

# Singleton Indefinites and the Privacy Principle: *Certain* Puzzles

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## **Abstract:**

The gap between a definite and an indefinite is reduced in the case of specific indefinites, in the sense that they both have determined reference. This fact is reflected in most accounts, particularly so in the analysis of Schwarzschild (2002) where specific indefinites are argued to quantify over singleton sets. If definites and specific indefinites share the singleton domain property, how are we to separate the two? The Privacy Principle, which is cued to the information state of discourse participants, is argued to apply to definites as well as indefinites (among other quantifiers), making it even harder to draw the line between definites and specific indefinites. We look at issues surrounding the distinction between definiteness and specificity through the lens of two empirical phenomena, bare nominals and specificity markers. Bare nominals in languages with determiners, for example English, and bare nominals in languages without determiners, for example Hindi, highlight different aspects of the problem. English bare plurals are known to have indefinite readings but not specific indefinite readings. Hindi bare nominals are thought to have definite and indefinite readings but can be shown not to have specific indefinite readings. The second empirical phenomena we consider are specificity markers like *certain*. In many languages they require a determiner in the singular but not in the plural, raising questions about their syntactic status as determiners or modifiers. They also do not occur in certain constructions, for example imperatives. Probing such restrictions provides a window into their semantic profile. This paper thus presents some puzzles that center around the creation of singleton sets and its relation to the Privacy Principle.

**Keywords:** Specificity, (In)definiteness, Bare Nominals, Exceptional Scope, Epistemic Specificity, Anti-familiarity, Specificity Markers as Modifiers/Determiners, Specificity Markers in Imperatives, The Privacy Principle, Implicit domain restriction.

## **I. Specific Indefinites as Singletons**

In this section I briefly review two properties of specific indefinites, exceptional scope and epistemic specificity. I present the core features of the account of these properties in Schwarzschild (2002). I then identify some issues raised by that account that are then addressed in sections 2 and 3.

### **1.1. What makes an Indefinite Specific?**

There are two signature properties associated with specific indefinites. The first is the exceptional scope property, the ability of indefinites to take scope outside islands. Pairs like (1a)-(1b), made famous by Fodor and Sag (1982), are illustrative:

- 1a. If a friend of mine from Texas had died in the fire, I would have inherited a fortune.
- b. If every friend of mine from Texas had died in the fire, I would have inherited a fortune.

c.  $\exists x [\text{speaker's-friend}(x) \wedge \text{from-Texas}(x) \wedge [\text{died-in-the-fire}(x) \rightarrow \text{inherit-a-fortune}(\text{speaker})]]$

The indefinite in (1a) is ambiguous between a narrow scope reading and an apparent wide scope reading. On the first reading, the consequent holds if any Texas resident who is a friend of the speaker had died. On the second reading, the speaker would have benefitted from the death of a particular individual who is a friend and resides in Texas. The variant with the universal quantifier in (1b) is unambiguous. It has only the narrow scope reading, whereby all Texans who are friends of the speaker would have to have died in order for the speaker to have benefitted. It lacks the reading in which the speaker gains a fortune for every friend from Texas who dies.<sup>1</sup> This is the basis for the view that indefinites, on their specific reading, can disregard syntactic constraints on scope taking that other quantifiers are subject to.

The reading at issue, however, is not actually captured by allowing the indefinite to take scope outside the island. The formula in (1c), unlike one where the existential has scope inside the antecedent, entails that the speaker has a friend who lives in Texas but it does not in any way limit the number of such friends. It therefore predicts that the speaker would have benefitted from the death of any of his Texan friends. However, there is a sense in which the speaker, in making the statement in (1a), has “a particular individual in mind” (Karttunen 1968, 20).<sup>2</sup> This is particularly clear when specificity markers like *certain*, *particular*, or *specific* are included in the indefinite. Fodor and Sag therefore label specific indefinites referential. This property is independent of the exceptional scope property. Not only does it persist even when special dispensations have been made about scope, it is also present when there are no islands or other scopal elements at play, as in *I talked with a logician* (Karttunen 1968, 14).

While referentiality aligns specific indefinites with definites and proper names, there is a crucial distinction that has been noted in the literature on this topic. Proper names and definites denote individuals who are identifiable by discourse participants but the referent of a specific indefinite is typically not identifiable to the hearer. In fact, specific indefinites may well have a strict requirement of discourse unfamiliarity, a requirement that makes itself visible in certain grammatical contexts. Imperatives, for example, are not conducive to specific indefinites, a fact that comes through particularly clearly if *certain* is used to bring out the specific reading:<sup>3 4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The wide and narrow scope readings for (1b) are given in (i) and (ii), respectively. The narrow scope reading for (1a) is given in (iii):

- (i)  $\forall x [[\text{speaker's-friend}(x) \wedge \text{from-Texas}(x) \wedge \text{died-in-the-fire}(x)] \rightarrow \text{inherit-a-fortune}(\text{speaker})]$
- (ii)  $\forall x [\text{speaker's-friend}(x) \wedge \text{from-Texas}(x) \wedge \text{died-in-the-fire}(x)] \rightarrow \text{inherit-a-fortune}(\text{speaker})]$
- (iii)  $\exists x[\text{speaker's-friend}(x) \wedge \text{from-Texas}(x) \wedge \text{died-in-the-fire}(x)] \rightarrow \text{inherit-a-fortune}(\text{speaker})]$

<sup>2</sup> There are also problems having to do with conditionals whereby an individual who makes the antecedent false can make the conditional true. Since the apparent exceptional scope effect is evident in other island configurations as well, I set this issue aside.

<sup>3</sup> I follow the view that *a N* is ambiguous between a specific and non-specific reading, while *a certain N* is not. A simple illustration of this is given below:

- (i) I didn't see a student.  $\neg > \exists \ \& \ \exists > \neg$
- (ii) I didn't see a certain student  $\exists > \neg$  only.

However, there are contexts that distinguish between a plain specific indefinite and one with a specificity marker in it (see Heim 2011 and von Heusinger 2011).

- 2a. #Please bring me a certain book.  
b. Please bring me the book.  
c. Please bring me *The Namesake*.

The directive in (2a) cannot be fulfilled because all that the hearer can infer is that there is a particular book the speaker has in mind but not which book it is. The directive has an overt specificity marker that disambiguates the indefinite in favor of a specific reading. It would not be implausible to conclude that it is the specificity marker that is the cause of the infelicity and that absent the specificity marker, the directive *please bring me a book* becomes acceptable only under a non-specific interpretation of the indefinite. The directives in (2b)-(2c), with a definite and a proper name respectively, do not suffer the same fate. Both presuppose discourse familiarity, and the willing interlocutor will have no problem in satisfying the request.

Another illustration of the difference between definites/proper names and specific indefinites with respect to discourse familiarity is illustrated by their behavior in contexts like the following. If the speaker and hearer both see someone enter the room, (3a) cannot be uttered felicitously, except of course ironically.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, (3b)-(3c) are quite acceptable:

- 3a. #Look, a certain professor has arrived.  
b. Look, the professor has arrived.  
c. Look, Prof. Smith has arrived.

I take examples like (2) and (3), then, to establish that there is a subtle but real distinction in the discourse status of specific indefinites and regular referential terms. Thus, while there is an element of referentiality in specific indefinites, perhaps a better way to think about this property is in terms of *epistemic specificity*, cued to only some discourse participants (Farkas 1994).

The presentation of these two signature properties glosses over many finer points that the extensive literature on specific indefinites has brought into the discussion. I refer the reader to von Stechow (2011) for an overview of this topic as well as for leads on specific issues. For present purposes, this simplified picture is enough to get us started on our quest to understand how one leading approach to specific indefinites deals with them.

## 1.2. Specificity through Domain Restriction

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<sup>4</sup> Sabine Iatridou (p.c.) points out that *certain* is also unacceptable in out-of-the-blue information seeking questions: #*Who bought a certain book?* I would say the reason for this is the same. The addressee cannot answer a question about a book she cannot identify.

<sup>5</sup> Explanations for ironic uses typically appeal to flouting of Gricean maxims. In this case, for example, one may argue that even though the discourse participants can see who is being referred to, the choice of a specific indefinite signals that the speaker is not actually identifying that individual. Note that it would only make sense to do so in contexts where that individual's arrival deviates from the norm in some way. Maybe she is late and has held things up in the process so that her arrival signals that the event can proceed. A neutral context where the individual arrives as expected would not support such ironic uses as there would be no pressure from the context to mask identity. See Breheny (2003) on the use of *certain* in what he calls jokey situations and Wilson and Sperber (2012: 123-45) for a general discussion of irony.

In an extremely influential paper, Schwarzschild (2002) argued that there is nothing exceptional about the scope taking potential of indefinites. Specific indefinites are indefinites whose domain is contextually restricted in such a way that they are reduced to singletons. What appears to be exceptional scope is really just an instance of scope neutralization, a phenomenon well-accepted in relation to definites. Domain restriction is pervasive in natural language and whatever explanation one adopts for them should transfer over to indefinites.<sup>6</sup> Of course, whether the restriction can be reduced to a singleton depends on the determiner. *A/an/some* readily allow for specificity through singleton domains while *every* typically does not. As Schwarzschild notes, there are some obvious theoretical advantages to this approach to specificity:

- 4a. It makes for the more general statement of the constraints syntax imposes on quantifier scope. They apply to indefinites the same as to other quantifiers (pg. 311).
- b. It makes for the more general statement of contextual delimitation of the domain of a quantifier. It is in principle indifferent to the cardinality of the extension of the resulting restriction (pg. 312).

Schwarzschild also addresses the issue of epistemic specificity for specific indefinites. He argues that the implicit domain restriction that applies to all quantifiers, and in the case of indefinites can create singletons, differs from indexicals like *now* which are identifiable by all discourse participants. What specific indefinites encode is an implicit parameter that is recognized by discourse participants, but not the actual referent. He proposes the Privacy Principle in this connection:

#### 5. Privacy Principle

It is possible for a felicitous utterance to contain an implicitly restricted quantifier even though members of the audience are incapable of delimiting the extension of the implicit restriction without somehow making reference to the utterance itself (pg.307).

While the Privacy Principle promises a way of maintaining the distinction between definites and indefinites, that it actually does so is not quite clear to me. The discussion surrounding this principle is foreshadowed in the introductory sketch, where Schwarzschild notes:

6. There are familiarity conditions on the use of definites which do not apply to indefinites...Fodor and Sag's *a friend of mine* is also singleton, albeit incomplete, and since it is likewise indefinite, there is no requirement that the 'referent' be familiar to all discourse participants. This freedom appears to allow the content of the contextual supplementation to be less transparent to the hearer in a way that would be impossible with a definite. What we have in effect is an incomplete indefinite description, where the completion is asymmetrically available to the speaker but not to the hearer...It will be the burden of section 6 to discover the nature of asymmetric contextual delimitation and to show that it is

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<sup>6</sup> The same explanation for the exceptional scope property of indefinites was independently proposed by Breheny (2003).

evident in the behavior of incomplete quantifiers in general and of other contextually completable expressions (pg. 292).

Schwarzschild provides examples in section 6 to show the generality of the Privacy Principle. Here are two of the cases he gives where non-indefinites come under its banner:

- 7a. Me and my partner Fleisch went into debt; serious debt and to some not very nice people. I got an idea that I could sell that old fish farm I have back home and maybe raise a few bucks. I call a lawyer and she tells me: “You can only sell the farm, if all of your relatives die.” Since I haven’t heard about any genocidal maniacs recently, I give up on that idea. Meanwhile, I relate the story to Fleisch who is more desperate than I am. He asks who’s included in ‘all of your relatives’? I say I don’t know exactly, but the devilish look in his eyes tells me I better go back to the lawyer to find out.
- b. The song I was thinking about is from the early 70’s.

As Schwarzschild puts it, it is well known to the speaker and his friend Fleisch that the lawyer’s use of *all* in (5a) is contextually restricted but exactly how only the lawyer can tell. Both the speaker who is reporting the lawyer’s speech and Fleisch who is now hearing it come under the Privacy Principle, the only way to say what is being quantified over is to make reference to the lawyer’s utterance: it’s the people she had in mind. Similar considerations apply to the definite in (5b). It is unlikely that the addressee is privy to what song the speaker was thinking of, though she certainly knows that there is a unique song that the speaker had in mind. Schwarzschild notes in his conclusion:

8. It sheds light on the intriguing ‘specificity’ intuitions that have been associated with the data in question. This last point stands on its own. Regardless of what we eventually say about the scope of indefinites, I hope to have demonstrated how they help us to see more clearly the power of implicit parameters. Although this power is felt more acutely with indefinites than in other cases, it is present elsewhere and its consequences should not be underestimated (pg. 312).

### 1.3. A preview of what is to come

In this article I will explore some of the consequences of Schwarzschild’s approach to specificity. One issue I will look at is the relationship between definites and indefinites with regard to epistemic specificity. Given that both types of noun phrase share the propensity for scope naturalization through domain restriction down to singletons, and given that both can be brought under the purview of the Privacy Principle, do we still need to distinguish between them in some formal way? In addressing this issue, I will compare regular indefinites to noun phrases without determiners, using English bare plurals and Hindi bare singulars for comparison. This will be done in section 2.

The second issue I will explore is the status of specificity markers like *certain*, *specific* and *particular*. I base most of my discussion on the first of these markers, on the view that its behavior is representative of this class of expressions, though I note at least one respect in which they do not align perfectly. The goal is to draw out some aspects of the syntax and semantics of

specificity markers that have not been previously discussed in the literature, especially as they relate to domain restriction and the Privacy Principle,. This is undertaken in section 3.

## II. Specificity and Determiners

In this section I consider two types of noun phrases that are often classified as indefinites, English bare plurals and Hindi bare singulars. Neither of these display exceptional scope readings and if they are indefinites, would have to be regarded as weak indefinites. Note that there is no formal distinction between strong and weak indefinites in the theory under consideration since strong indefinites are simply indefinites with singleton domains. The so-called weak indefinites to be discussed provide interesting foils to regular indefinites that allow both weak and strong readings.

### 2.1. English Bare Plurals and Specificity

I start with the view that specificity in indefinites can be reconciled with a standard existential quantifier, once the possibility of domain restriction down to singletons is admitted. “It follows then that in principle any indefinite could be a singleton indefinite, hence we should expect to find apparent unexpected scope-taking by indefinites” (Schwarzschild 2002: 297). Let us look at English bare plurals as an example of an indefinite that does not show this expected scope-taking behavior and try to understand what might prevent what should in principle be possible.

We have known since Carlson (1977) that English bare plurals have indefinite readings in episodic contexts. For example, (9a) entails the existence of barking dogs, just like its overt indefinite counterpart: *some dogs are barking*. Bare plurals have been analyzed under the neo-Carlsonian approach of Chierchia (1998), for example, as kind terms that undergo *Derived Kind Predication (DKP)*, a sort-shifting operation, to yield indefinite readings, (9b). They have also been analyzed as predicative terms that are bound by an external existential quantifier, (9c), by Wilkinson (1991), and Gerstner-Link and Krifka (1993), among others:<sup>7</sup>

9a. Dogs are barking.

b.  $\text{barking}_s (\overset{\cap}{\text{dogs}}) \text{ =Derived Kind Predication= } \Rightarrow \exists x [\overset{\cup}{\text{dogs}}_s(x) \wedge \text{barking}_s(x)]$

c.  $\exists x [\text{dogs}_s(x) \wedge \text{barking}_s(x)]$

Carlson also noted that bare plurals only allow narrow scope readings, and more significantly, narrow scope readings that are not available to regular indefinites:

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<sup>7</sup> The kind forming operator *nom*, represented by  $\overset{\cap}$ , is based on Chierchia (1984). The rule of Derived Kind Predication, proposed by Chierchia (1998:364) is given in (i). See Dayal (2013) for a full explication of the core properties of Chierchia’s theory. Krifka et al (1995) and Dayal (2011a) provide overviews and further references:

(i) If P applies to objects and k denotes a kind, then  $P(k) = \exists x [\overset{\cup}{k}(x) \wedge P(x)]$

- 10a. Miles wants to meet policemen. Want >  $\exists$   
 b. Miles wants to meet a policeman/some policeman. Want >  $\exists$ ;  $\exists$  > Want
- 11a. John killed a rabbit/some rabbits repeatedly.  $\exists$  > repeatedly  
 b. John killed rabbits repeatedly. Repeatedly >  $\exists$

This is as expected on the neo-Carlsonian view. The bare plural is an individual denoting expression of type  $\langle s, e \rangle$ , which allows it to be interpreted as a direct argument of the predicate. When the rule of DKP enters the picture, it introduces an existential quantifier locally, ensuring narrow scope with respect to any other scopal element in the structure. As pointed out in Dayal (2011a), the issue of bare plurals taking obligatory narrowest scope has never been satisfactorily addressed by those who take bare plurals to be simple indefinites.<sup>8</sup> I therefore take the scope facts to suggest that adequate empirical coverage is only afforded by analyses that include reference to kinds, followed by a sort-sifting operation such as DKP.

With this background, we can now ask how the theory of specificity in Schwarzschild (2002) applies to bare plurals. In that connection, we may note that bare plurals are open to domain restriction. A member of the department review board might utter (10a) with a non-specific reading of *policemen* restricted to those employed by the particular district under review. Since we don't see scope neutralization, or apparent wide scope readings, it must be the case that such narrowing stops before reaching singleton status. It is worth highlighting that the resistance to singleton status cannot simply be imputed to plurality as there are well-known examples of specific plural indefinites: *if three/some relatives of mine die, I will inherit a fortune*.

It is helpful in trying to understand the behavior of bare plurals with respect to specificity and scope to start with cases where there are no other scopal elements involved. Neither (9b) nor (9c) tell us why bare plurals should resist specific readings. That they do so is verified not only by examples like (10) and (11), involving exceptional scope, but by examples like (12), from Dayal (2013), where scope interaction is not at issue:

- 12a. Some dogs, namely Spotty and Rover, are barking.  
 b. #Dogs, namely Spotty and Rover, are barking.

If epistemic specificity refers to individuals the speaker has in mind, bare plurals do not allow for it and we would like to know why. Here I briefly present an alternative version of the neo-Carlsonian account of bare plurals as a possible answer to this question.

In Dayal (2013) I argued that bare plurals are kind terms that do not involve existential quantification even in episodic contexts. Instead, they refer to the maximal individual that instantiates the kind at the evaluation index. I offered the following modification of Chierchia's DKP rule:

13. DKP-Modification (Maximality + Proper Widening):  
 If P(s) applies to objects and k is a kind, then

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<sup>8</sup> van Geenhoven (1998) and Krifka (2004) are two accounts that derive narrow scope for bare plurals by analyzing them as denoting properties. However, neither accounts for the facts straightforwardly. To discuss these proposals falls outside the scope of this paper.

$\llbracket P(s)(k) \rrbracket = 1/0$  if  $\llbracket \exists s' s < s' \wedge P(s)(k_{s'}) \rrbracket = 1/0$ ,  
where  $\exists x[x \leq k_s \wedge \neg \text{in-}s(x)]$  and is undefined otherwise.

What (13) says is that a bare plural is only acceptable in a context  $s$  if the extension of the kind term in  $s$  is representative of a larger group of entities, those that include instantiations in a larger situation  $s'$ . That is, the episodic reading of bare plurals operates on a widened domain of quantification, in the sense of Kadmon and Landman (1993). The so-called indefinite readings of bare plurals are actually representative group readings of the kind discussed in Brisson (1998) and Lasersohn (1999). I refer the reader to Dayal (2013) for further explication and details of implementation.

The point that is relevant to our present concerns is this. If a bare plural operates on a widened domain, it will necessarily include reference to entities that are outside the speaker's ken.<sup>9</sup> That is, the domain cannot be reduced to a singleton that is known to the speaker but unknown to the hearer. On this view, then, bare plurals can never be subject to the Privacy Principle because they, by their very nature as kind denoting terms, are antithetical to epistemic specificity. More concretely, the claim of widening accounts for the impossibility of specification, demonstrated in (12). This imputes the inability of bare plurals to manifest exceptional scope to their inherent character as kind denoting terms. While their domain may be contextually restricted, it nevertheless includes non-salient entities whose identity cannot be known to the speaker.

## 2.2. Hindi Bare Nominals and Specificity

Let us now turn to bare nominals in languages that do not have determiners and see how the theory of specificity in Schwarzschild (2002) applies to them. Here I will restrict myself to one language of this type, namely Hindi, and report the findings in Dayal (2004 and 2017). Focusing on Hindi bare singulars, I will show that they can be characterized as singletons but they nevertheless cannot be characterized as specific indefinites.<sup>10</sup>

Dayal (2017) addresses the popular notion that bare singulars in languages without determiners are ambiguous between definite and indefinite. It is easy to establish that Hindi bare singulars are definites. It is somewhat more controversial whether they can be classified as indefinites. I have argued that they are not genuine indefinites but before we look at the data that show this, let us note that this is unexpected, viewed from the perspective of languages with determiners. Consider the following comment from Löbner (1985:320): “as for languages which do not have a definite article, it is plausible to assume that they just do not explicitly express the way nouns are to be interpreted.” I take this to imply that bare nominals in such languages are to be taken as ambiguous between definite and indefinite.

A more nuanced view is presented in Heim (2011): “in languages without definiteness marking, the relevant “ambiguous” DPs may simply be indefinites. They are semantically

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<sup>9</sup> I take the notion of widening in Kadmon and Landman (1991) to have a modal dimension. In the case of bare plurals it would include possible instantiations of the kind, not known to the discourse participants.

<sup>10</sup> As discussed in Dayal (1992 and 2004), Hindi bare plurals behave more or less like English bare plurals as far as kind, generic and existential readings are concerned. They additionally have definite readings, just like their singular counterparts.



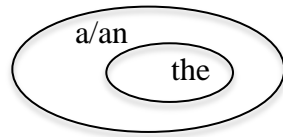
equivalent to English indefinites. But they have a wider range of felicitous uses than English indefinites, precisely because they do not compete with definites and therefore do not get strengthened to carry the implicatures that would show up if they were uniformly translated as indefinites into English”.

To put this in context, consider the following meanings for the singular definite and indefinite articles found in languages like English.<sup>11</sup>

14a.  $[[\text{the}]] = \lambda P: \exists x \forall y [P(y) \leftrightarrow y = x]. \iota x[P(x)]$

b.  $[[\text{a/an}]] = \lambda P. \lambda Q. \exists x [P(x) \& Q(x)]$

c.



Every context in which a statement with *the N* is felicitous and true is a context in which the corresponding statement with *a/an N* is also felicitous and true, but not the other way around. *Maximize Presupposition*, a principle that favors the use of presuppositional counterparts over simpler forms, effectively blocks the indefinite in contexts where the domain set is known to be a singleton. Heim’s point is that in languages which do not have a lexical exponent of *the*, this distinction will not be evident. A bare singular should be compatible with singleton as well as non-singleton domains of quantification.

As stated above, it can be easily established that bare NPs in languages without determiners behave like definites, on the basis of well known diagnostics, such as anaphoricity and the homogeneity test. The latter specially shows that bare NPs must denote singleton sets (Löbner 1985):

15a. *A dog is sleeping and a dog is barking.*

b. *That dog is sleeping and that dog is barking.*

c. *#The dog is sleeping and the dog is barking.*

d. *#Fido is sleeping and Fido is barking.*

The impossibility of predicating incompatible properties of a definite follows from the analysis of definites as involving singleton sets. That they should align with proper names rather than demonstratives or indefinites is therefore expected.

Hindi, a language without determiners, shows that a bare NP behaves like definites/proper names with respect to Löbner’s test:

16. # *kutta so-rahaa-hai aur kutta bhaunk-rahaa-hai.*

dog sleep-PROG-PR and dog bark-PROG-PR

'The dog is sleeping and the dog is barking.'

<sup>11</sup> Since we are focusing on singular terms in Hindi, we can work with the simpler version in (14a). The plural version imposes uniqueness calibrated to maximal individuals.

Having established this, let us consider the scope properties of Hindi bare singulars. The following examples from Dayal (2017) are illustrative:

- 17a. *agar mere rishtedaar ki maut ho jaaye, to mujhe bahut paisaa milegaa*  
 if my relative of death happen then I-DAT lot money get-FUT  
 ‘If my relative dies, I will get a lot of money.’
- b. *har vidyaarthii-ne maujuudaa vishai par har lekh paRhaa*  
 every student-ERG current topic on every article read  
 ‘Every student read every article on the current topic.’

The bare NP in (17a) denotes a unique referent potentially identifiable to both speaker and hearer. The addition of the numeral *ek* ‘one’, as in *mere ek rishtedaar* ‘my one relative’, is needed to make it a specific indefinite.<sup>12</sup> The difference between the available and unavailable readings is subtle, riding crucially on the gap between common ground knowledge and epistemic specificity asymmetrically cued to the speaker.<sup>13</sup> The relevant point is perhaps better illustrated in (17b). Consider a sentence like *every student read every article on a current topic*. A narrow scope reading for the indefinite would require every student to have read every paper on any current topic – that is every student would have read every paper on every current topic. A wide scope reading would require every student to have read every article on one of the several current topics, the same one. The reading of interest is the one where the choice of topic varies with students. This reading would allow a continuation like the following: *for example, Mary read every article on the Russia investigation and Sue read every article on the Tax Reform Bill*.<sup>14</sup> The Hindi sentence does not have this intermediate scope indefinite reading. Neither does it have the wide scope indefinite reading. To get either of these readings, the numeral *ek* ‘one’ would have to be used: *ek maujuudaa vishai* ‘one current topic’. Without overt markers of indefiniteness what we have is the definite reading, where the existence of the relevant topic has already been established in the discourse. In fact, the conclusion based on (17) could be anticipated on the basis of (16), for it would not have been infelicitous had an indefinite reading been available for the bare nominals.

It should be clear enough from even this very cursory window into Hindi that neither the view that bare NPs in languages without determiners are ambiguous between definites and indefinites nor the view that they have a wider distribution than indefinites in languages with determiners applies to Hindi. To the extent that these facts also hold in other determiner-less

<sup>12</sup> The numeral *ek* ‘one’, in its unstressed form, can function like *a/an* in many contexts but unlike *a/an* is crucially unable to have a neutral narrow scope reading with respect to negation or to lend itself to generic readings (Dayal 2004).

<sup>13</sup> One may argue, quite rightly, that the definiteness in this example is due to the possessive construction. The absence of the relevant reading can be ascertained by translating examples which do not involve possessives.

<sup>14</sup> For reasons not entirely clear to me, some form of modification of the noun *vishai* ‘topic’, as in *maujuudaa vishai* ‘current topic’ seems to be needed to make Hindi (17b) fully acceptable.

languages, the conclusions we will draw about the distinction between definites and specific indefinites in the next section will apply to them as well.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.3. Differentiating singleton definites from singleton indefinites

The distinction between definites and indefinites has standardly been made along two dimensions: uniqueness vs. non-uniqueness and familiarity vs. novelty. Definites are taken to impose on their restriction the requirement that they be instantiated by unique (maximal) individuals. Indefinites have no such requirement, though in competition with definites may well end up with a non-uniqueness implicature. Definites have also been argued to refer to familiar discourse referents while indefinites have been seen as introducing new discourse referents. Specific indefinites add an interesting new dimension to this picture, being morpho-syntactically indefinite but seeming to align with definites with respect to the uniqueness criterion. This leaves the familiarity-novelty condition as one possible way of distinguishing between definites and specific indefinites. The goal of this section is to see if it can explain the behavior of bare nominals, and to see if it can help us sift out the implications of the fact that noun phrases that lack determiners lack specific indefinite readings. We focus in particular on Hindi bare singulars as they allow us to make pointed comparisons between singleton definites and singleton indefinites. While Hindi bare singulars can denote kinds, just like the singular definite in English can (*the dinosaur is extinct*), such singular kind terms do not undergo kind formation in the same way as plural terms and therefore do not lend themselves to DKP based indefinite readings (Dayal 2004). In addition, we have seen that the Hindi bare nominal can undergo argument formation, presumably via *iota*, which results in a singleton definite. It therefore begs the question why it should not also undergo argument formation via  $\exists$ , resulting in a singleton indefinite.

In order to address this issue, let us start with the noun phrase that does have the exceptional scope property of singleton indefinites (18a), and compare it to the bare nominal which lacks such a reading (19a):<sup>16</sup>

- 18a. ek maujuudaa vishai  
 One current topic  
 “a current topic”  
 b.  $\lambda Q \exists x [C-T(x) \wedge P(x) \wedge P'_{H\text{-unknown}}(x) \wedge Q(x)]$   
 c.  $|C-T \cap P \cap P'| = 1$
- 19a. maujuudaa vishai  
 current topic

<sup>15</sup> Although I restrict myself to Hindi here, the absence of specific indefinite readings for bare nominals in determiner-less languages is attested more generally (see Dayal 2004 and forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> If (19b) were to include a hidden property  $P'$ , it would have to be known to both speaker and hearer but then there would be no distinction between  $P$  and  $P'$ :  $\lambda x [C-T(x) \wedge P(x) \wedge P'_{S-H\text{-known}}(x)]$ . I therefore do not include  $P'$  in (19b).

- “the current topic”
- b.  $\iota x [C-T(x) \wedge P(x)]$
  - c.  $|C-T \cap P| = 1$

Assuming that (18a) and (19a) are both incomplete descriptions, we can now try to probe further into the connection between the hidden identifying properties that make these noun phrases singletons (cf. (18c) and (19c)), the discourse status of such properties, and the structure of the noun phrase. Both types of noun phrase involve properties that lead to domain restriction, restricting the set to particular times or places, for instance. I represent them above as P. The other is a special type of property that is only known to the speaker. We can now ask where in the nominal structure these two types of domain restriction could be encoded. In addressing this issue, we will first consider the view that bare nominals are NPs that undergo covert type shifts when they occur in argument positions. We will then look at the problem from the perspective that all nominal arguments project full DP structures. Bare nominals only appear to be bare but they do have a D which happens to be null.

Let us extend the neo-Carlsonian account of bare nominals, briefly reviewed in section 2.1, with two further additions:<sup>17</sup>

- 20a. **Blocking Principle:** (‘Type Shifting as Last Resort’): For any type shifting operation  $\tau$  and any X:  $* \tau(X)$  if there is a determiner D such that for any set X in its domain,  $D(X) = \tau(X)$ .  
(Chierchia 1998: 360)
- b. **Ranking:**  $\{nom, \iota\} > \exists$  (Dayal 2004: 419)

English and Hindi bare nominals can be taken as property denoting NPs of type  $\langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ , which undergo covert type shifts that are subject to the two principles given in (20):

- 21a.  $[_{DP} \text{one } [_{NP} \text{current-topic}]]$
- b.  $[_{NP} \text{current-topic}]$

The Blocking Principle explains why Hindi bare nominals have definite readings but not English bare plurals, but it is the ranking of covert type shifts that explains the missing indefinite reading. Recall that in Schwarzschild’s theory there is no formal distinction between specific and non-specific indefinites – they differ only in the cardinality of their sets. Hindi bare singulars do not have specific indefinite readings because they do not have indefinite readings. We could then say that ordinary domain restrictions (the property P in (18) and (19)) are represented at the level of NP, but the special type of domain restriction that must not be known to the hearer is crucially tied to existential quantifiers. The overt indefinite phrase in (18a) provides the D that makes the introduction of this property possible. When P’ is present, (18a) behaves like a specific indefinite, when it is not present, it behaves like a non-specific indefinite. The same option is not available to (19a) because there is no existential quantifier in play.

The challenge for this view, of course, is to explain the apparent indefinite readings of bare nominals. The indefinite readings of English (and Hindi) bare plurals can be explained

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<sup>17</sup> The ranking proposed in Chierchia (1998) places *nom* over  $\{\iota, \exists\}$  which does not yield the right results. It predicts that bare nominals in languages like Hindi could not have definite or indefinite readings.

straightforwardly as derivative on their kind-denoting reading, as discussed in section 2.1. The apparent indefinite readings of Hindi bare singulars is harder to explain and I cannot do full justice to the issue within the constraints of this paper. I have argued elsewhere (Dayal 2004 and 2011b, 2015 for example) that bare singulars have indefinite readings only in certain syntactic positions, and thus have construction-specific sources. The indefinite readings of Hindi bare singulars in direct object position are an example of the latter.<sup>18</sup>

To return to the structure of the Hindi bare nominals in (18a) and (19a), there is a fairly well-established alternative view that says all noun phrases, including bare nominals, must be DPs (Longobardi 1994, among many others). On this view, the structures under discussion would be as given below:

- 22a. [<sub>DP</sub> one [<sub>NP</sub> current topic]]  
 b. [<sub>DP</sub> Ø [<sub>NP</sub> current topic]]

The structure in (22a) is for the overt indefinite form in (18a) and is uncontroversial and has the potential for specific and non-specific readings, as discussed above. The interesting case is the bare singular in (19a), which would be analyzed as (22b), with a null D. The question is how to determine what the semantics of this null D should be. In order to capture the definite reading of bare nominals in Hindi, we would want to encode the *iota* operator in this D. However, cross-linguistically we would have to use the Blocking Principle to determine in which languages a null D could and could not encode *iota*. In order to rule out the unavailable specific indefinite interpretation, we could take one of two routes. We could stipulate that overt  $\exists$  determiners but not null  $\exists$  determiners license properties that can be hearer-unknown. Or we could rule out the possibility of the null D encoding  $\exists$  altogether. The first option is a non-starter as it cannot capture the obligatory narrow scope behavior of such NPs (cf. 11a vs. 11b). The second option is viable only if we import from the neo-Carlsonian account discussed in relation to (21), the construction-specific  $\exists$  force for the so-called indefinite readings. What we see then is that positing a null D does not provide a real alternative to the neo-Carlsonian theory, at least as far as interpretive possibilities are concerned. The important point in explaining the missing specific readings is to block bare nominals from being interpreted as having internal existential force.

To conclude, we have seen in this section that bare noun phrases, especially when considered from a cross-linguistic perspective, indicate that the generality of Schwarzschild's Privacy Principle must be tempered with sensitivity to the definite/indefinite contrast. While definiteness can be expressed with or without a determiner, true indefiniteness must have a lexical exponent. Only in such a structure can an indefinite acquire the potential for specificity.

### III. Specificity Markers

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<sup>18</sup> See Dayal (2011 and 2015) for a detailed account of how indefinite readings can arise in this position. The process involved is classified as pseudo-incorporation, which builds on the property level meaning of bare singulars (and plurals) and is sensitive to factors such as case marking, verbal aspect and the hard-to-pin-down nameworthiness of the noun-verb combination. Crucially, these effects are not found in other argument positions, such as subject and indirect object positions.

We now use the conclusion from the last section, that it is only full DPs with overt determiners that allow specific indefinite readings, to pivot slightly to DPs whose status as specific indefinites is overtly flagged by specificity markers. In this section, we consider the status of such markers with respect to their position in the nominal spine. We also consider their semantics as it relates to the distinction between anti-familiarity and the Privacy Principle.

### 3.1. Determiners or Adjectives?

We have mentioned the specificity marker *certain* in relation to singular indefinites but it also occurs with plurals. There is an interesting contrast between the two cases which, to the best of my knowledge, has not been discussed in the literature. In the singular version *certain* functions like an NP modifier that needs a determiner (23a). In the plural, it seems to create complete noun phrases, much like a determiner (23b):<sup>19</sup>

- 23a. \*(a) certain book.  
b. certain books.

This leads to several distinct possible analyses of *certain*, two of which are given in (24) and (25):

- 24a. [DP a-certain [NP book]]  
b. [DP certain [NP books]]

- 25a. [DP a [NP certain [NP book]]]  
b. [DP Ø [NP certain [NP books]]]

Let us start with the option in (24) which posits that *certain* is essentially a determiner except that in the singular it has the form *a-certain*. The pattern is not restricted to *certain* but applies also to other specificity markers like *specific* and *particular*. As such, we would have to posit not only a complex determiner *a-certain*, but also *a-particular* and *a-specific*, while allowing the simple forms in the plural. This line of explanation captures the facts but seems to miss the crucial connection to number specification.<sup>20 21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The contrast we see in (23) is replicated outside the domain of specificity. Partitive phrases like *a slice of/slices of* or *a part of/parts of* show similar contrasts. But we set these aside here and focus exclusively on specificity markers.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Bobaljik (p.c.) also points out that mass nouns do not occur easily with *certain*: *certain ?(types of) honey*, *certain ?(jars of) honey*. I do not explore this further here, though the role of number specification with mass nouns vs. count nouns is clearly relevant. It is worth noting that mass nouns part company with bare plurals in this respect, though they typically tend to align with bare plurals semantically while behaving like a singular syntactically.

<sup>21</sup> Thanks to Jessica Rett for helpful comments with regard to the possibilities played out in the text.

The option in (25) seems to address the connection with number in a more satisfactory way.<sup>22 23</sup> It takes *certain* to be a noun modifier that requires a determiner in the singular but not in the plural, simply replicating what we know from unmodified noun phrases: *\*(a) book* vs. *books*. One way of fleshing out the proposal in (25) would be as given in (26).<sup>24</sup>

- 26a. [DP D-DEF a [AdjP certain [NumP -PL [NP book]]]  
 b. [DP D-DEF Ø [AdjP certain [NumP +PL [NP books]]]

We could say that *certain* modifies a NumP marked for number and is a complement to a D-DEF and that English spells out such a determiner as *a/an* in the singular and  $\emptyset$  in the plural. This would be a unified account of *certain* as a nominal modifier and the connection between overt and covert exponents of D would be related to an independent fact about the grammar of English.

One thing we can say with some certainty in relation to the analysis in (25)-(26) is that *certain* as a modifier occurs relatively high in the nominal spine, above other adjectives: *certain expensive green books* vs. *expensive (\*certain) green (\*certain) books*. In this respect it behaves like numerals that also must precede adjectives. However, it is distinct from numerals which can be complements of definite determiners and demonstratives (*the one/two book(s)*, *that one book*, *those two books*) or function as determiners themselves (*one book*, *two books*).<sup>25</sup> None of the specificity markers can function as a determiner on its own in the singular. *Certain*, unlike the other specificity markers, also cannot function comfortably as complement to other determiners, including numerals.

While this account may hold some appeal, there are two problems with it. It rests on the assumption that *a/an* and  $\emptyset$  are counterparts of each other. However, as we noted in our discussion earlier, Carlson (1977) established that bare plurals are not plural counterparts of singular indefinites. I repeat the crucial examples below, which are just two out of a long list provided by him. I would like to draw attention in particular to the fact that bare plurals are not a sub-type of regular indefinites but are semantically distinct:

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 10a. Miles wants to meet policemen.                | Want > $\exists$                    |
| b. Miles wants to meet a policeman/some policeman. | Want > $\exists$ ; $\exists$ > Want |
| 11a. John killed a rabbit/some rabbits repeatedly. | $\exists$ > repeatedly              |
| b. John killed rabbits repeatedly.                 | Repeatedly > $\exists$              |

And we face another obstacle when we take cross-linguistic considerations into account. The pattern we are discussing is not limited to English. Similar contrasts are found in German,

<sup>22</sup> This is, essentially, what Breheny (2003) proposes for the singular. He does not engage with the plural.

<sup>23</sup> Sabine Iatridou (p.c.) points out that the two options could be settled empirically if a language made morphological distinctions between determiners and modifiers.

<sup>24</sup> See Ritter (1992), among others, on cross-linguistic evidence for a functional projection between D and NP, which is the locus of the singular-plural distinction. Ritter labels this NumP. See Bernstein (2001) for more discussion of NumP.

<sup>25</sup> Thanks to Susi Wurmbrand for important discussion related to this point.

Italian and French, for example: German *ein bestimmtes Buch* vs. *Bestimmte Bücher*, Italian *un certo libro* vs. *certi libri*, and French *un certain livre* vs. *certains livres*. Italian and French are particularly telling as these languages are known not to allow bare plural arguments. That is, the counterpart of (23b) in these languages without *certain* would not be spelt out with a null indefinite determiner. The analysis in (9)-(10) makes the incorrect prediction that plurals with the counterparts of *certain*, in addition to singulars, should occur with an overt indefinite determiner in French and Italian. From this perspective, then, our earlier proposal that *certain* is a determiner that just happens to form a unit with the singular indefinite determiner retains some appeal – though it certainly begs the question why that should be so.

There is a third option we might consider, one which may fare better with regard to cross-linguistic considerations. I should clarify that this is a tentative proposal aimed at deriving the observations regarding *certain* and its correspondents. While each piece of the analysis probably has antecedents in the literature, it is quite possible that this particular package does not. The proposal should be read as speculating on what it would take to reconcile the presence/absence of a determiner with number specification on the noun:

- 27a. [DP D-DEF, -PL a [DP-DEF, α-NUM certain [NumP α [NP book]]]  
 b. [DP-DEF, +PL certain [NumP +PL [NP books]]]

The structures in (27) are based on the view that number specification in the languages under consideration requires an overt morphological exponent. Singular number on the noun is deficient in this respect and the requirement for checking the number feature can only be satisfied through an overt lexical determiner. Plural number is morphologically expressed so the requirement for number specification can be met at the level of NumP itself. Treating *certain* as a quasi-determiner that is marked –DEF but as underspecified with respect to the number feature can be used to motivate the difference between singular and plural versions of specific indefinites cross-linguistically.<sup>26 27</sup> Its number feature can be checked off by the plural NP complement or by a c-commanding determiner. Once the number feature is realized, ‘*certain*’ can function as a full-fledged determiner so that plurals with such specificity markers are acceptable even in languages that do not freely allow bare NP arguments. It is worth noting that the pattern under discussion is replicated in Hindi, which agrees with the languages we have considered so far with respect to encoding number. An outlier seems to be Russian which is also a language that marks number and lacks determiners but allows ‘*certain*’ in the singular without requiring the numeral ‘one’. There are obvious gaps in the discussion here, but recall that this paper is billed as a set of ‘puzzles’, not as a set of ‘solutions’.

Before we turn to possible issues in the semantics of specificity markers like *certain*, a small detour into the land of bare plurals and specificity is in order. In discussing the kind reading of bare plurals, Carlson (1977) notes a class of bare plurals that are not kind denoting.

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<sup>26</sup> This would be different from determiners like *the* and *some* which can take both singular and plural nouns. I will assume that they are ambiguous between + and – PL, not underspecified like *certain*.

<sup>27</sup> One problem with this line of argumentation is that languages like French are argued not to instantiate number at the level of NP but rather at the level of DP where the crucial distinction in number is morphologically encoded in the determiner.



Such bare plurals typically include modifiers with indexicals in them. He furthermore notes, albeit somewhat tentatively, that they seem to allow *de re* readings:

28. Bill believes that people in the next room are about to leave.

Non kind-denoting bare plurals have not been subjected to the same scrutiny as kind-denoting bare plurals discussed in section 2.1. Chierchia (1998) uses the ranking of covert type shifts in (22b) to analyze them as bona fide indefinites that shift via  $\exists$ . This is a potential counterexample if specificity is correlated with the presence of an indefinite determiner but not a problem if specificity is correlated with the presence of an  $\exists$  in the interpretation, without regard to how the  $\exists$  gets introduced. Let us ascertain first, though, whether these non kind-denoting bare plurals truly allow wide scope existential readings. In order to do so, I draw on the account of such terms in Dayal (2013). Using the diagnostic of incompatible predicates discussed in connection with (15), we can see that they behave like other bare plurals in this respect:<sup>28</sup>

29a. #People in the next room are sleeping and people in the next room are arguing.  
b. #People are sleeping and people are arguing.

Let us now consider the canonical scope island we have been using to talk about specificity:

30a. If people in the next room begin to leave, we will have a problem but not if others do.  
b. If certain people in the next room begin to leave, we will have a problem but not if certain others do.

In (30a), the continuation *but not if others do* can only refer to people not in the next room. That is, we do not have a noun phrase in the antecedent that picks out a singleton (albeit plural) subset of people in the next room that the speaker has in mind, leaving other people in the next room as potential referents for the indefinite in the continuation. In (30b), on the other hand, the addition of *certain* allows for precisely these effects. The antecedent refers to a subset of people in the next room who satisfy some property P' that is speaker-known but hearer-unknown, while the continuation refers to another subset of people in the next room who satisfy some property Q that is also speaker-known but hearer-unknown. And, to conclude this point, this finding is consistent with the ameliorating effect of *certain* on the example in (29a):

31. Certain people in the next room are sleeping and certain people in the next room are arguing

What we have seen in (29)-(31) is that *people in the next room* cannot have specific indefinite readings. How then are we to think about the *de re* reading of the bare plural in (28)? In Dayal (2013) I speculated that the indexical inside the DP *people in the next room*, anchors the interpretation to a finite set of individuals, of whom the attitude holder could potentially have direct knowledge. I conclude this section by noting that *de re* readings of non kind denoting bare plurals notwithstanding, we have not so-far seen clear cases of exceptional scope-taking potential in nouns that do not have overt determiners.

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<sup>28</sup> That is, the sentences in (30) cannot be expressed using wide scope existential quantifiers. Recall the discussion of (9) and (12) in section 2.1.

### 3.2. The unexpected modality of ‘certain’

Let us conclude by returning to the role of the Privacy Principle in ruling out specific indefinites with *certain* in imperatives and direct perception contexts. As noted earlier, there is a sense in which specificity markers have a referential quality to them, referring to an entity ‘the speaker has in mind’. While there is little doubt about this determined reference property, there is a sense in which they could be thought as quite the opposite of referential, including in their semantic profile a touch of modality. First, let me present the empirical justification for this counterintuitive-sounding take on *certain*.

We know from the literature on *ever*-free relatives (Dayal 1997, von Stechow 2000, Caponigro 2003, among others) that such noun phrases are felicitous only if the domain of quantification is potentially plural:

- 32a. John picked up whatever was in front of him  
(it could have been a hammer or it could have been a chisel, I don’t know which).  
b. John picked up whatever was in front of him  
(a hammer as it happened, but it could have been anything else).  
c. John picked up  $x \wedge [\Diamond x=a \vee \Diamond x=c \wedge a \neq c]$

In one case, possibility is calibrated to the speaker’s knowledge (the ignorance/identity reading); in the other case, it is calibrated to the agent’s goals (the indifference reading). The point is that such free relatives must leave room for variation with respect to the intended referent. That is, the set quantified over must not be a singleton.

Similarly, the literature on epistemic indefinites emphasizes the role of a plural domain of quantification:

- 33a. John picked up some book or other  
(it could have been *Emma* or *Ivanhoe*, I don’t know which).  
b. John picked up some book or other and pretended to read  
(it happened to be *Emma* but it could as well have been *Ivanhoe*).  
c. John picked up  $x \wedge \text{book}(x) \wedge [\Diamond x=e \vee \Diamond x=i \wedge e \neq i]$

At first blush, *certain N* seems to be a different species altogether. For example, the *namely* test that has been applied to both types of modal expressions discussed above does not apply to *certain N*. As (34c) shows, a speaker may choose to disclose the identity of the referent:

- 34a. #Whatever John is cooking, namely ratatouille, smells delicious.  
b. #John is cooking something or other, namely ratatouille.  
c. John is cooking a certain dish, namely ratatouille.

However, there is another test where it very much aligns with *some N or other*. Consider the direct perception context, due originally to Alonso-Ovalle and Menendez-Benito (2003). Fleshing out the paradigm with the unadorned indefinite *some*, the epistemic indefinite *some N*

or other, and a certain *N* we get the following judgments. It is crucial that we take both the speaker and the hearer to be looking at the relevant individual:<sup>29</sup>

- 35a. Look! some professor is dancing on the table.
- b. # Look! some professor or other is dancing on the table.
- c. # Look! a certain professor is dancing on the table.

In this respect, it is *ever*-FR and definites modified by *ever*-FRs that behave differently:<sup>30</sup>

- 36a. Whoever/whichever professor is dancing on the table is tall.
- b. The professor dancing on the table, whoever he is, is tall.

The crucial difference between (35b)-(35c) and (36a)-(36b) is in the shared ability of the speaker and hearer to pick out the intended referent. A minimal but telling shift in the context where the speaker, but not the hearer, sees the person dancing and utters (35b)-(35c) without *look* as reports to the hearer, makes them felicitous. The definite is compatible with the intended referent being part of common ground knowledge. The specific indefinite, like the epistemic indefinite, is not.

The significance of the observed modality of *certain N* to the account of specificity as singleton indefinites is about the size of the domain set. The scope neutralization account of specific indefinites requires that it be a singleton but the kinship with *ever*-Free Relatives and epistemic indefinites suggests that it be a plurality. This apparent contradiction is easily resolved if the property ultimately responsible for reducing the set to a singleton is subject to the Privacy Principle. As far as the hearer is concerned, there is more than one individual who could be in  $[N \cap P']$  because  $P'$  is asymmetrically cued to the speaker's rather than the hearer's epistemic state.

An interesting question arises at this point. Should this restriction be somehow included in the pragmatic profile of specificity markers? If we focus only on *certain*, it seems like a reasonable move. It would not only explain the behavior of (a) *certain N* that we have been looking at, it could also provide an explanation of why *\*the certain N* is unacceptable.<sup>31</sup> If we

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<sup>29</sup> Daniel Altshuler does not find (35c) problematic. He also finds the following in a google search: *Look! A certain woman is also hanging-around on the roof. How strange!* It is hard for me to fully understand the contribution of *certain* in this sentence, but clearly the claim I am making would need to be scrutinized further if such examples turn out to be truly acceptable.

<sup>30</sup> There are some problems in creating parallel examples with definites. For instance, if we want to keep to the same two properties *being a professor* and *dancing on the table*, we would have sentences like: (i) *whoever is a professor is dancing on the table* and (ii) *the professor, whatever his name, is dancing on the table*. Neither of these describes the situation in which (35a) would be used. The reason for including (36), even if the comparison is imperfect, is to show that *ever* is acceptable with definites in cases where the relevant properties are equally salient to speaker and hearer.

<sup>31</sup> There are many questions to be answered but in the absence of answers, I simply note them here. Sabine Iatridou (p.c.) questions why *some certain* should be unacceptable. Apparently, they were attested in earlier stages of English (Slade 2015:108). Daniel Altshuler (p.c.) finds many instances of *the certain* in a google search: *a human being must always obey the certain judgement of his conscience*. These seem to me to take the meaning of *certain* as *be-sure*. The unacceptability of *the certain* and *every certain* is noted in Heim (2011).

include other specificity markers, however, this would not be a wise move as they do combine with definite as well as indefinite determiners. They simply make overt that there is a property at issue that is responsible for creating a singleton set without imposing requirements related to the addressee's knowledge about this property. The asymmetry in those cases has to come from the definite and indefinite determiners.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Schwarzschild's account of specific indefinites as quantifying over domains restricted to singletons has been very influential. In this paper I have tried to bring out an aspect of the account that has typically not been subjected to much scrutiny, the Privacy Principle. I looked at two types of bare NPs to argue for making this principle sensitive to the presence or absence of an overt indefinite determiner. English bare plurals whose indefinite readings are derivative on their status as kind terms and Hindi bare singulars which are reliably singleton definites but never singleton indefinites make the case in different ways. I also looked at differences between singular and plural terms with specificity markers and argued for their status as (quasi)-determiners. Finally, I connected specificity markers in indefinites, otherwise so close to referential terms, with epistemic indefinites in order to emphasize the need to calibrate the generality of the Privacy Principle to the distinction between singleton definites and singleton indefinites.

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