the discussion, the participants cease to engage with each other and the moderator, or only engage minimally. There is no observable indication that participants have attained consensus until they become non-responsive. At this point the moderator orients towards this action of minimal or non-responsivity as an indication of the participant's belief that they have achieved completion of consensus and the moderator asks the next question. Not once did any participant resist the moderator's decision to move on to the next stage of the question route. Again, the role of the moderator is integral to the groups achieving consensus, but it is not a role in isolation and is a co-participant with the group when it comes to the completion of the question unit.

Research Question Two.

How do participants who make a knowledge claim justify such claims?

I have shown that the role of the individual members of the group manifests itself most clearly at the beginning of the process of consensus forming, in tandem with the moderator. Immediately after the moderator has initiated the next stage of the question route with the topic for that stage, the individual members begin to put forward candidate answers to that question. Participants largely support their knowledge claims using one of two strands of support. They could do so with a source for the knowledge claim, namely themselves or a third person. Alternatively, they justified their claim with by showing the knowledge claim they are making is refers to a frequently occurring phenomenon, or that the knowledge claim is widely held around the world (endoxa), or by showing that the knowledge claim has a basis in a reasoned process. Participants displayed a strong preference to support their knowledge claims from the taxonomy of knowledge claim justifications. Individuals display a desire to appear rational. Individuals support knowledge claims more often than not. The evidence discussed in Chapter Two, on the taxonomy of knowledge claim presentation shows that speakers have a wide range of ways to support their knowledge claims and tend to support their knowledge claims and display a preference to voicing supported knowledge claims over unsupported knowledge claims. This display of being rational is clearly something viewed as preferable. The act of presenting a knowledge claim and being able to offer support for that claim may be as important as epistemic vigilance (Sperber et al., 2010). Given the clear preference for displaying a publicly facing support for a knowledge claim, there is good reason to view this phenomenon as being important to how speakers wish to be viewed. Unsupported knowledge claims were rare and were of the type related to universally known facts or facts known to be known amongst all participants whereby supporting such claims was unnecessary.

Research Question Three

What practices identify the discussion group working towards a consensus?

Chapter Three discusses this question in more detail. When group participants worked from the individual participant's knowledge claim towards a group consensus, I observed three practices in this particular part of the process. These three practices can occur at the same time as each other. The three practices were a preference for a cautious epistemic advancement, a

preference for agreement, and a preference to mitigate disagreement. The preference for a cautious epistemic advance involved speakers making a disavowal of their own knowledge claims, intense hedging, and concept checking with the moderator and each other. Disavowal takes the form of a speaker making a statement and then orienting towards non-alignment with that statement in the previous or next turn. The participants also displayed a preference to mitigate any potential disagreement. This took the form of ignoring knowledge claims made by other speakers and engaging in stance drift. The practice of ignoring was not a total refusal to recognize the previous knowledge claim of another participant. Rather, it was an epistemic ignoring. The participant usually acknowledged that a previous speaker had completed a knowledge claim but refused to engage with the content of the utterance and instead began an entirely new knowledge claim. This practice is very common. Speakers can also mitigate any potential disagreement by engaging in stance drift. This process occurs when a first speaker makes a knowledge claim, and a second speaker disagrees with this knowledge claim. The disagreement mitigation takes place by the second speaker responding to the first claim by finding some part of the initial claim and orienting towards agreeing with this part of the fist knowledge claim. The group members now drift towards agreeing with this new interpretation of the first knowledge claim and have thus avoided any potential disagreement. When displaying a preference for agreement, participants have two approaches available, an intense sequence of agreement, and the use of the interpersonal engine. Group participants display intense agreement in order to display affiliation with another speaker. The agreement often was repeated multiple times by the same speaker with regard to a single knowledge claim even when this agreement did not represent any new information. This type of utterance is more encouragement than agreement but takes the recognizable form of an agreement. Finally, group participants can be observed forming an agreement with another speaker's utterance before the utterance is recognizable. This displays a preference for agreement that places agreement over meaningful epistemic closure. This suggests that the epistemic engine that Heritage (2012a, 2012b) has shown to drive progressivity in certain interactions is not the only engine to drive conversation to completion. The interpersonal engine can be seen to drive group participants towards consensus.

I will now summarize the three secondary questions that arose during the research.

Research Question Four

To what extent is the character of the discourse affected by the previous relationships between participants?

The discussion groups were selected from my friends in Kobe. As such, all participants knew each other, and they all knew the moderator. Nevertheless, the group discussions displayed dimensions of institutional talk (as defined by Drew & Heritage, 1992) despite there being an absence of any institution. The institutional power is created by being talked into being. I acted as researcher and moderator, but I am also a friend of each participant that volunteered their time. In other contexts, the participants behaved very differently, exhibiting no orientation towards there being an asymmetry of power between myself and them. However, in the discussion groups, participants would frequently orient towards the moderator (their erstwhile peer and friend) as being a representative of some institutional power asymmetry. This minimal institutionalism (see Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986, on the creation of minimal groups) existed in every group discussion. The moderator displays elements of the power asymmetry that comes from an established question-asker role, and an established question-answerer role. This means that the moderator, and only the moderator, allocates and ends topics, although the moderator's decision to end is reactive to the participants pre-ending disengagement.

Research Question Five

What is the role of the moderator in the discussion group?

The role of the moderator is central to the sequence organization of the discussion groups. This is not only due to the moderator using the question route that controls the main questions. The interview structure is semi-structured and so there are plenty of examples of follow-up questions being asked. Also, the participants frequently interact with each other without involving the moderator. The moderator obviously initiates the discussion group process using the question route. It is this artifact, the pre-made question route, that is the only discernable source of power asymmetry in the process and this power asymmetry pervades all the group discussions. The overall structure of the discussion groups follows the question route, and the moderator is the only participant to have access to the question route. The other participants acquiesce to this aspect of the moderator's role, and indeed, the moderator

himself does so too. However, the moderator does not initiate all sequences. Group members display that consensus has been attained through minimal responses and minimal interaction with each other and the moderator, even resisting attempts by the moderator to extend the sequence which results in extended silences. The moderator reacts to this signal as a cue to initiate the next question from the question route. The moderator exercised control over the questions and the participants exercised control over their answering, in so much as they would remain silent or only engage in minimal responses. This duality of control may owe more to the perceived epistemic rights of the roles as moderator and participant than it does to the nature of institutional talk, as clearly there was no institution.

Research Question Six

What is a knowledge claim?

Defining a knowledge claim is significantly more difficult than analyzing a knowledge claim. At the heart of this issue is the problem of the word 'truth'. The long-time definition of knowledge has been 'justified true belief'. Yet, it is not always possible to know what is true. The Gettier problems have compounded the difficulty of defining knowledge by introducing the concept of luck into the equation. Looking to the field of epistemology for help in defining knowledge does not prove fruitful for epistemology seeks to explain *what* knowledge is, whereas I am interested in *how* it is formed. Focusing my research on the concept of a 'knowledge claim' side steps the issues that dog the attempts to define knowledge.

However, there were a number of different ways to define a knowledge claim that were available. The first of these, a grammatically complete sentence, was clearly not appropriate for the analysis of spoken language. Nor did it lend itself to group discussions where knowledge claims were constructed over multiple turns by multiple parties, each turn representing an integral part of the finished product but lacking discernible grammatical completeness. Another candidate for the definition of a knowledge claim was the 'tone unit' (Chafe 1994). This was an interesting solution to the problem of defining a knowledge claim and has many features that lend itself to the analysis of spoken language. However, I was primarily interested in the spoken words used in the construction of the knowledge claims not prosodic qualities. Given the centrality of conversation analysis to my methodology, I considered looking at how other participants oriented towards the utterances of the previous speaker. If the next speaker oriented towards the previous speaker's utterance as a knowledge claim, then this would seem like a good approach to defining a knowledge claim. Yet, given

that one of the most common approaches by participants to knowledge claims made by other speakers was to ignore it, this created the situation whereby an utterance which was clearly a knowledge claim, was not treated as a knowledge claim by other participants. Ultimately, there was no substitute for using my judgement as to deciding what constitutes a knowledge claim and what does not. The subjectivity of this approach has potential pitfalls. Does an explicit disagreement constitute a new knowledge claim? How are conditional utterances to treated? There is no fool proof way of defining and identifying a knowledge claim and the researcher must use their judgement and remain consistent throughout.

In future research, I am considering the viability of using the taxonomy outlined in Chapter Two as a defining characteristic of a knowledge claim. Speakers display a preference for supporting their knowledge claims by using either a source or a justification, as outlined in the taxonomy in Chapter Two. This can also be observed in multi-party constructions of knowledge claims. The advantages of this approach are that it is an approach that takes an observable phenomenon as the defining characteristic.

6.3 Implications and applications of the study

The study has complemented Heritage's view of the epistemic engine. The work of Heritage on the epistemic engine (2012a, 2012b) has brought insight into the progressivity of conversation. The concept of K+/K- has been immensely helpful to me as a teacher of English as a second language. My assertion that an interpersonal engine exists does not contradict the work on an epistemic engine but offers another dimension to the progressivity of conversation. In the group discussions, there were observable instances of both the epistemic engine and the interpersonal engine driving the conversation forward. However, the fact that not all conversational progress is based on an epistemic imbalance suggests not all interaction is for the purpose acquiring unknown information.

The study has foregrounded the importance of previous knowledge on a topic. In these discussion groups, there are no power asymmetries growing out of an epistemic imbalance. All participants were chosen for the relevant discussion group topics in order to create groups with equal epistemic access. Thus, all questions in the question routes fell firmly within the epistemic territories of each and every speaker.

The study has raised the question of what the main determiners that contribute to how discourse in discussion groups progresses. The work of Drew and Heritage (1992) on the institutional talk program has looked into how the presence of institutionality impacts a

variety of dimensions, such as the sequentially occurring talk, power asymmetry, and lexical choices. My research has shown that participants will orient towards a power asymmetry even in the total absence of an actual institution. Group dynamics and social epistemology, although not a part of the traditional field of Applied Linguistics, have proven helpful in giving me a framework for understanding how the discussion groups actually form knowledge. The work of List (2011) on group knowledge and judgment aggregation provided insight that helped me to interpret my data. List arrived at his conclusion by rating the conclusions of groups with regards a dilemma with an actual outcome. My research reached a very similar conclusion to List but by investigating the language used and not the outcome of problems. Exploring other models and frameworks within the fields of group dynamics and social epistemology may yield ideas for future research, and that is the next section.

The study has possible implications for other studies involving discussion between groups e.g., classrooms, focus groups etc. Similar to the implications for classroom-based group work is the fact that pre-formed groups display a preference for forming consensus has repercussions for focus group-based market research. The high stakes nature of market research is obvious. Companies can make serious financial decisions, such as branding, launch dates, or advertising strategies, based upon the market research gathered from focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Even more important are the clinical studies focus groups that can literally be a matter of life and death (Fern, 2001). If such studies use pre-formed groups or use the same group long enough for it to become a formed group, this preference for consensus could impact the outcomes of the focus group. Market researchers should be aware that a consensus reached in a pre-formed group need not indicate that it is the same consensus that would be reached on the same issue but with a different pre-formed group or with groups in which the participants are unknown to each other hitherto.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

I see the study as having three main limitations. The first is the inevitable limitation of the amount of data gathered. In this respect, the thesis was a learning experience. Initially I insisted on having four members of each group and did not proceed with the group if fewer than this number of people were available to take part. This caused significant delays as volunteers would drop out regularly. I subsequently revised this policy to run groups with two or three people, only by that time because of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19

pandemic, I was only able to hold seven group discussions instead of the planned twenty. The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic greatly inhibited my ability to gather data. In retrospect, from the beginning I should have held all the discussion groups even when a single member cancelled. My experience was that a three- or two-person group yielded data that was just as interesting and relevant as a group of four. In future research using focus groups, I will not hesitate to continue the recording should any members cancel, and this will be the advice I give to any other researchers using a similar data gathering method. The consequences of this small number of groups upon which to draw is that there may be some room to finesse the findings. More data always adds to the robustness of the findings of a study, and I look forward to investigating the impact of more data to the findings. However, despite the number of discussion groups upon which I was able to draw not being the optimal size I had initially planned, the data created was interesting and generated answers to the research questions.

A second limitation in the study is the composition of the groups. The groups were all groups of people who both knew me and knew each other, i.e., they were pre-formed groups. The selection of the groups was opportunistic selection. In essence, living in Japan limits the pool of potential volunteers and I canvassed my friends in Kobe. However, the group discussions were tailored to suit the volunteer pool. One of the main findings of my research was that these groups tended towards consensus. I hypothesized that this was a consequence of the pre-formed nature of the group, in that the discussions were low-stakes for the participants and therefore they did not warrant a potential friendship ending argument with long term friends. It would have been useful to have some groups that were not pre-formed, i.e., members who did not know each other. If pre-formed groups and non-pre-formed groups both display a preference for consensus, then I could conclude that it the consensus was not a consequence of the pre-formedness of the groups.

The third limitation of the research that I see is that the topics for the three different discussion groups did not afford opportunities for disagreement. I would argue that this is both a strength and a weakness of the topics and the subsequent question routes that were created for the topics. The topics and their question routes were based on creating topics that would give equal epistemic access to the topics from all the participants. These topics and their question routes achieved this intended outcome. However, I cannot say with certainty whether a change of topics but keeping the same group participants would have influenced the

preference for consensus. However, all three of these limitations do open up intriguing possibilities for future research and this is discussed in the next section.

Another criticism of the study is that the questions that were selected for the question routes were not ones in which the participants displayed a large personal commitment. Although the topics selected were designed to lead to rational debate, without causing irreparable damage to interpersonal relations. There were times when the participants did not seem overly enthused about participating. The topics also called for different kinds of knowledge and for equal access to knowledge, which again was by design.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Finally, there are three areas of further research that are suggested by the research in my dissertation. The first suggestion is to continue the same research but with two variations. The first variation is to take the same question routes with the same topics but to use groups of participants that are not known to each other. This would serve to investigate if the preference for consensus was a dimension of the pre-formedness of the groups in my research or whether it was a dimension of the topics chosen. The repercussions of this research would be important. Understanding the source of a preference for consensus would be an important finding for institutions that use discussion group research. Using participants who do not know each other (as opposed to pre-formed groups) would create an epistemic imbalance in the composition of the group members. As a consequence, a non-pre-formed group may display a preference for epistemically driven outcomes, or it may display a preference for interpersonally driven outcomes (although I suspect the former). A second variation would be to use pre-formed groups but alter the question route so that it becomes more contentious (within the realms of ethical considerations). This would investigate whether or not it was the types of topic that induce a preference for consensus in pre-formed groups. These two variations together could establish the source of the preference for consensus – is it the topics discussed, or is it the pre-formedness of the groups? Both outcomes would be observable in the language used by the participants. Heritage (2012a, 2012b) has shown that an epistemic imbalance is observable in the language used by speakers, and I have shown in this dissertation that a preference for interaction is equally detectable in the language choices of users.

A second idea for further research based on the data would be to investigate the participants utterances from the perspective of voice. Coffin (2002) looks at the way authors of history

texts can represent different voices, such as recorder, interpreter, and adjudicator. Myskow (2017), expanding upon this research identified the voice of surveyor. Applying this approach to the participants in discussion groups is likely to yield results. During my research, I noticed three participants voices: the peacemaker, the joker, and the gadfly. The peacemaker was a voice used in two different groups. The peacemaker had a preference for agreement and tended to find commonalities between the viewpoints of different speakers and bring them to the fore over the differences. This voice was used by individual participants to find common ground between two potentially incompatible opinions. The gadfly was an individual who occasionally sought to consider a different viewpoint from the other members. The gadfly had a preference for 'playing the devil's advocate' (and described himself this way) and tended to voice perspectives overlooked by other members of the group. Interestingly, other members would not always reply to his alternative viewpoints. The joker, and every group had one, made jokes or humorous observations. He did not always attend to the matter at hand. It is not clear to what extent the joker diffused tension or caused distractions. Future work could follow up these observations and test them against additional data. The work of Coffin (2002) and Myskow (2017) suggests that such research would be likely to produce interesting findings.

Finally, do speakers continue to be cautious in their presentation of knowledge claims until they get certain signals from other participants? Are these signals paralinguistic? In Chapter Three, I show that one dimension of consensus attainment is the cautious progressivity of participants advancing knowledge claims. This cautiousness eventually ends, and the group moves towards consensus. It would be of interest to explore the different cues that participants observe which lead to their less cautious exposition of knowledge claims. These cues could be paralinguistic, such as smiles or prolonged eye contact. They could also be an aggregation of backchanneling or minimal agreements. So far, I have not discerned the mechanism that pushes the group over the edge into consensus although I have identified how the group displays a belief that they have attained consensus.

6.6 Conclusion

Module Three takes the work of Module Two and modifies it and explores it in more detail. The research makes four key findings. In Module Three I show that pre-formed groups display a preference for consensus. I show that this preference for consensus occurs in three distinct stages. I also show that participants can orient towards a preference to agreeing before

an actual proposition has been made, thus showing an interpersonal engine. Finally, I show the role of the moderator is the main impetus behind any institutional talk that takes place in these discussions. In addition, three secondary research outcomes were raised during the research. The character of the discourse is effected by the pre-formedness of the groups. The moderator influences the sequence organization and thus the outcomes of the group discussions. Finally, although this research is focused on knowledge claims, it is very difficult to define exactly what a knowledge claim is. There are a number of equally valid approaches to identifying a knowledge claim but ultimately, the judgement of the researcher is the best approach.

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