

# IMPLICATURE AND NON-LOCAL PRAGMATIC ENCROACHMENT

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## ABSTRACT

This paper offers a novel conversational implicature account of the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions. Developing an account I first suggested elsewhere [omitted] and independently proposed by Matthew Lutz (2014), this paper explores the idea that the relevant implicatures are generated by a constitutive relationship between *believing a proposition* and *a disposition to treat that proposition as true in practical deliberation*. I argue that while this view has a certain advantage over standard implicature accounts of pragmatic sensitivity, it comes with a significant concession to proponents of pragmatic encroachment. On the account offered here, knowledge attributions have *locally*-pragmatically-sensitive implicatures because they have *non-locally*-pragmatically-sensitive entailments. The view thus represents a unique and powerful hybrid of these two approaches to the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions.

## Keywords

knowledge, pragmatic encroachment, practical reasoning, stakes sensitivity, implicature, treating as true

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge attributions appear to be pragmatically sensitive—their acceptability appears to depend in part on what is at stake in the subject’s choice situation. In Keith DeRose’s (1992) famous bank cases, for instance, our willingness to accept an assertion of ‘DeRose knows that the bank will be open on Saturday’ appears to depend, not just on the strength of DeRose’s evidence, but on how much is at stake in getting the checks deposited before Monday.

Why are knowledge attributions pragmatically sensitive?<sup>1</sup> Common accounts divide into three kinds.

According to contextualist accounts, the term ‘knows’ picks out different relations in different contexts of utterance, and the function that determines which relation is picked out is in part pragmatically sensitive. On these accounts, which relation is picked out by ‘knows’ in a given context depends in part on what conversational participants (ought to) take to be at stake in the subject’s choice situation.<sup>2</sup>

According to encroachment accounts, the term ‘knows’ picks out a relation that is in part pragmatically sensitive. On the standard version of these accounts, whether the knowledge relation holds depends in part on pragmatic features of the subject’s current choice situation.<sup>3,4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While this paper will take pragmatic sensitivity for granted, it is an open empirical question whether our willingness to make and accept knowledge attributions really does depend on pragmatic factors. Empirical research on this question has recently been conducted by Adam Feltz and Chris Zarpentine (2010), Joshua May *et al* (2010), Wesley Buckwalter (2010), Ángel N. Pinillos (2011), Chandra Sripada and Jason Stanley (2012), and Wesley Buckwalter and Jonathan Schaffer (forthcoming). The results of these studies have been mixed. Buckwalter and Schaffer (forthcoming) provide a nice summary.

<sup>2</sup> On many contextualist views, which relation is picked out by a given utterance of ‘knows’ also depends on what conversational participants (ought to) take to be at stake in their own situation. The champion of the contextualist approach is Keith DeRose (1992, 1998, and 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Proponents of encroachment approaches include John Hawthorne (2004), Jason Stanley (2005), Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath (2007, 2009a, and 2009b), Hawthorne and Stanley (2008), Mark Schroeder (2012a and 2012b) and Jacob Ross and Mark Schroeder (2014). On my way of dividing things up, Brian Weatherson’s (2005) view also counts as a pragmatic encroachment view (see fn. 4).

<sup>4</sup> Following Ross and Schroeder (2014), I use the label ‘pragmatic encroachment’ in a somewhat broad fashion. On my usage, the label applies to any view according to which the (or even a)

According to implicature accounts, knowledge attributions *implicate* a relation that is pragmatically sensitive. On these accounts, although the truth of a knowledge attribution does not depend on the subject’s current choice situation, knowledge attributions nonetheless communicate something about the subject’s current choice situation.<sup>5</sup>

In a paper primarily on another topic—namely, the alleged relationship between *belief* and *degree of credence*—I suggested that there is a constitutive relationship between *belief* and a *disposition to treat as true* in one’s reasoning [omitted]. I also suggested, somewhat in passing, that this relationship supports an implicature account of the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions.

My earlier paper was not the first to suggest that a relationship between belief and a disposition to treat as true could explain the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions. Jacob Ross and Mark Schroeder (2014) independently proposed a thesis I call

*The Reasoning-Disposition Thesis (RD)*.<sup>6</sup> Part of what it is to believe that *p* is to be defeasibly disposed to treat *p* as true in one’s reasoning.

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relation picked out by ‘knows’ is pragmatically sensitive. Take, for example, Brian Weatherson’s (2005) view, according to which what you *believe* constitutively depends on the features of your choice situation. Assuming that what you know constitutively depends on what you believe, Weatherson’s view counts as a version of the pragmatic encroachment account, as I am using the term. On Weatherson’s own, narrower usage of the term, only views according to which pragmatics encroach into knowledge specifically—that is, encroach into knowledge without encroaching into belief, truth, or justification—count as pragmatic encroachment accounts. Since the distinction between pragmatic encroachment accounts in the broader sense and pragmatic encroachment accounts in the narrower sense is not a distinction that will concern us here, I have chosen to use the term in the broader sense. Thanks to [omitted] for reminding me that some philosophers use the label in the narrower sense.

<sup>5</sup> Keith DeRose (1998, 2002) refers to implicature accounts as ‘Warranted Assertability Maneuvers’ or ‘WAMs’. Peter Unger (1984) was the first to explicitly distinguish implicature accounts from contextualist accounts. Contemporary proponents of implicature accounts include Patrick Rysiew (2001) and (2007), Jessica Brown (2006), and Matthew Lutz (2014), all of whose views will be discussed below.

<sup>6</sup> Ross and Schroeder name this thesis ‘the reasoning-disposition *account* of belief’ (my emphasis). I have chosen to use the term ‘thesis’ instead so that we can clearly distinguish this thesis from the *account* of pragmatic sensitivity that Ross and Schroeder build on top of it. It is important to

Ross and Schroeder use RD as the basis of an encroachment account of pragmatic sensitivity. More specifically, Ross and Schroeder argue that together with some plausible auxiliary assumptions, RD implies

*The Knowledge-Action Principle.* S knows that  $p$  only if it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in her current choice situation.

Adapting counterexamples from Jessica Brown (2006), my earlier paper argued that RD is implausibly strong. I suggested, however, that a closely related thesis is both plausible and plausibly supports an implicature account of pragmatic sensitivity. That closely related thesis is

*The Minimal Reasoning-Disposition Thesis (MRD).* Part of what it is to believe that  $p$  is to be prepared<sup>7</sup> to treat  $p$  as true in one's reasoning in at least some choice situations where  $p$  is relevant.

In this paper I will be developing this approach to pragmatic sensitivity in more detail. The first step in the development will be to propose a strengthened version of MRD—namely,

*The Normal Reasoning-Disposition Thesis (NRD).* Part of what it is to believe that  $p$  is to be prepared to treat  $p$  as true in all normal choice situations.

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distinguish the thesis from the account built on top of it because Lutz (2014) builds a different account of pragmatic sensitivity on top of this same thesis.

<sup>7</sup> In my earlier paper, I formulated this principle in terms of having an 'indefeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true' rather than in terms of 'being prepared to treat  $p$  as true'. I now think that the former is a misleading label for what I have in mind. Please see section three below for more discussion. I owe thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing me to get clearer on this issue.

I will then argue that, together with some plausible auxiliary assumptions, NRD implies

*The Non-local Knowledge-Action Principle.* S knows that  $p$  only if it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in all normal choice situations.

Finally, I will argue that the non-local knowledge-action principle explains why an unqualified knowledge attribution typically implicates that it is rationally permissible for the subject to act in accordance with her belief in her current choice situation.

A generous referee for this journal has pointed out that Matthew Lutz (2014) has recently offered a similar approach to pragmatic sensitivity. As I understand it, Lutz's account is akin to my own, but is slightly more closely tied to Ross and Schroeder's account than my own is. Specifically, Lutz endorses Ross and Schroeder's RD. However, contrary to Ross and Schroeder, Lutz argues that RD does not imply that whether you know that  $p$  depends on whether you can rationally act as if  $p$  in your current choice situation. Rather, RD implies that whether you know that  $p$  depends in part on whether you can rationally act as if  $p$  in normal choice situations, which in turn explains why knowledge attributions are pragmatically sensitive. Hence, while Lutz's account begins with RD and mine begins with NRD, the two accounts end up in the same place.. Indeed, I'll suggest below that the similarities between the two accounts run deep enough to warrant thinking of them as slightly different versions of the same general approach, which I will refer to as the 'reasoning-disposition implicature account'.

Although I will make some brief remarks about why I prefer my version of the reasoning-disposition implicature account to Lutz's, the primary goal of this paper is to contrast the reasoning-disposition implicature account with the standard implicature account of pragmatic sensitivity. According to the standard implicature account, knowledge attributions have pragmatically sensitive implicatures because both knowledge and rational action are constitutively connected to one's *epistemic position*. Roughly, the idea is that because a knowledge attribution entails that the subject's epistemic position is stronger than the (fixed) threshold required for knowledge, a knowledge attribution will therefore implicate that the subject's epistemic position is stronger than the (variable) threshold required for rational action. This general sort of account was first explicitly

formulated by Peter Unger (1984), but has been recently developed along somewhat different lines by Patrick Rysiew (2001 and 2007) and Jessica Brown (2006). I call this standard implicate account ‘the epistemic-threshold implicature account’.

In his paper, I aim to show that (1) the reasoning-disposition implicature account has an important advantage over the epistemic-threshold implicature account, but also that (2) this advantage comes with an important concession to proponents of pragmatic encroachment. The concession is that although what one knows does not depend on pragmatic features of one’s *current* choice situation, what one knows depends on pragmatic features nonetheless. In this respect I disagree with Lutz, who claims that the reasoning-disposition implicature account can be offered in defense of the traditional view that knowledge depends purely on ‘traditional epistemic factors’. The reasoning-disposition implicature account has many virtues, but epistemic purity is not among them. Indeed, it is precisely this lack of epistemic purity, combined with an implicature account of the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions, that makes the view so interesting.

I begin with a brief review of Ross and Schroeder’s reasoning-disposition encroachment account. This account will be used as a foil to introduce both my and Lutz’s versions of the reasoning-disposition implicature account.

## 2. THE REASONING-DISPOSITION ENCROACHMENT ACCOUNT

According to Ross and Schroeder, pragmatic features encroach into knowledge because pragmatic features encroach into justified belief.<sup>8,9</sup> As noted above, the principle at the heart of their account is

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<sup>8</sup> Readers who use ‘pragmatic encroachment’ in the narrower sense described in fn. 4 might find this sentence a bit odd. Please see fn. 4 for explanation.

<sup>9</sup> Ross and Schroeder are not the first to attempt an account along this general line. Previous proposals, however, have focused on an alleged constitutive connection between belief and *degree of credence* (Brian Weatherson 2005, Dorit Ganson 2008, Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath 2009). Ross and Schroeder reject this alleged connection, positing a connection between belief and a *disposition to treat as true* in its stead.

*The Reasoning-Disposition Thesis (RD)*. Part of what it is to believe that  $p$  is to be defeasibly disposed to treat  $p$  as true in one's reasoning.

Two key notions here require explanation.

First, there is the notion of *treating  $p$  as true in one's reasoning*. Ross and Schroeder say that in the case of practical deliberation, 'an agent treats a given proposition as true just in case she evaluates her alternatives by the same procedure by which she would evaluate them conditional on  $p$ ' (2014: 6). To illustrate, suppose Bridget is offered a chance to stake even money on a fair coin landing heads. In evaluating her options (take the bet; don't take the bet), she will typically consider two possibilities—namely, the possibility that the coin lands 'heads', and the possibility that the coin lands 'tails'. A possibility she will typically not consider, however, is the possibility that the coin lands *on edge*. If she doesn't consider this possibility, then, even if she in fact has a non-zero credence that the coin will land on edge, she is evaluating her options by the same procedure that she would evaluate them conditional on the proposition that the coin will not land on edge.<sup>10</sup> She is thus, as Ross and Schroeder are using the phrase, treating the proposition that *the coin does not land on edge* as true in her practical deliberation.<sup>11</sup> Finally, for ease of exposition, I will often simply say 'S treats  $p$  as true in C' when what I really mean is 'in C, S treats  $p$  as true in her reasoning about what to do in C'.

The second notion that requires explanation is that of a *defeasible disposition*, which Ross and Schroeder contrast with what they call an *indefeasible disposition*. While Ross and Schroeder define neither of these notions, they say that 'if an agent had an indefeasible disposition to treat a proposition  $p$  as true, then she would act as if  $p$  even in [choice situations where] she has an enormous amount to lose in acting as if  $p$  if  $p$  is false, and little to gain in acting as if  $p$  if  $p$  is true' (2014: 9). By contrast, a defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true in one's reasoning is 'a disposition that can be overridden

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<sup>10</sup> To make this a bit more concrete, we can imagine Bridget drawing up a standard decision table. If no column (or columns) on the table represents the possibility that the coin lands on edge, then she is evaluating her options by the same procedure she would evaluate them conditional on the proposition that the coin will not land on edge.

<sup>11</sup> For convenience, I will often use the phrase 'S treats  $p$  as true in C' as shorthand for the more precise phrase 'S treats  $p$  as true in her deliberation in C about what to do in C'.

under circumstances where the cost of mistakenly acting as if these propositions are true is particularly salient' (9). Ross and Schroder alternatively refer to a defeasible disposition as a 'default disposition' or a 'natural tendency' (9). While we will be able to make do with this rough understanding of a defeasible disposition, one thing we need to be clear on is the following. As I understand them, Ross and Schroeder are not saying that extreme-stakes scenarios where  $p$  is relevant are outside the *range* of scenarios that trigger one's defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true. Rather, they are saying that the disposition can be 'overridden' in extreme-stakes scenarios. Compare this to, say, a choice situation where  $p$  is totally irrelevant. Here there is no need to 'override' the disposition to treat  $p$  as true, since this situation is outside the range of the disposition—that is, this is not the sort of situation that triggers that disposition in the first place. This distinction will be important below.

Ross and Schroeder argue that together with certain auxiliary assumptions, RD implies that what you know non-trivially depends on your current choice situation. They begin by claiming that RD entails

- (1) If S is in a choice situation where  $p$  is relevant, then for S to believe that  $p$  is in part for S to be disposed to treat  $p$  as true in her current choice situation.

Ross and Schroeder's first auxiliary assumption is

- (A1) If to have attitude  $A$  is in part to be disposed to  $\phi$  under circumstances  $C$ , then an agent S is justified to occurrently have attitude  $A$  in  $C$  only if it is rationally permissible for S to  $\phi$  in  $C$ .

From (1) and (A1) it follows that

- (2) If S is justified to occurrently believe  $p$ , then it is rationally permissible for S to treat  $p$  as true in her current choice situation.

Ross and Schroeder's next auxiliary assumption is

- (A2) If S knows that  $p$ , then S is justified to occurrently believe that  $p$ .

From (2) and (A2) it follows that

- (3) If S knows that  $p$ , then it is rationally permissible for S to treat  $p$  as true in her current choice situation.

Ross and Schroeder's final auxiliary assumption is

- (A3) If it is rationally permissible for S to treat  $p$  as true in C, then it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in C.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, (3) and (A3) entail

*The Knowledge-Action Principle.* S knows that  $p$  only if it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in her current choice situation.

As Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath (2009) have noted, it is possible to endorse the knowledge-action principle while rejecting pragmatic encroachment—one need only endorse *infallibilism* about knowledge. If knowledge that  $p$  requires absolute epistemic

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<sup>12</sup> By 'acting as if  $p$ ', Ross and Schroeder mean 'acting in the manner that would be rationally optimal conditional on the supposition that  $p$ ' (2014: 4).

certainty that  $p$ , then it follows rather trivially that one knows that  $p$  only if one can rationally act as if  $p$ . This is because absolute epistemic certainty that  $p$  plausibly licenses one in acting as if  $p$ —in the relevant sense (see fn. 12)—no matter what one’s choice situation. However, if knowledge that  $p$  does not require absolute epistemic certainty that  $p$ , then the knowledge-action principle plausibly implies that the level of epistemic certainty required to know that  $p$  non-trivially depends on one’s choice situation.<sup>13</sup> Hence, when combined with fallibilism and the auxiliary assumptions noted above, Ross and Schroeder’s reasoning-disposition thesis plausibly implies pragmatic encroachment, which would in turn account for the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions. Let us call this the ‘reasoning-disposition encroachment account’.

As I [omitted] and Lutz (2014) have argued, Ross and Schroeder’s (2) is implausibly strong. To see why, recall the sorts of cases that Jessica Brown (2008) uses as alleged counterexamples to the knowledge-action principle. Here is a slightly modified version of one such case.

Birth: One day Liz is offered a bet on whether she was born in England. In fact, Liz was born in England, and her reasons for believing so are just like anyone else’s: her parents told her she was born in England, her aunts and uncles tell stories about going to see her in the hospital, and so on. However, the terms of the bet are as follows: if Liz was born in England, Liz gains £1; if Liz was not born in England, Liz is tortured for the next thirty years.

As Brown (2006) notes, Liz knows that she was born in England, but it is not rationally permissible for her to take the bet, and hence *Birth* is a counterexample to the

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<sup>13</sup> Suppose that knowledge that  $p$  requires some degree of epistemic certainty  $d$  less than absolute epistemic certainty. If  $d$  does not depend on one’s choice situation, then by simply making the stakes high enough, we can create a choice situation where  $p$  is epistemically certain to degree  $d$  for S and yet it is not rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in C. This would be a violation of the knowledge-action principle. Hence, on the assumption of fallibilism, the knowledge-action principle implies pragmatic encroachment.

knowledge-action principle.<sup>14</sup> If so, then *Birth* is also a counterexample to the reasoning-disposition encroachment account, since that account implies the knowledge-action principle.<sup>15</sup>

But where does the reasoning-disposition encroachment account go wrong? If the knowledge-action principle is false, then at least one of Ross and Schroeder's principles must be false as well, since those principles together entail the knowledge-action principle. To begin to address this issue, let us focus not on the question of whether Liz knows she was born in England, but instead on the question of whether Liz *believes* that she was born in England. There is nothing inconsistent in supposing both that Liz believes that she was born in England and that she does not treat that proposition as true, in the sense defined above, when deciding whether to take the bet. Ross and Schroeder can accept this. The reasoning-disposition thesis does not require that an agent who believes that  $p$  actually treat  $p$  as true in all situations where  $p$  is relevant—the reasoning-disposition thesis merely requires the agent to be *defeasibly* disposed to treat  $p$  as true in her reasoning. Ross and Schroeder will simply insist that Liz has a defeasible disposition to treat the relevant proposition as true, but that that defeasible disposition is being overridden because of the extremely high stakes.

However, when we consider the question of *justified* belief—in particular, justified occurrent belief—Ross and Schroeder's account runs into trouble. Let  $b$  be the proposition that Liz was born in England. According to Ross and Schroeder's (2), it is

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<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere [omitted], I argue at length against the knowledge-action principle and in favor of an alternative principle.

<sup>15</sup> Not everyone agrees that cases like *Birth* are convincing counterexamples to the knowledge-action principle. Ichikawa (2012), for example, contends that arguments from such examples rest on implicit assumptions about 'what reasons are sufficient for [rationalizing] what actions'. In the case of *Birth*, the argument might seem to rest on the assumption that being born in England is a sufficient reason for Liz to take the bet. Ichikawa argues that a defender of the knowledge-action principle can, with at least some plausibility, deny this assumption. I deal with Ichikawa's objection at length elsewhere [omitted].

Another way one might try to defend the knowledge-action principle is to claim that the fact that Liz is being presented with such a bet provides Liz with undercutting/rebutting evidence for her belief that she was born in England (personal communication, [omitted]). Fortunately, the details of the case can be specified in various ways such that this is not the case. We can, for example, stipulate that the person offering the bet is under contract to do so, perhaps as a result of some highly unlikely earlier development. If the details are filled in properly, it will be highly implausible that his offering the bet to Liz provides her with any undercutting/rebutting evidence for her belief that she was born in England.

rationally permissible for Liz to occurrently believe that  $b$  only if it is rationally permissible for Liz to treat  $b$  as true in her current choice situation. For Liz to treat  $b$  as true in this choice situation would be for Liz to evaluate her options in the same manner she would evaluate them conditional on  $b$ . But if it were rational for her to evaluate her options in that way, then it would be rational for her to accept the bet. Since it is not rational for Liz to accept the bet, it is thus not rational for Liz to reason in that way. Hence, according to (2), Liz is not justified to occurrently believe that she was born in England. This seems mistaken.

According to the standard characterization of occurrent belief, to occurrently believe that  $p$  is to consciously believe that  $p$  or to have the belief that  $p$  in the forefront of one's mind. Suppose that Liz does just that. Suppose Liz consciously thinks to herself:

*Well, yeah, I was born in England. But still, the stakes here are crazy. After all, there is some chance, albeit incredibly small, that my belief is false. So I won't take the bet.*

Here Liz occurrently believes that she was born in England, and she seems perfectly rational in doing so, contrary to (2).<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps there are no intuitions in philosophy so strong that they must be preserved come what may. There are, however, some intuitions so strong that any theory that would overturn them requires a high level of independent support. I suggest that the intuition that Liz is justified to occurrently believe that she was born in England is one of these intuitions, and that the reasoning-disposition encroachment account simply does not yet have the level of support needed to overturn that intuition. We should thus look for an alternative account of pragmatic sensitivity.

### 3. THE REASONING-DISPOSITION IMPLICATURE ACCOUNT

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<sup>16</sup> The argument I have just given is aimed specifically at Ross and Schroeder's encroachment account. This argument does not, however, undermine all encroachment accounts, and it is not intended to do so.

Elsewhere [omitted], I suggested that what's wrong with Ross and Schroeder's account is RD. Contrary to RD, it seems to me that one might believe  $p$  and yet have no disposition whatsoever to take  $p$  as true in one's reasoning in extreme-stakes scenarios like Liz's. It is not as if Liz feels some *inclination* towards treating the relevant proposition as true in her deliberation about whether to take the bet but then *overrides* this inclination in order to evaluate her options more carefully. Rather, she goes straight to evaluating her options more carefully. This suggests, but of course does not prove, that Liz is not *overriding* a disposition to treat that proposition as true in that situation. Rather, she has no disposition whatsoever to treat the relevant proposition as true in *that* situation.

It also seems to me that believing requires *more* than a defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true in one's reasoning. Note that having a defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true does not entail actually being prepared to treat  $p$  as true in *any* choice situations at all. One might have a defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true and yet *also* be disposed to always override that disposition, always taking into account the possibility that not- $p$  whenever  $p$  is relevant. But such a combination of dispositions, it seems to me, is incompatible with belief—if one is not prepared to treat  $p$  as true in at least *some* choice situations, one does not believe that  $p$ .

While these considerations are by no means decisive, I have suggested [omitted] that the reasoning-disposition thesis be replaced with

*The Minimal Reasoning-Disposition Thesis (MRD).* Part of what it is to believe that  $p$  is to be prepared<sup>17</sup> to treat  $p$  as true in at least some choice situations where  $p$  is relevant.

MRD differs from RD in that the notion of being *defeasibly disposed to treat  $p$  as true in one's reasoning* has been replaced with the notion of being *prepared to treat  $p$  as true in at least some choice situations where  $p$  is relevant*. Following Ross and Schroeder, I understand a defeasible disposition to  $\phi$  as a 'natural tendency'—that is, a *pull* or *inclination* towards  $\phi$ -ing. As I noted above, having such a disposition is compatible

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<sup>17</sup> See fn. 7.

with not being prepared to  $\phi$  in any choice situations—one might have some natural inclination towards  $\phi$ -ing and yet be disposed to always override this inclination.

Importantly, being prepared to  $\phi$  in some situation does not mean that one will *definitely*  $\phi$  in that situations, nor does it mean that one *consciously* plans to  $\phi$  in those situation.<sup>18</sup> But it does mean that one has more than a mere ‘natural tendency’ towards  $\phi$ -ing. So in this sense, to be prepared to  $\phi$  is something stronger than a defeasible disposition to  $\phi$ , and so the condition that MRD places on belief is, in a certain respect, stronger than the condition that RD places on belief.

But, in another respect, the condition that MRD places on belief is weaker than the condition that RD places on belief. According to RD, belief requires a defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true *in one’s reasoning* (where  $p$  is relevant). According to MRD, belief requires that one be prepared to treat  $p$  as true in *at least some* choice situations where  $p$  is relevant. Consider again Liz’s extreme-stakes scenario. According to RD, Liz can believe that she was born in England despite not treating this proposition as true in her current choice situation, because the disposition required by belief is *defeasible* and thus can be overridden in extreme-stakes scenarios like this one. Nevertheless, according to RD, Liz must have some *inclination* or *pull* towards treating  $p$  as true in this choice situation—it is this inclination or pull that she overrides. But MRD requires no such thing. According to MRD, by contrast, Liz can believe that she was born in England despite having no inclination whatsoever to treat this proposition as true in her current choice situation. MRD does not require that in order to believe, one must be (even defeasibly) disposed to treat that proposition as true in *all* choice situations where it is relevant—it merely requires that one be prepared to treat that proposition as true in *some* choice situations where it is relevant.

MRD raises the following question: will just any choice situations do, or is there a more-or-less specific range of choice situations for which one must be prepared to treat  $p$  as true in order to count as believing that  $p$ ? One plausible answer is that in order to believe that  $p$ , one must be prepared to treat  $p$  as true in all *normal* choice situations. Some philosophers may balk at the notion of a normal choice situation, insisting that the notion is simply too vague. But such philosophers see vice where there is virtue. As

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<sup>18</sup> And it certainly doesn’t mean that one has ‘made preparations’ to  $\phi$  in that situation.

David Lewis famously noted,<sup>19</sup> we want our analyses to provide illumination, but we don't want them to eliminate vagueness. If the notion to be analyzed is itself vague—as it is in the case of *belief*—we want our analysis to capture this vagueness.

There are a couple of different ways of working out the idea that to believe is in part to be prepared to treat a proposition as true in normal choice situations. The most plausible version, it seems to me, relativizes the notion of a normal choice situation to a particular agent.<sup>20</sup> On this agent-relativized view, if it is normal for S to be in extreme-stakes scenarios, S won't count as believing that *p* unless she is prepared to treat *p* as true in those extreme-stakes scenarios. I think this is the right result. When we initially found it intuitive that Liz can believe that she was born in England without being prepared to treat that proposition as true in her extreme-stakes scenarios, we were surely filling in the details in the natural way, assuming that Liz is not normally offered such bets. But if she is normally offered such bets, then it's plausible that we would be less inclined to ascribe belief to her if she is not prepared to treat that proposition as true in that scenario.

To see this last point, let's consider a pair of cases that might be a bit more familiar. Suppose it's the monsoon. It doesn't make much difference to Betsy Businesswoman whether it will rain today, but since it rains almost every day during the monsoon, she is prepared to treat that proposition as true for the sorts of decisions that she normally faces—e.g., whether to take an umbrella with her as she leaves for work in the morning. Farmer Fred, however, is much more concerned about the weather. Although he has exactly the same evidence as Betsy Businesswoman, Farmer Fred is not prepared to simply treat it as true that it will rain today in *all* of the choice situations

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<sup>19</sup> In defense of his analysis of counterfactuals in terms of similarity of possible worlds, Lewis argued as follows.

It may be said that... the notion of comparative overall similarity of worlds is hopelessly unclear, and so no fit foundation for the clarification of counterfactuals or anything else. I think the objection is wrong. 'Unclear' is unclear: does it mean 'ill-understood' or does it mean 'vague'? Ill-understood notions are bad primitives because an analysis by means of them will be an ill-understood analysis. (It may yet be better than no analysis at all.) But comparative overall similarity is not ill-understood. It is vague—very vague—in a well-understood way. Therefore it is just the sort of primitive that we must use to give a correct analysis of something that is itself undeniably vague. (2001: 91)

<sup>20</sup> An alternative would be to relativize it to what is normal for the agent's group, or, alternatively again, the agent's species.

he normally faces where that proposition is relevant. While Fred is happy to simply treat that proposition as true when deciding whether to take an umbrella as he leaves the house, he will want to check today's weather forecast before deciding to go ahead and plant his field. Here it is natural to suppose that Betsy, but not Fred, believes that it will rain today. This tells in favor of a view according to which what you believe depends in part on what you are prepared to treat as true in those choice situations that are normal for you.<sup>21</sup>

According to the view now under consideration, MRD can be replaced with a slightly stronger principle I will call

*The Normal Reasoning-Disposition Thesis (NRD)*. Part of what it is to believe that  $p$  is to be prepared to treat  $p$  as true in all normal choice situations.

With NRD in hand, we can now account for the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions. Unlike Ross and Schroeder's account, the NRD-based account is an implicature account. Nonetheless, the account can be formulated in a way that is structurally analogous to Ross and Schroeder's encroachment account. We begin by noting that NRD entails

(1\*) If S believes that  $p$ , then S's belief that  $p$  is in part constituted by her being prepared to treat  $p$  as true in all normal choice situations.

Analogous to Ross and Schroeder's (A1), I assume

(A1\*) If S's attitude  $A$  is constituted in part by S's being prepared to  $\phi$  under circumstances  $C$ , then S is justified in having attitude  $A$  only if it is rationally permissible for S to  $\phi$  in  $C$ .

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<sup>21</sup> To be sure, Fred might be *just as confident* as Betsy that it will rain today, but as I [omitted] and others (e.g., Lara Buchak 2014) have argued, belief does not plausibly supervene on degree of confidence, contrary to the so-called 'Lockean Thesis'.

From (1\*) and (A1\*) it follows that

- (2\*) If S is justified in believing that  $p$ , then it is rationally permissible for S to treat  $p$  as true in all normal choice situations.

Note the crucial difference between (2\*) and (2), the latter being the claim that got Ross and Schroeder's account into trouble. As we noted above, (2) implies that Liz is justified to occurrently believing that she was born in England only if it is rationally permissible for her to treat that proposition as true in her current choice situation. On the natural assumption that such a choice situation is not normal for Liz, (2\*) has no such implication.

Suppose, however, that this kind of high-stakes situation *is* normal for Liz. In this case, (2\*) implies that Liz is not justified to occurrently believe that she was born in England. It seems to me that this is the right result. Again, let's consider Betsy Businesswoman, who normally faces only low-stakes choice situations where the weather is relevant, and Farmer Fred, who normally faces some high-stakes choice situations where the weather is relevant. It seems to me that, even if they have the same evidence, and even if they *right now* face the same choice situation, Betsy may be justified in believing that it will rain while Fred is not.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps even after consideration of cases like Betsy and Fred, you don't share the intuitions that I have reported here—that is, you don't have intuitions in favor of the noted implication of (2\*). In that case, it's important to keep in mind that I am not here arguing *from* these intuitions in support of (2\*). My aim at the moment is merely to show that, at a minimum, the noted implication of (2\*) is not *as implausible* as the noted implication of (2), and thus that the NRD-based account of pragmatic sensitivity has a certain advantage over Ross and Schroeder's RD-based account. In any case, let us proceed with the NRD-based account.

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<sup>22</sup> To be sure, they might be justified in having the same *level of confidence* that it will rain today. Please see fn. 21.

Despite the crucial difference between (2) and (2\*) that we've been discussing, the latter is nonetheless strong enough to explain why knowledge attributions are pragmatically sensitive. Unlike (2), however, (2\*) explains pragmatic sensitivity via pragmatically sensitive implicatures. To this end, we'll need an auxiliary assumption analogous to Ross and Schroeder's (A2), but more familiar.

(A2\*) If S knows that  $p$ , then S is justified in believing  $p$ .

From (2\*) and (A2\*) it follows that

(3\*) If S knows that  $p$ , then it is rationally permissible for S to treat  $p$  as true in all normal choice situations.

The final auxiliary assumption we need is simply Ross and Schroeder's

(A3) If it is rationally permissible for S to treat  $p$  as true in C, then it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in C.

(3\*) and (A3) entail what I call

*The Non-local Knowledge-Action Principle.* S knows that  $p$  only if it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in all normal choice situations.

The non-local knowledge-action principle, unlike the knowledge-action principle, does not imply that what one knows essentially depends on the nature of one's *current* choice situation. Crucially, however, the non-local knowledge-action principle is not *anti*-local: the choice situation one is currently in might be one of the choice situations in which it must be rationally permissible for one to act as if  $p$  in order for one to know that  $p$ . For

this reason, the non-local knowledge-action principle predicts that knowledge attributions will typically implicate claims about the subject's current choice situation. According to the non-local knowledge-action principle, an assertion that S knows that  $p$  is in part an assertion that it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in all normal choice situations. But in a conversational context where what is at issue is whether it is rational for S to act as if  $p$  in her current choice situation, an unqualified assertion that it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in all normal choice situations will typically implicate that it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in her current choice situation. The Gricean idea here is familiar: in a conversational context where what is at issue is whether it is rationally permissible for S to act as  $p$  in her current choice situation, it would be misleading to make an unqualified assertion that entails that it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in all normal choice situations unless one believed that S's current choice situation either is or is relevantly analogous to a normal choice situation. That's a mouthful. But it shows that NRD, via the non-local knowledge-action principle, supports an implicature account of the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions.

In a recent essay, Lutz (2014) develops an account of pragmatic sensitivity similar to the one I have just given. Lutz begins by offering a counterexample to Ross and Schroeder's reasoning-disposition account that is nearly identical to the one I offered here and previously elsewhere [omitted], and which we both adapted from Brown (2008). However, where I have used this counterexample as a partial basis for rejecting RD and replacing it with NRD, Lutz maintains that Ross and Schroeder's account goes wrong *downstream* from RD. Specifically, Lutz maintains that their account goes wrong either at (1) or (A1), depending on how these claims are interpreted. For Lutz, then, there is nothing wrong with RD, although there is something wrong with the account of pragmatic sensitivity that Ross and Schroeder have built on top of it. A better account to build on top of RD, Lutz argues, is an implicature account.

Lutz begins his account by arguing that knowledge ascriptions speak to the rationality of reasoning one way rather than another because knowledge ascriptions attribute warranted belief. He then asks

what is it about having a warranted belief that is relevant to the practical circumstances at hand? If [RD] is true, then the practical importance of warranted belief is constituted by S being justified in adopting a disposition to treat  $p$  as true in practical reasoning. But we can say more than this. The disposition in question is defeasible, after all. Simply conveying that S has adopted a heuristic to treat  $p$  as true in practical reasoning does not yet settle whether or not this is one of the situations where it would be rational to take  $p$  as true in practical reasoning, or whether this is rather one of those situations in which  $p$  should not be taken as true in practical reasoning. But if this is one of the situations in which  $p$  should not be taken as true in practical reasoning, then, given the practical circumstances, it would not be relevant to draw attention to this characteristic disposition of warranted belief. So the Demand for Practical Relevance guarantees that we can rule out the possibility that this is one of the circumstances in which the subject should not be taking  $p$  as true. Consequently, we can conclude that the speaker is trying to convey that this is a situation in which S may take  $p$  as true in practical reasoning. (1727 – 8)

Lutz’s account requires some unpacking. In what follows I offer what seems to me the most natural interpretation of Lutz’s account. I do not doubt that there are other plausible interpretations. Since my aim here is not to argue against Lutz’s account, but rather to welcome his account as akin to my own, I can hardly be accused of attacking a straw man.

First, there’s a small terminological issue. Throughout his essay, Lutz uses the phrases ‘S has a defeasible disposition to  $\phi$ ’ interchangeably with ‘S has adopted a heuristic to  $\phi$ ’. Since he takes the former phrase from Ross and Schroeder (2014), and since he does not say that he means anything by either of these phrases other than what Ross and Schroeder mean, I will for consistency replace his occasional uses of the latter with instances of the former.

With this in mind, note that Lutz says that ‘simply conveying that S has [a defeasible disposition] to treat  $p$  as true in practical reasoning does not yet settle whether or not this is one of the situations where it would be rational to take  $p$  as true in practical reasoning’ (2014: 1727). What it apparently does settle, however, is that

*there are some* situations where it would be rational for S to treat  $p$  as true in her practical reasoning. Indeed, Lutz writes earlier that ‘according to [RD], S’s believing that  $p$  entails that S is rational to [be defeasibly disposed] to take  $p$  as true, and thereby take  $p$  as true in the *vast majority* of situations’ (1722, emphasis in original). He also says that ‘it is best to think of this disposition to take these propositions as true as defeasible, since there will be (extraordinary) practical circumstances in which it is not rational to act on our beliefs’ (1723). From these remarks I conclude that Lutz maintains that if one is justified in having a defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true in one’s reasoning, then one is justified in treating  $p$  as true in *ordinary*—or, as I would put it, *normal*—choice situations.

Note also that in the above passage Lutz’s explicit conclusion is that a knowledge attribution typically implicates that it is rationally permissible ‘for the subject to take  $p$  as true in her practical reasoning’. This stands in apparent contrast to my account, the conclusion of which is that a knowledge attribution typically implicates that it is rationally permissible ‘for the subject to act as if  $p$ ’. However, elsewhere Lutz takes the rational permissibility of treating  $p$  as true in one’s reasoning to entail the rational permissibility of acting as if  $p$ .<sup>23</sup> Hence, I suspect that Lutz would have no strong objection to a slight reformulation of his account, a reformulation according to which the conclusion is that a knowledge attribution typically implicates that it is rationally permissible for the subject to act as if  $p$ . This allows us to eliminate a mere superficial difference between the two accounts.

With these considerations in mind, here is how I understand Lutz’s account. He begins by embracing RD. He then notes that RD entails

- (1\*\*) If S believes that  $p$ , then S’s belief that  $p$  is in part constituted by her defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true.

Next, the account assumes

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<sup>23</sup> On p. 1725 Lutz claims that the sentence “In C, if S knows that  $p$ , then S is justified to treat  $p$  as true in her practical reasoning” is simply the contrapositive of “In C, if it is rationally impermissible for S to act as if  $p$ , then S does not know that  $p$ .”

(A1\*\*) If S's attitude  $A$  is constituted in part by S's defeasible disposition to treat  $p$  as true, then S is justified in having attitude  $A$  only if it is rationally permissible for S to  $\phi$  in all normal choice situations.

From here, Lutz's account goes through exactly the same as my own. (1\*\*) and (A1\*\*) imply

(2\*) If S is justified in believing that  $p$ , then it is rationally permissible for S to treat  $p$  as true in all normal choice situations.

Drawing on the same auxiliary assumptions as my account—namely, (A2\*) and (A3)—(2\*) implies

*The Non-local Knowledge-Action Principle.* S knows that  $p$  only if it is rationally permissible for S to act as if  $p$  in all normal choice situations.

which, as I argued above, explains why an unqualified knowledge attribution will typically implicate that it is rationally permissible for the subject to act as if  $p$  in her current choice situation.

Given the deep overlap between Lutz's account and my own, I suggest we think of these as two versions of what I will call 'the reasoning-disposition implicature account'. If I've interpreted Lutz correctly, the only real difference between our accounts concerns how we reach (2\*). Whereas I get to (2\*) from NRD and the accompanying (A1\*), Lutz gets to (2\*) from RD and the accompanying (A1\*\*). At this point it is unclear to me just how important this difference is. In any case, I won't be adjudicating between these two versions of the reasoning-disposition implicature account here.

Lutz has offered a powerful defense of his version of the reasoning-disposition implicature account against the most well-known objections to earlier implicature

accounts (2014: 1732 – 1739). Since Lutz’s arguments can be offered with equal force in defense of my version of the reasoning-disposition implicature account, I will simply refer any readers interested in those objections to Lutz’s paper. The remainder of this paper is dedicated to showing that (A) the reasoning-disposition implicature account has an important advantage over the standard implicature account, but also that (B) this advantage comes with an important concession to *pragmatic encroachment* accounts.

#### 4. THE STANDARD IMPLICATURE ACCOUNT: EPISTEMIC THRESHOLDS

Peter Unger (1984) is often seen as the first to offer, but not endorse, a relatively clear articulation of an account according to which knowledge attributions have stakes-sensitive implicatures. Unger based his implicature account on what is now known as a skeptical invariantist view of knowledge. According to the skeptical invariantist view, knowledge attributions invariantly entail that the subject is in a very strong epistemic state. For such a view to be plausible, it needs to be combined with an account of why we often find knowledge attributions acceptable, despite the fact that almost all of them are false. This is exactly what Unger’s implicature account offered (1984: p. 52).<sup>24</sup>

More recently, Patrick Rysiew (2001 and 2007) and Jessica Brown (2006) have developed implicature accounts of pragmatic sensitivity based on *modest* invariantist views of knowledge. According to the modest invariantist view, knowledge attributions invariantly entail that the subject meets some *modest* epistemic standard. On this view, subjects know lots of things, and thus there is no general need for an implicature explanation of the acceptability of knowledge attributions. On this view, knowledge attributions are often acceptable because they are often true. Nevertheless, there remains a particular need to explain why knowledge attributions are pragmatically sensitive—that is, why their acceptability appears to wax and wane as we lower and raise what’s at stake in the subject’s choice situation. It is to this end (among others) that Rysiew and Brown have developed their versions of the implicature account.

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<sup>24</sup> Unger’s explanation of how this implicature works is extremely concise. On p. 52, Unger references ‘the appropriate psychological complications’, without describing what these are. Here Unger is referring to the sorts of psychological mechanisms he described in Chapter 1, where he uses the term ‘flat’, rather than ‘knows’, as his primary example. See especially p. 9.

Despite the opposing aims of Unger's account, on the one hand, and Rysiew and Brown's accounts, on the other, all of these accounts posit the same sort of mechanism by which the relevant implicatures are generated. At the core of all three accounts are (versions of) two theses.

*Epistemic Threshold for Knowledge (TK).* There is a fixed threshold  $T_K$  such that in order to know that  $p$ , one's epistemic position with respect to  $p$  must be at least as strong as  $T_K$ . This threshold is fixed independently of the subject's current choice situation.

*Epistemic Threshold for Rational Action (TRA).* There is a variable threshold  $T_A$  such that in order to rationally act as if  $p$ , one's epistemic position with respect to  $p$  must be at least as strong as  $T_A$ . This threshold varies in accordance with the subject's current choice situation: the higher the stakes, the higher the threshold.

If true, these two theses would together plausibly explain the pragmatic sensitivity of knowledge attributions. According to TRA, S is rational to act as if  $p$  only if S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_A$ . Hence, a conversational context where what is at issue is whether it is rational for S to act as if  $p$  is therefore a conversational context where part of what is at issue is whether S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_A$ . Now, according to TK, 'S knows that  $p$ ' does not entail that S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_A$ . It does, however, entail that S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_K$ . And in a conversational context where what is at issue is whether S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_A$ , an unqualified assertion that entails that S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_K$  will typically implicate that S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_A$ . The Gricean mechanism here is familiar: in a context where what is at issue is whether S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_A$ , it would be misleading to make an unqualified assertion that entails that S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_K$  if one did not believe that  $T_K$  was at least as high as  $T_A$ . This is the standard implicature account of pragmatic sensitivity. Let us call it the 'epistemic-threshold implicature account'.

The epistemic-threshold implicature account has considerable plausibility. First, it's plausible that there is an epistemic threshold necessary for knowledge that  $p$ . Second, it's plausible that there is an epistemic threshold necessary for rationally acting as if  $p$ . And third, it's plausible that an unqualified assertion that entails that some value is above a certain threshold will typically implicate that that value is above the conversationally relevant threshold. Nevertheless, the account faces a serious challenge.

## 5. A CHALLENGE FOR THE EPISTEMIC-THRESHOLD IMPLICATURE ACCOUNT

Following Rysiew (2007), I have so far formulated the epistemic threshold implicature account in terms of the ecumenical phrase 'epistemic position'. But precisely which epistemic state plays the role described in TK and TAR? While both Brown and Rysiew have offered suggestions in this regard, both have remained officially neutral on this particular question. Their choice to do so is a wise one: for the purposes of the epistemic-threshold implicature account, it does not matter *which* epistemic state plays the role described in TK and TAR. The crucial thing is that there is *some* epistemic state that plays that role. More precisely, what matters is that there is some epistemic state such that (1) knowledge requires a certain strength of that state and rational action requires another, possibly distinct, strength of that state and (2) the strength of the state required for rational action depends on one's choice situation, while the strength of that state required for knowledge is fixed across choice situations.

Nonetheless, let us consider the two suggestions that Rysiew and Brown have proposed. Doing so will help us to see a general challenge facing the epistemic-threshold implicature account. I have chosen the word 'challenge' here carefully—I do not mean to suggest that what follows is a reason to believe the epistemic threshold implicature account is *false*. However, in so far as the challenge remains unmet, we will at least have reason to remain skeptical of the epistemic-threshold implicature account, and thus to lend credence to other, competing accounts.

Following Brown's (2006) suggestion, we might try to understand the relevant notion of an epistemic position in terms of *the distance across possible worlds one's belief tracks the truth*. On this view, TK and TRA become the following.

*Truth-Tracking Threshold for Knowledge (TK<sub>TT</sub>)*. There is a fixed non-trivial set of possible worlds  $W_K$  such that in order to know that  $p$ , one's belief about whether  $p$  must track the truth across  $W_K$ . This set is fixed independently of one's current choice situation.

*Truth-Tracking Threshold for Rational-Action (TRA<sub>TT</sub>)*. There is a variable set of possible worlds  $W_A$  such that in order to rationally act as if  $p$ , one's belief about whether  $p$  must track the truth across  $W_A$ . This set is determined in part by one's current choice situation: the higher the stakes, the more possible worlds across which one's belief must track the truth in order to rationally act as if  $p$ .

Alternatively, following Rysiew's (2001) suggestion, we might understand the relevant notion of an epistemic position in terms of *being able to eliminate counter-possibilities*. On this view, TK and TRA become the following.

*Possibility-Eliminating Threshold for Knowledge (TK<sub>PE</sub>)*. There is a fixed non-trivial set of not- $p$  possibilities  $S_K$  such that in order to know that  $p$ , one must be able to rule-out each member of  $S_K$ . This set is fixed independently of one's current choice situation.

*Possibility-Eliminating Threshold for Rational-Action (TRA<sub>PE</sub>)*. There is a variable set of not- $p$  possibilities  $S_A$  such that in order to rationally act as if  $p$ , one must be able to rule-out each member of  $S_A$ . This set is determined in part by one's current choice situation: the higher the stakes, the more not- $p$  possibilities one must be able to eliminate in order to rationally act as if  $p$ .

How plausible are these versions of TK and TRA? We might worry that TK<sub>TT</sub> and TK<sub>PE</sub> both place controversial, if familiar, constraints on knowledge.<sup>25,26</sup> But I will not

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<sup>25</sup> TK<sub>TT</sub> is a strengthened version of the so-called 'safety' condition on knowledge, according to which S knows that  $p$  only if S is right about whether  $p$  in all nearby worlds *in which S believes that  $p$*  (Sosa 1999). TK<sub>TT</sub>, by contrast, requires S to be right about  $p$  in *all* nearby worlds, regardless of whether S believes  $p$  or *not- $p$*  in each of those worlds. See Juan Comesaña (2005) for critical discussion.

rehearse the well-known worries about these theses here. Instead, I want to have a closer look at TRATT and TRAPE.

The most immediately worrisome thing about TRATT and TRAPE is that they have an uneasy relationship with standard decision theory. According to TRATT, the rationality of acting as if  $p$  depends in part on how far across possible worlds one's belief tracks the truth. A bit more precisely, the idea is that as the stakes go up, it is rational to act as if  $p$  only if one's belief about  $p$  tracks the truth across more distant possible worlds. According to TRAPE, the rationality of acting as if  $p$  depends in part on which not- $p$  possibilities one can rule-out. A bit more precisely, the idea is that as the stakes go up, it is rational to act as if  $p$  only if one can rule out more distant not- $p$  possibilities. According to standard decision theory, however, the rationality of a particular course of action depends, not on truth-tracking or possibility-eliminating, but on *rational degree of confidence*.

Standard decision theory says that the rational course of action is that which maximizes expected utility, where the expected utility of an action is defined as a certain sum of products—namely,

$$\sum_i V(O_i)C(O_i)$$

Here  $V(O_i)$  is the value of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  possible outcome of the action, and  $C(O_i)$  is the subject's rational degree of confidence that  $O_i$  would be the actual outcome of the action.

On the so-called *radical subjectivist* interpretation of standard decision theory, there are no constraints on rational degrees of confidence other than the axioms of probability theory. On other accounts, however, there are further constraints. David Lewis' Principal Principle, for example, roughly says that where an agent believes that the objective probability of  $p$  is  $x$ , her degree of confidence that  $p$  also ought to be  $x$ . Other theorists have gone further, insisting that one's degrees of confidence are rational only if they are in accordance with the total evidence either known by or, on some views, available to, the agent. As far as I know, however, no theorist has proposed that

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<sup>26</sup> One particular version of TKPE is Rysiew's (2001) relevant alternatives approach to knowledge, where the set of relevant alternatives is fixed independently of one's current choice situation.

rational degrees of confidence are constrained by either the distance across possible worlds one's belief tracks the truth or by the set of counter-possibilities one can rule out.

Thus, TRATT and TRAPE are compatible with standard decision theory only if there is at least some strong correlation between rational degree of credence, on the one hand, and either truth-tracking or possibility-eliminating, on the other. But it is unclear whether there are such correlations. With regards to truth-tracking, consider the following scenario.

It's Friday and Keith sees that there is a long line at the bank. Keith has been to the bank the last few Saturdays and found it to be open. He is also right now looking at a sign on the bank's door, and the sign indicates that the bank is open from 8:00 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. On the basis of the strong evidence available to him, he believes that the bank will be open tomorrow (Saturday), and so he decides to wait until tomorrow to deposit his checks. Nonetheless, unbeknownst to Keith, the manager has *just now* been debating whether to close the bank tomorrow for some emergency repairs. In the end she decides not to close the bank, but she very easily might have done so, and had she done so the evidence *right now* available to Keith would not have been different from what it now is. For example, even if the manager had decided to close the bank tomorrow, she would not yet have had a chance to post a sign indicating that the bank would be closed.

Here Keith might very easily have falsely believed that the bank will be open tomorrow. The bank manager very easily could have decided to close the bank tomorrow, and if she had, Keith would have falsely believed that it will be open. Hence, in this case, Keith's belief does not track the truth about whether the bank is open even across very nearby possible worlds. And yet, despite this, it is rational for Keith to have a *high degree of confidence* that the bank will be open tomorrow.

Not only does the above case illustrate the fact that rational degree of confidence does not seem to depend on the distance across possible worlds one's belief tracks the truth, it also reinforces the idea that the rationality of action depends on the

former, and not the latter. Provided the stakes are reasonably low, it is rational for Keith to wait to deposit his checks, despite the fact that Keith's belief that the bank will be open does not track the truth even across *very nearby* possible worlds.

Is there a correlation between rational degree of confidence and the extent to which one can rule out counter-possibilities? At first, it might seem that the answer is 'yes'. Rational degree of confidence is plausibly correlated with the strength of one's evidence, and the strength of one's evidence might seem to be correlated with the extent to which one's evidence rules out counter-possibilities. But this natural thought turns out to be false. Evidence that rules out more counter-possibilities often rationally requires a *lower* degree of confidence. Consider the following scenario.

Keith is at the bank on a Friday and has all the same evidence that he did in the previous scenario, except for the following: he overhears someone in line saying that she heard the bank manager discussing the possibility of closing the bank tomorrow for emergency repairs. In this scenario, Keith has all the evidence he had before, and then some—he also has the stranger's testimony to the effect that the bank manager was discussing the possibility of closing the bank tomorrow for emergency repairs.

In this new scenario Keith should have a *lower* degree of confidence that the bank will be open tomorrow than what he should have in the previous scenario. And yet, despite this, Keith's evidence in the new scenario rules out more counter-possibilities than what were ruled out by his evidence in the previous scenario. Consider, for example, the possibility that months ago the manager put in place a policy to start closing the bank on Saturdays, without prior notice, starting tomorrow. Keith's evidence in the previous scenario did not rule out this possibility. His evidence in the new scenario—at least according to a modest understanding of 'rules out'—does. And yet the degree of confidence that is rationally permissible for Keith to have in the previous scenario is higher than the degree confidence it is rationally permissible for him to have in the new scenario.

The above cases show that there is neither a *perfect* correlation between truth-tracking and rational degree of confidence, nor a *perfect* correlation between possibility-eliminating and rational degree of confidence. It remains a possibility, however that one of these correlations is strong enough to warrant a slightly more complicated version of the epistemic-threshold implicature account. Suppose, for example, that there was a strong but not perfect correlation between truth-tracking and rational degree of confidence. In that case, an assertion that entailed that one's belief tracked the truth so far across possible worlds might indeed implicate that it was rationally permissible for one to have a degree of confidence above a certain threshold, which would in turn implicate that it is rationally permissible for one to act as if one's belief is true. A similar strategy might be employed *mutatis mutandis* to save the possibility-eliminating version of the epistemic-threshold implicature account.

I leave it to others to try to work out views along these lines. My point here has merely been to illustrate a general challenge to the epistemic-threshold implicature account. The challenge is to either show that knowledge and rational action are both connected to (different degrees of) either the *same* epistemic state or else *sufficiently correlated* epistemic states. In the final section, I'll discuss how, and at what cost, the reasoning-disposition implicature account avoids this challenge.

## 6. PRAGMATIC ENCROACHMENT STRIKES BACK

Where the epistemic-threshold implicature account claims that both knowledge and rational action are constitutively connected to different degrees of some common epistemic state (or at least sufficiently correlated epistemic states), the reasoning-disposition implicature account claims that there is a constitutive connection between knowledge and a disposition to treat a proposition as true in one's reasoning. This feature of the reasoning-disposition implicature account allows it to avoid the challenge faced by the epistemic-threshold implicature account—namely, that of identifying the relevant epistemic state(s).

This is not to say that proponents of the reasoning-disposition implicature account *deny* that both knowledge and rational action are connected to (different degrees of) the same epistemic state. In fact, the reasoning-disposition implicature

account guarantees that if rational action is connected to a certain kind of epistemic state, then so is knowledge. According to the reasoning-disposition implicature account, you know that  $p$  only if you are justified in believing that  $p$ , and you are justified in believing that  $p$  only if it is rational for you to treat  $p$  as true in normal choice situations. But whether it is rational for you to treat  $p$  as true in normal choice situations depends (in part) on whether it is rational for you to act as if  $p$  in normal choice situations. Hence, if rational action is connected to a certain kind of epistemic state, then, according to the reasoning-disposition implicature account, so is knowledge. The virtue of the reasoning-disposition implicature account is thus not that it denies that knowledge and rational action are connected to (different degrees of) the same epistemic state, but rather that the account guarantees that whatever sort of epistemic state is connected to the latter is also therefore connected to the former.

This virtue of the reasoning-disposition implicature account, however, comes with a significant concession to proponents of pragmatic encroachment. The concession is that, contra Lutz (2014), the reasoning-disposition implicature account cannot be employed in defense of the traditional view of knowledge, according to which ‘pragmatic factors play no role in determining whether a subject has knowledge’ (1718). This is because the reasoning-disposition implicature account is *also* an encroachment account. In the introduction of this essay I said that

According to encroachment accounts, the term ‘knows’ picks out a relation that is in part pragmatically sensitive. On the standard version of these accounts, whether the knowledge relation holds depends in part on pragmatic features of the subject’s current choice situation.

According to the reasoning-disposition implicature account, what a subject knows does not essentially depend on features of her *current* choice situation. The reasoning-disposition implicature account is thus not a ‘standard’ encroachment account. Nonetheless, the account entails that knowledge *is* pragmatically sensitive: what you know essentially depends in part on how you can rationally act in *normal* choice situations. In short, according to the reasoning-disposition implicature account,

knowledge attributions have *local* pragmatically-sensitive implicatures because they have *non-local* pragmatically-sensitive entailments.<sup>27</sup>

One might hope to argue that this concession is not unique to the reasoning-disposition implicature account. In particular, one might hope to argue that the epistemic-threshold implicature account also implies that what you know is non-locally pragmatically sensitive—that is, what you know depends on how you can rationally act in some, but not necessarily your current, choice situation. After all, according to TK, S knows that *p* only if S's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_K$ . But for any plausible  $T_K$ , if one's epistemic position is at least as strong as  $T_K$ , then one can rationally act as if *p* in any normal choice situation. Hence, it seems that TK plausibly implies the non-local knowledge-action principle, according to which you know that *p* only if it is rationally permissible for you to act as if *p* in normal choice situations. Hence, it appears that the epistemic-threshold implicature account also implies that what you know depends in part on how it is rationally permissible for you to act.

To address this issue, we need to get clearer on just what it means for pragmatic factors to *play a role in determining whether a subject has knowledge*. What it does not mean is simply that there is some *necessary connection* between knowledge and pragmatic factors. No traditionalist would have denied, for example, that if you know that *p*, then there is at least some choice situation where it is rationally permissible for you to act as if *p*. Where proponents of pragmatic encroachment disagree with traditionalists is primarily over the *order of explanation*. According to traditionalists, your knowing that *p* is part of what *makes it the case* that it is rational for you to act as

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<sup>27</sup> A helpful reviewer notes that, despite being an encroachment account, the view offered here in a certain respect 'cuts against' the standard intuitions used to support encroachment accounts. Suppose, for example, that Hannah faces the decision of whether to offer someone with a peanut allergy a certain sandwich, and that Hannah has no stronger evidence than a somewhat vague memory of the sandwich being made from almond butter. Standard encroachment accounts will hold that in a case like this, Hannah does not know that the sandwich does not contain peanuts. But if Hannah normally faces only low-stakes choice situations where such issues are relevant, then, on the account offered here, Hannah may well know that the sandwich does not contain peanuts, even in this high-stakes scenario. So, in this sense, the account offered here cuts against the standard intuitions used to support an encroachment account: it allows that those intuitions are mistaken. But this is merely a consequence of the fact that the account offered here is a *non-standard* encroachment account: it is an encroachment account that offers an *implicature* approach to the relevant intuitions. By accounting for the intuitions standardly used in support of standard encroachment accounts, the account offered here thus, like any implicature account of pragmatic sensitivity, gains support from those intuitions, despite the fact that it allows that what we find intuitive might be literally false, and what we find unintuitive might be literally true.

if  $p$  in those choice situations where it is rational for you to act as if  $p$ . Or, more precisely, some fact about you partially in virtue of which you know that  $p$ —specifically, your epistemic position—is part of what makes it rational for you to act as if  $p$  in those choice situations where it is rational for you to act as if  $p$ . According to proponents of pragmatic encroachment, however, the fact that it is rational for you to act as if  $p$  in certain choice situation is part of what *makes it the case* that you know that  $p$ .

When it comes to order of explanation, the standard implicature account—that is, the epistemic-threshold implicature account—sides with the traditional view. On the epistemic threshold-implicature account, what you know depends on how you can rationally act in normal choice situations, not because what you know is in part constituted by how you can act in normal choice situations, but because knowing requires an epistemic position that makes acting on your belief rationally permissible in normal choice situations. On this account, were you to normally face extreme-stakes choice situations, that difference alone wouldn't constitute a change in what you know.

The reasoning-disposition implicature account, by contrast, grants the order of explanation to proponents of pragmatic encroachment: what you know constitutively depends on how it is rationally permissible for you to act in normal choice situations, which in turn constitutively depends on pragmatic features of those choice situations. According to the reasoning-disposition implicature account, you know that  $p$  in part *because* you normally face certain kinds of choice situations. On this account, were you to normally face extreme-stakes scenarios, that difference alone could change what you know. While the reasoning-disposition implicature account is thus not a standard encroachment account, one cannot plausibly deny that on this account, pragmatics encroach into knowledge.

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