Comments on:
"Evaluative adjective sentences: A question-based analysis of projection"

This manuscript seems to have a good potential to be a solid contribution to the relevant fields. I have some reservations and concerns, however, to be explicated below.

#1: The most crucial issue, for me, is that the argument in Section 3 is not clear enough. Take the following passage (p.16):

> To illustrate how the Current Question constrains the Discourse Question, consider an utterance of the example in (30) [*[Sam]ₓ was smart to buy a ticket the day they went on sale.*"], which is presented with its focus alternative set. The Current Question, as a subset of this focus alternative set, entails that somebody bought a ticket the day they went on sale and that somebody buying a ticket the day they went on sale is smart. That is, when this utterance is made, what is already taken to be part of the common ground is that somebody bought a ticket the day they went on sale and that, in buying a ticket the day they went on sale, somebody was smart. Only some Discourse Questions are plausible, given this common ground information. In particular, both the Discourse Questions 'Who got a ticket?' and 'Did Sam get a ticket?' are plausible because both are unanswered given the entailments of the Current Question. On the other hand, Discourse Questions like 'How did Sam get a ticket?' and 'Was Sam smart to buy a ticket the day they went on sale?' are less plausible because what is common ground already answers these Discourse Questions.

This part confuses me a lot. How does the information: "somebody bought a ticket the day they went on sale and that [this same person's] buying a ticket the day they went on sale is smart" answers the question: "How did Sam get a ticket?"? It is possible that, while Mary (or whoever) was smart to buy a ticket on the first day, Sam stupidly bought an overpriced ticket from a scalper in the last minute.

Side note: The information that somebody was smart to buy a ticket on the first day appears to support the inference that if Sam bought a ticket on the first day, he was smart to do so. But this inference is not logically valid. Consider the following discourse segment:

(1) The Avengers were stupid to eat the poisoned food. Except for Hulk. He was aware that the food was poisoned, but he was also aware that his body would not be affected by any sort of poison. Hulk was not stupid to eat the poisoned food.

From "Somebody was stupid to eat the poisoned food", it does not follow that if Hulk ate the poisoned food, he was stupid to do so. (End of side note)
    I cannot make sense out of the paragraph starting with "Next consider an utterance of the example in (31), again presented with its focus alternative set. ..." for a parallel reason.

#2: I feel like, at the descriptive level, what's going on is fairly straightforward. NEAS (2) is "ambiguous" and allows two interpretations, where one is a "flipped image" of the other.

1

(2)   John was not fortunate to win the lottery.
    a.   "John was not fortunate to win the lottery. The money he earned ended up ruining his life."
         Interpretation #1 (this accords well to the traditional understanding of EAS's; perhaps the default/unmarked one)
         at-issue: John's winning the lottery, if it takes place, is **not** to be characterized as fortunate
         not-at-issue (*projective*): John won the lottery.
    b.   "John was not fortunate to win the lottery. He is still suffering from poverty."
         Interpretation #2 (the "problematic", "puzzling", or "unmarked" one)
         at-issue: John did **not** win the lottery.
         not-at-issue: John's winning the lottery, if it takes place, is to be characterized as fortunate.

(Karttunen et al. 2014 puts forth a somewhat more complicated picture, but it is not clear to me why the simple one in (2) would not suffice.)

Which interpretation a NEAS receives in a given context is affected by **how plausible each interpretation would be in the given context**. (This is a very general statement that applies to ambiguity in general.)

In (2a), the added comment "The money he earned ended up ruining his life" makes Interpretation #2 implausible, thereby singling out Interpretation #1. (2b), the added comment ("He is still suffering from poverty"), plus the common-sensical knowledge that winning a lottery is good thing and makes the winner rich, makes Interpretation #2 the only plausible option.

An explicitly asked question is part of the context, and thus it is not surprising at all that the choice of a preceding question affects the choice between the two interpretations.

(3)   A: Did winning the lottery make John happy?
      B: (Actually,) John was not fortunate to win. (**Interpretation #1**)

(4)   A: Who is the lucky guy who won the lottery? Was it John?
      B: John was not fortunate to win. (**Interpretation #2**)

Obviously, (3B) on Interpretation #2 would be incongruent to (3A), its at-issue content not addressing the question. Likewise, (4B) on Interpretation #1 would be incongruent to (4A), its at-issue content not addressing the question.

I believe that the authors fully agree with all the things said above. My concern is that the authors might be overplaying the roles of the CQ/DQ here. In the following discourse segments, the explicitly asked questions help disambiguation of the word *mole*.

(6)   A: What kind of pet did the Smiths have?

B: They had a mole [animal].

(7)   A: How come the terrorists knew the CIA's plan?
       B: They had a mole [spy].

But this does not make us want to come up with a "question-based account" of word disambiguation, right? I am inclined to believe that "disambiguation" taking place in (3)/(4) and that taking place in (6)/(7) are ultimately of the same kind – and thus that it is misguided to link directly (i) the projectivity of a EAS prejacent on the one hand and (ii) the notion of the CQ on the other. Rather, it appears that a CQ is one of many factors that leads to disambiguation of (N)EAS's.

(I do not see how exactly their question-based analysis works in the first place, as explained in Comment #1. A better-explained version might resolve my doubts …)

#3: On p.16 and elsewhere, the authors appear to suggest that focus on the subject (inevitably? – I am not clear about what the authors are committed to here) leads to the interpretation where the prejacent is at-issue. Cases like (8) conforms to this generalization.

(8)   A: Who wasn't able to buy a ticket?
       B: [John]$_F$ was not smart to buy a ticket early enough. (*nonprojective*: 'John bought a ticket early enough')

But it is also possible to construct a case where the subject is in focus and yet the prajecent is *not* at-issue.

(9)   A: Everyone ate the poisoned food. Everyone was stupid to do so -- except for one person.
       B: Huh? Who are you talking about?
       A: [Hulk]$_F$ was not stupid to do so. He is immune to poison. (*projective*: Hulk ate the poisoned food.)

I wonder if this poses a problem for the authors' question-based account.

#4: I have serious doubts about Gradient Projection Principle, and the associated assumption that projectivity and at-issueness are gradient.

It is very much possible that, upon hearing a sentence like: *John was (not) fortunate to win the lottery*, people have different degrees of commitments (certainty) as to which component is at-issue. But a similar kind of "gradience" could easily be observed with a sentence like: *Those CIA agents had a mole*.

(10)   Chris: Those CIA agents had a mole.
       QUESTION 1: Is Chris certain that the CIA agents had a small animal?
       QUESTION 2: Is Chris certain that the CIA agents had some sort of spy?
       QUESTION 3: Is Chris certain that the CIA agents had a small animal, rather

3

than some sort of spy?
…

Different respondents would show different reactions ("certainly yes", "possibly no", etc.) to QUESTIONS 1, 2, 3, …. But this should not be taken to mean that two senses of *mole* are gradient.

Likewise, people may say, "certainly yes", "possibly no", etc. when asked to rate a statement/question like "Americans are smart/Are Americans smart?" or "Trump is smart./Is Trump smart?", partly due to the vagueness of *smart*. This kind of observation has led some to admit that the truth is a gradient, rather than binary, notion. But this move has its problems, and is far from being widely accepted (see e.g. Ch 2 of Wechsler's 2015 *Word Meaning and Syntax*, Oxford University Press).

Admitting the gradience of projectivity/at-issueness is a rather radical (if not insensible) move, and the data discussed by the authors do not appear to lend direct support for it.

#5: I find it rather interesting that (i) EAS's and (ii) factive predicate sentences both show two—unmarked and marked—patterns of projection, and yet the "marked pattern" for the former is rather different from that for the latter.

With EAS's, the "marked pattern" (= Interpretation #2) is a flipped image of the "unmarked pattern" (= Interpretation #1). In an NEAS, negation behaves like metalinguistic negation—observe the parallelism between (2b) and (11), where the canonically projective component becomes nonprojective and vice versa.

(11) John does NOT speak French TOO. He speaks only French.
      "nonprojective (targeted by the negation)": John does **not** speak some language other than French.
      "projective": John speaks French.

With factive predicate sentences, in my understanding, the "marked pattern" is such that the projective content simply disappears, rather than becomes nonprojective.

(12) **unmarked pattern**
      (Mary was at Princeton, but told John that she was not.) John did not discover that Mary was at Princeton.
      "nonprojective": John did **not** come to believe that Mary was at Princeton.
      "projective": Mary was at Princeton.

(13) **marked pattern**
      Was Mary at Princeton? -- John did some survey, but did not discover that Mary was at Princeton.
      "nonprojective": John did **not** come to believe that Mary was at Princeton.
      ~~"projective": Mary was at Princeton.~~

Probably the authors are aware of this interesting contrast—I just thought fuller illustration of this would make a nice addition to the manuscript.

#5: Oshima compares the three "constructions" in (14), where the Adj+*to*+Inf construction corresponds to what the authors call the EAS sentence.

(14) a. John was wise to leave. [Adj+*to*+Inf construction]
      b. It was wise of John to leave. [Adj+*of*+NP construction]
      c. Wisely, John left. [Subject-Oriented Adv (SOAdv) construction]

He assumes that the Adj+*to*+Inf construction is semantically equivalent to the Adj+*of*+NP construction, while the SOAdv construction has the reversed assertion/presupposition (at-issue/non-at-issue) configuration.

Karttunen *et al.* (2014) mention (in fn.1) that for a Adj+*of*+NP construction, the prejacent appears to be invariably projective. This, along with other remarks by them and by the manuscript's authors, suggests that Oshima's characterizations are to be revised in the following way.

(15) a. John was (not) wise to leave. [Adj+*to*+Inf construction]
        allows both Interpretations #1 and #2
      b. It was (not) wise of John to leave. [Adj+*of*+NP construction]
        Interpretation #1 only
      c. Wisely, John {left/did not leave}. [Subject-Oriented Adv (SOAdv) construction]
        Interpretation #2 only

To me, the picture in (14) suggests that the unmarked projection pattern of the EAS pattern arises from polysemy at the level of conventionalized lexical or constructional meaning (a position taken by Karttunen *et al.*), rather than from some general mechanism regulating how CQ's/DQ's constrain what projects and what does not (a position taken by the authors). If the latter were the case, it would be difficult to explain why the Adj+*of*+NP construction never allows the "generalization" to project, and the SOAdv construction never allows the prejacent to project.

Side note: I feel like there is some reminiscence between the "polysemy" of the EAS (Adj+*to*+Inf) sentence on the one hand, and kinds of polysemy illustrated below (see Chapters 2 & 3 of Wechsler 2015), in that they all involve "foreground-background reversals" in a broad sense.

(16) a. The window is rotting.
      b. John crawled through the window.

(17) John is drilling {a. a hole/b. the metal}.

#6: As I understand, when Barker and Oshima said the prejacent of an EAS is (always) presupposed, they were wrong in two ways.
    First, the prejacent is sometimes at-issue (asserted). Second, even when the prejacent is projective, it is still not presuppositional, in the sense that it is a "[-SCF

(Strong Contextual Felicity)] projective content" in Tonhauser et al's (2013; "Towards a taxonomy of projective content", *Language* 89) terminology, and a "non-presuppositional CI" in Oshima's (2017; "The meanings of perspectival verbs and their implications on the taxonomy of projective content/conventional implicature", *Proceedings of SALT 26*) terminology.

The first point is clearly explained in the manuscript. The second point, on the other hand, is not. The authors might find the second point empirically controversial – it would be nice, anyhow, if they can clarify their take on this.

#7: A minor point: While (22a) is the denotation (ordinary semantic value) of (21aM), (22b) is not the denotation but the focus semantic value of (21aJ) – shouldn't this be clarified in some way, e.g., using super- or subscript "f". It is problematic to say that (22b) is the meaning of (21aJ), because then (21aJ) ends up having "the same meaning" as *David likes Lebanese coffee*. Maybe I am just missing some terminological assumptions here.

#8:

> For adjectives with more than 10 pages of results, we extracted all relevant examples from the first 10 pages and then extracted a random selection of examples from the remaining pages.

What is the rationale of the random selection? One could use, say, the examples from the first 15 pages instead, or do a random selection from all the pages, to obtain whatever amount of examples desired.