

TELLING DISABILITY: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN PERSONAL AND VICARIOUS NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the construction of disability identities in personal and vicarious narratives. Sociolinguistic research on narrative focuses largely on personal narrative (Schiffrin 1996); some studies claim that vicarious narratives lack coherence and evaluation (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Chafe 1994) and have no natural relation to the teller's identity (Norrick 2013). Research on health communication contributes to linguistic understandings of disability (Hamilton 1994; Ramanathan 2009); however, few studies explore disability discourse as its own area (cf. Al Zidjaly 2005). Taking an approach to disability discourse that emphasizes disability as practice, I analyze identity construction in narratives told by people with and without disabilities. I argue that vicarious narratives – which I define as narratives about someone else's lived experience – are productive sites for constructing personal identities.

The analysis investigates narratives from a 16-hour corpus of video-recorded conversations among three participants with lifelong, mobility-related, physical disabilities; their able-bodied family, friends, and caregivers; and the able-bodied researcher. The analysis shows tellers displaying their individual disability identities through positions (Davies and Harré 1990; Bamberg 1997) taken up in response to able-bodied characters in storyworlds. I propose that telling vicarious narratives allows tellers to expand their repertoires of storyworlds beyond their own lived experiences. I demonstrate how one particular teller with a disability uses vicarious

narratives about third-person characters to construct her personal disability identity.

I adapt the term “the wise” (Goffman 1963) to apply to people without disabilities who, through social network ties to a person with a disability, are “wise to” disability practices and have a measure of acceptance in the disability community. I argue that these close ties allow able-bodied people to display their wiseness through a borrowing of epistemic rights with regard to disability discourse. I show that people with disabilities and the wise within their communities can co-construct shared disability identities. By defining certain able-bodied people as wise, this study reconsiders the role of people without disabilities in the disability community. It suggests that wise identities and shared disability identities provide avenues for exploring how identity is created within close communities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study is a linguistic one, but it deals with the experience of disability as it impacts the research participants' lives and identities and as it features in their narratives and conversations. I introduce my approach to studying disability in this chapter. As a first step, I provide below a transcribed excerpt from my first one-on-one session with "Derek", one of the research participants with a physical disability. In it, he describes to me (unelicited) his attitude toward having a disability. (Full transcription conventions are given in the Appendix.)

Excerpt 1: *my life in a chair*

- 1 **Derek:** But also too if you were to ask me
- 2 if I could get up and walk today
- 3 obviously I would do it
- 4 but I'd also miss my life in a chair
- 5 **Leslie:** Yeah.
- 6 **Derek:** because it has given me so many things
- 7 that just other people don't get to experience
- 8 **Leslie:** Yeah.
- 9 **Derek:** ... you know almost .. are- m-
- 10 a lot of my disadvantages ha:ve have breded the great stories //
- 11 and and and it's sort of taught me tolerance and and everything else
- 12 and um ... I- I- you know.
- 13 Do I wonder what'd be like? Yeah.
- 14 Do- Do I necessarily- Am I bitter about not being able to change it? No.

In this study, I have the privilege of exploring some of *the great stories* and investigating the identity work that arises from each participant's *life in a chair*. As a person without a disability, I strive to convey an accurate sense of the attitudes and experiences of the participants with

disabilities. As a linguist, I seek to apply a sociolinguistic approach to understanding how the participants tell stories, create identities, and form linguistic communities around disability.

This study is about constructing personal identities around disability in narrative discourse -- “telling disability”. I investigate how tellers create and display their own identities in narratives that include other people’s identities and experiences: by telling disability to an able-bodied audience in narratives with able-bodied characters (Chapter 4), by telling disability in narratives of vicarious experiences (Chapter 5), by telling disability when the teller does not have a disability themselves (Chapter 6). I argue that people with disabilities create disability identities that are unique to each individual, yet can be constructed using vicarious experiences and can become shared across communities that include people without disabilities.

The research participants included three people with mobility-related physical disabilities each paired with an able-bodied person from among their family and friends. The data collection took place in the everyday settings of the participants’ homes and workplaces. As the researcher, I met with different groupings of participants for 10 sessions: an individual session with each research participant (except one of the able-bodied family members); a session with each pair together; a session with the participants with disabilities; and a final session with a group of both participants with disabilities and able-bodied participants. I focused on collecting narratives about the day to day experience of living with a physical disability, rather than eliciting talk about institutional or gate-keeping encounters.

This chapter begins with a discussion of how I understand and use the concept of *disability* in my work (Section 1.2). It briefly touches on existing models of disability and proposes a model of disability as practice to be applied to disability discourse (Section 1.2.1); it characterizes how I identify *disability discourse* with examples from the data (Section 1.2.2). The chapter goes on to

describe my approach to the community of people with disabilities among whom I did my research (1.3), as a researcher who is “wise” to disability (Section 1.3.1). and follows the principles of linguistic commitment to the community (Section 1.3.2). Finally, this chapter previews the coming chapters (Section 1.4).

1.2 Approach to disability

Disability has been defined in many ways, for many reasons. For my current purpose--a linguistic study of discourse produced by and about people with physical disabilities-- I propose a working definition of an individual person’s experience of disability. I define a *person with a physical disability* as a person who uses an individual set of practices and strategies to accommodate their physical impairment(s) as they move through everyday life. In Section 1.2.1, I provide a multi-category model that views *disability* as practice as one component of an individual’s experience of having a disability, along with medical condition, impairment(s), and external factors. This model is compatible with a view of people with disabilities as a minority group and is based on other macro-level, multi-category models of disability as a social construct. In Section 1.2.2, I discuss disability discourse, that is, discourse in which the categories of the model of disability become relevant to understanding what is being said. I exemplify disability discourse using two examples (Excerpts 2 and 3) from the narrative data.

1.2.1 Disability as practice

Scholars studying disability have long rejected a medical model of disability (e.g. chapters in Shakespeare (ed.) 1998; Altman 2001; chapters in Albrecht et al. (ed.) 2001). The medical model locates disability in the individual person and presents it as a tragic problem for that person. It equates an individual’s medical diagnosis, functional impairment, everyday practices, and social involvement under the umbrella of disability, while placing emphasis on the underlying disease,

disorder, or injury. The model predicts negative social consequences as a natural and inevitable result of this underlying medical condition; being socially isolated, for instance, is seen as part of having a disability. The medical model looks toward the rehabilitation or cure of the underlying medical condition as the solution for the negative aspects of having a disability, even in the case of lifelong or permanent disabilities. The model therefore casts disability as an on-going problem that typically cannot be solved. Furthermore, because the model views the underlying medical condition as the root of problems arising from a disability, intervention from medical experts is required to manage life with a disability. Thus, the model has been closely connected to attitudes of paternalism toward people with disabilities and toward stigmatizing disability. In sum, under the medical model of disability, a disability is a problem for an individual person that can (not) be resolved by a cure and inherently predicts a lower quality of life.

Current definitions and models of disability in the multidisciplinary field of disability studies proceed from the view that disability is socially constructed. Social construction models differ from the medical model in several key areas. First, these models define disability as more than a medical condition and tend to use multiple categories to characterize what a disability is (Altman 2001). Second, social construction models generally hold that negative social consequences originate in the social world and not in the individual; causal links between a medical condition and social factors are suspect (Minaire 1992; Marks 1997). Third, social construction models focus on the way people live their lives with long-term disabilities (Fougeyrollas and Beauregard 2001). Disability is not understood as an individual problem to be solved, though some models do highlight problems, such as discrimination, that people with disabilities face in their societies. Thus, models based on a social construction approach take into account the wider sociocultural context and an individual's interaction with it. Within the social construction perspective, two

macro-level approaches have developed separately: the social model and the minority group model. The social model of disability and the minority group model of disability have similar aims: they both reject the medical model of disability as a problem inherent to an individual, view disability as socially constructed, and place responsibility for negative social consequences of disability on society. Both these approaches have been established theoretically in disability studies and politically in the disability rights movement.

The social model of disability (Oliver 1990, 1996, 2004) proposes that disability is located not in the limitations of an individual person but in the barriers created by society. The social model has two categories: *impairment*, referring to a person's physical or mental condition, and *disability*, referring to the social and environmental barriers a person with an impairment experiences. The social model makes the crucial theoretical and political claim that the negative effects of having a disability -- e.g. social isolation, inability to pursue a career -- do not follow naturally from an individual's medical condition or set of impairments (Barnes et al. 2002; Oliver 2004; Shakespeare 2006). Adherents to the social model argue therefore that disability as they define it is a societal problem which can be alleviated by political action (Oliver 1990, 1996; Fougeyrollas and Beauregard 2001). The social model of disability is often used by scholars as a basis for explaining the social construction of disability. For instance, Kasnitz and Shuttleworth, anthropologists working in the field of disability studies, define *disability* in a way consistent with the social model: "Disability exists when people experience discrimination on the basis of perceived functional limitations" (2001). However, recent work has nuanced the model to take into account chronic pain, degenerative medical conditions, and other factors not originating from society that may negatively impact individuals with disabilities (see

Shakespeare (2006) for this argument within disability studies; see Ramanathan and Makoni (2007) and Ramanathan (2009) for similar arguments in health communication).

Another major social construction approach to disability is the minority model of disability, which views people with disabilities as a minority group (Altman 2001). This model counters the medical model by making disability a group attribute rather than an individual problem. It promotes the disability rights movement by establishing people with disabilities as a minority that should have the rights and protections that other minorities do (Hahn 1988, 1993; Bickenbach 2001). Hahn (1997: 174) gives the rationale for this approach:

“The basic thrust of the “minority-group” model of disability asserts that disabled men and women have been subjected to the same forms of prejudice, discrimination and segregation imposed upon other oppressed groups which are differentiated from the remainder of the population on the basis of characteristics such as race or ethnicity, gender and aging.”

The minority group model has been especially prominent in the United States; the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 gives its first purpose as “provid[ing] a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities.” In disability studies, the model opens up the comparison between scholarship on people with disabilities and scholarship on other minority groups. My own proposed model of an individual’s experience of disability is compatible with this macro-level view of people with disabilities.

In addition to these two social construction approaches, many scholarly and governmental models of disability have been developed for specific purposes and contexts. Current models share two characteristics: first, they have multiple categories to represent what disability is, in contrast to the monolithic medical model; second, they include categories pertaining to the individual and categories pertaining to society, in keeping with a social construction approach.

Nagi (1965) was among the first to conceptualize disability in categories or components. His original model separates pathology, impairment, functional limitations, and disability (defined as the “pattern of behavior that evolves in situations of long-term or continued impairments that are associated with functional limitations” (Nagi 1965, quoted in Altman 2001). The social model introduced the distinction between the individual and societal components to disability, attributing impairments to individuals and disabilities to society. Kasnitz and Shuttleworth (2001) follow this pattern. Their model includes two components that pertain to the individual although they are socially constructed: medical impairments and functional limitations. It also includes two components that pertain to interaction between the individual and society: disabilities (defined in terms of discrimination); and handicaps (which may or may not arise depending on both the individual’s and society’s management of discrimination). Political and governmental definitions of disability have been influenced by these models. The World Health Organization (WHO), for instance, has used a multi-category model of disability for over 30 years; it has been associated with Nagi’s (1965) model and later revisions of it (Masala and Petretto 2013). Altman (2001) also shows that the ICDH-1 clearly borrowed concepts from a social model approach. The table below gives examples of multi-category models.¹

¹ The table entries for the WHO models are adapted from Altman (2001), who points out the strong relationship between these governmental models and other theoretical models.

Table 1.2.1a Multi-category models of disability

Model	Pertaining to the individual				Pertaining to Society	
Nagi	Pathology	Impairment	Functional limitation	Disability		
Social Model		Impairment			Disability	
Kasnitz & Shuttleworth		Impairment	Functional limitation		Disability	Handicap
ICIDH-1	Disease/disorder	Impairment	Disability		Handicap	
ICIDH-2	Health context	Body function/structures/impairment	Activity/activity limitation		Participation/participation limitation	Context: environment & personal

One final aspect that all these models have in common is that they are concerned with disability at a macro-level; they were developed to define disability as a construct in society. Every model of disability has to take into account the social and political issues affecting people with disabilities. As Altman observes, following Zola (1993), “there is no neutral language with which to discuss disability” (2001: 97).

There is no single or neutral model of disability. I intend mine to be compatible with a social construction approach to disability and with a view of people with disabilities as a minority group. Like the other multi-category models prevalent in disability studies research, it includes both individual and societal components. However, my model does not claim to define disability at the macro-level of other models that are concerned with the role of people with disabilities in society.² Instead, this model is designed to apply the multi-category approach to an individual’s

² A widespread criticism of Nagi’s original model, and the ICIDH models that used it, is that -- like the medical model -- they locate disability in an individual person (Altman 2001). My model, however, is not meant to represent people with disabilities as a group, nor be used for the same purposes as the WHO models. It provides categories

experience of physical disability. It is the individual’s experience that informs the identities they construct around disability and tell about in narratives. Thus, this model is useful for analyzing disability discourse.

Table 1.2.1b Model of individual experience of disability

Medical condition	Impairment	Disability	External Factors
An underlying disorder, disease, or injury that causes an impairment	A limitation in or lack of a physical function	The use of the practices, strategies, and accommodations that an individual employs to move through everyday life given their physical impairment(s)	The social and environmental conditions that impact disability practices
E.g. cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy	E.g. spastic movements, inability to walk, muscle weakness	E.g. scheduling daily rest periods, using a wheelchair, employing a personal care assistant	E.g. cultural assumptions about a certain disability, public transportation, hiring policies

This model provides four categories for considering the experiences of individuals with disabilities; the first three pertain to the individual, the fourth to the individual’s interactions with others. The first category, pertaining to the individual, is the *medical condition*, the underlying disorder, disease, or injury that causes an impairment. The second, also pertaining to the individual, is the *impairment* or set of impairments, a limitation or lack of a physical function. (This study focuses specifically on physical impairments, but the model could be used to cover both mental and physical impairments.)

The third category pertaining to the individual is *disability*, the use of practices, strategies, and accommodations that an individual, given their particular physical impairments, chooses to

specifically for examining an individual’s experience and is intended to be used for linguistic analysis. Chapter 6 proposes a linguistic approach to studying people with disabilities as a community.

employ in order to move through everyday life. In other words, the model views disability as practice. These practices vary from individual to individual; the necessity for them is what characterizes having a disability. In this way, a person with a physical disability is a person who uses an individual set of practices and strategies to accommodate their physical impairment(s) as they move through everyday life. It is crucial to note that in this model each set of medical conditions, impairments, and disability practices is unique to an individual. No medical condition presupposes an impairment, nor vice versa. Moreover, in this model, unlike for example the World Health Organization's ICIDH-1 model, medical conditions underlie impairments, rather than impairments arising from medical conditions. This is to avoid the false implication that medical conditions have a causal relationship with the other categories in the model. Most importantly, disability as practice is not linked to an underlying medical condition. For example, a person who uses a power wheelchair may have cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy; a person with multiple sclerosis may use a wheelchair full-time or not at all. It may seem counterintuitive to use the word *disability* -- with its negative prefix -- as the label for a category that covers the practices, strategies, and accommodations that enable a person to function well. A wheelchair, for example, provides the *ability* to move. However, *disability* and *disabled* are currently accepted terms. Rather than invent a new label, I foreground a different category of the commonly used multi-category model. In the medical model, a person with a *disability* is an individual with a medical condition (first category) that causes inherent physical and social limitations; in casual speech, a person with a *disability* may be a person who is unable perform a function because of an impairment (second category); in the social model, a person with a *disability* is someone who encounters societal barriers (fourth category) to their impairment

(Oliver 1990; Kasnitz and Shuttleworth 2001). In my model, a person with a *disability* is defined by practice, the third category.

The fourth category of the model pertains to the world around the individual; *external factors* are the social and environmental conditions that impact disability practices. This category is necessary to a model that represents an individual's experience in order to include an individual's interactions in the social world. External factors are kept as a single category in the model because social and environmental conditions may be inextricably linked. For example, the ease with which a person who uses a wheelchair rides a public bus could be impacted on a single occasion by the accessibility features of the bus, the training of the driver in using those features, and the legal regulations that resulted in the features and the training, as well as by the attitudes of able-bodied passengers toward making room for a wheelchair user at rush-hour. In a model of an individual's experience, these external factors belong in a single category.

All four categories of the model are socially constructed. As Kasnitz and Shuttleworth (2001) point out, medical diagnoses and functional limitations, as much as everyday practices and social factors, can only be understood in the sociocultural context in which they are experienced.

A final note on the terms I use in this study: common terminology surrounding disabilities has changed over the years, as attitudes toward certain words -- and towards people with disabilities themselves -- have changed. It is my intention to use only terminology that is currently acceptable to most people with disabilities and to use it in ways that are in keeping with current scholarship on disability. I am aware of variations in usage (e.g. "people with disabilities" in American English vs. "disabled people" in British English), but not of any negative connotations to the terms I have chosen.

1.2.2 Disability discourse

Disability discourse is discourse in which the categories I have laid out in the model of disability become relevant to understanding what is being said. This relevance may be based on explicit mentions, such as naming an impairment or medical condition, or indirect references, such as talk about environmental barriers that are only pertinent because of a particular disability.

Discourse about disability as practice can be identified by references to an individual's use of practice and strategies to accommodate their physical impairment(s) as they move through everyday life. Since these practices vary between individuals, what constitutes a mention of disability as practice is context dependent. This section uses two excerpts from larger narratives to illustrate what disability discourse looks like in narratives told by people with disabilities and their friends and family.

In the first excerpt, the teller, "Tawnya", makes explicit mentions of disability. Tawnya is one of the participants with disabilities, as is her friend "Min" who is also a character in the story.

Tawnya begins to tell me the narrative in response to my question about what she and Min like to do together. In this excerpt from the opening of the narrative, Tawnya specifically brings disability into the conversation.

Excerpt 3: *we gimped out the boat*

- 1 **Tawnya:** We go: to the mo:vies,
- 2 we've been on a cruise, //
- 3 ah Min and I
- 4 and then I think seven of our other .. um disabled friends. //
- 5 Also went.
- 6 So it was like eight-
- 7 it was like we gimped out the boat. /@@@/

Neither Tawnya's nor Min's disability is necessarily relevant to the narrative events of going to the movies and going on cruise. Tawnya makes disability salient through her mentions of it. First, she uses the term *disabled* to introduce the characters of *our other ... um disabled friends* [4]. This description brings attention to the fact that she, Min, and their seven friends, all have disabilities. Tawnya next uses the in-group term *gimp* for a person who has a mobility-related physical disability. She uses it productively -- *gimped out the boat*, by comparison to *pimped out*, meaning to extravagantly enhance a vehicle -- to make a joke. As the listener, I laugh while Tawnya continues to tell the narrative.

The second excerpt contains indirect references to disability; the narrative is understandable and tellable because both the teller and the audience are familiar with the disability of the main character. The teller is "Russell", the co-participant and able-bodied friend of Derek, who uses a power wheelchair. Russell told the story to me during a one-on-one session. I had already met with both Derek and Russell, and in this conversation I was trying to elicit re-tellings of narratives from previous sessions with them. In this excerpt, understanding Derek's individual disability practices – including his use of a power wheelchair that cannot safely negotiate curbs – is necessary to understanding the narrative.

Excerpt 2: *the sidewalk was like three inches*

- 1 **Russell:** He likes telling-
- 2 he likes talking about um ...
- 3 riding off a sidewalk in Herndon,
- 4 onto a cobblestone street
- 5 after seeing a really awful band. //
- 6 um ... only because the curb was ver-
- 7 the sidewalk was like three inches //
- 8 to the street.
- 9 Even though I told him /@/ not to

- 10 cause it's probably not a good idea?
11 **Leslie:** Yeah. @
12 **Russell:** He he yea:h
13 he does that on occasion um.
14 He likes telling that story
15 because he likes the fact that
16 I was semi-dancing in the middle of the street? /@@@/

Russell uses the verb *riding* [3] to describe Derek's movements, but that alone is not sufficient to make Derek's disability a salient part of the narrative. Derek tends to refer to his movement in his wheelchair as *driving*, while other people who use wheelchairs may use other verbs including *walking*. It would not be productive to analyze as disability discourse every utterance that includes a mention of Derek moving from place to place. The clause the verb is in, however, combines with other references in the narrative to make Derek's individual disability practices relevant. Given the wheelchair that Derek uses as his primary mobility device, *riding off a sidewalk* [3] could be a dangerous maneuver. This danger is emphasized when Russell says that the *sidewalk was like three inches \ to the street* [7-8], an insignificant height for someone who is walking but an issue for someone who is using a power wheelchair. In addition, the fact that it is a *cobblestone street* [4] means that Derek was likely to be uncomfortable moving his wheelchair across it. As Russell remarks, and I agree, *it's probably not a good idea* [10]. In this story, the teller's point (and listener's response) are dependent on the context of a particular character using a particular assistive device as part of his disability.

Russell comments at the end of the narrative that Derek finds it tellable because Russell was *semi-dancing in the middle of the street* [16]. The narrative as Russell tells it, however, is about Derek. Given his use of a wheelchair, *riding off a sidewalk*, moving down a *cobblestone street*, and negotiating drop of *like three inches* is as tellable as Russell's dancing. This excerpt is

disability discourse because Derek's everyday disability practices are relevant to understanding what it is about and why it is told. Both of these excerpts are analyzable as disability discourse.

1.3 Approach to the community

In this section, I discuss my approach to the community I am studying. As a researcher entering a community, I take the overall approach of a participant observer. I was present for all of the recorded conversations that make up the study's data and participated in the narrative discourse as a listener and occasionally as a teller or co-teller. Hamilton argues for the importance of "insider's knowledge" (1994: 31) for understanding conversations with a person with Alzheimer's disease; having that knowledge helps the researcher to interpret the interaction. Similarly, familiarity with mobility-related physical disabilities has helped me to identify and make sense of the disability discourse in this study.

As an able-bodied person interacting with people with disabilities, I consider myself a member of the "wise" (Goffman 1963) who has a close relationship with a person with a disability. In Section 1.3.1, I explain that aspect of my own identity as it impacts my research. As a sociolinguist benefiting from community members' participation, I aim to follow the principles of linguistic commitment (Labov 1982; Wolfram 1993; Schilling 2013). In Section 1.3.2, I preview how various stages of my study tied into these principles. In later chapters, I further discuss my role as a participant observer (Chapter 3), my methodology for researching disability from a "wise" standpoint (Chapter 3) and my linguistic definition for the community of people with disabilities (Chapter 6).

1.3.1 Researching as a member of the wise

I approached this study as a member of the “wise”, Goffman's (1963) term for someone who does not belong to a ‘stigmatized’ group but has been personally or professionally associated with them to the point of having “a measure of acceptance” (28) in the group. Goffman also highlights that they have special knowledge of the group. Those who are “wise” to physical disability are able-bodied people whose own experiences have made them familiar with the experience of having a disability, and who are accepted as wise by a community of people with disabilities. Although I do not have a disability, I consider myself wise to disability through my close friendship with the Reverend Claire Wimbush,³ who does. Claire and I met more than a decade ago and have spent substantial time in each other’s company, so I have had the opportunity to observe -- and often participate in -- her practices of disability. Those practices include full-time use of a power wheelchair, daily use of a team of personal care assistants, and (at various points in Claire’s career) partnership with a service dog.

One influential experience I have had of participating in disability discourse occurred when I accompanied Claire to the training for her service dog. The service dog recipients, all of whom had physical disabilities or regularly experienced seizures, were required to attend a full-time residential training with their new dogs and to bring an able-bodied companion. I spent two weeks as part of this group of people with disabilities and their family members, friends, and caregivers. The entire group interacted not only at the training facility but also in public spaces where the dogs practiced their skills. The stories that I heard -- and told -- during this time convinced me that narratives about disability would be a productive focus for my linguistic research. Although many of the service dog recipients had life experiences in common, I noticed

³ Claire’s name and role in my research are mentioned with permission.

that the way they each spoke about their disability was individual and in some ways different from the way I was used to hearing Claire speak about her disability. Moreover, I was struck by the vicarious narratives told by the able-bodied companions. At one point, I found myself telling a story about Claire's experiences taking her wheelchair through airport security. This telling was in response to similar stories told by my able-bodied interlocutors. I realized that the other people without disabilities and I were doing identity work around disability. Reflecting on the stories we told, I see them as constructing "wise" identities, dependent on association with another person and their identity. My observations about vicarious narratives and wise identities inspired me to study narrative and identity within disability discourse.

1.3.2 Commitment to the community

My approach to doing research about people with disabilities follows from the sociolinguistic tradition of commitment to the community (Labov 1982; Wolfram 1993; Wolfram et al. 2004; Wolfram et al. 2008; Schilling 2013). Labov proposes two principles of linguistic commitment. The first is the principle of "error correction": a linguist should correct "widespread idea[s] or social practice[s] with important consequences that [are] invalidated by his own data" (1982: 172). Labov's second principle is that of "debt incurred." He explains it this way: "[a]n investigator who has obtained linguistic data from members of a speech community has an obligation to make knowledge of that data available to the community, when it has need of it" (1982: 173). Wolfram adds the principle of "linguistic gratuity", calling upon linguists to "actively pursue positive ways in which they can return linguistic favors to the community" (1993: 227). Schilling observes that this principle advances linguists' involvement with the community from a commitment to advocacy to a commitment to empowerment: "community members are key collaborators in developing outreach and educational projects" (2013: 227).

I explored and implemented ways to benefit the participants at every stage of this project, drawing on different aspects of commitment to the community at different stages. Before data collection began, I recruited the three participants with lifelong disabilities through the “friend of a friend” method, which places the researcher within a community’s system of reciprocal rights and obligations (Milroy and Gordon 2008). I entered the community through my friend Claire; she introduced me to “Jason”, a friend with a physical disability who owns a wheelchair repair shop. Jason put me in touch with the three participants: he is Derek’s employer and has been friends with Tawnya and Min since they went to high school together. Jason was enthusiastic about my study; he compared it to volunteer work he participated in to educate students without disabilities about what it was like to have one. For him, and for the participants, a major goal of any research concerning people with disabilities is to raise awareness of their experiences. As Schilling (2013) observes, researchers entering a community as the friend of a friend have reciprocal obligations to the members of that community. One obligation that emerged from my research was considering how the data and analysis can be used to educate able-bodied people about disability. That kind of educational application follows Labov’s (1982) principle of error correction. The medical model of disability is invalidated by scholarly research on disability, including my own. Yet that model has a pervasive effect on societal views of disability and, accordingly, on social, institutional, and gate-keeping interactions. Disseminating information about disability discourse to a non-linguistic audience is one means of error correction.

The data collection sessions, in particular the small group sessions, were an opportunity for the participants to meet each other and discuss common experiences. Since people with disabilities do not necessarily form geographic speech communities, they may have few chances for face-to-face communication with each other. I designed the research procedure to include sessions for

the participants with disabilities and sessions for the participants with their able-bodied family members, friends, or caregivers. The conversations in these sessions centered not on medical conditions or physical impairments, but on disability as practice -- participants compared strategies and accommodations they use in their everyday lives. My study enabled the participants to engage in disability discourse within this group of people.

In the final stage of the data collection, I sent a follow-up email to the participants. I told them about the venues in which I had presented my study thus far and gave examples of the response. For instance, an undergraduate student who is blind found the participants' narratives meaningful to her own experiences; after my lecture, she chose to do her class project on online narratives about visual impairment. My purpose in writing this email was to close the study, and to thank the participants for their involvement. At the same time, it was designed to benefit the participants by showing them that their contributions were having an effect. To borrow Schilling's (2013) term, the participants were "key contributors" to the study; my commitment to the community began with them.

When I present my data, I include data that are representative of my participants' lives and attitudes. For instance, I have enough narratives about tellers encountering barriers to accessibility that I could draw all my examples from those data. However, disability discourse is by no means limited to talk about accessibility. Focusing exclusively on problems particular to the community would misrepresent its concerns. Furthermore, it would weaken the study's methodology by not taking a holistic view of disability as practice. I try to ensure that the stories I use in each presentation reflect the tellers' experiences in everyday life -- including, but not limited to, accessibility issues. In this way, I use my data to raise awareness among my able-bodied colleagues and students of the experience of disability. While a particular talk may

present an analysis or teach a topic, it is also an opportunity for me to practice commitment to the community by disseminating information about disability and thus addressing the community's concern with being represented accurately to outsiders. In the conclusion (Chapter 7), I consider further implications of the study for the disability community.

1.4 Overview of the study

This study is intended for an audience both of linguists and people who are interested in language and of (other) scholars of disability. It contributes to the study of language in the areas of identity and narrative. It argues that identities are individual (as disability identities are to each participant with a disability) and yet can be shaped by the identities of others (as wise identities and shared disability identities are for members of close social networks). It demonstrates that vicarious narratives – narratives about the lived experience of someone other than the teller – can fruitfully be included alongside personal narratives in an analysis of narrative and identity.

Furthermore, this study contributes to research on disability within linguistics by considering disability as its own area of investigation, rather than as part of another subfield such as health communication. Previously, this approach has been taken by only a few linguists, including Barton (1995, 1999, 2004, 2007), McNerney (2001), Al Zidjaly (2005, 2009), and Everts (2012). Within the discipline of disability studies, this study offers an analysis of everyday narratives about disability and suggestions for further research regarding the “wise”.

In this section, I give an overview of the chapters of the study, with particular attention to the layout of the analysis chapters:

The Theoretical Background (Chapter 2) reviews literature from the field of sociolinguistics, broadly interpreted to mean a sociocultural approach to language that is concerned with “real” language used by participants in social interactions (cf. Bucholtz 2003). Within that field, it

considers research on identity, narrative, and disability discourse. The chapter presents models of narrative analysis that informed the analysis (Section 2.2). The chapter then discusses identity construction in discursive interaction (Section 2.3), highlighting identity as socially constructed, instantiated in interactions, plural, and dynamic. It goes on to discuss narrative as a site for identity construction. Finally, the chapter investigates disability discourse (Section 2.4), as it is analyzed in studies of both narrative and identity. Like the other works I consider in this chapter, the studies examined in this section are chosen from within the discipline of sociolinguistics. The theoretical background in Chapter 2 provides a basis for the analyses in Chapters 4, 5, and 6; each of these chapters also incorporates a shorter theoretical background section targeted to the argument of that chapter.

The Methodology (Chapter 3) describes the processes of recruiting participants, collecting data, and preparing narratives for analysis. It provides profiles of the core participants, who have physical disabilities, and the co-participants, who are among their able-bodied family members and friends. It details the stages of the data collection, with attention paid to the setting, the participants' interaction, and the researcher's participation and goals. The chapter also covers the procedure for identifying, coding, and transcribing the narratives. Data for analysis were narrowed to narratives that feature a character with a disability who interacts with another identifiable character(s). The example narratives were selected to illuminate particular areas of the data (e.g. the telling of vicarious narratives).

The analysis chapters, "Telling disability by positioning" (Chapter 4), "Telling disability in vicarious narratives" (Chapter 5), and "Telling disability within the community" (Chapter 6), examine narrative examples selected from the interactions. The examples in the chapters move from elicited personal narratives told by the participants with disabilities through spontaneous

personal and vicarious narratives told by, and about, people with disabilities, to spontaneous personal and vicarious narratives told by, and about, their family and friends. Chapters 4 and 5 analyze narratives told about the participants with disabilities; Chapter 6 analyzes narratives told about their family and friends. Chapter 4 uses only personal narratives for examples; Chapters 5 and 6 features both personal and vicarious narratives. The personal narratives in Chapter 4 were deliberately elicited; the narratives in Chapters 5 and 6 occurred within on-going conversations. This order is intended to introduce the reader to disability narratives of a familiar type (i.e. an elicited personal narrative) before branching out to include vicarious narratives and disability narratives told by and about able-bodied people.

In all the analysis chapters, identity construction is the central theme. Chapter 4 “Telling disability by positioning“ uses an analysis of positioning to argue that people with disabilities construct disability identities that are individual: a “constellation” of positions rather than a fixed point of identity. It argues that the third person characters are essential to the identity work being done. Chapter 5 “Telling disability in vicarious narratives” uses narrative analysis to demonstrate that individual disability identities are constructed in vicarious as well as in personal narratives. Chapter 6 “Telling disability within the community“ employs the concepts of “wiseness” and shared identity to show that able-bodied family members and friends can construct wise identities and shared disability identities in community with a person with a disability.

In “Telling disability by positioning“ (Chapter 4), I show how tellers with disabilities construct individual disability identities in narratives. The background section (4.2) reviews approaches to positioning as a tool for identity construction. The methodology for this chapter borrows from Davies and Harré’s (1990) positioning theory both the concept of negotiating positions within the interaction and the custom of labeling each position for the purpose of the analysis. It adopts

-- following Bamberg (1997a) -- the practice of investigating positioning first in the storyworld and then in the surrounding interaction. The analysis section (4.3) examines three elicited personal narratives told by the participants with disabilities. The positioning in these stories follows a similar triadic pattern between the characters of an able-bodied child, an able-bodied parent, and the teller with a disability. The positions taken up in the individual narratives, however, are unique: for the purpose of this analysis, I label them “teacher”, “advocate”, and “ambassador”. The analysis traces these positions in both the narrative and the surrounding interaction. I argue that third person characters drive the positioning moves that allow the tellers to do identity work; likewise, these able-bodied third person characters make the most explicit mentions of disability. The concluding section (4.4) highlights the implications of the analysis for refuting the medical model of disability and for examining third person characters in narratives, suggesting that this is especially significant in vicarious narratives.

In “Telling disability in vicarious narratives” (Chapter 5), I argue that vicarious narratives should be considered alongside personal narratives when analyzing identity. The background section (5.2) reviews the literature on narratives of vicarious experience, much of which has found vicarious narrative to be lacking the features that make personal narrative a worthwhile object of analysis. It also critically examines studies that have used vicarious narratives to examine identity construction. The methodology proposes a working definition of vicarious narratives as narratives that are about the lived experience of someone other than the teller. It suggests that vicarious narratives can be told to expand the tellers’ repertoire of narratives to include experiences the teller has not had. Using this definition, the analysis section (5.3) demonstrates that vicarious narratives are analyzable using the same methods as personal narratives and are sites of identity construction. I examine identity construction using Bamberg’s (2011a)

dilemmatic spaces of coherence of a self over time, uniqueness of a self among others, and agency of a self in the word. I argue that the teller constructs her individual disability identity by using the lived experience of her friends with disabilities and imaginatively telling the narrative events. The concluding section (5.4) uses the findings in the analysis to address the critiques of vicarious narrative found in the literature.

In “Telling disability within the community“ (Chapter 6), I consider the identity construction of able-bodied people in disability discourse. The background section (6.2) discusses the linguistic communities in which people with physical disabilities construct their identities: communities of practice; imagined communities; and social networks that include able-bodied family members and friends. The methodology explains how I apply Goffman’s (1963) definition of the “wise” specifically within the social networks of people with disabilities, and how I employ the concept of a shared identity to look at disability identities constructed by both people with physical disabilities and the able-bodied “wise”. The analysis section (6.3) examines a vicarious narrative in which a teller with a disability portrays her able-bodied family member as “wise”; a personal narrative in which an able-bodied teller co-constructs a shared disability identity with a co-teller with a disability; and a vicarious narrative in which that able-bodied teller displays his epistemic rights to talk about disability. I argue that able-bodied people engage in disability discourse, even to the point of co-constructing shared disability identities. The concluding section (6.4) suggests the importance of regarding people with disabilities as a community for conducting linguistics research and discusses implications of the concept of a shared identity for analyzing the discourse of other groups.

The conclusion (Chapter 7) summarizes the analysis of telling a disability identity in narrative discourse. It highlights the contribution of this research to work on narrative and identity and on

the community of people with physical disabilities; it also points out the limitations of the research. The chapter re-examines central themes of the study, including disability as practice and disability discourse with able-bodied interlocutors, from the perspective of the disability community. It concludes with further directions for research on narratives about disability for both linguists and scholars of disability studies.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced my approach to disability and disability discourse and described the purpose and content of the study. It has also previewed the kind of data that were collected for the analysis. While this chapter has incorporated work from the multidisciplinary field of disability studies, as well as discussing my own experiences, Chapter 2 reviews the linguistic literature that provides the theoretical background for this study. It focuses on sociolinguistic research on identity, narrative, and disability discourse.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained my working definition of the term *disability* to mean the use of practices and strategies that an individual employs to accommodate their physical impairment(s) as they move through everyday life. I introduced a model for analyzing discourse about an individual's experience of life with a physical disability; the model includes the categories of medical condition, physical impairment, disability, and external factors. In this chapter, I will provide theoretical background for the entire study, including background on disability discourse. Whereas in the previous chapter I drew on models and scholarship from the field of disability studies, in this chapter, I limit my discussion of disability discourse to research conducted within the field of linguistics, both because that is the field in which the current research was planned and conducted and because that is the body of research that informs my own approach to analyzing disability discourse.

I situate my approach to language within the field of sociolinguistics, broadly defined (Hymes 1974; Bucholtz 2003). Bucholtz explains that during its formative stages, “sociolinguistics positioned itself as an empirical discipline in which *language* was taken to mean the systematic use of language by social actors in social situations” (2003: 398). As she points out, the field of sociolinguistics has developed in diverse directions; Bucholtz includes within it “the disparate quantitative and qualitative approaches that claim this name ... [and] also linguistic anthropology, conversation analysis, and other socially and culturally oriented forms of discourse analysis” (ibid.). Bucholtz uses the term *real language* for the object of sociolinguistic work; others term this *language in use* or *discursive interaction*. Like Bucholtz, I view sociolinguistics as a sociocultural approach to language in use, informed by research in diverse subfields. Within this

broad sociolinguistic view of language, my own approach is a qualitative one that draws primarily on methods from discourse analysis and narrative analysis (Schiffrin 1994; Johnstone 2002), and from interactional sociolinguistics and cross-cultural communication (Gumperz 1982; Tannen 1984, 2004).

Discourse analysis covers a wide range of methodological approaches. In her survey of these, Schiffrin (1994) includes pragmatics, speech act theory, ethnomethodology, and ethnography of communication, and variationist sociolinguistics, as well as interactional sociolinguistics (discussed separately below). Johnstone defines discourse as “actual instances of communicative action in the medium of language” (2002: 2); she argues that “discourse analysis” is so called to emphasize that the object of analysis is not a more abstract concept of language. In this sense, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics take the same view of language. Schiffrin (1994) distinguishes between a formalist and a functionalist view of language. A formalist definition of discourse is language above the sentence (Stubbs 1983: 1, quoted in Schiffrin 1994: 23); that is, the unit for analysis is the structure of language above the level of syntax, morphology, and phonology. One functionalist definition of discourse is that the unit of analysis is language in use; this broad definition equates discourse analysis with sociolinguistics (as I define it). I follow Schiffrin in adopting another functionalist definition of discourse: discourse is made of utterances, “units of language production ... that are inherently contextualized” (Schiffrin 1994: 41).

For my methodology, the key point is that discourse analysis considers both text and context. Discourse analysis provides an understanding both of language use within the text (for example the linguistic features at work in a narrative) and of linguistic and social context for text (for example the talk before and after the narrative and the interaction of the teller(s) and

interlocutors). I consider my work in this study to be a close discourse analysis of narratives. Models of narrative analysis are covered more fully later in the chapter (Section 2.2). However, I want to point out that narrative analysis can be considered an area of discourse analysis. It defines the unit of analysis as the narrative and uses a close analysis to account for both text and context. Discourse and narrative analysis are areas with which I associate my approach to analyzing language.

Interactional sociolinguistics can also be considered a subfield of discourse analysis, or of sociolinguistics generally. As developed by Gumperz (1982), it proceeds from an ethnographic methodology. Its goal is to show how language users make sense of what is being communicated on all levels of linguistic structure. Gumperz (1982) terms this interpretative activity “conversational inference”. Conversational inferences are made based on “contextualization cues”: linguistic features such as prosody, word choice, and even gestures that provide clues to meaning. Crucially, conversational inferences and contextualization cues rely on socio-cultural knowledge to be interpreted. Gumperz also argues that language is interpreted as it is situated in a particular context, the speech activity. Thus, in interactional sociolinguistics, researchers draw on ethnographic understandings to analyze the interpretation of language in context.

A closely related area of linguistics is cross-cultural communication, also called intercultural communication. Gumperz did pioneering work in this field; for example, his study of cafeteria workers with Indian backgrounds interacting with customers with British backgrounds at a British airport (1982: Chapter 8). Gumperz found that subtle differences in language use, such as a falling intonation rather than a rising intonation at the end of questions, led to misunderstandings even among proficient speakers of English. Cross-cultural communication seeks to analyze not only how sociocultural background affects language use and interpretation

but also how people of different background interact with each other through language. Tannen, for instance, applies these methods not only to talk among New Yorkers and Californians (2005), but to communication between women and men (1984). In this study, I find the lens of cross-cultural communication useful for analyzing how people with disabilities and able-bodied people interact discursively.

The purpose of this chapter is to ground my theoretical approach within the broad field of sociolinguistics. Specifically, the chapter reviews the literature on identity, narrative, and disability that informs my understanding of these fields in the discipline of linguistics. Having taken the sociolinguistic view that language involves social actors in social situations, the chapter moves from identity construction in discursive interaction, to identity construction specifically in narrative discourse, to identity construction and narrative discourse relating to disability. Section 2.2 presents three models of narrative used in the current study. Section 2.3 gives theoretical background on a sociolinguistic approach to identity and discusses identity construction in narrative. Section 2.4 reviews sociolinguistic literature on disability discourse.

The review of the literature in this chapter is designed to prepare the way for the more focused discussions of theoretical background that begin the individual analysis chapters. These discussions ask questions and make arguments that are addressed in the analyses. Thus the theoretical background in this chapter underlies all the chapters in the study. Some sections are especially relevant to one part of the analysis: the background on identity and positioning supports the positioning analysis in the fourth chapter; the background on narrative and identity supports the analysis of vicarious narrative in the fifth chapter; the background on disability discourse complements the analysis of family and friends' disability discourse in the sixth

chapter. The discussions of theoretical background in each analysis chapter build on the foundation laid in this one.

2.2 Narrative models

In this section, I explain three models of narrative that influence my concept of what narratives are. First, Labov and Waletzky's (1967; Labov 1972a, 1997, 2004) approach defines narrative in terms of its structural features. Second, Ochs and Capps' (2001) dimensional model proposes five defining features of narratives that are present along a dimensional scale. Third, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (Bamberg 2004d; Georgakopoulou 2006a; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) introduce "small stories" as a functional way of understanding how narratives are instantiated in discourse. All three models are based on analyzing narratives taken from interactive discourse. Each model seeks to explain what narratives are -- the structure, principles, dimensions that do or do not define them -- and what people do with narratives -- the reasons they are told, the ways they are interpreted, and the interactional/social effects they have.

In my analysis, I use the Labovian model to address the structural components of narratives, and I incorporate concepts he developed such as evaluation and tellability. However, while Labov's (1997) functional definition of narrative emphasizes the narrative turn and complete narrative texts, I am equally interested in narratives that emerge with less structure from the ongoing interaction. I take a functional view of narrative by incorporating Ochs and Capps' (2001) dimensions of narrative. This model focuses on the narrative function of meaning-making; the authors explain how narratives are told to help their tellers to make sense of the world both individually and in community. Ochs and Capps' model allows for narratives that are, for instance, co-told, embedded, and low in tellability: what Bamberg (2004d) and Georgakopoulou (2006a) call "small stories."

Small stories are proposed by Georgakopoulou and Bamberg as a way to broaden the understanding of what constitutes a narrative in interaction. Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) argue that such stories are important tools for creating and displaying identities. The remainder of this section will discuss the three models of narrative. In addition, the connection between small stories and identity is explored in Section 2.3.3. This lays the theoretical foundation for my analysis of the narrative examples in Chapters 5 and 6. Note that it is not my intention to propose adjustments or critiques of these models. Instead, I use them to examine the construction of disability identities in narrative.

2.2.1 Structural model

Labov's original work on narrative (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972a) grew out of his sociolinguistic research studying "vernacular" language in New York, particularly African American Vernacular English. One collection of data that particularly interested him were stories told in response to a researcher's question of whether the teller had ever been in danger of death; the narratives that resulted were often highly structured and in vernacular language. Labov and Waletzky (1967) propose a structural definition of narrative: narratives consist of narrative clauses, independent clauses whose sequence cannot be altered without altering the interpretation of events. A minimal narrative has at least two of these ordered clauses (a temporal junction).

The Labovian model also sets out the structural types of narrative clauses. I list them below with definitions adapted from Labov's later work (1972a, 1997, 2004), as well as Labov and Waletzky's (1967) foundational study:

- Abstract: initial clauses that summarize the story
- Orientation: free clauses that gives information about the setting or characters
- Complicating action: sequential clauses that report a narrative event
- Evaluation: free clauses that give information about ; may be external or internal (see

discussion below)

- Resolution: complicating action clauses that report the results of the (most tellable) narrative event
- Coda: Final clause that provides the summary, point, or punchline of the story

Although not all narratives include each type of clause, the structural model is useful for understanding how each component of a narrative contributes to the story and relates to other components. The Labovian model of a full narrative has become one which much of the linguistic scholarship on narratives since it was proposed has taken into account – to use, revise, or refute. In my study, I make use of the structural model to identify parts of a narrative.

Three key concepts that I use from Labov's (1972a, 1997, 2004) work on narrative are "personal narrative", "evaluation", and "reportability". Labov's work on narrative deals almost exclusively with what he calls narratives of personal experience or personal narratives (cf. Labov 2004).

Labov and Waletzky (1967) find that narratives of vicarious experience do not have the same structural components or coherence as personal narratives. Moreover, Labov (1997) argues that personal narratives function to transfer the experience of events from the teller to the listener; the teller has access to it through their own memories and can relate it to the listener in such a way "that they become aware of it as their own experience" (Labov 1997). In Chapter 4, I examine personal narratives; in Chapter 5, I explore vicarious narratives. Labov's original distinction between these two kinds of narratives of lived experience -- and his focus on personal narrative - - has had a lasting impact on the field of narrative analysis. In Chapter 5, I argue that both kinds of narrative can be used to do identity work.

Labov defines evaluation as "the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative" or more simply as an answer to the question "so what?" (1972a: 370). Labov distinguishes between internal evaluation, which is embedded within the narrative, and external

evaluation, which is outside the sequence of events. Internal evaluation happens within the narrative action and can include linguistic devices such as “intensifiers” that give emphasis to a clause or part of a clause, or “comparators” that contrast the events to hypothetical events (Labov 1997). Labov (1972a) describes external evaluation as occurring when “[t]he narrator ... stop[s] the narrative, turn[s] to the listener, and tell[s] him what the point it” (1972a: 371). Although external evaluation may be subtler than an outright explanation of the purpose of telling the story, these three actions define external evaluation. It occurs outside the world of the story, it is addressed to the listener, and it speaks to the moral stance (Labov 1997) of the narrative. One particular evaluative device is the use of irrealis. Labov (1997) points out the importance of modal, negative, and future clauses to evaluation; he proposes that a “narrative clause in an irrealis mood is an *evaluative clause*” by definition. Following Labov (1997), Carranza (1998) argues that narrating any event that is not happening provides the teller’s commentary on what did happen. Negated, hypothetical, and future events are a notable strategy for evaluation in the example narratives I analyze..

Reportability, or tellability helps to answer the “So what?” question posed by a listener to a speaker who takes and holds the floor in order to tell a narrative (Labov 1997); the reportability of a story justifies telling it. Labov (1997, 2004) argues that narratives are told around a most reportable event, an uncommon occurrence that has consequences for the interlocutors. The most reportable event is the lynchpin of Labov’s structural model, in which the complicating action precedes it and provides causes for it and the resolution follows it. Labov (2004) notes, however, that reportability depends on the social context and interlocutors. The question of tellability, as well as other aspects of a classic Labovian narrative, are revisited in the other two models discussed in this section.

2.2.2 Dimensional model

Drawing on their extensive studies of family interaction and other work on narrative discourse, Ochs and Capps (2001) provide a dimensional model for understanding conversational narratives. Their aim is to “analyze how different interlocutors shape the telling of narrative and how life events are structured through narrative form.” They argue that narratives of personal experience are ubiquitous in everyday conversation and range from stories about common occurrences to performances about surprising events. To capture the variability of narratives, Ochs and Capps propose five “dimensions” that are relevant to narrative: tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance:

- Tellership – the extent to which interlocutors are involved in telling the narrative; Ochs and Capps argue that all interlocutors have some degree of tellership, but they may have high or low involvement
- Tellability – the extent to which narratives are of interest or significance to interlocutors in a conversation; narratives may have high or low tellability (cf. Labov (2004) on reportability)
- Embeddedness – the extent to which narratives interact with the surrounding talk; narratives may be relatively embedded or relatively detached
- Linearity – the extent to which narrative events connect in a causal or temporal relationship (e.g. Capps and Ochs (1995a) find nonlinearity is a feature of one narrative about a panic attack)
- Moral stance – the ways in which characters and events are evaluated as good or valuable in the world; moral stance may be certain and constant, uncertain and fluid, or indeterminate and unstable

The prototypical personal narrative – in response to Labov’s (1972) danger of death question, for instance – has one teller, high tellability, detachment from the conversation, linear organization, and a unambiguous moral stance. However, narratives can fall at different points along each dimension: a narrative might have multiple co-tellers instead of one teller (tellership); it might report ordinary life events that do not run counter to expectations (low tellability). A distinctive feature of Ochs and Capps’ (2001) approach is its plurality: it accounts for multiple

tellers, multiple interpretations of events, multiple narratives interacting with each other. In my analysis, the dimensional model can account for narratives that do not fit the prototypical mode. For instance, some of the example narratives in Chapters 4 and 5 exhibit low linearity when tellers relate the narrative events and then immediately re-tell them; one of the narratives in Chapter 6 is co-told (with high involvement).

Although the dimensional model does not define narratives in terms of their structures, it recognizes several of the same components as a Labovian model of narrative structure: description (orientation); chronology (complicating actions); evaluation. The dimensional model, however, adds explanation – the point, interpretation, or meaning-making component of the story – as a part of the structure. Labov's (1997) approach to narrative is concerned with the point of the story, but does not include it as a structural component except insofar as it affects the evaluation, resolution, or coda. Moreover, Ochs and Capps (2001) argue that conversational narrative, in which there is a give and take between interlocutors, features description *questions*, chronology *clarifications*, evaluation *challenges*, and explanation *speculations*. Their concern is with how the narrative structure is shaped by the on-going interaction.

Ochs and Capps (2001) argue that the underlying purpose of conversational narrative is to construct meaning. Stories are not told solely because of their high tellability, but instead function as evidence for a larger point or as responses to previous stories. Ochs and Capps' model explores how narratives make meaning and provide moral stances in conversational interactions. The moral stance dimension of the model is key to meaning-making. Ochs and Capps point out that tellers often contrast the protagonist's (their own) moral stances to those of characters in the story. I find that this comparison between selves lends itself to identity work, regardless of whether the teller is the protagonist of their story. Furthermore, Ochs and Capps tie

moral stance to community, arguing that one sign of membership in a community is accepting its moral standards. This dimension thus also helps to explain the ways in which narratives are told within a community, including the communities of disability discussed in Chapter 6.

2.2.3 Small stories

Georgakopoulou (2001, 2006a, 2007) and Bamberg (2004d, 2008, 2011a, 2012) propose “small stories” as an alternative to the “big stories” that are seen as part of an on-going autobiographical narrative in the fields of social psychology and narrative analysis. The small story approach to narrative draws on analyses of narrative data collected in experimental and interview settings. Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) describe small stories as narratives that are typically short in length and deal with “fleeting aspects of lived experience” (2008: 379). They hold that the methodologies stemming from Labov’s model of narrative obscure the existence of small stories and the interactions that are part of them, although they acknowledge that work has been done in this direction (including by Ochs and Capps (2001)). Georgakopoulou explains that small stories run the “gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings and refusals to tell” (2007: vii).

Bamberg (2004a) argues that small stories occupy the same space, and perform the same functions, in interactions as more detachable narratives. Small stories, however, are frequently only tellable because they either describe about events that happened very recently or address some point in the ongoing interaction. Small stories are typically shorter in length and may have a minimum of temporally-ordered narrative clauses; however, they are often rich in orientation and evaluation. Bamberg (2004d) also suggests that they may have more complicated onsets in the conversation, as (co-)tellers gradually negotiate and take the floor to tell their story. Thus

small stories occupy the same space in conversational interactions as more detached, fully-structured narratives. They also perform the same functions, including allowing the teller to hold the floor, creating a story world, and providing a site for identity construction.

The work Georgakopoulou and Bamberg have done on small stories is part of a larger trend in narrative analysis that seeks to explain narratives that do not fit into previous ideas of narratives as fully structured and detached or as parts of a larger autobiographical narrative. De Fina and Georgakopoulou suggest that models of “small” stories, taken in opposition to models of “big” stories, are thus “a systematic attempt to broaden the scope of narrative analysis” (2012: 108). The small stories model allows analysis of habitual, hypothetical, and future narratives that occurs in conversation and interviews. The model is compatible with the growing understanding of narrative as an interactive practice: narratives that are emergent from the on-going interaction and co-constructed by interlocutors can be expected to be small or incomplete (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008). In my analysis, I examine small stories, as well as habitual, hypothetical, irrealis events, within the narrative examples.

The small stories approach is also closely tied to narrative and identity, as discussed in this chapter. Bamberg (2008, 2011a, 2012), Georgakopoulou (2006a, 2007), and De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) argue that small stories are productive in constructing identities. Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) offer a sample analysis examining small stories with the three-level model of positioning first proposed by Bamberg (1997a).

The models I have discussed are all shaped by the perspectives and the data used by their originators. Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) focus on (high) reportability and full narrative structures proceeds from his work on elicited narratives taken from sociolinguistic interviews; Ochs and Capps’ (2001) interest in multiple tellers and embeddedness arises from their work on

conversational narrative; Georgakopoulou's (2001, 2006a) and Bamberg's (2004d) small story approach comes from a wide range of conversational, interview, and experimental data. My own data are taken from interactions that were framed as conversations, yet had many features of a sociolinguistic interview (e.g. a researcher present with a recorder). In my analysis, I identify narratives by their adherence to Labov's (1997) minimal narrative (according to his structural model) and by their narrative functions in the discourse (according to the dimensional and small story models). My example narratives can all be analyzed as sites of identity construction for their tellers. In the following section, I explain my approach to narrative and identity.

2.3 Narrative and identity

In this section, I discuss how I approach identity in narrative discourse. In Section 2.3.1, I briefly define my approach to identity and, following the framework proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), lay out the parameters of a sociolinguistic approach to identity. In Section 2.3.2, I operationalize identity construction at the level of individual discourses using Davies and Harré's (1990) positioning theory. In Section 2.3.3, I consider identity in narrative discourse, beginning with Schiffrin's (1996) foundational work and returning to positioning with Bamberg's (1997a) model for analyzing positioning in narratives. I conclude that section with a discussion of Bamberg's (2011a, 2011b, 2012) recent work on identity in narrative.

2.3.1 A sociolinguistic framework for identity

I characterize my approach to identity by four basic features: identities are socially constructed; identities emerge from and are instantiated in (discursive) interactions; identities are dynamic and plural; identities can recur across discourses. Stating identities are socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1966) means they are formulated in interaction with other people. The social construction of identity can be set against an essentialist understanding of identity as an

inherent property of an individual. Viewing identity as a social construction means identities exist only in relation to other available identities and other actors in the social world (Bucholtz and Hall 2005).

Since identities are not inherent, they are produced in interactions – including discursive interactions – with others (Taylor 1991; Johnstone 1996; Bucholtz and Hall 2005). De Fina, Schifffrin, and Bamberg (2006) concur that “identity is a process”. This feature of identity is captured in the terms “identity-in-interaction” to describe identity (Aronsson 1998) and “identity work” to describe the discursive process of constructing an identity. Identities are locally-occasioned within each conversation, as participants in the conversation create, negotiate and display identities through their use of language. Identity and language are connected through indexical relationships (De Fina et al. 2006) when speakers draw on cultural ideologies that link certain linguistic features to certain attributes of a person (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Ochs argues that “[l]inguistic constructions at all levels of grammar and discourse are crucial indicators of social identity for [speakers] as they regularly interact with each other” (1993: 288).

Accordingly, the focus for linguistic analysis is not on what a person understands their identity to be, but on what identities emerge for them in discourse (Bamberg 2004b).

The identities that emerge in interaction are not fixed, coherent attributes of a person, but dynamic, plural versions of their self. Because participants in an interaction constantly construct and negotiate identities, identity is never a finished product but instead is constantly undergoing revision (Bamberg 2004a). Different versions of the self emerge in particular interactions as participants respond to varied contexts (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). In this way, identity construction in interaction gives rise to repertoires of identities (Kroskrity 1993; cf. Bamberg et al. 2011); I use the term disability identity to refer to an individual's repertoire of identities

constructed around their disability practice. Conflicting identities also emerge in discourse. McNerney's (2001) findings about contradictory positionings of power and weakness in disability narratives echo studies such as Schiffrin's (1996), which shows contradictory positions of solidarity and distance in family narratives.

Identities that are instantiated in particular conversations may recur across discourses.

Georgakopoulou (2006b) describes how speakers habitually take up conversational roles, which then serve as platforms for their larger, social identities. In a similar way, Zimmerman (1998) identifies three levels of identity: discourse identities, which emerge fleetingly in conversations; situated identities, which re-occur in certain contexts; and transportable identities, which are available across conversations and contexts (cf. Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) principle of positionality, discussed below). De Fina et al. (2006) exemplify transportable, global identities as qualities of a person such as gender or ethnicity. While all identities emerge from interaction, some identities are negotiated and displayed within multiple interactions. Thus, disability identity can be analyzed across multiple discourses.

In order to analyze identity in linguistic interactions, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) propose a framework with five broad principles. Their framework covers sociolinguistic approaches on identity in a way that weaves together individual strands of research. Rather than offering a singular analysis, Bucholtz and Hall provide the groundwork for multiple models and approaches to identity. At the same time, their principles highlight key aspects of identity with which sociolinguistic analyses are concerned. I describe the five principles of Bucholtz and Hall's framework below, with a discussion of how each principle applies to the analysis in the current study.

The first principle Bucholtz and Hall give is that of *emergence*: “Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon” (2005: 588). The authors trace the idea of emergence to work of Hymes (1975) and Bauman and Briggs (1990) in linguistic anthropology. Bucholtz and Hall argue that emergence is demonstrated with especial clarity “in cases where the speakers’ language use does not conform with the social category to which they are normatively assigned” (2005: 588). An example of this (cited but not discussed by Bucholtz and Hall) is Barrett (1999)’s study of African American drag queens, in which he shows how “white woman” identities emerge within the performance, rather than existing outside of it. The emergent principle is common to linguistic scholarship on identity. Emergence is a foundational argument in positioning theory (Davies and Harré 1990; van Langenhove and Harré 1999), which developed with the premise that positions are emergent and instantiated in specific discourses. Bamberg argues for emergence both in his model of positioning (1997a, 2004a) and in his proposal for analyzing identity in dilemmatic spaces (2011a; discussed in section 2.3.3). In chapter 4, I examine identity through an analysis of positioning in narratives, drawing on positioning theory and applying Bamberg’s (1997a) model.

Bucholtz and Hall term their second principle *positionality*: “Identities encompass (1) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles” (2005: 592). In this principle, Bucholtz and Hall incorporate macro-level trends, such as those studied in variationist sociolinguistics, local identity categories, such as those found ethnographic observations, and micro-level identity work, such as those captured by close discourse analysis. Rather than arguing that one of these levels of identity work is most properly called “identity”, Bucholtz and

Hall demonstrate that multiple levels can be found in a single discourse. They claim that, for doing linguistic analysis, “it is not a matter of choosing one dimension of identity over others, but of considering multiple facets in order to achieve a more complete understanding of how identity works” (2005: 593). My analysis begins at the micro-level, with a close discourse analysis of the narratives. Each of these analyses, however, also incorporates other dimensions of identity. The discussion sections of chapter 4 and 5 argue that the identity work done in the narratives gets at a higher-level “disability identity” being constructed by the individual tellers. Chapter 6 discusses a “wise” or “shared” identity for able-bodied individuals, investigating how these arise within social networks.

Bucholtz and Hall’s third principle is *indexicality*: “Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicature and presuppositions regarding one’s own or others’ identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups” (2005: 594).

The fourth principle Bucholtz and Hall propose is *relationality*: “Identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy” (2005: 599). The authors suggest that identity incorporates many other dimensions of relationality as well. In their own discussion, Bucholtz and Hall use *adequation* and *distinction*, instead of similarity and difference, to highlight the ways in which language can be used to incorporate heterogeneous members into a group. They point back to the example of gender identities emerging in discourse to illustrate how people may adequately identify themselves with a group to which they do not

normatively belong. Individuals may not be the *same* as the group, but can prove they are *similar enough* to participate in it. The dimensions of sameness/difference is emphasized in other works on language and identity; Bamberg (2011a), discussed below, gives it as one of his three dilemmatic spaces in which identities are constructed. The relation of sameness/difference, or adequation/distinction, is an especially productive one for the current study. The concept of a “disability identity” is made possible by adequation: diverse physical disabilities -- that, is disability practices specific to the individual -- are viewed as a common state of being. In this way, the participants in this study can label themselves “people with disabilities”, despite using different daily practices to meet different physical needs. Moreover, in chapter 6, I propose that able-bodied “wise” individuals can share in a disability identity. Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) term adequation is useful in this case where sameness does not seem to apply.

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) propose *partialness* as their last principle: “Identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of others’ perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures” (2005: 585). They claim by this principle that identity is constantly shifting in a single interaction and across multiple contexts, and that different analyses will yield insights into different aspects of identity. Bucholtz and Hall see this principle as speaking to the role of agency in identity construction, that is, to what extent individuals can be agentic in the construction of their own identities. (This level of agency being distinct from the agency that Bamberg (2011a), for instance, posits as a dimension of an identity being constructed.) Bucholtz and Hall follow Duranti (2004) in stating that the use of language is itself an act of agency; however, agency does not entail intentionality. In their discussion, the authors point out that sociolinguists “are generally not concerned with calibrating

the degree of autonomy or intentionality in any given act; rather agency is more productively viewed as the accomplishment of social action” (2005: 606). The current study does not seek to measure the deliberateness of the identity work the participants engage in. However, the implication of the principle – that identity is constantly shifting in interactions and across contexts – is relevant to any study of identity.

Drawing extensively on literature from sociolinguistics, Bucholtz and Hall synthesize current approaches to analyzing identity. Although Bucholtz and Hall define identity as “the social positioning of self and other” (2005: 586), they state themselves that this definition is “deliberately broad and open-ended” (ibid.). Their principles encompass, rather than enclose, different aspects of identity. The principle of positionality, for instance, leaves space for analyses of identity from small to large scales, ranging from the close discourse analysis used in this study to an analysis of identity in national narratives (cf. chapters in Moghaddam et al. 2007). Bucholtz and Hall in one sense provide an overview of linguistic approaches to identity. Yet while Bucholtz and Hall’s five principles explore the nature and definition of identity in linguistic interaction, the purpose of the principles is also to provide a framework for analyzing identity. This framework delineates areas that can be explored in an analysis of identity in interaction. My analysis of disability (and “wise”) identity incorporates each principle: (1) the principle of emergence by viewing identity as instantiated in interaction; (2) the principle of positionality by using a close discourse analysis to investigate micro-level identities and to get at higher-level identities; (3) the principle of indexicality; (4) the principle of relationality by investigating the dimension of sameness/difference; and (5) the principle of partialness by acknowledging that identities are dynamic and changeable in and across discourses. Bucholtz and Hall’s definition of

identity as social positioning suggests a way to operationalize how identities are constructed in individual discourse texts such as narratives.

Positioning of selves within the interaction points to the identities being constructed by the participants: “Positioning aims at a description of the discursive practices by which people position self and others in talk-in-interaction so as to assign locally relevant identities” (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2000: 210). In the next section, I explore positioning theory as proposed by Davies and Harré (1990). In Section 2.3.3, I discuss how Bamberg (1997a) formulates a model of positioning aimed specifically at analyzing narratives. This model is furthered in work by Bamberg (2004a) and Georgakopoulou (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008).

2.3.2 Positioning theory

Davies and Harré (1990) introduce positioning theory as a way of analyzing identity in discourse, stemming from an earlier treatment of positioning by Hollway (1984). The authors define positioning as “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines” (Davies and Harré 1990: 48). This definition highlights certain features of positioning:

- Positioning is a dynamic “process”
- Positioning is concerned with “selves”
- Positioning uses a spatial metaphor (“located in”)
- Positioning is instantiated “in conversations”
- Positioning is interactive (“jointly produced”)

These features are comparable to aspects of identity highlighted in recent literature, such as emergence (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). The definition also creates a link between positioning and narrative. The spatial metaphor and instantiation in a discourse are compatible with the idea of selves being placed within a story world (Bruner 1990; Schiffrin 1996). Furthermore, although

“story lines” are not equivalent to narrative events, Davies and Harré explain that they are “embedded in fragments of the participants’ autobiographies” (see Linde 1993 on the coherence of life stories).

Davies and Harré (1990) illustrate the application of positioning theory to interaction with an example invented for the analysis. “Sano” and “Enfermada” are looking for a pharmacy in an unfamiliar city to buy medicine for Enfermada. Sano says, “I’m sorry to have dragged you all this way when you’re not well”; the analysis proposes that Sano meant to position himself as healthy and thereby having an obligation to his unhealthy companion. Enfermada, however, replies: “You didn’t drag me, I chose to come”. She has interpreted Sano’s remark as positioning her as not responsible for her own health. She refuses this position for herself -- and Sano’s position of obligation for himself -- and re-positions herself agentively. The authors draw in Enfermada’s feminist perspective in order to make an argument about the relational nature of positioning. The conversation in the storyworld becomes a negotiation of the different “story lines” of the characters, with the discursive practice of positioning taking on larger meaning within the social world.

Davies and Harré’s (1990) work is motivated by their view that the concept of role – widely used at the time – is too static to describe the process of identity construction in conversational interaction. The authors critique Goffman’s concepts of “footing” (1981) and “framing” (1974; see also chapters in Tannen (ed.) 1993). Footing, defined by Goffman as “the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (1981: 128), is often seen as similar to positioning and can be used as a complementary method of analysis (Ribeiro 2006). Davies and Harré, however, view both footing and frames as too tied to the notion of pre-existing roles or schema. They claim instead

that a position exists within a particular discourse. In their analysis and discussion, they emphasize the ways in which positioning is dynamic and locally instantiated.

Davies and Harré (1990) offer a heuristic of factors to consider when analyzing positioning: the assumptions about what sort of discourse this is, the ways the speakers find appropriate to speak in this sort of discourse, the imagery and metaphors a speaker uses, the contradictory nature of positions taken up by speakers, and the relationship between positioning and larger roles the speaker wishes to evoke. The first two factors have strong similarities to the concept of interactive frames; that is, what speakers think they are doing when they are talking (Tannen and Wallat 1993; see also Bateson 1954/1972, Goffman 1974). Indeed, framing, footing, and positioning all stand in opposition to earlier ideas of roles and can be used to analyze similar phenomena in discourse. My choice of positioning, discussed further in Chapter 4, is principally motivated by its close ties to the analysis of narrative and identity.

The reciprocity of positioning among interlocutors in a conversation is one feature in the literature on positioning theory that has no counterpart in strategies of identity work such as framing and footing. That is, speakers may position each other's selves as well as their own self. This kind of positioning move then leads to negotiation of the position, as in the example of Sano and Enfermada's interaction. One important means of negotiating is the speakers' ability to refuse a the position that their interlocutor has put them in and re-position their self. In an analysis, the positioning moves of positioning of one's self, positioning another, refusal of positions, and re-positioning provide a way to describe how identities are constructed in interaction between speakers.

In the introduction to their edited volume on positioning theory, van Langenhove and Harré (1999) set up a taxonomy for the theory. They introduce first, second, and third order

positioning: first order occurs when speakers position themselves within what the authors call the “moral space”; second occurs when first order positioning is challenged and negotiated by interlocutors; and third occurs when speakers explicitly tell about or discuss first and second order positioning (the authors classify their chapter as third order positioning).

In a similar vein, the authors propose four forms of positioning that show the interactive nature of the process-- positioning may be “forced” and applied to other’s selves as well as one’s own. Deliberate self-positioning occurs “in every conversation where one wants to express his/her personal identity”. Forced self-positioning happens when an interlocutor initiates the positioning; for example, asking why someone did something. Deliberate positioning of others occurs when a speaker locates another person, absent or present, within the moral space. Forced positioning of others occurs when an interlocutor requires a speaker to position an absent or present person other than themselves; the example given is of a mother asking a father to comment on their son. Although this taxonomy is not rigidly adhered to in my analysis, it suggests possible positioning moves to examine in the data.

To exemplify their analysis, van Langenhove and Harré (1999) use a naturally-occurring interaction taken from Tannen (1984). According to van Langenhove and Harré (1999), the two participants, Deborah and Peter, are first positioned as the pair ‘teacher’/‘learner’ while Peter tells Deborah about a book he has read. Then, Peter positions himself as ‘martyr’ when he talks about being busy and not getting enough sleep. Deborah is repositioned as ‘friend’ in response to Peter’s act of positioning. This exemplifies how positions change over the course of a conversation. A hypothetical example of refusing a position is given in the same paper: Smith says “Why don’t I see you at guest nights these days?” and Jones replies “What a stupid question. It’s because I’m not there” (van Langenhove and Harré 1999: 25). The authors explain

that Smith is positioning Jones as a guilty party. Jones refuses this positioning and instead “reposition[s] himself as the sophisticated critic of Smith’s naivety” (ibid.). The positioning of a participant changes in this example as well. Thus, the act of positioning is a dynamic process within a discourse, negotiated relationally between the participants.

Current approaches within positioning theory argue that positions can be identified by the ascription of rights and duties to a self (cf. Moghaddam et al. 2007; Harré et al. 2009; Harré 2012). Positioning occurs when an individual’s self takes on the rights and duties that are understood as belonging to a certain position. Under this approach, positioning theory can be understood “as a method of analysis aimed at revealing the storylines and implicit (sometimes explicit) ascriptions and resistances to ascriptions of rights and duties to perform actions expressing social acts appropriate to the situations recognized by participants” (Harré 2012: 191). As Harré notes, the application of this method can range from analyses of positioning by an individual reflecting alone, through individuals interacting in conversation, to nation-states engaging in discourses. As an interdisciplinary approach, positioning theory is used not only for doing linguistic analysis but also for doing work in psychology and other disciplines. Although Davies and Harré (1990) originally place positioning theory in opposition to the notion of pre-existing roles, De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) point out that positioning theory has come to rely on the concept of culturally available positions, which are formed a priori. The authors cite the use of fabricated examples and the assumption that rights and duties have mentally stored representations as out of keeping with a discursive approach. Positioning theory fails to address the use of “real language” (Bucholtz 2003) in real interactions. Therefore, while Davies and Harré’s (1990) original formulation of positioning theory is helpful for understanding how

identities are created and negotiated at a local level, a discourse-oriented approach is needed to analyze narratives.

For a distinctively sociolinguistic perspective on narrative and identity, Schiffrin's (1996) work is foundational. In the next section, I examine her approach to analyzing the performance of identity in narratives, including her concept of positions. I then discuss Bamberg's (1997a) proposal of a model of positioning that applies specifically to narratives, and his explanation (2011a) of how identities are negotiated within narratives. These studies of narrative and identity fall within the sociolinguistic approach to identity laid out by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and incorporate the concept of positioning proposed by Davies and Harré (1990).

2.3.3 Identity in narrative discourse

In her ground-breaking work on narrative and identity, Schiffrin proposes that personal narratives provide an opportunity for tellers to perform identities:

“Telling a story provides a self-portrait: a linguistic lens through which to discover peoples' own (somewhat idealized) views of themselves as situated in a social structure. The verbalization and textual structure of a story... combines with its content, and with its local and global contexts of production, to provide a view of self that can be either challenged or validated by an audience.”
(1996:199)

This understanding of identity in personal narrative relies on the concept of a “story world” (170) that displays the teller's self against a backdrop of cultural meaning and expectations. Schiffrin argues that the self in the story world and the way it is positioned can reveal the identity of the teller. By situating a self within a story world, the teller performs a identity. Schiffrin also notes that the interaction between the characters within the story world aides in the performance of identity. Narrative discourse thus provides a unique site for tellers to construct their identities.

Schiffrin examines narratives told by two Jewish-American women, Jan and Zelda, about their families. Jan tells about her daughter *goin' out with a Gentile boy* (1996: 175); Zelda tells about her attempt to get her daughter-in-law to call her “mom”. Schiffrin emphasizes that identity is displayed at all levels of the narrative: the form, the content, and the performance (1996: 194). De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) exemplify these three levels in Schiffrin’s work with the contrast between direct and indirect speech (form), the sequential order of the action (content), and the alternation of utterances from within the storyworld and from outside it (performance). Schiffrin’s argument centers on the distinction between epistemic and agentive selves (Bruner 1990). Tellers present their agentive selves when they show themselves as taking goal-oriented actions. For example, in the complicating actions of the story, Jan makes cooperative verbal actions to show solidarity with her daughter’s choice to date the boy (*I said “I don’t care”* [1996: 177]). Tellers present their epistemic selves when they state their beliefs and desires. For example, in the evaluation, Jan approves of her daughter’s decision not to go out with a Gentile again, implying that her daughter’s initial choice was a harmful one (*That cured her!*[1996: 178]). Schiffrin demonstrates how the two tellers in the study navigate between contrasting epistemic and agentive selves in order to negotiate solidarity and distance, and power and autonomy.

In Schiffrin’s analysis, she names the relational aspect of how selves are portrayed “positions”. For example, when Zelda in the story world says to her daughter-in-law *If you can’t say Mom, just call me by my first name!* (1996: 196), Schiffrin explains that Zelda is taking up a position of solidarity with her daughter-in-law, indexed by Zelda’s desire to be addressed in a familiar way. Schiffrin shows Zelda takes up dual positions of solidarity and distance toward her daughter-in-law that exist in tension with each other throughout the narrative. By telling stories, Jan and

Zelda are able both to present their selves within a social setting and to position their selves in relation to other characters in the storyworld. Schiffrin claims that by doing so, each woman displays her identity as a “mother”. (In this article, Schiffrin uses the term “social role” at the same level as “social identity”.) Schiffrin takes a performative view of identity, seeing it as dynamic and locally situated. Schiffrin shows that narratives are a linguistic resource for the display of identity and uses positions to explain how selves relate to one another in the storyworld.

Building on Schiffrin’s observation that identity work happens both in the storyworld and the surrounding interaction, Bamberg (1997a) offers a model to analyze identity construction in narrative using positioning. He set out to link Davies and Harré’s (1990) positioning theory with Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) tradition of narrative analysis (1997a: 336). Bamberg (1997a) proposes a three-level model of positioning in which the analysis examines, first, positioning among the characters in the storyworld; second, positioning among the participants in the interaction; and third, positioning in answer to the larger question *who am I?* (later also equated with positioning in terms of master narratives (Bamberg 2004a)). Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) lay out the application of this model to small stories in an analysis illustrated with a narrative from an interview between a moderator and four adolescent boys. The authors show that the co-tellers of the narrative positioning themselves by the placement of the characters in the storyworld, the interactive accomplishment of narrating, the interactive turns, and the relations between the interlocutors. All of these positioning moves lead to an answer for the identity question *who am I?*, which the authors see as positioning in terms of a master narrative of male adolescence. Bamberg’s (1997a) three-level model for conducting a positioning analysis is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, in which it is applied. It is important to note here,

however, that Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2008) work in demonstrating the application of positioning to small stories also shows that small stories are used to display tellers' identities in the same way as more elaborated narratives.

Bamberg's (2011a, 2011b) recent work on identities in narrative combines ideas of positioning, coherence, and agency. His work is useful because, while it remains compatible with his model for analyzing positioning, it also demonstrates how narrative functions as a unique site for creating and displaying identities. In other words, it places positioning within the broader context of how identities are negotiated in interactive discourse. Bamberg (2011a) explains identity formation in terms of negotiating three dilemmatic spaces: first, the sameness of identity over time; second, the uniqueness of self among others; and third, the agency of self in the world. Each of these spaces presents a particular challenge for identity work in narrative. The first dilemmatic space is negotiated by diachronically presenting an identity that is continuous across changing time. Bamberg describes this identity negotiation in part as in "the process of sorting out what events qualify as formative or transformative for the emergence of identity" (2011a: 6). Telling about events in narrative lends itself to this process. The second dilemmatic space is negotiated by synchronically differentiating and integrating a self in relation to other selves. In narrative, this is the space in tellers position their selves vis-à-vis other characters. Bamberg (2011a) claims that other characters are brought into existence and put into social categories in order for this identity negotiation to be done. By comparing and contrasting their selves with others, tellers are able to show their uniqueness. The third dilemmatic space is the negotiated of agency between self and the world. Bamberg points out that in narratives, the tellers and characters are uniquely present; in a personal narrative, for instance, the teller's own character is embodied in the story world as well as involved in the interaction. He argues that this space, too,

involves positioning: placing a self in relation to others as an agent or as an undergoer. The dilemmatic spaces of coherence/change, sameness/difference, and high/low agency echo Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) principle of relationality, in which identities are constructed by moving along a dimension between contrasting ends. In this sense, Bamberg's (2011a) approach could be applied to non-narrative discourses. But his discussion shows that these dimensions are particularly applicable to narratives. Like Schiffrin (1996), Bamberg finds that narratives allow their tellers to reveal aspects of who they are.

In my analysis, I apply a sociolinguistic understanding of identity to examining narrative discourse. I use positioning (Davies and Harré 1990; Bamberg 1997a; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) as a tool for examining identity; I also consider how identities are negotiated in the dilemmatic spaces proposed by Bamberg (2011a). The narratives I analyze are told by and about people with physical disabilities. In the next section, I discuss previous research on disability discourse within the field of sociolinguistics, with particular attention to studies that examine narrative and identity.

2.4 Disability discourse in sociolinguistics

In this study, I analyze disability discourse using sociolinguistic methods. Scholars in the field of health communication have done similar work, examining narrative and identity in the discourse of patients and medical practitioners. Crucially, some scholars have broadened the perspective on patients and illness discourse to take a more holistic approach. Hamilton (1989, 1994), for instance, moved research in the area of Alzheimer's Disease and health communication from a focus on pathology and cognitive difficulties to an approach that explores how people with Alzheimer's can and do interact and engage in conversation. Recently, Ramanathan (2009, 2014) has proposed an emphasis on how patients' bodies get "languaged" -- that is, paying attention not

only to the social construction of illness and disability but to the physical side of their experience. Even so, studies in health communication tend to identify their participants by particular illnesses or diagnoses. Ramanathan and Makoni (2007), for example, illuminate what they term the “(mis)languaging of bodies” specifically with regard to bodies with diabetes and epilepsy. The highlighting of participants’ medical conditions, while suitable in the field of health communication, can be problematic for studies of disability discourse. I argue that disability is defined as practice. Structuring linguistic studies of disability by identifying participants specifically by their medical conditions and then interrogating the discourse surrounding their medical practices runs the risk of privileging that set of practices over the everyday practices that participants with disabilities engage in. In effect, it is assuming that disability identities are grounded most essentially in medical conditions and medical practices. This assumption runs counter to scholarship in disability studies over the last few decades (see Shakespeare (ed.) 1998; Altman 2001; Albrecht et al. (ed.) 2001). Linguistic studies must begin by examining people with disabilities as a community rather than simply as people who are patients (which they may be also). Al Zidjaly (2005, 2006, 2007) provides an example of a study that applies the sociolinguistic analysis of agency and multimodality to the discourse of a person with a disability. My own study takes a similar approach in examining narrative and identity in disability discourse.

In this section, I review sociolinguistic literature on disability discourse, focusing on studies that have analyzed identity construction or have used narrative data. Disability discourse is not a well-recognized area in sociolinguistics. Nevertheless, several scholars have been undertaken research on discourse concerning people who use practices and strategies to accommodate their physical impairment(s) as they move through everyday life. The research I review in this section

those whose participants who fall within this definition of people with disabilities and whose methods of analyzing identity and narrative follow a sociolinguistic approach. Some of the sociolinguistic literature on disability discourse comes out of the discipline of health communication, including Hamilton (1989, 1996, 1998, 2008), Capps and Ochs (1995a, 1995b), Ramanathan (and Makoni 2007; 2009; with McPherron 2011), and Okada (2011). Other studies approach disability discourse as such, but focus on health-related activities such as medical encounters and support groups, such as Barton (1995, 1996, 1999, 2004). Finally, some recent studies examine the discourse of people with disabilities from an everyday, non-institutional standpoint, particularly McNerney (2001) and Al Zidjaly (2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012).

2.4.1 Disability discourse in health communication

Hamilton's work has been influential in moving the study of Alzheimer's Disease from a focus on pathology and language deficit to a holistic understanding of how people with Alzheimer's communicate and interact. Hamilton (1989, 1994) studied her own conversations with a woman with Alzheimer's Disease, "Elsie", over the course of four and a half years. Hamilton used methods from interactional sociolinguistics to examine how she and Elsie interacted as conversational partners. This study contrasted with other work at the time on the language of people with Alzheimer's Disease by exploring a conversational interaction rather than a test or interview situation. One important aspect of Hamilton's work, then, and now, is her attention to the interlocutors of speakers with Alzheimer's Disease. Hamilton (1994) highlights the importance of considering the role of interlocutors who are healthy in the discourse of patients with Alzheimer's Disease. She argues this especially in the context of patients who may have limited communicative abilities; isolating the discourse of the patients only shows half of the

interaction. This argument is echoed in Fond's (2013) analysis of topic in conversational interactions between research participants with neurological disorders and clinicians. Fond shows that certain instances in which the conversation does not seem to be "staying on topic" are examples of the participants taking control of the topic and asserting their own agency. Fond points out that, in the context of a medical encounter, these instances may be interpreted by the clinician as examples of the "patient's" inability to focus. Only by analyzing the discourse of both the clinician and the participants with neurological disorders does it become clear that the participants are initiating a topic shift and not going off topic.

As Hamilton (1994) argues, it is only possible to see the 'appropriateness' of responses in their larger discourse context. How a patient responds to their interlocutor depends upon the interlocutor's talk as well as the patient's competence. Hamilton (1996) analyzes the co-construction of identity on the part of patients and caregivers when the patient has a deteriorating memory. She examines the ways in which an interlocutor's response to the patient's talk identifies the patient as a peer or as a patient. Hamilton explores the dynamic nature of these co-constructions in conversations, leading to the establishment of social identities. She also points out the impact of the interlocutor's responses on the patient's identity construction, since these responses show an expectation of how a person with Alzheimer's is supposed to behave.

Because patients with Alzheimer's can have difficulty switching between different identities, the role of the interlocutor in these interactions is particularly vital. The interlocutor's responses indicate whether the patient is currently identified as a peer or as a patient; at the same time, however, the patient can engage in face-saving strategies to correct an unwanted identity.

This equal attention to the patient with Alzheimer's and the interlocutor continues in Hamilton's study of narrative. Following her earlier work (1989, 1994), Hamilton (2008) has studied

narrative and identity construction in conversations with an Alzheimer's patient. As a parallel to Schiffrin's characterization (1996) of narrative as "self-portrait", Hamilton (2008) suggests that narratives told by patients with Alzheimer's can be considered "snapshots". In other words, the narratives and "narrative-traces" (independent clauses that refer to the past) that Hamilton describes are used by Elsie to engage in identity work. Elsie is not able to tell about fully-formed storyworlds, but she refers to past events in order to present herself as a conversational partner and to display her younger (and more healthy) self. Hamilton draws from this analysis practical suggestions for health professional and personal caregivers working with people with Alzheimer's Disease. She explains how interlocutors can support an individual's identity work by responding to politeness strategies, focusing on the here-and-now (e.g. objects in the physical environment), and actively listening at times when the individual is able to refer to the events. In her conclusion, Hamilton argues that "even a narrative as "snapshot" can provide clues that help interlocutors reconstruct aspects of the individual's identity" (2008: 80). Hamilton suggests implications of her work that can be helpful to people with Alzheimer's and their caregivers. In Chapter 7, I follow this example by discussing the implications of my work for the community of people with disabilities.

Ramanathan (1994, 1995) also studies Alzheimer's Disease discourse from an interactional perspective, as well as discourse related to other illnesses. She applies sociolinguistic methods to studying the language of and about patients with long-term or permanent medical conditions such as breast cancer, diabetes, and epilepsy. Ramanathan (2009) combines her work on health communication with concepts from critical disability studies (Davis 2006). Her work (2009) examines how "bodies get languaged" with relation to illness and disability. She addresses the notion of bodies that have illnesses, disabilities, or amputations as non-normal and deviant, and

she calls for further consideration of how language is used with regard to physical experience. Her analysis draws on discourses about different illnesses and disabilities to understand how bodies are constructed by and for people with these ailments in societal discourses. In doing so, Ramanathan (2009, 2014) approaches illness and ailments in a way compatible with studying disabilities; that is, as permanent, “normal” states of being. Her work on the language of the body has implications for studying disability discourse, most especially her assertion that any understanding of experiences of illness or disability must take into account physical realities such as body ‘breakdowns’ and chronic pain. However, her work related to disability begins with practices having to do with ailments and impairments. In other words, disability and illness become interchangeable and interconnected in a way that privileges discourse related to medical conditions and impairments over discourse related to everyday practices. This places Ramanathan’s work in the field of health communication, within a growing area of scholarship that analyzes language about the body.

Following Ramanathan and Makoni’s (2007) examination of language surrounding diabetes and epilepsy, Okada (2011) examines “illness narratives” from open-ended interviews with patients with fibromyalgia (in English) and rheumatoid arthritis (in Japanese). She presents the weaknesses of both biomedical models and social models of disability and illness: “whereas the biomedical model takes little account of individuals and their suffering, the social model disregards the physical body ... that is experiencing malfunction, discomfort, and pain (2011: 146). Okada discusses her approach using disability-related terminology (including “disability”), though her focus on illness as a category puts this study within the discipline of health communication. A key point for the study of disability is the distinction Okada makes between visible and invisible illnesses or disabilities. Like Goffman’s (1963) observations about visible

stigma, Okada's findings show that the visibility of a physical condition to others is a major factor in analyzing the experience of that condition. She points out that people with invisible illness may be called upon to defend or explain their ailment and -- in the case of a contested illness such as fibromyalgia -- may need to invent their own discourses to do so. Bülow's (2004) work on Swedish support groups for chronic fatigue syndrome supports this claim; both Bülow and Okada argue that narratives are important tools for legitimizing these experiences when medical discourses are lacking. Okada's emphasis on sustained illness and chronic pain is helpful for understanding how this part of disability experience affects and is affected by language.

Capps and Ochs (1995a, 1995b) bring a unique perspective to the study of language and disability by combining their expertise in clinical psychology and applied linguistics. Their study can be placed within the field of health communication, since it identifies a participant by her medical condition and discusses implications for clinical treatment. Their approach is notable, however, for the way they allow their participant's discourse about disability practices to guide the disability practice that are highlighted in the study. Capps and Ochs study discourse and narratives of Meg, a woman with agoraphobia, and her family. Because Meg frequently describes her experiences of panic, Capps and Ochs highlight them in their work. The authors analyze the narrative structure of stories about panic attacks and the grammatical structure of discourse that describes anxiety. Their analysis highlights the spiraling structure of panic narrative: how a problematic event precipitates panic that in turn becomes a problem. The analysis also shows the linguistic devices, such as mental verbs, intensifying adverbs, and negation, that Meg uses to construct her own diminished agentive roles and non-agentive roles in her stories. Capps and Ochs explore the paradox that being out of control herself, and

acknowledging her helplessness, allows Meg to have more control over others who have to respond to her anxiety.

Although their study is focused on the experiences of one person, the authors include every member of the household – Meg’s husband, daughter, and son – in their discussion of how Meg’s panic is constructed through storytelling. They examine the interactions of the family during dinnertime storytelling events, finding that Meg’s husband does not align with her emotions when she tells stories of panic. This lack of alignment, which the authors suggest may be aimed at curbing Meg’s anxiety, has the effect of escalating it as Meg portrays herself as helpless and irrational. The authors also include the children in their analysis, outlining the ways in which Meg’s daughter may be socialized into telling stories about rational and irrational protagonists. Like Hamilton’s (1996) emphasis on the researcher’s responses, Capps and Ochs’ (1995a) inclusion of Meg’s family points toward the importance of examining the discourse of people without disabilities.

The authors make observations about life-story narratives; for instance, they point out that Meg contextualizes a story about the birth of her son by saying that it was before she developed panic attacks. However, their focus is on understanding a genre of stories within Meg’s repertoire; they take the angle of studying disability discourse by analyzing stories that feature Meg’s disability explicitly. Capps and Ochs’ (1995a) work with Meg leads them to suggestions for clinical practitioners working with people with agoraphobia. Thus their work is both a linguistic study and a source of therapeutic insights into a health condition.

2.4.2 Disability discourse as an emerging area

Some sociolinguistic studies have approached disability discourse as its own area, separate from health communication. Some of these studies include institutional discourse, such as Barton’s

(1999, 2004) work on support groups for parents of children with disabilities. Other research applies sociolinguistic analysis to more everyday discourse concerning disabilities, including McNerney's (2001) analysis of positioning in the life stories of women with physical disabilities and Al Zidjaly's (2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012) work on agency and multimodality in the discourse of Omani man with a disability and his caregivers. I situate the current study within this area of sociolinguistic research.

One area of research on disability discourse is work done on support and self-help groups (e.g. Hamilton 1998, Bülow 2004). These groups fall within the category of institutional discourse: Barton (1999), following Drew and Heritage (1992), describes institutional discourse as standardized across occurrences and either oriented toward institutional goals or embedded in larger institutional discourses (e.g. education, advocacy). Barton analyzes disability discourse predominantly in institutional settings: medical encounters (1995, 1996), support groups (1999, 2004), legal situations (2004, 2007), and charity organizations (2001). She places her work within the fields of both disability studies and discourse analysis: she views disability as a sociocultural construct and points to "the role of language in establishing, maintaining, and reflecting its social nature" (1996: 300). Unlike many studies in the field of health communication, Barton does not differentiate between -- or even necessarily mention -- underlying medical conditions in her descriptions of participants and data. For example, in her studies (1999, 2004) involving parents of children with disabilities, she does not categorize her research participants according to what disability their child has. Rather, Barton takes the prevalent approach in disability studies of viewing people with disabilities as belonging to a common group (cf. Hahn 1993, 1997 on the minority group model of disability).

Barton (1999, 2004, 2007) studies (and participates in) discourse and narratives shared in a support group for parents of children with disabilities. One of the activities the group engages in is to empower parents to advocate for their children's rights and education. Barton (1999) analyzes the way slogans are used in the support group; she (2004) also examines the development of lay legal consciousness among the support group members. In the latter study, Barton shows that the support group develops a lay legal consciousness that takes a relational view of the law and encourages advocacy. This type of legal consciousness can be counterproductive when the social institution, such as a school board, takes a rule-based orientation toward the law. A key difference between Barton's work on support groups and the current study is that none of her research participants are people who have disabilities themselves, but rather able-bodied parents, support group facilitators, and health professionals. While Barton's data can be categorized as disability discourse, the discourse occurs among people without disabilities.

Some work in sociolinguistics that approaches disability as its own area has focused on everyday discourses about disability. For example, McNerney (2001) collected life stories told by women with physical disabilities in interview settings. She analyzes conflicting positionings of power and weakness and of conquerors and victims by examining metaphor, negation, and constructed dialogue. McNerney concludes that the data on women with disabilities supports the finding that identity is not static or one-dimensional. McNerney's findings about contradictory positionings of power and weakness in disability narratives echo studies such as Schiffrin's (1996), which shows contradictory positions of solidarity and distance in family narratives. McNerney's research centers on life story narratives of people with disabilities themselves. In the current

study, I examine both full narratives and small stories; I also include both people with disabilities and their able-bodied interlocutors.

Al Zidjaly's (2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011a) work focuses on disability, agency, and multimodality in the discourse of Yahya, an Omani man with quadriplegia paralysis, and his able-bodied family, friends, and personal care assistants. As Al Zidjaly shows, the medical model is the prevailing understanding of disability in Oman. Despite government policies aimed at including people with disabilities in society, social exclusion and even isolation is typical for people with physical disabilities. Thus, to a more pronounced degree than in the United States, disability is seen in society as a negative problem for an individual and their family. Al Zidjaly (2005, 2006, 2007) looks at agency in the discourse of a man with a mobility impairment and his caregivers. Al Zidjaly (2005) recorded naturally-occurring discourse between Yahya, an Omani man with a mobility impairment, and his caregivers, including herself. The analysis argues for the co-construction of agentive selves, showing how Yahya and his "wise" both contribute. Al Zidjaly's focus is not narrative discourse, though she does include hypothetical narratives told by Yahya as a part of the anticipatory discourse he uses to persuade his caregivers to do things.

Al Zidjaly's work shows how Yahya negotiates agency in conversations with others and alleviates his isolation through online media. Al Zidjaly (2007, 2009) uses Goffman's (1963) concepts of a real self and a virtual self in her exploration of Yahya's agency; she argues that while Yahya's real self is a disabled, dependent man, his virtual self is an "outspoken normal agentive young man" (2007: 75). She (2007, 2011a) examines the discourse around a series of events in which Yahya was able first to convince other people to help him dialogue with the government and then to persuade the government to change regulations which had prevented him from hiring his own personal care assistant. Al Zidjaly was present for these events, both as an

active researcher and as one of the friends assisting Yahya. Al Zidjaly points out the role that Yahya's able-bodied family members, friends, and caregivers play in affirming his virtual self and co-constructing his agency through discursive means. She (2009) follows Goffman (1963) in characterizing these able-bodied interlocutors as "wise"; I also use this term, as mentioned in Chapter 1 and discussed in Chapter 6. Al Zidjaly's research, while it does not emphasize narrative and identity, does suggest how disability discourse analyzed with sociolinguistic methods: by approaching people with disabilities as a community.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have located the current analysis within the field of sociolinguistics, broadly defined (following Bucholtz 2003). I presented three models of narrative which influence my approach to the analysis. I apply Labov's (1997) model in order to discuss narrative structure and to define a minimal narrative. I use Ochs and Capps' (2001) dimensional model to understand the function of narratives and their range in levels of tellership, tellability, and moral stance. Their narrative model opens up the examination of narratives that do not follow a full Labovian structure, for example, narratives that are embedded or non-linear. I follow Georgakopoulou (2001, 2006a) and Bamberg (2004d) in analyzing small stories, in order to include narratives that have minimal structure or tell about habitual and hypothetical events. These narratives have been connected to identity construction (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). I approach identities as socially constructed and dynamic; emerging from and instantiated in interactions; and recurring across discourses. I analyze identity in narratives told by and about people with disabilities. Schiffrin (1996) shows that narratives offer tellers a way to situate their identity within a storyworld and take positions in relation to other characters. I apply positioning (Davies and Harré 1990, Bamberg 1997a) and Bamberg's three dilemmatic spaces (2011a) as tools for

analysis. By analyzing narratives, I show how identities are created and displayed in disability discourse.

The sociolinguistic research on disability discourse that I have reviewed in this chapter, both studies from the field of health communication and studies that approach disability as its own area, are helpful in several ways. First, they emphasize a holistic view of the experience of disability, with attention paid to both disability as a social construction and disability as a physical experience (Ramanathan 2009; Okada 2011). Second, they examine conversational and everyday interactions as well as institutional discourses (Hamilton 1994, 2008; Capps and Ochs 1995a; Al Zidjaly 2005, 2007). Third, they include both people with disabilities and able-bodied people in their social networks and communities (Hamilton 1994, 2008; Capps and Ochs 1995a; Barton 1999, 2004; Al Zidjaly 2005, 2007). Finally, and significantly for the current study, some studies have approached disability as its own research area (Barton 1999, 2004; Mc Nerney 2001; Al Zidjaly 2005, 2011a). In my own research, I examine disability discourse about everyday experiences, approaching disability as its own area and people with disabilities as a linguistic community. My particular interest is in how people with disability and their able-bodied family and friends construct identities in narratives about disability.

In the next chapter, I describe my methodology for collecting these narratives. I explain the process by which I recruited participants with disabilities, defined by their own self-identification rather than by medical condition. I also recruited able-bodied co-participants from among the family, friends, and caregivers of the participants with disabilities, in order to collect narratives from the communities in which the participants regularly interact. I collected narratives about disability practice which are examined in the following analysis chapters.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain the research procedure for recruiting participants and collecting data. The research participants comprised the core participants with physical disabilities and the co-participants who are their able-bodied family members and friends. The participants with disabilities were people who have had mobility-related physical disabilities their entire lives.⁴ The complete data consist of a series of interactions that I arranged with all the research participants. I chose to collect narratives through these conversational, but not naturally-occurring, sessions because I expected them to yield narratives. The sessions were designed to allow me to elicit narratives, but also to encourage the research participants to initiate narratives within the interaction. I audio- and video-recorded the sessions and later transcribed sections of them for analysis.

I begin this chapter by introducing my approach as an able-bodied researcher in conversation with participants with disabilities and recounting my previous work on narratives told by people with disabilities (Section 3.2). I go on to give my criteria for participants and co-participants and my method of locating them (Section 3.3); I then describe the individual participants and co-participants. Next, I discuss my approach to the data collection and describe the planning, order,

⁴ The larger research project also included two core participants with acquired disabilities and their able-bodied co-participants. They are not included here for three reasons. First, the participants with disabilities formed two distinct groups socially: the participants with lifelong disabilities were all between the ages of 25 and 35 and were members of each other's social networks, while the participants with acquired disabilities were between the ages of 55 and 65 and were strangers to the other participants. Second, the two groups of core participants did not interact with each other during the data collection, so each set of data is complete in itself with no omissions or overlaps. Third, and most importantly, the two participants who acquired disabilities as the result of illness or injury have not had physical disability as a part of their identity for their entire lives. I hypothesize that this major difference in life experience could make a difference to their disability identities, an avenue which is not examined here but may be productive in future studies.

and outcomes of the recorded sessions (Section 3.4). Finally, I detail the process of identifying, coding, and transcribing narratives to arrive at a data set for analysis (Section 3.5).

3.2 Researcher role and approach

I approached this project as a member of the “wise”: Goffman's (1963) term for someone who does not belong to a stigmatized group but has become personally or professionally identified with them to the point where they have familiarity with the group. The wise not only accept the group, but to a certain extent are accepted by it. I do not have a visible physical disability as all my participants do, but I consider myself “wise to” that experience through my close relationship with my friend the Reverend Claire Wimbush⁵, who does. Despite my own understanding of my wise identity, I needed to take into account the outsider status I would have when entering into conversations with people with physical disabilities. It is readily apparent that I do not have a visible disability, and – as my analysis will consider – it takes identity work in discourse to establish a wise identity. I wanted to let my participants know that I had some understanding of the disability community and a genuine interest in learning more through their participation in my project.

I did three things to communicate my intentions. First, I used the friend-of-a-friend method for recruitment and in several cases was introduced to my participants with disabilities by someone who has a disability. Second, I deliberately talked about my friend who has a disability during the first conversation I had with participants (with her permission). Not only did that let my participants know something about my personal experience and knowledge of physical disabilities, it also explained something about my interest in the community. Third, I introduced topics and vocabulary that would be relevant to talk about disability. I had done preliminary

⁵ Claire’s name and role in my research are mentioned with permission.

research aimed at finding these topics using blogs about disability. By asking appropriate questions about issues like public transportation and showing familiarity with terms like *transfer* and *aide*, I communicated that I was not a complete outsider. I felt that doing so was important to my research in order to encourage participants to respond openly and comfortably about their experiences.

Before beginning the present research, I did preliminary work on narratives told by writers of online blogs who have physical disabilities and use wheelchairs. My focus in that study was on lexical variation between the variants *wheelchair* and *chair*; I analyzed the variation both quantitatively throughout the blog entries and qualitatively within personal narratives. The background knowledge I gained from examining the blogs contributed to my understanding of disability discourse. In particular, it influenced my choice of topics and my use of in-group terms during the conversations I had with participants in the present research. During the course of this prior study, I observed the topics and in-group terms that reoccurred in the blog entries. Topics such as public transportation, traveling by airplane, and working with personal care assistants came up frequently. In addition, many of the narratives in the blogs included encounters with able-bodied strangers to whom the bloggers had to explain their disabilities. For the present study, these topics informed my choice of general questions to ask in the first sessions with the participants with disabilities. I also observed how bloggers characterized themselves and others according to in-group distinctions, such as being a manual- or a power-wheelchair user, and salient qualities, such as the ability to drive. The bloggers use of in-group terms – such as *chair*, *transfer* (for moving in or out of a wheelchair), and *aides* (for personal care assistants) – confirmed the understanding I had of them from personal experience. In my talk with participants in the current research, I was able to use some of these terms to present myself as a

member of the wise. Because I was not studying a geographic community of people with disabilities, my previous research on blog entries gave me valuable background for the current study.

3.3 Participants and recruitment

The research for this project involved people with visible, mobility-related physical disabilities in the Washington, D.C. metro area. In this section, I describe the criteria by which I looked for research participants and the friend-of-a-friend method I used to recruit them. I also introduce the individual participants and their backgrounds. In all there were six research participants: three core participants with physical disabilities; three able-bodied co-participants (one from each primary participant's social network); and one participant with a disability who contributed to only two sessions.⁶ Hereafter, I refer to the research participants with disabilities who participated in all sessions as “core participants” and the research participants without disabilities as their “co-participants”.

3.3.1 Criteria for participants

There were two sets of research participants: the core participants with physical disabilities and the co-participants from among their family members and friends. Before recruitment began, I established a set of requirements for the participants with physical disabilities. The first requirement was that they have a physical disability that stems from a mobility impairment. I define mobility impairment as a physical impairment that substantially affects the way a person performs life activities, specifically in the way they move their limbs and in their ability to walk or to grasp and lift objects. The second requirement was that the participants' disabilities be

⁶ As discussed in the next section, this participant owns the wheelchair shop in which two group sessions took place. He was recorded during these conversations and so he is included in the list of participants with disabilities.

visible in the way they move or in their use of assistive devices; thus participants have in common the experience of having a disability that is immediately evident to other people around them. These criteria ensured some comparability in the participants' experience of physical disability, although their underlying medical conditions and impairments were different. As it happened, all the participants used wheelchairs. The third requirement was that participants were not living in a location that was limited to other people with disabilities; one of the goals of the project was to look at disability identities that are not constructed in a geographic speech community of disability. The final requirement was that each participant's disability be a constant in their life, not acquired within the past three years or in a state of change. This criterion was more subjective, but it was necessary to the project that disability be a well-established part of a participant's identity and one which they were comfortable talking about. The three participants with disabilities discussed here all have lifelong disabilities.

I aimed to have co-participants who regularly take part in interactions where a disability identity is being constructed by the participants with disabilities. People with physical disabilities may not have a large amount of everyday contact with other people with disabilities; they often come from households and speech communities with able-bodied interlocutors. The lack of a geographical speech community of people with disabilities means that disability discourse takes place among other communities to which they belong. Thus, the principal requirement for co-participants was that they be close companions of the participant with a disability: each pair of participants and co-participants talks regularly to each other and are part of each other's social network (Milroy 1987). Co-participants also needed to be able-bodied, so that they were not constructing a disability identity of their own. Beyond these basic requirements, I asked the

participants to select their co-participants; the result was that the co-participants varied widely in their relationships to the participants, from hired caregivers to nuclear family members.

3.3.2 Finding participants

Finding participants with disabilities was difficult because they were not members of a geographically located speech community or community of practice. I used the friend-of-a-friend method by asking people I knew to suggest potential participants and to put me in contact with them.

I met the three core participants, Derek, Min, and Tawnya, through a friend of a friend, Jason. Jason is the owner of a store that sells and repairs assistive equipment, whom I had met over a year previously when I went with my friend Claire to his shop to have her wheelchair worked on. Claire mentioned to Jason that I was doing research and had his permission to give me his contact information. Just before I began recruitment, I had taken in one of Claire's wheelchairs to be repaired, so I had had recent contact with Jason. He was a particularly useful contact for my project because he was (1) a wheelchair user and possible participant himself; (2) a community leader in the sense that many of his employees, as well as his customers, have physical disabilities; and (3) a long-time resident of the local area who had attended magnet schools for people with disabilities. When I was ready to begin data collection, I contacted Jason first and set up an appointment with him to talk about my project in person before asking for his help. Having the meeting face to face meant that I could more easily present myself as the friend of a friend and explain my project in detail. I made it clear from our first meeting that I intended my project to give back to the community by focusing attention on everyday life with a disability rather than on medical or institutional contexts (as is often the case). Jason was interested in this effort, especially since I presented myself as both knowledgeable and yet still a "learner" about the

community and people helping me as “participants” rather than “research subjects”. On the basis of that first meeting, Jason offered his help to participate, to recruit others, and to provide a wheelchair-friendly meeting space at his business. Over the course of the project, he hosted (and participated in) two recorded sessions at his shop, encouraged one of his employees to volunteer as a participant, and put me in touch with two of his friends with disabilities by giving me their contact information and telling them about the project. Because I recruited Derek, Min, and Tawnya with Jason’s help, they all knew each other before the research began.

Once I had located the three participants with disabilities, I asked each of them to suggest a co-participant: an able-bodied family member or friend in the local area with whom they spoke regularly. In most cases, it was during the initial recording session that a co-participant was decided upon. One chose a family member with whom they live; two chose friends who live nearby.

3.3.3 Description of participants

The section that follows provides background on each participant and their co-participant, as well as Jason, who spoke on two recordings. The background information was gathered from my correspondence with research participants before meeting them; our talk before, during, and after the research sessions; and the optional follow-up email that asked for demographic information. As much as is possible, I have tried to use the same terms that the participants use to describe themselves and their lives, e.g. Derek usually refers to his personal assistant as his *roommate*, Min usually refers to hers as her *friends*, and Tawnya usually refers to hers as *aides*, although all of the participants use *aide* as a generic term for someone who is paid to provide personal assistance.

Derek

Derek is a 27-year-old man who uses a power wheelchair. He works in a full-time paid position as a customer service and sales representative at the wheelchair repair shop owned by Jason. He had completed some college classes before leaving to work as a manager for a band. At the time the research took place, he lived in his own apartment with a roommate who was paid to be his personal assistant and to drive Derek's adapted van. Derek is European American. His parents live in the area, along with a large extended family; until recently he lived at his parents' house. He also has a sister with whom he is close. None of his immediate family has physical disabilities. His underlying medical condition is spastic cerebral palsy (CP), present since birth, which has resulted in limited strength and control of his muscles. Derek has used a power wheelchair since he was in elementary school.

Russell

Russell (Russ) is Derek's best friend; he is an able-bodied man in his late twenties. He works full-time as a Latin teacher at a public high school. He is African American. Besides Derek, Russell has known few people with disabilities; none of his family or other friends have physical disabilities. Derek and Russell met through an online chat site about a band and later arranged to meet at a concert. They have been best friends for several years and are close to each other's families. Over the course of their friendship, Russell has sometimes given Derek assistance with personal tasks; Russell also drives Derek's van on frequent trips they take together.

Min

Min is a 36-year-old woman who uses a power wheelchair. She volunteers regularly on the governing board at a group home for adults with disabilities and also as a private tutor. She

graduated from college and worked full-time before quitting her job to maintain her eligibility for government medical benefits. At the time the research took place, she lived in a house with her father, who receives disability benefits for an acquired physical impairment. She has two friends who are paid to be personal assistants and to drive her adapted van. One who comes during the week is a family friend who also assists Min's father; the other, Simone, comes on weekends and was a co-participant in the research. Min describes herself as Caucasian-Asian American. Besides her father, Min has a brother who lives in the area with his family; their mother died when Min was in high school. Min attended public school with Tawnya and Jason. Her underlying medical condition is muscular dystrophy, present since birth, which has resulted in physical weakness and an extremely limited range of motion in all her limbs. She has used a power wheelchair since she was 12 years old and before that used other assistive mobility devices.

Simone

Simone is Min's friend who helps her on the weekends; she is an able-bodied woman in her mid-thirties. She works during the week as a court reporter and notary public. She identifies herself as African American. Simone has known several children with mental and intellectual disabilities through her past jobs and her mother's work, but was not previously close to anyone with a physical disability. Min and Simone met two years ago through an advertisement for a personal assistant that Min placed on the website Craig's List. Since meeting Min, Simone has spent time with many of Min's friends with disabilities, particularly Jason, Tawnya, and Jorge (Min's tutoring student). Simone and Min have also spent time with each other's families: Min with Simone's children and Simone with Min's father, brother, and extended family. In addition to

helping her with personal tasks and driving, Simone spends social time with Min on the weekends.

Tawnya

Tawnya is a 34-year-old woman who uses a power wheelchair. She works in a full-time paid position in a center that assists people with disabilities to find local resources; her work involves traveling around the area as a community educator. She also volunteers regularly as a group leader at her church. Tawnya graduated from college and worked in a government job before starting her current position. At the time the research took place, she was living with her father and mother (Lois). Tawnya pays professional aides to provide personal assistance in her home. Tawnya drives her own adapted van. She describes herself as African American. Besides her parents, Tawnya has a brother who lives in the area with his family and an extended family in Georgia who she visits often. No one else in her family has a physical disability. Tawnya attended grade school with Min and Jason. Her underlying medical condition is spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), diagnosed at age 2, which causes muscular wasting and weakness. Tawnya has used a power wheelchair since high school and before that used a manual wheelchair in elementary school.

Lois

Lois is Tawnya's mother; she is an able-bodied woman in her late fifties. She works full-time for the federal government. She is African American. Besides Tawnya, none of Lois's close family have a physical disability. Lois has known Jason and Min very well since the time they were in elementary school. When Tawnya was younger, Lois provided her with personal assistance and transportation; at this point in her life, Lois provides assistance only when they are traveling together.

Jason

Jason is a 34-year-old man who uses a power wheelchair. He owns and works full-time in a wheelchair sales and repair business, where he makes a point of hiring employees with disabilities. He began his career as a sales representative at a similar business after graduating from high school. At the time the research took place, he lived in his own home, had a vacation home in Florida, and drove an adapted van. He is European American. His brother, also a wheelchair user and an electrical engineer, is a part of the business; they have other family living locally. Jason attended grade school with Min and Tawnya. His underlying medical condition is Becker's Muscular Dystrophy; he has used a power wheelchair since elementary school. (N.B. I do not have any information on whether Jason employs a personal care assistant). Jason contributed to the recorded data, but was not one of the core participants.

3.4 Data collection

Recruitment of participants and data collection took place between August 30, 2010 and February 5, 2011. A follow-up email was sent to all the participants in August 2011, six months after the data collection was complete, in order to collect remaining demographic details and formally end their participation in the project. Transcription and coding of the data continued through the fall. The complete data set consists of 10 audio- and video-recorded sessions in which the seven research participants talked together in different groups. In this section, I describe and motivate the research procedure. I begin by outlining the purpose and limitations of my data collection methods. I describe in detail the recording sessions with participants, their research goals and actual outcomes.

3.4.1 Purpose and limitations

The aim of the data collection process was to elicit narratives about everyday life during conversational discourse; prior work on disability discourse has largely focused on talk about – or during – medical, gate-keeping, and institutional interactions (e.g. Hamilton 1998; Barton 1999, 2004). The conversations took place among the participants with disabilities, the co-participants, and myself. The co-participants were chosen from among the able-bodied members of the participants' social networks (Milroy 1987) of family and friends. They were selected firstly, because they are the interlocutors with whom the participants regularly engage in discourse constructing disability identities; and secondly, because their co-construction of those identities is of interest. I was present during all the conversations in order to elicit talk and to ensure I had a complete understanding of what went on, beyond what can be gained from the recordings.

Although the aim was to collect conversational discourse, the recorded sessions were unlike everyday conversations in several ways.

- First, the sessions were arranged purposefully, with all the interlocutors aware that the research was being conducted.
- Second, the recording equipment was visible and the act of recording affected the interaction.
- Third, in certain sessions, particularly the initial meetings with participants, I asked interview-like questions rather than remaining within a purely conversational frame.
- Finally, I remained present for all of the sessions as a participant observer; the participants were interacting with me as a researcher and as an able-bodied person.

I used various methods in order to mitigate these factors and produce the most naturalistic conversation possible.

- First, while the participants were aware of the research, I tried to create a casual atmosphere. Sessions were conducted in places that participants felt comfortable,

including their homes and workplaces. I always referred to the sessions as ‘conversations’, rather than ‘interviews’; I referred to the larger group session at the end as being a ‘celebration’ of the end of the project. At all the group sessions, I brought food to make the setting seem more social.

- Second, I used recording equipment that was as unobtrusive as possible. The audio recorder I used was an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-300M, which is approximately four inches long, with an internal microphone. During sessions, I placed it near the participants. The video recorder was a 9.5 inch Samsung Flashcam F30 Digital Camcorder, which I used with a 12-inch tripod and positioned to record participants. Although I informed participants when I turned the recorders on and off, I did not need to touch or refer to them during the conversations.
- Third, I limited my use of interview-style questions primarily to the initial interviews. I had prepared these questions to collect basic background information on participants, such as their education, and to explore topics that my previous research indicated were of interest to the disability community, such as transportation. However, I did not carry written prompts into any of the sessions, to avoid the appearance of a formal agenda. Following the procedure for sociolinguistic interviews, I allowed the participants to direct the conversation and followed up on what they said rather than keeping strictly to my prepared questions. When I used interview-style questions in subsequent sessions, I asked them at the end of the conversation. For example, I asked at the small group sessions about terms used to refer to people with disabilities; by doing this at the end, I avoided making the participants self-conscious about using these terms during the rest of the session.
- Finally, as discussed in the previous section, I crafted a particular approach to interacting with participants as an able-bodied researcher, including meeting participants through the friend-of-a-friend method and positioning myself as a member of the wise. During the sessions, I tried to give the appearance of an everyday conversation. For example, I dressed in casual clothes.

In keeping with the conversational frame of the sessions, I participated in the talk not only by asking questions and backchanneling, but also by telling narratives of my own. One goal of telling these narratives was to present myself as a member of the wise, who had stories to tell about friends with physical disabilities. Another goal was to elicit narratives by telling them myself (see Sacks 1970/1992 on ‘second stories’). I limited my own participation, however, to give participants the opportunity to hold the floor. As a participant observer, I affected the way the talk went; I tried to do so in ways that furthered the aims of the data collection.

3.4.2 Participant sessions

In this section, I describe the sessions with the participants and co-participants in which the data were recorded. The sessions occurred in five phases: individual sessions with the participants; pair sessions with the participants and co-participants; a group session with the core participants; individual sessions with the co-participants; and a closing session with core participants and co-participants together. First, I outline the purpose and planning behind each phase, then I describe what went on in each session and how it contributed to the data. The table below lists the 10 recorded sessions by type:

Table 3.4.2 Data collection sessions

Session	Participants	Date	Setting	Length of recording
Individual Sessions with Core Participants	Derek	Nov 5, 2010	Derek's workplace	49:48
	Min	Nov 13, 2010	Min's home	1:13:18
	Tawnya	Nov 12, 2010	Tawnya's workplace	57:00
Pair Sessions with Core Participants and Co-participants	Derek & Russell	Dec 4, 2010	Derek's home	1:22:33
	Min & Simone	Nov 20, 2010	Min's home	1:05:41
	Tawnya & Lois	Nov 23, 2010	Tawnya & Lois's home	45:05
Group Session with Core Participants	Derek, Min, Tawnya	Dec 2, 2010	Wheelchair repair shop (Derek's workplace)	1:18:58
Individual Sessions with Co-Participants	Russell	Dec 23, 2010	Russell's home	1:05:50
	Simone	Feb 5, 2011	Wheelchair repair shop	21:51
	(no session with Lois)			
Closing Session with Core Participants and Co-participants	<i>Participants:</i> Derek, Min, Tawnya <i>Co-participants:</i> Russ, Simone	Feb 5, 2011	Wheelchair repair shop (Derek's workplace)	1:43:54
Total length of recorded data: 10:43:58				

The purpose of all the sessions was to collect narratives by providing speakers with appropriate opportunities to tell them and, to a lesser extent, by eliciting them directly. Although the narratives were not told in naturally-occurring conversations, I planned the sessions to be as conversational as possible and framed them as conversations to the participants. The order of the phases – who talked to whom and when – was designed both to make the speakers feel comfortable interacting in the session and to provide me with the information I needed in order to elicit more narratives in the following sessions. The result was a large collection of narratives told by the research participants, both spontaneously (though in the context of the planned sessions) and in response to my prompts.

Individual sessions with the core participants. The individual session with the participants served three purposes. The first was to gather background information on the participants, including their educational history, places they had lived, and their use of assistive devices. I prepared several modules of questions to elicit this information. Using the methodology of a traditional sociolinguistic interview (Labov 1972b; Tagliamonte 2006), I asked the questions in whatever order seemed to fit the conversation, focused on those modules that I thought would encourage talk, and allowed the participant to speak as much or as little as they chose on any topic. The second purpose was to elicit narratives from the participants. In this phase only, I prepared questions to ask at every session in order to elicit narratives on similar topics from all the participants. For instance, I asked each participant a version of the question, *Has anyone, like a stranger or a kid, come up to you and asked why you use a wheelchair?*, because I had seen many narratives on this topic in my prior research. I memorized all the questions I prepared, so that I was not referring to a written protocol at any point during the sessions. The third purpose of the session was to ask participants to decide on a co-participant and to discuss with them who

might be a good choice. Making this a part of the session allowed me more input on who the co-participants would be, as well as the opportunity to learn more about them and their relationship to the co-participant before the pair sessions.

The sessions took place in locations where the participants felt comfortable: Derek's and Tawnya's at their workplaces; Min's was in her home. These were my first in-person meetings with Derek, Tawnya, and Min. It should also be noted that Simone stayed in the room during my first individual session with Min, although Simone did not speak or interact with either of us during the recording. The individual sessions with participants lasted between 45 and 75 minutes; they were successful in gathering background information and identifying co-participants. The data collected also included narratives that would be co-told or re-told in later sessions.

Pair sessions with the core participants and co-participants. The pair sessions had two purposes: to record a more naturalistic interaction and to elicit co-told and re-told narratives. I was especially interested in finding narratives of shared past experience that could be collaboratively told or had been told before (see Norrick 1997 on co-narration and Georgakopoulou 2005 on shared narratives). In this phase, the participants and co-participants could interact with an interlocutor whom they knew well and spoke to regularly, rather than only with me as the researcher. As a result, many narratives were told without my needing to elicit them. However, I did ask a few questions directly. In preparation for each session, I reviewed the narratives already told in the individual session with the participants and memorized possible narratives to elicit for re-tellings and co-tellings.

The pair sessions varied in their length and structure. Derek and Russell's and Min and Simone's sessions, which took place in the participant's homes, were over an hour. The talk was

conversational and, although I participated, I made fewer direct elicitations. The session with Tawnya and Lois was more like an interview in which the participants waited to be asked a question and responded directly to it. In this session, Lois expressed concerns about the logistics of recording and the appropriateness of their responses. Also, because this pair are family members, I was in the position of a guest in their home, as opposed to the other three sessions where I was one of two visitors to someone else's home.

Group session with the core participants. The group session was designed to record a conversational interaction by bringing participants together in different combinations. As with the pair sessions, I anticipated that having more than one speaker in the interaction would lead to a livelier interaction. Besides all being people with disabilities, the group had had their disabilities all their lives and were between the ages of 25 and 35. Moreover, all the participants, including Jason who joined the conversation briefly, had met before. Min and Tawnya are best friends with each other, and longtime friends of Jason. Derek is Jason's employee and knows Min and Tawnya through his work. Thus, Min, Tawnya, and Derek were comfortable with each other and had the ability to co-tell narratives.

The group met at Jason's wheelchair repair shop, a familiar location for all of them. After telling an opening story designed to start the conversation, I allowed the speakers to interact with each other without trying to elicit narratives. The resulting conversation went smoothly, with the participants asking each other questions and telling, co-telling, and re-telling narratives. Min in particular asked eliciting questions of the other participants. The session included food or drink and was framed as much as possible as a social occasion.

This small group phase originally would have included a session or sessions that brought together the co-participants. I decided against doing that after the co-participants were actually

recruited because they had widely different relationships with their respective participants, from mother to friend to hired personal care assistant. I believed that bringing them together with the purpose of talking about the participants would be socially awkward for them and not result in the kind of narrative data I wanted to collect. I focused instead on meeting with the co-participants one-on-one.

Individual sessions with the co-participants. Originally, I had planned to meet individually with both participants and co-participants before meeting with them in pairs. However, it became clear to me while arranging the individual session with the participants that having the pair sessions first was necessary. I had emphasized that one purpose for my study was to learn more about the experience of living with a disability. Thus asking the able-bodied co-participants to meet individually with me was potentially face-threatening to the participants with disabilities, in the sense that I could be “checking up on” what they had told me or implying that an able-bodied viewpoint was an authoritative one. Meeting with them first as a pair reduced this implication because the participants with disabilities could observe and judge my interactions with the co-participants and contribute to what I learned from those interactions. It also meant that the co-participants themselves had more motivation to take part in the study, since the initial meeting was done as a social activity with a friend or family member. When I later asked to meet with the co-participants by themselves, I emphasized that meeting individually with everyone who had been in the study was good practice, as well as a way to get more than one perspective on what we had been talking about. The participants responded positively to these reasons.

The purpose of the individual sessions with the co-participants was to elicit narratives about disability from able-bodied friends and family members. While the sessions were framed to the co-participants as a way to gain a different perspective, their design also aimed at revealing

perspectives on disability shared with the participant. I was especially looking for vicarious narratives, in which the co-participants told about experiences of having a disability that they knew about but had not had themselves.⁷ I hoped these stories would result from the co-participants talking about their friend or family member. I was also interested in stories shared between the participant and co-participant pairs. Accordingly, I elicited re-tellings of narratives that had been told or co-told in previous sessions with the participants with disabilities. As noted in the table, however, one co-participant, Tawnya's mother Lois, did not wish to meet individually with me. The narratives collected from her were all told at the pair session.

Closing session with core participants and co-participants. The closing session with participants and co-participants brought together all the participants with disabilities, Derek, Min, and Tawnya, as well as Jason, and two of their co-participants, Russell (Derek's friend) and Simone (Min's friend). It was framed as a celebration of the end of the study; I provided food and drinks to make it a more social occasion. The core participants and co-participants met in the lobby of Jason's wheelchair repair shop, which was a familiar location for everyone except Russell and where the lifelong participants had met previously for their group session.

I did not prepare any questions or prompts for this session. Simone and I had met for her individual co-participant session directly beforehand; Min, Tawnya, and Derek had to wait for a few minutes in Jason's office. Because of this, the session begins without a pause in the recording after Simone's session and with an interaction already underway between the participants. The only initial awkwardness was in introducing Russell to the group, since he had not met anyone besides Derek and me. Once again, the participants exchanged questions and answers with each other, as well as telling narratives.

⁷ For my approach to vicarious narratives, see Chapter 5, especially the theoretical background section (Section 5.2). Regarding my interest in narratives told within close relationships, see Chapter 6.

Final contact with the participants and co-participants. Six months after the data collection had ended, I sent a follow-up email to all the research participants. In it, I thanked them again for their participation and informed them about my preliminary presentations on the data at conferences and guest lectures. I also took the opportunity to ask them to clarify demographic information, such as ethnicity and underlying medical condition, since I had not explicitly asked for these during the sessions. Min, Simone, and Tawnya answered the email with demographic details. The demographic information from the other research participants was gleaned from the recorded data.

3.5 Identifying, coding, and transcribing narratives

Once the data were collected, I began the process of identifying narrative segments, coding the narratives based on their features, and transcribing in full the narratives to be analyzed. In this section, I discuss how I went about that process, and in particular the decisions I made to select certain narratives for analysis.

In order to identify narratives in the data, I listened to all of the audio recordings of the sessions. Using the software program Transcriber, which allows an audio signal to be synchronized with written text, I annotated the recordings with time-stamped text comments. For example, I commented on topic changes, which speaker had the floor, and mentions of disability-related words and phrases, such as the *wheelchair/chair* variant. My focus, however, was on identifying narratives. When I found a narrative, I used Transcriber to mark the duration of the segment and annotated it for the teller(s), grammatical person, co- and re-telling, disability-related words, and narrative features such as constructed dialogue and habitual/hypothetical narratives.

At this stage of the process, my intention was to look for units of talk, of whatever length, that evoked a story world. Labov and Waletzky (1967) define a minimal narrative as two ordered

clauses about the past. Bamberg's (2004d) notion of a 'small story' incorporates this definition, but he argues that this type of narrative may be more elaborated in their orientation or evaluation than in their developing actions. They can be identified by their place and function in the talk as much as by their structure. Thus I defined narrative broadly as a unit of talk with a character (the teller or another person or group) performing actions (at least two clauses) that are displaced from the present time (past, future, habitual, or hypothetical).

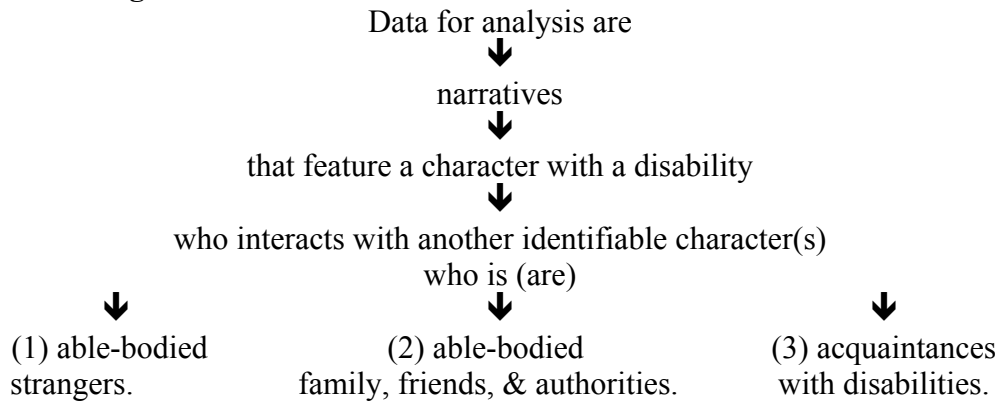
Rather than using a numbering system to refer to the narratives, I named the narratives using a quote from the teller. Although selecting the quote is a subjective action that may reveal more about my perspective on the story than the teller's, I found that doing so forced me to come to an understanding of what I thought the story was about and of what I saw as the teller's point. I also found the names to be helpful when I was coding, as a handle for recalling the details of each individual narrative. I believe the names to be more relevant than numbers for readers of the analysis, just as naming a speaker with a pseudonym – matched for gender, etc., to the original name – makes for easier understanding of a transcript than naming a speaker with a single initial.

Once I had identified the narratives in the data, I listed all of them in a table and coded them (174 in total). My coding categories included: identifying information (session, timing in the session, duration of the narrative); narrative features (topic, tellership, grammatical person and characters, narrative elements such as constructed dialogue); and disability (categories of the disability model, lexical items related to disability). The goal of coding the data was not to measure it quantitatively but to provide a map of segments to analyze qualitatively. For example, by looking at the narrative features category, it is possible to see which narratives have constructed dialogue; by looking at the disability aspects category, it is possible to see which narratives may

relate to a medical master narrative of disability. In this way, the coding provides a means of locating narratives relevant to a particular research question or analysis.

After identifying and coding the narratives, I narrowed down the potential data for analysis by excluding narratives that did not feature a character with a disability interacting with other characters. A small number of narratives in the data did not mention any characters with disabilities at all; for example, Tawnya relating the plot of a novel and Russ telling a small story about his job. In this set of narratives, which have no character with a disability or mention of disability, it is not possible to trace a disability identity. (However, narratives featuring a character with a disability who was not one of the participants were retained in the data set.) A further set of narratives had a character with a disability who did not interact with another identifiable character; for example, Tawnya telling about her college graduation and Derek and Russ co-telling a story about Derek falling off a sidewalk. These narrative tended to be brief, with less detailed story worlds. Schiffirin (1996) argues that story worlds are connected to social worlds and so aid in the construction of identities. Without interactions between characters in the story world, there is less opportunity to see the positioning or performance of a character's identity. The excluded narratives comprised 26 of the 174 narratives told by the participants with lifelong disabilities and their co-participants. The criteria for the remaining 148 narratives are shown in the figure below:

Figure 3.5 Selecting narratives



At this point, all the narratives retained for analysis featured a character with a disability interacting with at least one other identifiable character. These narratives with other characters fell into three categories. First, there were narratives about interactions with able-bodied characters who were strangers to the character with a disability. Second, there were narratives about interactions with able-bodied characters who were potentially wise to disability: family, friends, and people in authority. Third, in addition to those with able-bodied characters, there were narratives about interactions with other characters with disabilities who were known to the main character with a disability. (In the final data set, there were no narratives about strangers with disabilities.) I was not concerned at this time with whether the character with a disability was the teller's character or with whether the character with a disability was a central character. My only criteria were that they be present and interacting; the other points come up in the analysis.

Of the selected narratives, 125 (approximately 85%) were personal narratives and 23 (approximately 15%) were vicarious narratives, as defined in Chapter 5. I transcribed narratives that provided strong examples for analysis from across the recording sessions and chose from those the example narratives for this study. The narratives I transcribed for possible analysis followed the conventions given below (and in the Appendix):

Transcription Conventions

.	final intonation
,	continuing intonation
?	rising intonation
:	lengthened syllable
th-	truncated word
the –	truncated intonation unit
<u>the</u>	emphasis
..	pause during intonation unit from half a second to one second
...	pause during turn from one to three seconds
()	pause greater than 3 seconds timed to a tenth of a second
@	laughter (more indicates greater length and/or intensity)
hh	audible breath out
“	constructed dialogue (often indicated by voice quality)
{ }	voice quality or non-linguistic information
[]	overlapping speech
=	latching
//	non-lexical backchanneling by interlocutor (e.g. <i>mhm</i>)
	line breaks indicate the end of intonation units in transcripts
\	end of intonation unit in in-text quotation
[...]	omitted from in-text quotation

I adapted my transcription conventions using notations from a few major sources in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, including Schiffrin (1994) and Tagliamonte (2006). My understanding of an intonation unit is taken from Chafe (1987, 2001). In addition, I add a double backslash symbol [//] for non-lexical backchanneling during a narrative. In the context of narrative analysis, it is important that the reader be able to see the shape of the narrative and locate the turns of the (co-)teller(s). I find it visually misleading to represent every instance of backchanneling on a separate line with the interlocutor's name, when in fact they do not have the floor. Nevertheless, the participation of the interlocutor through backchanneling is part of the

interaction. In narratives (co-)told to a single interlocutor (myself as the researcher), I solve the representational issue by putting [//] at the point in the teller's turn when the backchanneling occurred. Finally, I use a forward dash [^] to substitute for the line break at the end of an intonation unit when quoting an utterance.

3.6 Conclusion

My goal in this chapter has been to describe the participants – why I chose them, how I recruited them, and who they are – and to detail the data collection procedure – what I planned to do, what actually happened, and what data have resulted. Having described my methodology, I now turn to the analysis. The following three chapters of this study present narratives told by people who have lifelong physical disabilities related to mobility, and by their able-bodied companions. In the following chapter, I examine narratives told by the participants with disabilities in their individual sessions with me, in response to a question I developed based on my prior research: *Has anyone, like a stranger or a kid, come up to you and asked why you use a wheelchair?*

Chapter 4: Telling Disability by Positioning

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins the analytical portion of the study. It focuses on personal narratives, which are told in the first person from the teller's point of view and in which the teller's character plays the protagonist's role. Overall, the analysis chapters move from an examination of personal narratives told by the participants with disabilities in this chapter to an exploration of vicarious narratives--which I define as stories told about someone else's lived experience--told by a participant with a disability in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 analyzes personal and vicarious narratives told by both participants with disabilities and their co-participants without disabilities.

In this chapter, I apply Bamberg's (1997a) model of positioning in narratives to three personal narratives told by the participants with disabilities. The example narratives all arise from the same eliciting question and circumstances. In my first session with each participant I asked *Has anyone, like a stranger or a kid, come up to you and asked why you use a wheelchair?* All three participants told habitual narratives (Riessman 1990) about their repeated experiences talking to children. The storyworld situation was an encounter between the teller's character and an able-bodied stranger, while the ongoing interaction was a conversation between the teller and an able-bodied stranger, myself. At the levels of the storyworld and the interaction, each participant took up a position with respect to their disability: Derek as a "teacher", Tawnya as an "advocate", and Min as an "ambassador". In the analysis, I examine how these positions are created and displayed in the example narratives. At the same time, these local positions point toward higher-level identity work that the participants are doing with regard to their disability identities. In the discussion, I argue that the third person characters are essential to the identity work that the

participants are doing in their narratives: the positioning moves of the third person characters shape the positions that the tellers take up.

The first section of this chapter (Section 4.2) introduces positioning by discussing Bamberg's (1997a) and Georgakopoulou's (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) three-level model for analyzing positioning and tying it specifically to the analysis of narratives. Section 4.2 sets the scene for the relevance of positioning to the analysis of narrative and identity. Section 4.2.1 covers Davies and Harré's (1990) positioning theory; Section 4.2.2 covers Bamberg's (1997a) three-level model. The final part of the section, Section 4.2.3, lays out the methodology used in this chapter to analyze positioning within habitual narratives. The analysis section (Section 4.3) applies the methodology to a set of "stranger" narratives about children asking questions. In Section 4.3.1, I discuss the habitual narratives told by Derek, Tawnya, and Min. At the level of the storyworld, I show how they position characters – the teller's character, the children, and the parents –in relation to each other. At the level of the interaction, I trace how each participant's positioning plays out in their conversation with me. In the discussion (Section 4.4), I argue that it is the third person characters who drive the positioning moves in the storyworld and who make the most explicit mentions of disability. I discuss the higher level identity work that comes out of the tellers' positioning moves in the storyworlds and the interactions. The concluding section (Section 4.5) suggests implications of the analysis for studying a disability identity.

4.2 Positioning

In this section, I build on the literature review in Chapter 2 of the positioning theory developed by Davies and Harré (1990), van Langenhove and Harré (1999), and colleagues, and the positioning model proposed by Bamberg (1997a) and applied by Georgakopoulou (with Bamberg 2008), De Fina and King (2011), and others. Positioning theory has been influential in

linguistics, social psychology, and related fields; Bamberg's (1997a) model has been applied primarily to the study of narrative in linguistics and social psychology. Because positioning is an interdisciplinary concept that has been applied using different methods, I explain my own approach to the analysis of positioning and how it is situated within the literature.

Positioning is an interactive, dynamic, and discursive process that can be understood as a tool for identity construction. The term requires some clarification, however, as it has been used in multiple ways. At the most basic level, the word "positioning" has been used to mean: (1) the overall process of positioning ("an analysis of positioning"); (2) the act of a speaker assigning a position to a self in the discourse ("positioning herself as a student"); and (3) the position being assigned ("she took up a positioning as a student"). Regarding the last, in some studies of positioning theory, the term "position" has given way to "positioning" in order to emphasize the dynamic and locally-occasioned nature of the concept (see Moghaddam and Harré 2010).

Arguments have also been made as to how to describe the act of positioning; Shuman (2012), for example, finds that the phrase "take up" a position implies (incorrectly) that a position is available outside the discourse to be taken up. Although I agree with the importance of representing a position as dynamic and locally occasioned, for the sake of clarity in writing, I use both "position" and "take up". I use "position" on the understanding that a position is ephemeral and instantiated in the interaction at hand. If a position recurs across discourses, I would argue that the explanation for the repetition lies in understanding the higher-level identity work being done by the speaker(s), not in assuming that the position exists outside of the discourse in which it is created and negotiated. Goffman uses the verb "take up" to define footing – "the alignment we take up to ourselves and others" (1981: 128) – without an implication that such an alignment exists before it is taken up. Likewise, Kendall (2008) uses "take up" with regard to discursive

positions. Thus, in my analysis, “positioning” refers to the overall process and to the actions of a speaker engaging in it; “taking up” refers to a speaker aligning themselves with an identifiable position; and “position” refers to a locally-occasioned, dynamic, but clearly identifiable position.

One way of characterizing what is meant by positioning is to locate the term within a specific body of literature. In my analysis, I draw on the definitions of positioning developed by Davies and Harré and by Bamberg, as well as the scholars working alongside them. Despite differences in their approaches, both Harré and Bamberg view each other’s work as falling within the methodology of positioning. In his early work on positioning, Bamberg (1997a) cites Davies and Harré’s (1990) definition of positioning as a starting point for applying the analysis of positioning to narrative. In a paper given to the International Pragmatics Association, Harré and Henricksen (2009) characterized Bamberg’s approach as a “prominent attempt of translating the rather unwieldy concept of positioning into concise research instruments”. Even within Harré’s and Bamberg’s own analyses, however, the application of the “unwieldy concept” can vary, necessitating a clear statement of methodology.

Positioning also needs to be distinguished from parallel concepts used in the analysis of discourse and narratives. Similar strategies for identity construction have been explained by framing (Goffman 1974; Tannen 1993a, 1993b), by footing (Goffman 1981), and by stance (Du Bois 2007). Some studies have attempted to delineate or to equate these strategies. Asking “Are we talking about the same things?”, Ribeiro (2006) investigated the relationship between the phenomena captured by positioning, footing, and voice. She finds that while footing captured subtle alignments between the interlocutors and the content, and voice indicated agency, positioning “conveyed the key set of expectations participants have on where to place the other in a given interaction” (Ribeiro 2006: 72). Shuman equates positioning with footing –

positioning is footing “in Goffman’s (1981) terms” (2012: 135) – but emphasizes that both concepts are interactive and instantiated in a text or narrative. As Ribeiro points out, “Researchers have used the concept of positioning in different ways while preserving its relational and interactional properties” (2006: 62). Rather than trying to define and separate all of these similar concepts – which in some cases may indeed be getting at the same underlying linguistic strategies – I detail below the features of positioning that led me to choose it as the identity construction tool that I analyze. All of these features are widely supported in the literature on both Davies and Harré’s positioning theory and Bamberg’s model, as well as on other linguists’ approaches to positioning.

Features of positioning that make it well-suited for an analysis of identity in my data are:

- Positioning is dynamic: Positions are constantly being changed, challenged, and negotiated over the course of an interaction. As part of a larger argument for studying “processes” of the social world over “substances”, van Langenhove and Harré (1999) define positioning as a discursive process and describe how an individual speaker can be positioned in multiple ways during a single conversation.
- Positioning is grounded in individual, small-d discourses: Davies and Harré (1990) argue that positions (or positionings) are instantiated in an on-going interaction. One of their goals in introducing “position” to replace “role” was to get away from the idea that roles are available from outside the discourse. Shuman similarly rejects any “position that exists apart from the decision to take it up” (2012: 134).
- Positioning is interactive: Erickson famously described talking with another person as “climbing a tree that climbs back” (1986: 316). Positioning in interaction is a process wherein the speaker is both positioning their self and being positioned back (van Langenhove and Harré 1999). An analysis of positioning examines all interlocutors and, applied to narrative, accounts for co-tellers as well as single tellers.
- Positioning foregrounds the relationships between people: The identity work being done with positioning incorporates the notion of the self and the other. In Bamberg’s (1997a) model of positioning, for instance, selves are positioned vis-à-vis characters in a story or interlocutors in a conversation.
- Positioning uses a spatial metaphor: The metaphor of a physical position captures the shifting alignments between characters in a storyworld; it also allows for the reciprocity of participants in an interaction positioning each other as well as their own selves. The language used to describe positioning evokes physical movement, embodying its dynamic and interactive features.

- Positioning is concerned with selves: The process of positioning leads toward a higher-order of identity work in which an individual is engaged. Bamberg (e.g. 1997a, 2012) describes positioning as answering the question, “Who am I?”; it goes beyond “how do I orient myself in this interaction” to get at “what kind of person am I in the world?”.
- Positioning is linked to narrative: The original definition of positioning given by Davies and Harré (1990) incorporated “story lines”, and positioning has continued to be applied to narratives and linked to master narratives (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008).

As noted in Chapter 2, many of the features that make positioning useful are comparable to the features of identity emphasized in recent literature. In this chapter, I use positioning to capture how speakers build identities in a particular interaction.

4.2.1 Positioning in narrative

Bamberg (1997a) offers a model of positioning that analyzes identity work in narrative discourse. Bamberg proposes three levels of positioning in conversations involving narratives. In Level 1, tellers position the characters in the story; Bamberg (2004a) highlights the teller’s character being positioned vis-à-vis the other characters. In Level 2, participants position themselves interactively in relation to the other speakers; these positions are constantly being negotiated over the course of the interaction. In Level 3, the tellers answer the question *who am I?* and position themselves in relation to larger resources, such as master narratives. By examining these levels, the analysis is able to get at the identity an individual is constructing in the narrative and the interaction. In this section, I describe the three levels of positioning in detail.

The table below sets out Bamberg’s three-level model of positioning, with the questions to be answered by the analysis and example answers taken from his data (Bamberg 2004).

Table 4.2.1 Bamberg’s three-level model of positioning

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Positioning of the characters in the story	Positioning of the participants in the ongoing interaction	Positioning in relation to master narratives
How are the characters positioned in relation to each other and story events? (Bamberg 1997a)	How does the speaker position themselves to the audience; what interactive purpose do they accomplish? (Bamberg 2004)	“Who am I?” (Bamberg 1997a: 337); How do the first two levels develop positions in relation to master narratives? (Bamberg 2004)
E.g. A girl in the story world is positioned as agentive and promiscuous by an adolescent male teller. (Bamberg 2004)	E.g. An adult interlocutor alternates between positioning himself as a collaborator and as a challenger to the teller. (Bamberg 2004)	E.g. The adolescent male teller is “doing masculinity”. (Bamberg 2004: 337)

Positioning level 1. The first level of the model involves positioning within the storyworld. In a first-person personal narrative, for instance, the teller positions their character vis-à-vis other characters. In an example in De Fina and King (2011), Elisa, a Latina undocumented worker, tells a story⁸ about a time she came into conflict with someone over not speaking English. The authors argue that Elisa uses lexical choices and constructed dialogue to position the antagonist’s character as unreasonable. Moreover, as the teller, she is able to introduce a third character in order to help her position her antagonist as “an aggressive character who is acting out of prejudice” (2011: 179) against Elisa as a Latina. By putting the antagonist in opposition to her character in the storyworld, and by aligning the third character positively with her own character and negatively with her opponent, Elisa achieves a first level of positioning in which she is innocent and ideologically correct.

⁸ The story was told in Spanish in response to a question from the researcher.

The defining question Bamberg originally asks at the first level is “*How are characters positioned in relation to one another within the reported events?*” (1997a: 337; italics original); one character’s self is positioned with respect to another character. Depending on the aim of the analysis, however, this first level of positioning can also include positioning of a character in the storyworld with respect to a position that emerges in the discourse. For instance, Bamberg (2004a) analyzes a narrative in which adolescent boys engage in “slut bashing” in a recorded session with an adult moderator. Ted and Fred co-tell a narrative in which a girl in their class is positioned as a “slut” through talk about her own promiscuous behavior and comparison to the behavior of other girls. I would argue that “slut” becomes a position that is simultaneously emerging from, and being used in, the boys’ narrative. The analysis considers intonation, lexical choices, and referring terms; agency and characterization also contribute to the positioning of the girl. In this example of a vicarious narrative, the boys do identity work through their positioning of the girl’s character in the storyworld.

Positioning level 2. The second level examines positioning among the interlocutors in the ongoing interaction, outside the storyworld. The distinction that Bamberg’s model makes between the storyworld and the interaction is a familiar one in narrative analysis. Harkening to Bruner’s (1990) work on the narrative self, Schiffrin (1996) asserts that telling a story sets up a storyworld in which the tellers of a personal narrative can place themselves as a character. Furthermore, as De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) point out, the three level model of positioning is an interactional one, and it views identity construction as an interactional accomplishment. Thus, tracing the positioning of the interlocutors is as much a part of the analysis of a narrative as examining the positioning of the characters in the storyworld.

At the second level of positioning, Bamberg's (2004a) analysis of the "slut bashing" narrative addresses the positioning of a main teller, Ted; of another adolescent participant, Fred; and of the adult moderator. In this case, the close linguistic analysis incorporates features such as turn-taking, discourse markers, and speaking for others; it uses these features to show the positionings among the participants. The analysis shows Ted and Fred positioning themselves first as teaching the adult moderator, and second as -- contradictorily -- being both concerned about the girl's bad behavior and unconcerned about the girl's social ordeal. The adult moderator "oscillat[es] between the role of collaborator and the role of challenger" in a way Bamberg says is "typical for this type of research discussion" (2004a: 345).

Positioning level 3. The third level of positioning in Bamberg's model seeks to answer the question "who am I?" and does so in relation to a higher-order resource around which selves are positioned. This resource has been variously named a "master narrative", "dominant discourse" (Bamberg 2004a), a "normative (social) position", or a "cultural discourse" (Bamberg 2004a). The proliferation of terms reflects the developing understanding of this level of positioning in Bamberg's work. While the first two levels of positioning have remained relatively the same since the proposal of the model, the third level has undergone some development as linguistic approaches to master narratives have progressed. At this point, it is probably most helpful for a linguistic study to operationalize the third level of Bamberg's model as positioning in terms of master narratives.

In Bamberg's model, the master narrative may be implicit or explicit in the current discourse. In Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2008) analysis of a conversation among adolescent boys, one participant, Victor, positions himself as uninterested in a girl. Victor says *it wasn't me hey I'm Shaggy*, positioning himself in relation to a reggae artist whose hit song at the time of the

conversation was about a man denying a relationship. The authors argue that Victor is borrowing both a line from the song “It Wasn’t Me” (an existing narrative) and the suave masculinity of Shaggy (a master narrative of what it is to be masculine). In this example, the third level positioning resource is unusually explicit. In the “slut bashing” conversation, Bamberg identifies the “normative discourse” around which the boys position themselves as “*what it means to be male*” (2004: 348; italics original), but does not point to a specific master narrative of masculinity.

4.2.2 Current methodology

Bucholtz and Hall define identity as “the social positioning of self and other” (2005: 586). In this chapter, I analyze identity in habitual narratives using an approach to positioning that draws on both Davies and Harré’s positioning theory and Bamberg’s three-level model. My analysis of positioning mirrors Bamberg’s in that I begin with positioning among characters in the storyworld and then move to positioning among interlocutors in the interaction. This approach is rooted in the way narrative analysis understands identity. In her foundational work on narrative and identity, for instance, Schiffrin (1996) discusses the dual positions of solidarity and distance between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in a storyworld. Her analysis goes on to connect these storyworld positions to higher-level identities such as “mother”. In the same way, my analysis looks at positioning of self and other in the narrative and the interaction in order to get at tellers’ construction of a “disability” identity. In this section, I briefly highlight aspects of my own approach to positioning and to habitual narratives.

At the level of the storyworld, my analysis foregrounds the positioning of the characters in the storyworld vis-à-vis each other, as in Bamberg’s (1997a) model. It also takes into account the positioning of the teller in relation to the characters. I examine the ways in which positionings

are assigned, challenged, and negotiated (van Langenhove and Harré 1999). At the level of the interaction, I focus on the ways the tellers position themselves towards their interlocutor, myself as the researcher. The analysis shows the consistency between the positions the tellers take up in the storyworld and the interaction.

One way I highlight this consistency is by naming the position taken up by each teller. In doing so, I hope to show continuity between the first- and second-level positionings of the tellers' selves, and to provide a convenient label for readers to remember the teller's positioning moves. Although I chose the labels carefully, I do not intend an argument as to their validity in describing the tellers' rights and duties outside the narrative discourse. The assignment of rights and duties is a major concern in some work on positioning theory, especially as it is used in social psychology and conflict resolution, but not in this analysis. The labels I use for positions unite a group of positioning moves in the discourse (e.g. a teller takes the position "teacher" when positioning their self as having a right to interact with children, as having a duty to explain their disability, as having a right to critique parenting skills). They do not refer to real-world obligations (e.g. a teller does not have a formal or informal duty to teach and would not necessarily self-identify with the label "teacher"). In this way, my use of such labels is most similar to that of van Langenhove and Harré's (1999), who use the labels "teacher" and "learner" respectively to describe the positions taken up by two speakers in an example borrowed from Tannen (1984). The speakers do so by making positioning moves in the conversation, and then take up new positions as the talk continues.

The analysis of positioning in the storyworlds and interactions, as well as the labels characterizing the positioning moves, point towards the higher-level identity work that occurs in the narratives. My analysis considers positioning as a tool for identity work; positions are

building blocks for constructing identities. Positions are always taken up within the context of a particular interaction and can be changed from moment to moment. (Indeed, part of Davies and Harré's (1990) original point was to get away from the idea of identities as static or singular). Although tellers' identities are also in flux, they can be analyzed for a particular individual in a particular interaction. De Fina argues that the "third level [of the positioning model] is necessary to deal with how narrators and audiences negotiate less locally produced sense of who they are, i.e. their membership into [sic] social identities, moral identities, etc." (2013: 43). In other words, the third level of positioning connects locally occasioned and instantiated positions in the storyworld and the interaction to more durable identities that recur across discourses. Tellers' disability identities emerge at this level as what De Fina calls "more portable identities (how narrators present themselves in terms of social identities)" (ibid.).

Bamberg argues that the separate consideration of storyworld and interaction allow the analysis to "explore self at the level of the talked-about [first level] and at the level of tellership in the here-and-now [second level] of a story-telling situation. Both of these levels feed into the larger project at work [...] that is, with more or less implicit and indirect referencing and orientation to social positions and discourses above and beyond the here-and-now" (2011a: 13; brackets mine). In this sense, the third level of positioning can be seen as pervading all levels of positioning. For example, in Bamberg's examination of the "slut bashing" narrative, the boys' third level positioning is in relation to a master narrative of masculinity, but the boys' maleness, particularly in contrast to the girl protagonist's femaleness, is also a factor in the first two levels of positioning. Although community and societal master narratives are hinted at in the positions taken up by the tellers in my data, I do not make an argument about big-N narratives outside the present discourse. Rather my analysis aims to describe the "higher project at work" in light of

Bamberg's (1997a) question *who am I?*. My analysis attempts to answer this question by using the particular positions in a narrative interaction to point toward the identity that an individual is constructing. In the example narratives for this chapter, each teller's self-positioning in a story that deals explicitly with disability becomes a building block in the construction of their individual disability identity. In other narratives, discourses, and interactions, that individual might position their self differently, since identities are multi-faceted and fluid. Yet analyzing positioning at different levels of a narrative allows a glimpse of the kind of disability identity that an individual is continually constructing. It argues that the tellers are "telling disability" when they tell their stories.

In the examples, the tellers relate their experiences in habitual narratives. Riessman defines a habitual narrative as one that "tells of the general course of events over time, rather than what happened at a specific point in the past, and thus is constituted with verb tenses and adverbs that mark repetition and routinization" (1990: 1197). Carranza (1998) calls habitual narratives "low-narrativity" narratives, which represent repeated or non-specific events instead of discrete events laid out with a full narrative structure. Carranza argues that habitual narratives can be used to prove the teller's point by "present[ing] experiences as generalized and common" (1998: 287). I follow Riessman (1990), Carranza (1998), and Cheshire and Ziebland (2005) in claiming that habitual narratives can be used strategically by tellers to display more durable identities by portraying repeated, typical events.

Habitual narratives are tellable because their events are on-going or re-occurring experiences. Looking at the narratives told among workers at a large American insurance company, Linde observes that it would be incongruous for experienced workers to tell each other narratives about everyday events, "yet there is much individual knowledge about routine work practice which

could valuably be conveyed” (2001: 165). Cheshire and Ziebland (2005) suggest that habitual narrative is more common in talk about chronic illness because such talk features everyday, repeated experiences. Perhaps for this reason, habitual narratives have been linked to narratives about long-term or chronic illness (Riessman 1990; Cheshire and Ziebland 2005), an experience similar to having a lifelong disability. In the interactions surrounding the habitual narratives in this chapter, habitual narratives are tellable both because the tellers are speaking to a researcher (myself) whom they are meeting for the first time and who does not share their individual knowledge of their disability practices and because the events described happen routinely.

Habitual narratives can be used as a site of identity construction. Riessman (1990) views the use of habitual narrative as “strategic”; for example, she explains that relating an argument between a husband and wife in a habitual narrative shows that such conversations are typical. Tellers can use habitual narratives to show that events happen often and in a consistent manner. In contrast, non-habitual narratives gain tellability from showing outstanding circumstances; in them, the “most reportable event is the event that is less common than any other in the narrative” (Labov 1997: section 5.3; original italics removed). Carranza (1998) echoes this finding about typicalness in her work on habitual narratives in interviews with Salvadorian immigrants. Unlike narratives that are tellable because they relate a single, significant event, habitual narratives are used by tellers to present the typicalness of the narrative events and thus the durability of the identities being constructed. She finds that habitual narratives and hypothetical (irrealis) narratives are complementary: habitual narratives can show what often happens, while hypothetical narratives can show what does not happen. Carranza argues that both habitual and hypothetical narratives are used to further the teller’s point. In their study of narratives told by a woman with chronic illness, Cheshire and Ziebland find that habitual narrative allows the teller

to “show that these aspects of her self identity are constantly reinforced through the repeated events that she recounts in her narrative” (2005: 6). Habitual narratives, then, are important to identity construction because they reveal durable identities being constructed through ongoing events.

4.3 Positioning selves with disabilities in encounters with able-bodied strangers

In this section, I apply methods from positioning and narrative analysis to narratives told by participants with disabilities. Each narrative is analyzed at the level of the storyworld and at the level of the interaction. In the storyworlds, the characters with disabilities encounter able-bodied strangers; in the interactions, the participants with disabilities are speaking for the first time to me, also an able-bodied stranger.

Before the data collection, I had determined that asking about questions from strangers would be likely to elicit narratives from all the participants with disabilities. I hypothesized that the selves portrayed within the narratives would be highly individual. Listening to the participant’s stories, however, I found their life experiences were quite similar. The data set for the analysis is accordingly made up of narratives from all three participants with lifelong disabilities.

Altogether, there were eight “stranger” narratives elicited from these participants. Derek first told a habitual narrative, followed by a narrative about a specific event. Tawnya told a habitual narrative, which sparked two small stories about strangers staring (rather than asking questions about her wheelchair use). Min responded with a small story about a recent occurrence, a habitual narrative, and a narrative about a past event. The analysis focuses specifically on the habitual narratives in which the tellers mention being questioned by children.

When they were asked, *Has anyone, like a stranger or a kid, come up to you and asked why you use a wheelchair?*, Derek, Tawnya, and Min all responded with narratives about children asking

questions. These are both habitual narratives, telling about events that have happened more than once to the teller, and apparently a common narrative in the community, telling about events that have happened to more than one teller. Derek says *it happens all the time*; Tawnya says *kids ask me all the time*; Min says *it happens ... / all the time*. Although I did mention *kids* in my question, it is interesting that all three participants responded to that aspect of the question.

The characters also relate similar actions in the three narratives. Children come up to ask a question because they are curious, and their parents pull them away. The tellers provide constructed dialogue and external evaluation in which they contradict the parents' actions and motivations. The narrative events and evaluations in the storyworld create positions for the characters vis-à-vis each other. In general, the teller's characters and the children are positioned as positively aligned toward each other, the parents are positioned as negatively aligned toward the children, and the teller's characters are positioned as negatively aligned toward the parents. The analysis examines this triad of positions at level one positioning in the storyworld. It then turns to level two positioning in the interaction, showing the positions each teller takes up in the conversation. Despite the similarity of the narratives, each teller positions their self differently. These positioning moves may be collectively characterized as a position of "teacher" for Derek, a position of "advocate" for Tawnya, and a position of "ambassador" for Min.

In the Discussion (Section 4.4), I use the analysis of positioning at the level of the storyworld and the interaction to claim that the ability of characters to position themselves, to position each other, and to refuse positions is essential to the teller's identity work (see Chapter 2 for discussion and examples of refusing positions in positioning theory). Not only do the tellers have the ability to position their third-person characters; they also create storyworlds in which their third-person characters position them. I argue that the tellers use the positioning moves of the

third-person characters who do not have disabilities to create their own positions with respect to their disability identities. I also show that, just as the third-person characters are essential to the identity work, these same able-bodied characters make the most explicit mentions of disability. The tellers themselves refrain from mentioning disability outside of the third-person constructed dialogues and certain irrealis sections. Finally, I build on the analysis of storyworld- and interaction-level positioning in this section to address the higher-level identity work done by tellers, pointing to an answer for Bamberg's (1997a) question *who am I?*.

4.3.1 Derek's *parents that pull their kids away*

Derek tells his narrative during the first individual session, in his employer Jason's private office during work hours. I ask Derek the eliciting question about a half hour into the session, at point in the conversation when he has been talking about surprising able-bodied people with stories about his disability. In response, Derek tells a habitual narrative, which he then evaluates and immediately retells. After this sequence, Derek transitions to another story about encountering a child in a public place.

Derek's narrative is a habitual narrative because it involves generic characters ("kids" and "parents") and is told in the present tense throughout. His repeated references to the events lend them weight. In this habitual narrative, Derek positions his self while telling about experiences that are on-going and typical; this position points toward a durable aspect of his disability identity.

Narrative: *parents that pull their kids away*

- 1 **Leslie:** So have you ever had someone
- 2 like I don't know a stranger or a kid or somebody
- 3 just come up to you and say like
- 4 "why are you using a wheelchair" something like that.

5 **Derek:** Yeah. I mean it happens all the time um
6 but one of the things I ca:nnnot stand is when parents //
7 you know ...
8 it's one thing for parents to .. you know .. to say something,
9 but the parents that pull their kids away like they did something ba:d //
10 I have no patience for that.
11 um .. because I think .. it just breeds ignorance.
12 because I think .. you gotta let your kids ask questions
13 **Leslie:** Yeah.
14 **Derek:** If I don't wanna answer em I won't answer em.
15 **Leslie:** @@ Yeah.
16 **Derek:** It's simple. //
17 But they're not asking personal questions //
18 I've had-I've had random people on the street ask me more personal questions.
19 but I wanna tell- I wanna tell people uh .. you know my story
20 I want to tell people what uh what the: what the situations are so.
21 I mean you know it's- it's really- it's really disheartening
22 when you see a parent that actually ... pulls their kid away
23 and then you know as you're rolling away they chastise them for
24 for what? curiosity?
25 **Leslie:** Yeah. [Yeah.]
26 **Derek:** [Yeah.]

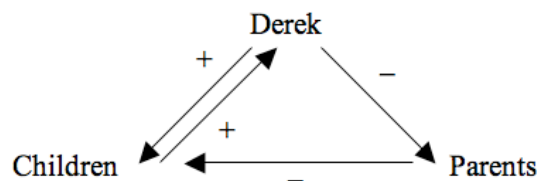
Derek's overall position in this habitual narrative can be characterized as being that of a "teacher". He is someone who is opposed to actions that *breed[] ignorance* [11], and someone who has the right both to answer the children's questions and to comment on the parent's behavior. Although I do not suggest that Derek necessarily applies the label "teacher" to himself or that the position exists outside the discourse, the positioning moves Derek makes in his habitual narrative show him taking up a position as a teacher regarding his disability. Within the storyworld, the characters of the parents refuse this position, and re-position their children

literally and figuratively. Within the interaction, Derek's position echoes his positioning moves in the habitual narrative.

Positioning in the storyworld

The characters in Derek's narrative – Derek, parents, and children – are positioned vis-à-vis each other within the storyworld. The children are positioned as positively oriented toward Derek, and Derek is positioned reciprocally as positively oriented toward the children. The parents are positioned in opposition to their children and their children's actions: that is, the children's positioning toward Derek. Derek is positioned in opposition to the parents and the parent's actions: that is, the parent's positioning toward their children. Their interaction has a triadic structure, represented below:

Figure 4.3.1: Positioning in Derek's storyworld



The children and Derek are positioned with respect to each other both in the question I ask and in evaluation, including irrealis clauses, that Derek provides throughout the habitual narrative. The first positioning move is actually mine: I use the deictic phrase *come up to you and ask* [3] in which *a stranger or a kid or somebody* [2] becomes aligned with Derek. Although my question could elicit a story about any stranger, Derek's narrative identifies children as the strangers asking questions. As I have already established the children's actions, Derek's first mention of the narrative events skips them entirely and goes directly to the actions of the parents. However, Derek positions himself vis-à-vis the children's actions – asking him questions – in his repeated evaluation: *I wanna tell people [...] my story/ I want to tell people [...] what the situations are*

[19-20]. The children's positioning as strangers who ask questions makes available a position for Derek as the person who answers them. The same connection between the characters occurs in the events that did not happen in the storyworld; such irrealis clauses are also evaluation in a narrative (Labov 1997; Carranza 1998). In a hypothetical statement, Derek claims *if I don't wanna answer em* (the children's questions) *I won't answer em* [14]. In a negated statement, Derek states *they're not asking [Derek] personal questions* [17]. These hypothetical and negated statements allow Derek to highlight that the reverse is true in the actual storyworld: the children are asking informational questions that Derek wants to, and will, answer. Derek goes on to contrast this storyworld with the kids asking questions to another event: *random people on the street ask me more personal questions* [18]. The adjectives *random* and *personal* suggest that Derek found those questions intrusive. By narrating hypothetical, negated, and alternate events alongside the events in the storyworld, Derek (as the teller) positions in a positive way the children as askers of (not personal) questions and his character as willing to answer those questions.

Derek positions himself as uniquely qualified to answer questions. He does this partly by positioning his character vis-à-vis the children's character: when the children ask *questions* (first mentioned by Derek in line 12), which are not *personal questions* [17], Derek takes up a position that is positively aligned toward them. Moreover, Derek repeats *I wanna tell people [...] my story / I want to tell people [...] what the situations are* [19-20], emphasizing his willingness to answer. By saying *my story* is what he wants to tell people, Derek sets it up as the answer to the kids' *questions* [12] and to the question I proposed in line 4: "*why are you using a wheelchair something like that*". Derek telling *my story* is the answer to these questions. The phrase suggests an autobiographical account; Derek can answer the question of why he uses a wheelchair by

telling his life story. After the repeated verbs, *my story* changes to *what the situations are* [20]. With this phrase, Derek broadens what he is telling from his own personal story to *situations* involving wheelchairs or disabilities in general and claims knowledge of *what the situations are*. By positioning himself as someone who wants to share his expertise on why he uses a wheelchair, Derek takes up a position as a teacher with respect to his disability.

While Derek and the children take up complementary positions, the parents' character makes contradictory positioning moves. The parents' character is negatively positioned toward the children's character – and the children's positioning moves as question-askers – three times in the storyworld. First, Derek (as the teller) describes the parents' character as *the parents that pull their kids away like they did something bad* [9]. The deictic phrase *pull ... away* reverses the physical move made when the children *come up to* Derek, while the parents' attitude that the children did something wrong stands in opposition to the complementary positioning of the children as askers and Derek as answerer. The parents' character is both literally and figuratively re-positioning the children in the storyworld. Derek subsequently tells the parents' action as a narrative event: *you see a parent that actually ... pulls their kid away* [22]. His use of the singular, rather than plural, characters makes the habitual event more particular. Again, the parents are oriented toward the children in a negative way that opposes the children's (and Derek's) positions. The physical re-positioning of the children this time results in Derek physically re-positioning himself: in the next narrative event, Derek is *rolling away* [23] from the children. In the final event in the narrative, *they* [the singular parent referent] *chastise them* [the singular child referent] [23]. This internal evaluation completes the parents negative orientation toward their children.

Yet beyond the physical re-positioning as in the deictic *pull* and the negative orientation as in *chastise*, the parents' character is refusing the positioning moves the children and Derek have taken vis-à-vis each other. At the first mention of parents pulling children away, the parents' perception of the children is that *they did something bad* [9]. The parents do not accept the positioning of the children as askers of questions about disability. At the second mention, the parents *chastise them* [the child] *for what? for curiosity?* [24]. Derek's suggestion that the parents are chastising their children for curiosity is sarcastic; parents are not expected to criticize their children for that reason. However, his equation of the children's actions with being curious reflects the complementary positioning of the children's characters as students and his character as a teacher. The parents are refusing the positioning on behalf of their children; rather than the encounter being about the children asking questions and Derek answering them, the parents see it as being about the children being rude or offensive and the parents being responsible for correcting or stopping them. The positioning of the parents vis-à-vis their children can be understood both as a positioning of the parents as having the duty to teach good manners and as a refusal of the positioning of Derek as having the right to teach about his disability.

However, Derek positions himself vis-à-vis the parents as someone who knows better than the parents do how to respond to their children's curiosity. As the teller, Derek contradicts the parent's re-positioning of the children with irrealis and evaluations. He contrasts the parent's positioning moves in the storyworld with irrealis actions in a hypothetical and in a directive. He presents an alternative reaction to the kids asking him questions, in which *parents [...] say something* [8], in order to contrast it with the actual storyworld action, *parents [...] pull their kids away* [9]. Although Derek does not tell what the parents may say to the children or whether they say it to the children, Derek, or both, he does show through the hypothetical that that the

parents have the choice of engaging with the interaction between the children and Derek's character. Derek positions himself as an authority on how to deal with children through the evaluation *you gotta let your kids ask questions* [12]. This is not constructed dialogue within the storyworld, but Derek's use of the second person gives it the form of a directive addressed to the parents in the storyworld or to parents in general. The directive, contrasted with the events in the storyworld, implies that the parents are fulfilling their responsibilities as correctors of the children in the wrong way. Derek does not deny the right of the parents to correct their children, but asserts that the parents should engage with the children's positions as students rather than reposition them entirely. By assuming the right to criticize the parent's behavior toward their children, Derek positions himself as having more expertise in responding to children than their parents have – at least with respect to his disability.

Derek's character is positioned vis-à-vis the parents and their actions in a negative way throughout the evaluation in the narrative. Derek positions the parents by using their actions in relative clauses to classify them as a certain type of parent: they are not just any parents, but *parents that pull* [9] and *a parent that [...] pulls* [22]. In addition, Derek gives three emotional evaluations of the parents and their actions: *I cannot stand when parents* [6]; *I have no patience for that* [10]; *it's really disheartening* [21]. The first evaluation is traceable to *the parents that pull their kids away* [9], which is also the referent for *that* in second evaluation. The third evaluation directly proceeds the repetition of the parent's actions: *a parent that actually ... pulls their kid away* [22]. By critiquing the parent's actions, Derek takes up a position as someone who has the right to tell the parents how to respond to their children's questions. Moreover because Derek classifies the parents by their actions, Derek sets his character in opposition to the parents.

Derek's character does not interact with the parents in the storyworld. However, Derek positions himself by the negative alignment of his character vis-à-vis the parents' character.

Finally, Derek states directly in the evaluation that the parents' reactions to their kids' questions *breeds ignorance* [11]. The choice of the word *ignorance* is key to Derek's point in telling the habitual narrative. In response to my question, he is demonstrating that when the children ask questions about his disability practice, he views them as ignorant or curious, not as rude or offensive. The phrase operates on two levels. First, the children's ignorance is perpetuated by the parent's refusal to let Derek teach them. Second, the parents' ignorance is thus passed on to their children. Derek positions himself as someone who opposes ignorance.

The positioning in Derek's storyworld can be understood in terms of complementary and contrastive positioning of the characters vis-à-vis each other. Derek and the children take up complementary, positive positions as teacher and students regarding disability. The parents' character refuse and re-position their children, taking up a negative orientation toward them. Derek's position as an expert on teaching children about disability competes with the parents' positions as authorities on teaching their children about manners. Derek is oriented negatively toward the parents throughout the narrative events. As the teller, Derek can "back a claim" (Carranza 1998) using irrealis; he uses this ability to compare the parents' actions with what they ought to have done. By assuming the right to criticize the parents' child-rearing and the duty of teaching the children about disability, Derek positions himself as a teacher at the level of the storyworld.

Positioning in the interaction

In the on-going interaction – level two in Bamberg's model of positioning – Derek also positions himself as a teacher. To a certain extent, he is positioned as an expert by the nature of the

research setting. In this initial session Derek, as in all my first meetings with participants, I deliberately positioned myself as a person who wanted to learn about the disability community. By asking a question about Derek's own experiences, I am inviting him to take up a position as an expert sharing knowledge. I ask the question with hedges: *I don't know* [2] and *or somebody* [2] disclaim knowledge of who the stranger might be. My use of *like* [3] in addition to the quotative *say* and the phrase *something like that* [4] downplay the exact wording of the constructed dialogue I suggest for the characters. My positioning of myself as a learner about disability makes available a position of teacher about disability available for Derek.

Derek fosters involvement with me through his use of second person pronouns. O'Connor (2000) analyzes how prisoners telling narratives about their crimes use the first and second person when referring to their own character in the storyworld. Following Phelan (1994), O'Connor argues that tellers use the second person for their own characters to create empathy and involvement. She points out that as the listener she "was being positioned to empathize with the experience as if it were generic, usual, when in reality (for me) it was not" (2000: 76). The interaction between Derek and me parallels the interaction between the prisoners and O'Connor in that I am also being asked to enter into an experience that can be assumed to be unfamiliar for me. When he re-tells the storyworld events, particularizing them by using singular characters for the parents and children, he involves me by using second person: *it's really disheartening \ when you see a parent that actually ... pulls their kid away \ and then you know as you're rolling away they chastise them* [21-23]. By using the second person to involve me in seeing the parents' actions and then rolling away from the children's questions, Derek also involves me in feeling disheartened. I become identified with Derek's storyworld positioning as someone who knows better than parents how to teach about disability.

My own utterances, though minimal, show more involvement at the points when Derek uses second person. When he says *you gotta let your kids ask questions* [12], the *you* applies the directive to the parents' characters, but also involves me as the listener. In acknowledgement, I respond by laughing and saying *yeah*, instead of merely backchanneling nonverbally as I do throughout Derek's other turns⁹. He provokes a laugh and a further backchannel from me when he adds: *if I don't wanna answer em I won't answer em* [14]. This evaluation works in two ways. As previously mentioned, he is using *irrealis* to position his character vis-à-vis the children's character, the referent for *em*. In addition, he could also be seen as commenting on his interaction with me: he is currently answering my question. Taken either way, Derek's hypothetical statement evaluates his willingness to answer questions about his disability. At the end of the narrative Derek again uses second person pronouns and also a rising intonation (*for what? curiosity?*). I show agreement with Derek again; my *Yeah. Yeah.* [25] again accepts Derek's expertise on how the parents should be responding to their children's questions. Thus, in the storyworld, Derek positions his character as a teacher in relation to the kids and their questions, seeking to alleviate the ignorance produced by the parents' actions. In the interaction, he also positions himself, and is positioned by me, as a teacher to able-bodied people about his own disability and about disability in general.

4.3.2 Tawnya's parents will pull the kid away

Tawnya tells her narrative in her office at her workplace during our first individual session. I ask Tawnya the eliciting question at a point in the conversation just after she says that she explains her disability *all the time* while working at the resource center for people with disabilities. In line

⁹ As indicated in the transcription conventions, a double backslash [//] indicates the interlocutor's nonverbal but audible backchanneling, such as *mhm*, in order to avoid visually breaking up the narrative turn.

2, I put the event of strangers asking questions into a non-professional context by mentioning *shopping*. I am asking about everyday conversations, not only workplace ones.

Tawnya's narrative is a habitual narrative told largely in the present tense. The telling can be split into three parts. In the first, Tawnya tells about habitual narrative events happening in the storyworld. In the second, she adds evaluation using irrealis: the negated events, constructed dialogue, and hypothetical events do not actually happen in the storyworld. In the third part, Tawnya re-tells the habitual events with narrative structure and adds constructed dialogue and attitude. I analyze the positioning of the characters vis-à-vis each other in the storyworld and in the irrealis separately, then discuss the positioning between Tawnya and me in the interaction.

Narrative: *parents will pull the kid away*

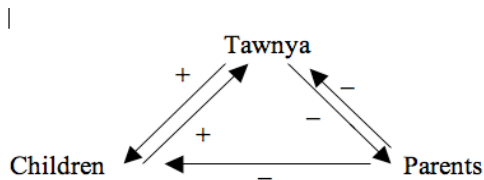
First Telling

- 1 **Leslie:** but um I was wondering
- 2 have you ever been like you know I don't know out shopping
- 3 or just doing something
- 4 and like a stranger or a kid or somebody comes up and asks you
- 5 about you know [why are you in a wheelchair] or that kind of thing?
- 6 **Tawnya:** [definitely] Oh kids ask me all the time
- 7 and I love it because it shows that they're curious //
- 8 it's the adults that annoy me /@@@/
- 9 honestly the adults of these poor children
- 10 um because I've been in situations where um parents will pull the kids away
- 11 **Leslie:** My goodness {higher pitch}
- 12 **Tawnya:** um you know n-because they don't-they think I'm going to run them over.

Positioning in the storyworld of the first telling

The first level positioning in Tawnya's narrative follows the same triadic pattern that was present in Derek's narrative:

Figure 4.3.2a: Positioning in Tawnya's first telling



At the level of the storyworld, Tawnya tells about the children's actions toward her, but not her response. In the first telling, Tawnya recasts the event in my question – *a stranger or a kid or somebody comes up and asks you* [4] – into her own narrative event: *kids ask me all the time* [6]. Although Tawnya does not specify what the children ask her, she does repeat the positioning of the children as the strangers who ask, and thus the children's orientation toward her. She also evaluates the children's actions: *I love it because it shows they're curious* [7]. Her positioning toward the children is positive, but her character does not take up a specific position in response to the children's position as askers.

The parents refuse the positioning of their children as askers: *I've been in situations where um parents will pull the kids away* [10]. In this first telling, the tenses reflect the on-going nature of the habitual events. Tawnya has typically been in these situations in the past and parents will typically do these actions in the future. The deictic *pull away* physically re-positions the children away from Tawnya.

As the teller, Tawnya uses reference to position the parents' character. The first mention of them is as *adults* [8], which contrasts them in age with *kids* [6], the first strangers Tawnya mentions. In the context of my question, however, it is possible to suppose these adults are also question-

askers. Tawnya identifies them as parents by referring to them as *the adults of these poor children* [9]. This positions the characters vis-à-vis each other by simultaneously connecting the parents to the children (the *adults* are possessed by the *children*) and marking the connection as negative (the children are *poor* as a consequence). Leaving aside the pronoun *they* [12], references to the parents' character become more specific through the tellings. In the first telling, the parents' character progresses from *adults* [8] to specific *adults of these poor children* [9] to *parents* [10] in the narrative event. Yet while the parents' character becomes more specified, the character remains positioned at a distance from Tawnya. In the first telling – *parents will pull the kids away* [10] – Tawnya is the deictic center of the action, the place that the children are being pulled *away* from. Moreover, the children's character is definite, marking them as “old information” (Prince 1992) -- an already understood part of the scene --, whereas the parents' character is indefinite, marking them as “new information” (ibid.) -- disconnected from both the children and Tawnya in this clause. In the storyworld, Tawnya evaluates her character's attitude toward the parents: *it's the adults that annoy me*. The beginning of the clause contrasts Tawnya's positive orientation toward the children's curiosity with her negative orientation to the adults.

In the thoughts that Tawnya attributes to them, the parents are positioned negatively toward Tawnya: *they [the parents] think I'm [Tawnya] going to run them [the children] over* [12]. This clause marks the boundary between the first telling and the irrealis events; the parent's action in thinking is within the storyworld but Tawnya's action in running over the children is not. It is also the first reference Tawnya makes to her disability practices: a danger of being *run [...] over* can be interpreted only if it is understood that Tawnya moves using a wheelchair (just as a

danger of being *stepped on* would make sense only for someone moving using their feet¹⁰). The parents position themselves as protectors of their children and Tawnya as a danger.

Tawnya does not take up a strong position in this telling. Vis-à-vis the other characters, Tawnya's character is positively oriented toward the children's actions and negatively oriented toward the parents. She is positioned as someone who approves of curiosity, but her overall position becomes clearer as her narrative turn continues in the irrealis and evaluation.

Narrative: *parents will pull the kid away*

Irrealis and evaluation

12 **Tawnya:** um you know n-because they don-they think I'm going to run them over.

13 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

14 **Tawnya:** You know it's like I haven't heard on the news

15 you know "wheelchair lady runs down four year old"

16 you know and I'd like tell them that

17 I'm like "Look it's okay I'm not going to run them over I can see:"

18 **Leslie:** Yeah.

19 **Tawnya:** you know it's like if I had thick glasses on that were dark

20 they might be worried

21 but I also wouldn't be frigging driving a wheelchair /@@@/

22 if I: couldn't see

23 I mean this is [like]

24 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

25 **Tawnya:** do people really think?

26 So that's the only challenge I-

27 because honestly it makes me feel bad like [I-]

28 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

29 **Tawnya:** it makes the:m .. label me as like some kind of monster //

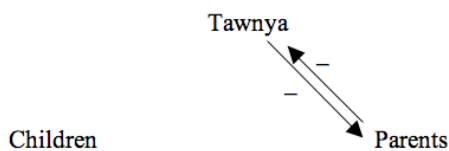
30 and that annoys me.

¹⁰ It is possible to use these verbs of motion metaphorically (*run* is already being semantically extended in the phrase *run over*) or to deliberately apply verbs for one type of motion to another (e.g. *I walk with a wheelchair*), but Tawnya is not doing so here.

Positioning in the irrealis and evaluation

After the initial telling of narrative events, Tawnya evaluates them using constructed dialogue, negation, and hypothetical events. The positioning moves are between the parents' character and Tawnya as they position her as dangerous and she refuses this positioning. As she does, Tawnya takes up an overall position as an 'advocate' regarding disability, which can also be seen in the storyworld during the second telling and in the interaction surrounding the narrative.

Figure 4.3.2b: Positioning in Tawnya's irrealis and evaluation



The constructed thoughts of the parents' character at the end of the first telling set off the evaluation: *they* [the parents] *think I'm* [Tawnya] *going to run them* [the children] *over* [12].

Running the children over is a hypothetical event marked by the future tense, and it continues to be an event in irrealis and constructed dialogue for the rest of the narrative. By imagining this event, the parents negatively position Tawnya's character as a danger to their children.

Tawnya refuses this position using irrealis events, punctuated by the discourse marker *you know* [14, 15, 16, 19] and by different uses of *like* [14, 16, 17, 19, 23]. She introduces constructed dialogue that is marked as irrealis by a negation: ***you know it's like I haven't heard on the news*** [14]. The discourse marker *you know* relates informational units in the discourse to each other (Schiffrin 1987); it indicates the connection between the irrealis and the storyworld. Tawnya is setting up the irrealis to directly evaluate the thoughts the parents had in the storyworld and to thereby refuse the positioning of her character by the parents. The parents think Tawnya is going

to *run them over* [12] and they position her as a danger; the news has not had a headline about *wheelchair lady runs down four year old* [15] and thus Tawnya is not a danger.

Tawnya uses the constructed dialogue of the headline to make her narrative not just a story about the habitual events she has experienced but of experiences relevant to the community of people with disabilities. Tawnya reports the negated constructed dialogue as being spoken *on the news* [14]; the viewpoint is coming from society outside the community. The headline itself is “*wheelchair lady runs down four year old*” [14]. The referent *wheelchair lady* could be taken as applying to Tawnya herself or to a hypothetical character in a wheelchair. It uses an outsiders’ label, taken from the news in the hypothetical world and the parent’s positioning from the storyworld. The referent positions the character solely with respect to their use of a wheelchair. The ambiguous referent and the news scenario also generalizes the constructed dialogue to apply to more situations than just the one in this storyworld. By refusing the positioning as a dangerous *wheelchair lady*, Tawnya positions herself as an “advocate” who can speak for her community and correct the erroneous outsider viewpoints of the news headline and the parents.

Continuing to refuse the parents’ positioning of her as dangerous, Tawnya uses the discourse marker and quotative *like* to mark irrealis and attitude in two instances of constructed dialogue. The first constructed dialogue is marked as hypothetical by the verb: *I’d like tell them that* [16]. The discourse marker reinforces the idea that Tawnya’s character did not actually say this to the parents; *like* accompanying a quotative marks less accurately reported constructed dialogue (Anderson 1998). The referent for *that* is ambiguous. It could refer to the following constructed dialogue (“*Look it’s okay* [17]), but it could also refer, more broadly, to the refutation of the parents’ thoughts created by negating the preceding constructed dialogue (“*wheelchair lady* [15]). Tawnya emphasizes the verb *tell*, positioning herself in either case as advocating to the

parents. In the second instance of constructed dialogue, Tawnya uses the quotative *like* to introduce her response to the parent's concerns: *I'm like "Look it's okay I'm not going to run them over I can see"* [17]. Since this instance of constructed dialogue comes immediately after the hypothetical dialogue, it is likely to be hypothetical as well. Moreover, quotative *like* can indicate both constructed dialogue and attitude (Cochrane 2006). Even if this instance occurs in the storyworld, it indicates as much about Tawnya's attitude toward the parent's positioning moves as her speech to the parents' character. She uses the negation in the constructed dialogue to reposition herself as not a danger: *I'm not going to run them over* [17]. Taken as constructed attitude, the instance as a whole indicates Tawnya's position as advocating to the parents that *it's okay* [17]. At this point, Tawnya connects the idea of not being a danger to being able to see; she emphasizes the verb *see* by lengthening the vowel.

The irrealis overall evaluates the parents' concerns as unreasonable. Tawnya does so first by exaggerating the danger the parents anticipate by creating the hypothetical news headline and thus ridiculing the parents' concern as exaggerated. Following the constructed dialogue (*I can see:* [17]), Tawnya creates a second hypothetical world, in which she is danger because she is both blind and using a wheelchair. Tawnya repeats the same discourse markers that preceded the previous irrealis to introduce the hypothetical world: ***you know it's like if I had thick glasses on that were dark \ they might be worried*** [19-20]. The repeated *you know* again marks the connection between the information units of the storyworld and this new irrealis. By repeating these markers, Tawnya signals a new set of moves refusing the parent's positioning of her. In the hypothetical world, the parents *might be worried* [20] about Tawnya's character using a wheelchair and being blind justifiably, as compared to their unreasonable worry about her using a wheelchair in the storyworld. Yet Tawnya adds to the hypothetical world in which she *couldn't*

see [22] that she *also wouldn't be frigging driving a wheelchair* [21]. Tawnya's pronunciation in this clause has features of African American Vernacular English that Tawnya may have access to¹¹, but that she does not typically use in the research sessions. There is final consonant cluster reduction on *wouldn't*: it is realized as [d]. Tawnya also uses alveolar nasals at the end of *frigging* and *driving*, whereas she typically uses velar nasals for *-ing* in the data. Code-switching to another dialect gives this clause an effect similar to constructed dialogue. The explicative *frigging* evaluates the idea that Tawnya would be using a wheelchair while blind as ridiculous. Tawnya sounds as though she is addressing the parents directly and admonishing them for their erroneous assumptions. Thus, by adding the *also* [21] clause, Tawnya shows there is not even a hypothetical world in which Tawnya would be dangerous, since she would not be blind and in a wheelchair in any case. The parents' concerns are unreasonable in all the worlds Tawnya tells about.

In the evaluation following the irrealis events, Tawnya's character (and her self) and the parents' character position each other negatively once again. In the final part of the evaluation – *I mean this is like \ do people really think?* [23, 25] – the way Tawnya emphasizes *think* makes it clear that the interpretation of the question should be *do people really think* [at all]. She changes the referent at this point to *people* from *parents* (the antecedent in line 10 to the pronouns throughout the irrealis section). Expanding the scope of the referent means Tawnya's positioning is done not only vis-à-vis the parents in the storyworld but also vis-à-vis all people who don't think. This contributes to Tawnya's overall position as an advocate to outsiders in general.

Tawnya connects her question to further evaluation with the discourse marker *so*, showing that the preceding clause is the premise for the following clause (Schiffrin 1987). The lack of

¹¹ In the data, Tawnya's mother Lois uses phonological features of AAVE, including alveolar nasals in *-ing* and final consonant cluster reduction.

thinking shown in the parents' unreasonable position creates *the only challenge* [26] for Tawnya; it also causes her to *feel bad* [27]. In the final positioning moves of this section, Tawnya reiterates the parents' negative positioning of her and positions herself negatively in response: *it makes them* [people] .. *label me as like some kind of monster \ and that annoys me* [28-29]. The referent for *them* is *people* [25] , but still includes *parents*: Tawnya uses *so* [31] to connect these positioning moves to second telling of the narrative that features the parents' character. This is a new positioning of Tawnya by the third-person character; in addition to being a danger, she is *some kind of monster* [28]. The harshness of this labeling is not matched by a strong emotion from Tawnya. Instead, she evaluates it as something that *annoys* [29] her with a noticeable falling intonation that marks the end of the irrealis and evaluation.

The positioning of Tawnya and the parents vis-à-vis each other is negative in the irrealis and evaluation, as it was in the storyworld. However, Tawnya's moves to refuse the parents' positioning of her character have resulted in Tawnya taking up the position of an advocate regarding her disability. She continues to position her character this way in the storyworld during the second telling.

Narrative: *parents will pull the kid away*

Second Telling

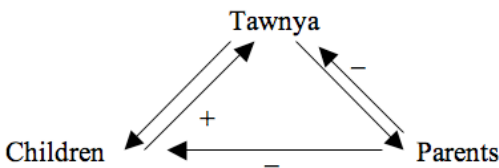
- 31 **Tawnya:** so the kids come up
32 and they ask things
33 and then the parents pull them away
34 like {breathy} "god don't ask [that]"
35 **Leslie:** [yeah]
36 **Tawnya:** you know or
37 {dramatic} "Johnny move out of this lady's way"
38 you know and I'm just like .. "calm down. /@@/
39 I see Johnny I see Johnny's mommy

40 and none of you are in any danger" /@/ but um
41 you know that annoys me
42 that's my only really pet peeve

Positioning in the storyworld of the second telling

The second telling of Tawnya's habitual narrative once again includes all characters in the triad.

Figure 4.3.2c: Positioning in Tawnya's second telling



In the second telling, Tawnya re-casts the narrative events: *so the kids come up \ and they ask things* [30-31]. Here she repeats the deictic expression from my question, *comes up* [4], physically positioning the children vis-à-vis her character in the storyworld. She also repeats the asking event from her first telling (and my question). In this telling, the kids ask *things*, which are again unspecified, but there is no reference to Tawnya as the indirect object. Thus, while the children are oriented toward Tawnya, she does not take up an position in response to their asking.

The parents are once again oriented negatively toward the children. In this telling, Tawnya puts the narrative events into temporally ordered clauses, linked by *and*: *so the kids **come up** / and they ask things / and the parents **pull them away*** [29-31]. The two clauses about the children lead directly into the event with the parents. Tawnya juxtaposes the positioning of the children towards her and the positioning of the parents' towards them. The parent's deictic *pull them away* is preceded by the children's deictic *come up* (repeated from my question but not from Tawnya's first telling). Thus in this telling the children's move toward Tawnya's character is

countered by the parents' move toward the children, a move that physically repositions them away from Tawnya. This move continues in the constructed dialogue: "*Johnny move out of this lady's way*" [37]. The deictic expression involves all the characters: it is spoken by the parents, addressed to the children, and places Tawnya's character as the deictic center. The parent's negative orientation toward their children is dependent on the children's positive orientation toward Tawnya. The parents re-position their children physically and figuratively away from her character.

The parents' constructed dialogue, however, suggests two different positions that the parents' character takes up in relation to the children. One is as a protector of their children, moving them out of the way of the danger Tawnya presents. The other position, present only in this constructed dialogue, is as the people responsible for the children's good manners. The first constructed dialogue, "*god don't ask that*" [36], suggests that the children's questions and curiosity are rude or offensive. The second, "*move out of this lady's way*" [37], could suggest a concern that the children are imposing on Tawnya as well as the concern throughout the narrative that Tawnya is a danger to the children. The way Tawnya (as the teller) performs the constructed dialogue suggests that, although it is introduced with quotative *like*, it is actually spoken in the storyworld. She mimics the voice quality of the parents' character: the first constructed dialogue is breathy-voiced as though the parents are whispering to the children so Tawnya cannot hear; the second stresses *Johnny* [37] as though the parents are trying to scold or to get the attention of Johnny. However, *like* also signals attitude; the way the parents pull the children away has an admonishing attitude.

The parents do not directly engage with Tawnya in the storyworld, but they position her within the constructed dialogue as *this lady* [37]. This referring expression echoes the earlier positioning

of Tawnya in the irrealis as *wheelchair lady* [15]. Tawnya responds by refusing the position and re-positioning herself as not a danger. In Tawnya's character's constructed dialogue, she negates the idea that the children and the parents *are in any danger* [40]. Her character's response to the parents' constructed dialogue suggests the interpretation that the parents want their children out of the way not out of consideration for Tawnya but out of concern for their children. Thus, the parents' character continues to position Tawnya as a danger to their children in the second telling.

Continuing from the first telling and the irrealis, Tawnya (as the teller) uses reference to position the characters vis-à-vis each other in the storyworld. In the first telling, the parents' character becomes gradually more specific (*the adults* [8], *the adults of these poor children* [9], *parents* [10]). In the irrealis and evaluation, the parents' character becomes identified with *people* [25] in order for Tawnya to position herself vis-à-vis them as an advocate. In the second telling, the parents' character becomes even more specific, with the same effect for Tawnya's positioning. For the narrative event, *the parents pull them away* [33], referring expression is definite; for the same event in the first telling, the referring expression was indefinite in contrast to the definite expression for the children's character. Moreover, after the children's character is referred to as *Johnny* [37, 39], the parents' character is referred to as *Johnny's mommy* [39]. This referring expression positions the parents in relation to the children, not only because *mommy* is possessed by *Johnny* (as *the adults* were by the children in the first telling), but because *mommy* is the referring term the children would use themselves. In this telling, the character of the parents, as well as the children, becomes more specified and thus more vivid within the habitual events. *Johnny's mommy* is also the referring term that would be used in speaking to the children. The parallel structure and simple present tense of Tawnya's constructed dialogue also suggests

someone speaking to a child: *I see Johnny, I see Johnny's mommy* [39]. By speaking to the parents as though they were children, Tawnya's character continues to position the parents' character as unreasonable. As the teller, Tawnya uses quotative *like* to introduce this constructed dialogue that she may have said in the storyworld. The emphasis and falling intonation of "*calm down*. [38] also suggests that Tawnya is saying the directive to – or expressing an attitude toward – someone who is unreasonably emotional. Tawnya positions the parents as unreasonable and orients herself negatively toward them.

She also positions herself vis-à-vis the parents' character as an advocate. At the same time that the children's and parents' characters are made more vivid within the habitual narrative by being given names, they are also made more typical by being given generic ones. Using these generic names makes the characters into placeholders for any able-bodied children and parents that Tawnya has encountered. Thus, when she speaks in the constructed dialogue, "[...] *none of you are in any danger*" [37], she is advocating against the erroneous viewpoint that any able-bodied strangers are in physical danger.

The positioning that the parents do of Tawnya as a person in a wheelchair leads to her refusing that position and taking up an overall position as an advocate with regard to her disability. Tawnya repeats the evaluation that the parents' positioning of her *annoys* her throughout the narrative: in the first telling, *it's the adults that annoy me*; at the end of the irrealis, *and that annoys me* [30], and near the end of the second telling, *you know that annoys me* [41]. Unlike Derek in his position of 'teacher', she is not objecting to the parents' repositioning of the children. Rather, Tawnya in her position of 'advocate' is refusing the position in which the parents' character has placed her. In the irrealis, the *that* that annoys her is being *label[ed ...] as some kind of monster* [29]; in the second telling, the emphasized *that* encompasses the entire re-

telling of the parents' positioning moves. Tawnya's final evaluation of the events is *that's my only really pet peeve* [42]. With her negative evaluation of the parents and their actions, Tawnya portrays her character as right and the parent's character as wrong.

Positioning in the interaction

At the level of the interaction, Tawnya and I use a high involvement style, signaled with linguistic devices such as overlapping speech (Tannen 2005). Tawnya overlaps the constructed dialogue in my eliciting question with *definitely* [6]. I overlap her at several points to backchannel *yeah* [13, 24, 28, 35], signaling my continued involvement in her telling. I am positioned as someone who is learning about Tawnya's experiences but familiar with similar experiences. Tawnya continues to position herself as an advocate as the conversation progresses.

In the on-going interaction, Tawnya has been positioning herself as an expert on disability in a professional context. The position is particularly salient because our conversation took place at Tawnya's office, directly after her workday. As with Derek's position as a 'teacher', I am not claiming that Tawnya's position as an 'advocate' exists outside the discourse. Her professional work could be seen that way, but not necessarily by Tawnya. In another session, she and her mother agree that Tawnya has never been a "poster child" in the way that they believe other friends with disabilities have. In the discussion, I address how Tawnya's positioning in this storyworld and interaction corresponds to her higher-level identity work.

Initially in the session, I had taken up the position of a 'learner' about disability. Just before I asked the eliciting question, however, we had been talking about issues of accessibility in public places. I told about my own experience trying to negotiate historical buildings with my friend who uses a wheelchair. Thus at this point in the conversation, I am no longer disclaiming knowledge about disability practices. However, I am still asking questions that help to make an

‘expert’ position available for Tawnya. Being an expert on disability complements the position of being an advocate for the community.

As a discourse maker, *you know* is used for meta-knowledge that speakers and listeners share (Schiffrin 1987). I use it in my elicitation to mark a social context *you know I don't know out shopping \ or just doing something* [2,3] that contrasts with the professional context we are in. It also marks the constructed dialogue I suggest: *asks you \ about you know why are you in a wheelchair or that kind of thing*[4-5]. I use the discourse marker to suggest that Tawnya is familiar with the events I am describing – and so am I. My hedging – *I don't know* [2], *or just doing something* [3], *or that kind of thing* [5] – continues my on-going positioning as someone who wants to learn about Tawnya’s disability experience. My use of the discourse marker, however, suggests my positioning at this point in the interaction as someone who is also familiar with these kinds of events.

Tawnya uses the discourse marker *you know* throughout the narrative to invite my agreement with her positioning. For example, she uses it in a truncated utterance, *um you know n-* [12] immediately after telling *parents will pull the kids away* [10]. In the second telling, she uses it the same way:

34 like "god don't ask [that]"
36 **you know** or
37 "Johnny move out of this lady's way"
38 **you know** [...]

As with her first use of *you know* [12], Tawnya uses it here to signal my familiarity with the kind of events she is describing. By doing so, she also involves me in the narrative. As discussed above, Tawnya uses *you know* [14, 19] in the irrealis and evaluation to organize informational units. She also uses the discourse marker in the irrealis to involve me: *you know* “*wheelchair*

lady runs down four year old" \ **you know** [15-16]. By book-ending the constructed dialogue with *you know*, Tawnya marks her and my shared knowledge; she invites my agreement that this hypothetical news headline is ridiculous. My laughter shows that I do agree. Her final use of the discourse marker is before her final evaluations of the parent's actions: **you know that annoys me** \ *that's my only really pet peeve* [41-42]. Tawnya also invites my agreement in the irrealis with question: *do people really think?* [24]. The question is rhetorical – Tawnya goes on without waiting for an answer and I do not respond with one – but it involves me as the listener.

Tawnya involves me in her narrative and the positioning she does within it. In the first telling, when Tawnya describes the habitual events, she heightens the drama of the parents' action by introducing it as an event that is happening to her: ***I've been in situations where um parents will pull the kids away*** [10]. Describing it this as a *situation*[] also indicates that although it is a habitual event, it is not to be taken as an ordinary one. My response, *my goodness* [11], has a higher pitch than usual and underscores my understanding that this is a dramatic event. At points throughout the telling, I laugh in response to Tawnya's positioning moves; laughter can be used to mark agreement or validation of another speaker's utterance (Ragan 1990). I laugh after Tawnya gives her first evaluation of the parents, positioning them negatively in contrast to the children: *it's the adults that annoy me* [8]. As discussed above, I laugh to signal my agreement with the ridiculousness of the hypothetical news headline [15]; Tawnya is here positioning the parents as unreasonable for their concerns. She does the same positioning move with her code-switching and evaluative use of *frigging* in the hypothetical world: *I also wouldn't be frigging driving a wheelchair* [21]. I laugh again to show my agreement. During the second telling, I laugh at the constructed dialogue that Tawnya's character uses to refute the parent's concerns: "*calm down.* [38], *none of you are in any danger*" [40]. My laughter not only shows my

involvement in Tawnya's narrative, it signals my solidarity with her positioning of the parents as unreasonable.

Beginning with this habitual narrative, Tawnya continues to position herself as an advocate in the on-going conversation. Her mention of a *pet peeve* [42] immediately sparks another two small stories about another pet peeve, able-bodied people staring; Tawnya continues in the next utterance: *oh and staring*. She ends this narrative with a comment to me (unrelated to the characters and events in the second storyworld): *I'll go talk to people \ I'll go talk to you know the board of supervisors*. In this utterance, Tawnya strongly positions herself as an advocate, willing to talk to people in general and to authority figures about her disability. Telling the narrative about parents pulling children away thus begins a story sequence in which Tawnya continues to position herself as an advocate at the levels of the storyworlds and the on-going interaction.

4.3.3 Min's parents are like "don't stare"

Min tells her narrative at her home during her first individual¹² session. Like Derek and Tawnya, Min tells a habitual narrative about children and their parents in the present tense. Min also emphasizes the typicalness of the event by saying she can't give a single example since it happens so frequently. Min's narrative, however, has two immediately noticeable differences from Derek's and Tawnya's. First, Min does not tell the narrative in direct response to the eliciting question. I prompt her toward telling a narrative by asking for an example; she first tells a story about very recent events in which an adult stranger asked about her disability, examined

¹² It should be noted that Min's co-participant, Simone, was in the room for this session. Simone did not interact with us during the recording, but her presence as an overhearer (Bell 1984) may have had an effect on the talk. This was an everyday setting for Min to have a conversation, however; it is usual for Simone to stay with Min throughout her weekend activities

in the Discussion (4.4). Second, Min's story centers on a narrative action in which parents say "don't stare" [14], rather than one in which they pull their children away.

Narrative: *parents are like "don't stare"*

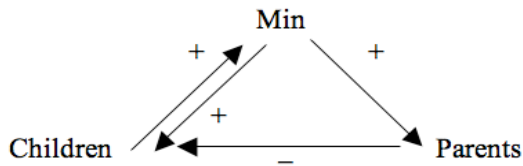
- 1 **Leslie:** Have you ever had- {overlapping, inaudible}
2 Have you ever had anybody like a stranger or a kid just come up and ask you
3 why you use a wheelchair?
4 **Min:** yeah
5 but I don't mind that, I really don't cause I know-
6 I know people are curious and that's fine with me, // but um
7 **Leslie:** so do you have an example of when that happened or?
[Min tells another narrative for 30 seconds]
16 **Min:** Little kids who don't know me //
17 they come up and they ask me
18 and that's fine.
19 I'm okay with it //
20 I really am I mean
21 I really don't have an example of it happening cause it happens ...
22 all the time I mean it's just all the time so it's just
23 little kids- and then parents are like "don't stare" //
24 {d'you- and I-} I'm like "it's okay" {very high pitched}
25 and I- I say hello to the little kids if I see them //
26 if they're staring at me.

Positioning in the storyworld

Min's habitual narrative about the children's actions begins in lines 16-17, breaks off for external evaluation in lines 18-22, and then resumes with the parents' and Min's actions in line 23-24.

Finally, Min tells habitual events that are also hypothetical in lines 25-26. I discuss the positioning through the whole narrative, Min's overall position in the storyworld can be characterized as being an 'ambassador' regarding her disability.

Figure 4.3.3 Positioning in Min's Storyworld



At the level of the storyworld, the children are positioned vis-à-vis Min in a way that is positive yet distant, through deixis, referring expressions, and hypothetical, habitual actions. As in the other narratives, my question creates the first positioning move of the children toward the teller: *anybody like a stranger or a kid just come up and ask you* [1]. However, Min did not immediately respond with the habitual narrative about children; when she does tell it, she reiterates the orientation of the children toward her: *they come up and they ask me* [17]. The repeated deictic phrase *come up* positions the children's character physically in relation to Min's character. Min's external evaluation of the narrative events – *and that's fine* – is positive, although unlike Derek and Tawnya she does not commend the children for their curiosity.

As the teller, Min positions the children's character through referring expressions. Min introduces the children as *little kids who don't know me* [8], characterizing the children's character as both the *kid* and the *stranger* from my eliciting question. The referring expression Min uses highlights their age; *little kids* is repeated throughout the telling [8, 23 (truncated utterance), 25]. The adjective *little* may emphasize that only children of a certain age typically ask Min questions. (However, she does not make a distinction between curiosity from *people* [6] and question from *little kids* [8]; both are *fine* [6, 18].) Furthermore, the first mention of the children's character positions Min as a stranger: *little kids who don't know me* as opposed to *little kids who I don't know*. Although the negation is used in a relative clause attached to the referring expression for the children's character, it actually positions Min's character as the stranger in

relation to them. In this way, Min's character and the children's character are positioned with a figuratively distance between them, despite the physical closeness in the following deictic phrase.

At the end, Min tells a hypothetical, habitual event. The event is hypothetical, since it is followed two instances of *if* [25, 26], but it does not have the comparative function that makes unrealistic events evaluative. Rather, Min uses *if* to introduce the conditions under which a habitual event happens: *I say hello [...] if they're staring at me* [16-17]. In the condition involving the children's actions, they are *staring at* [17] Min's character, but not speaking to her. The children's actions position Min as an object of their curiosity, with a figurative distance between them. Even as the children are positioned as positively oriented toward Min's character in the storyworld, the children's character is also positioned as distant from her. The children's position as askers of questions to, and starers at, someone they do not know places Min the position of being a stranger.

The positioning of Min's character vis-à-vis the children's is also positive; it bridges the distance between them. In response to the children's asking questions, Min breaks off her telling of events to evaluate them externally: *and that's fine. I'm okay with it I really am* [18-20]. The continuer *and*, followed by the falling intonation at the end of the intonation unit, makes the evaluation *and that's fine*. [18] the conclusion of the preceding events *they come and they ask me* [17]. Min is repeating her original response to my elicitation about being asked questions: *that's fine with me* [6]. Min's external evaluation that she is *okay with it* is repeated in her character's constructed dialogue, when she says of the children's actions "*it's okay*" [24]. Throughout the habitual narrative, Min evaluates the children's actions positively.

Min's character actively engages with the children's character in the hypothetical habitual events. Min *say[s] hello to the little kids* [16], positioning her character as positively oriented toward the children. This engagement requires two conditions *if I see them* [25] and *if they're staring at me* [26]. Thus in the hypothetical, habitual storyworld, the positioning moves are mutual: Min sees the children *staring at me* [26] and Min says hello *to the little kids* [25]. The characters are oriented toward each other. However, as discussed, the children's staring also maintains a distance between them and Min. Whereas the children's asking questions and staring has positioned Min as a stranger and an object of curiosity, Min's action in saying 'hello' crosses the distance between the characters. Min is positioned overall as an ambassador regarding her disability both because she is a stranger to the children and because she engages with them.

The parents take up a negative orientation toward their children's actions, as they do in the other tellers' storyworlds, but in Min's storyworld they do not physically reposition their children. Instead the parents' character address the children's character with constructed dialogue: *parents are like "don't stare"* [23]. As the teller, Min changes her intonation slightly to mark that the constructed dialogue is being said in the storyworld. The use of quotative *like* makes this also a statement of the parent's attitude about their children's actions; they are opposed to children's actions. The parents' positioning of Min is not different from the children's positioning of her however. Min has been positioned as a stranger and an object of curiosity in relation to the children's character. The parent's directive opposes the children's expression of curiosity, but it maintains or even increases the distance between Min's character and the children's character. Interestingly, it is the negated action in the directive that introduces the staring. The narrative events have so far included the children coming up to Min and asking her questions, but not staring at her. The parents' constructed dialogue implicitly adds this event to the storyworld, and

then it appears again as a condition of Min's habitual hypothetical action. Although no physical re-positioning is mentioned, the parents' constructed dialogue effectively re-orientates the children away from Min. The parents' positioning vis-à-vis the children is thus negative, and they maintain the positioning of Min as distant and a stranger.

Although the parent's character does not interact with Min's character directly, Min does interact with them. Her response to the parents' constructed dialogue is another constructed dialogue introduced with quotative *like*: *I'm like "it's okay"* [24]. By doing so, Min contradicts the parents' opposition to the children's actions. In that sense, her orientation toward the parents could be seen as negative, since she is disagreeing with them. But her attitude toward the parents and the children, marked with the quotative, is not negative; she is reassuring the parents and is *okay* with interacting with the children. She substantiates this attitude first by addressing the parents directly. Min is using the quotative *like* to mark an actual reported speech as well as an expression of attitude. Her high-pitched performance of the constructed dialogue sets it apart from the rest of the utterance and shows that it is actually said in the storyworld. Following immediately after, Min's hypothetical, habitual action of saying hello to the children further reinforces her accepting attitude. Her character's willingness to verbally bridge the distance between Min and the children and parents contributes to her overall position as an ambassador.

Positioning in the interaction

At the level of the interaction, I position myself as a learner about disability, and Min positions herself as an ambassador, someone who is willing to respond to stranger's curiosity regarding her disability. To a certain extent, this is her position throughout our initial interaction, from her enthusiasm for participating in the study to her frankness in providing details of her personal experiences. At this point in the conversation, I am positioning myself as a "learner" about

disability; I have not mentioned any of my own familiarity with disability practices. As it does in the other research sessions, my position as a learner makes a corresponding position available to Min.

At a point after Min has been telling habitual narratives about going into Washington, D.C., I ask the eliciting question: *Have you ever had anybody like a stranger or a kid just come up and asked you \ why you use a wheelchair?* [2-3]. The indirect constructed dialogue makes my question less narrative-like than it was in other interactions. This difference may be one reason why Min's initial response is non-narrative; she answers the question *yeah* [4]. In my next turn, I prompt Min to speak past her non-narrative response: *so do you have an example of when that happened or?* [7]. Ending with *or* and a rising intonation is the way that I asked several eliciting questions earlier in the interaction. Combined with asking for an *example*, this utterance positions me as a 'learner' or possibly as an 'interviewer' at this point. When Min begins to tell narratives, she is taking on the corresponding position as an 'expert' on her own experiences. Min's immediate reply to my eliciting question is not the habitual narrative or the answer that it happens all the time, although – like Derek and Tawnya – Min responds with both. Her first response, however, is to say that she doesn't *mind*:

- 4 *yeah*
- 5 *but I don't mind that, I really don't cause I know-*
- 6 *I know people are curious and that's fine with me,*

Min interprets my question to include the implication that she will mind being asked. The discourse marker *but* indicates a contrast to the listener's expectations (Schiffrin 1987); together with the negation *but I don't mind* [5], it contradicts any expectation I had that Min objects to being asked questions. Instead Min takes up a position as someone about whom *people are*

curious [6]. This begins the positioning of Min as distanced from others with regard to her disability: people are curious because they do not know about her. Her acknowledgement that she *know[s]* [6] this also implies that the position she takes up is one that is made available because of other's positioning moves. Min expects that people will position her as the object of their curiosity. She expresses willingness to engage with them from this position: *that's fine with me*. Before she tells the narrative, Min has positioned herself as someone about whom others are curious and who is willing to answer their questions. During the narrative, the external evaluation repeats Min's assertion without negation. Whereas her first response was *I don't mind that, I really don't* [5], the paradigmatic repetition during the narrative is *I'm okay with it, I really am* [19-20].¹³ She intensifies her evaluation on each repetition with *really*. Min further demonstrates that she doesn't mind at the level of the storyworld by her character's constructed dialogue to the parents and the narrative event of greeting the children. At the level of the interaction, my positioning as a learner or interviewer makes available a position of expert for Min. The position Min takes up as someone about whom others are expected to be curious, as well as the emphasis she puts on her willingness to engage with them, corresponds to her position in the storyworld as an "ambassador" regarding her disability.

4.4 Discussion

In this section, I discuss how Derek, Tawnya, and Min are "telling disability" through positioning in habitual narratives. First, I examine how the tellers use the positioning moves of third-person characters without disabilities to create their own positions with respect to their

¹³ One attendee at AAAL 2011 commented that Min's repeated assurances that she is fine with questions actually suggest that she is uncomfortable with them. That is a possible interpretation in this narrative. However, the first small story Min tells about answering a stranger's question (discussed below), as well as her willingness to answer my questions and elicit answers from other research participants (discussed in Chapter 3), demonstrate that she is comfortable with questions about her disability in those situations.

disabilities. I argue that the ability of characters – as well as tellers – to position each other, and to refuse positions, within the storyworld is essential to the teller’s identity work. Furthermore, I consider the narratives as examples of disability discourse. I show that even though the tellers’ characters are being positioned as open to talking about their disabilities, these characters do not make direct mention of disability practices. Instead, it is the able-bodied characters who make direct mentions of disability. The few instances when the tellers mention disability are in response to the able-bodied characters. Finally, I discuss how the positions taken up in these narratives relate to higher level identity work – answering the question *who am I?* (Bamberg 1997a).

Positioning using third-person characters

One notable aspect of these narratives is the way in which characters in the storyworld – even characters that are not the teller’s – position each other. In Derek’s narrative, the parents re-position the children from the complementary position the children have taken up as ‘students’ to Derek’s ‘teacher’ about disability. In Tawnya’s narrative, the parents position her character as a ‘danger’ to the children, and Tawnya – as both teller and character – re-positions herself in response. By doing so, she takes up her position as an ‘advocate’. In Min’s narrative, her own character is positioned in relation to the children’s character, rather than the other way around. She positions herself as an ‘ambassador’ in harmony with this positioning as a ‘stranger’. In all the habitual narratives, the positions that the tellers take up in relation to their disabilities rely on positioning work done within the storyworld by third person characters.

In Davies and Harré's (1990) original proposal of positioning theory, the authors use a re-constructed interaction¹⁴ between 'Sano' and 'Enfermada' to illustrate how positioning analysis may be done. Sano and Enfermada are out on a cold day looking for a place to buy medicine for Enfermada. When they fail to find one, Sano says "*I'm sorry to have dragged you all this way when you're not well*" and Enfermada replies "*You didn't drag me, I chose to come*" (italics added). According to the authors, Sano's utterance reflects a "network of obligations" wherein he, as a healthy person, has a responsibility to care for Enfermada, as an ill person. In contrast, Enfermada's utterance reflects a "feminist framework" in which she has agency and it is unacceptable for her to be positioned as relying on Sano's agency. The authors characterize the position Sano takes up as 'nurse' and way he positions Enfermada as 'patient'. Enfermada interprets Sano's positioning as paternalistic, refuses it, and re-positions herself in an agentive way. Using this example, Davies and Harré discuss the positioning moves of positioning self and others, as well as refusing a position and re-positioning. They also illustrate the significance of storylines: "the nurse-patient narrative" that Sano ascribes to versus the paternalistic man and helpless woman storyline that Enfermada perceives.

Davies and Harré (1990) refer to their example as a story, but they do not highlight that, by constructing their own example rather than using data, they have created a storyworld with themselves as the tellers. Considering the example as a (written) narrative of lived experience co-told by the authors, it is possible to see that characters in a storyworld can perform the positioning moves of positioning of self, positioning of others, re-positioning, and refusing positions in the same way that participants in the interaction can. I draw attention to this positioning within the storyworld because of its importance to understanding how identity can be

¹⁴ The article implies that a similar interaction actually took place between the two authors. It was not collected as data, however, and is presented in the article as a fictionalized conversation. Thus it is useful as an illustration of positioning theory rather than as an analysis applying it.

constructed using third person characters. In a sense, the characters are constructing identities through positioning of their selves and each other's selves within the storyworld.

In Davies and Harré's (1990) co-told narrative, both characters are first person. However, positioning moves also occur in narratives featuring third person characters. Third person characters appear in the storyworlds of narratives analyzed by Bamberg (2004a). In the "slut bashing" narrative co-told by adolescent boys Ted and Fred (discussed in Section 4.2.2), the tellers position the third-person character of the girl as a 'slut' in the storyworld. Bamberg argues that the tellers do identity work by positioning the promiscuous girl "as situated in a 'kids' world' and as acting irresponsibly" (2004a: 343). Meanwhile, the tellers position themselves within "their own world of rational, young adults" (2004a: 341). As Bamberg (2004a) points out, the contrast between the positioning of the third person character in the storyworld and the positioning of the tellers in the interaction leads to the identity work. Yet applying his and Georgakopoulou's (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) model of the storyworld as the first level of positioning analysis, it is possible to see further positioning moves: moves that rely not on the positioning of the first-person character or the positioning of the teller with relation to the characters but solely on the positioning of the characters in relation to each other. In the example narratives, tellers do identity work by creating storyworlds in which their third-person characters provide the positioning moves to which the tellers and the tellers' characters respond.

Derek, Tawnya, and Min use the positioning moves of third-person characters without disabilities to create their own positions in relation to their disabilities. As in Davies and Harré's (1990) narrative of Sano and Enfermada, competing storylines lead to re-positioning among the characters; as in Bamberg's (2004a) data, the tellers use third person characters to position their selves. The positioning moves among the characters in the storyworld ultimately supports the

higher-level identity work being done by the teller. Yet in these narratives, the tellers strategically use the positioning moves of the third person characters as an impetus to position their selves.

In Davies and Harré's (1990) example Sano and Enfermada reacted according to different narrative frameworks; in Derek's narrative, the positioning moves made by the parents' character follow a different storyline than the moves made by Derek's character. When they pull the children away, the parents are following a storyline in which they, as parents, are responsible for the good behavior of the children. The parents position their children as being rude rather than being curious; asking questions is doing *something bad* [9]. Derek re-positions the children in his irrealis statement *but they're not asking personal questions* [17]. Furthermore, he re-positions the parents character by taking away their right to be responsible for their children: *if I don't wanna answer em* [the children's questions], *I won't answer em* [14]. Derek, in keeping with his positioning of himself as a teacher, takes responsibility for deciding how to respond to the children's questions. Thus, while the parents' positioning moves are based on a "rude child and responsible parent" storyline, Derek repositions the other characters and resists this storyline. He simultaneously asserts another storyline wherein the actions of the parents in pulling the children away *just breeds ignorance* [11] and the parents *chastise them* [the children] *for what? curiosity?* [23-24], rather than rudeness. In this storyline, Derek positions himself as a teacher who can alleviate ignorance and satisfy the curiosity of the children. The competing storylines of "rude child and responsible parent" versus "curious child and willing teacher" exist in the positioning at the level of the storyworld. As the teller, Derek uses the complexities of positioning moves in the storyworld to highlight his own preferred storyline in contrast to the parents' character's dispreferred one.

In Tawnya's narrative, the position she takes up in the storyworld – and in the interaction – is created in order to refuse the way the parents' character positions her in the storyworld.

Tawnya's character does not take up a strong position vis-à-vis the children's character in either the first or the second telling of the narrative. Instead it is the children who position themselves positively toward Tawnya as 'askers'. Tawnya evaluates their actions positively (*I love it because it shows they're curious* [7]) but does not take up any position as 'answer-er' that may be available. Instead, the parents' character does the positioning of Tawnya's character vis-à-vis the children. Particularly in the constructed dialogue and thoughts and in the irrealis events, the parents position Tawnya's character as a danger to the children. Tawnya takes up her position as 'advocate' in the process of refusing the way the parents' character has positioned hers.

For example, in the irrealis section, Tawnya ridicules the parents' concerns in their constructed thoughts (*They think I'm going to run them over* [12]) by using the hypothetical wheelchair lady headline. As discussed, the *on the news* scenario [14] and generalized *wheelchair lady* referent [15] broaden the point that Tawnya is making to apply to other people who use wheelchairs. By using this particular hypothetical situation to refuse the parents' positioning of her character, Tawnya 'advocates' for the community of wheelchair users in general. She solidifies this position in the storyworld by constructed dialogue/attitude both in the irrealis (*I'd like tell them that* [16]) and in the second telling (*I'm just like .. "calm down.* [38]). Tawnya – as the teller of the narrative – responds to the positioning moves done by the parents' character in the storyworld by advocating for her community. This position carries over to the level of the interaction: in the small stories sparked by this narrative, Tawnya continues to position herself as someone will *go talk to people* – an advocate to others in relation to her disability.

At one point in Tawnya's second telling, the parents' character seems to be doing positioning in relation to storyline of "rude child and responsible parent":

- 33 **Tawnya:** and then the parents pull them away
34 like "god don't ask [that]"
36 you know or
37 "Johnny move out of this lady's way"
38 you know [...]

The parent's constructed dialogue, "*god don't ask that*" [34], admonishes the children for the rudeness of asking questions. Yet Tawnya as the teller chooses to highlight on the parent's positioning of her as a danger throughout the first telling, unrealistic, and second telling. Here, Tawnya immediately shifts the focus from the children asking questions to the children being in *this lady's way* [37]. The parents' second constructed dialogue could also be taken as admonishing the children for rudeness – they are obstructing Tawnya – but Tawnya's own character responds only to the implication of danger (*none of you are in any danger* [40]).

As the teller, Tawnya ultimately has control over what positioning moves she attributes to the third person characters in the storyworld. The story Tawnya chooses to tell is one in which third person characters position her in one way and she refuses that positioning and re-positions herself. As with Derek's storyworld, the third person characters become a resource: Tawnya can position herself in contrast to them and can use their constructed dialogue and thoughts to introduce ideas that neither her character in the storyworld nor even her self in the interaction can voice. The way these ideas play out regarding disability is discussed below.

In Min's narrative, her character is initially positioned in relation to the children's character: *little kids who don't know me* [16]. Min is a stranger to the children, rather than the children

being strangers to her, as was suggested by the referents in my eliciting question (*a stranger or a kid* [2]). Min takes up her overall position only in response to the other characters:

25 **Min:** and I- I say hello to the little kids if I see them //
26 if they're staring at me.

In these habitual-hypothetical narrative clauses, Min character's action as an 'ambassador' – *I say hello* [25] – happens only in response to the children – *if I see them* [25] – and to the children's actions – *if they're staring at me* [26]. Min's positioning of her self in the storyworld is as someone who is a stranger; this position necessarily relies on the presence and positioning of the third person characters. Since the children as third person characters create distance – finding Min to be a stranger and staring rather than approaching – Min as the character is able to display closeness – telling the parents *it's okay* [24] and saying hello to the children. In Min's storyworld, the positioning of the third person characters is necessary for Min to be able to do her own identity work.

In these narratives, the tellers with disabilities use positioning moves of the third person characters in a complex way: the characters engage in positioning not only their own selves but positioning and re-positioning others in the storyworld. This allows positions to be negotiated within the storyworld just as they are within in an interaction--the teller's character positions, re-positions, and refuses positions. The third person characters' positioning moves serve as catalysts for the first person characters' moves. I argue that this enables the tellers to do different and deeper identity work than they would be able to do outside the storyworld or in a story with less dynamic third person characters. The positioning moves -- and competing storylines -- introduced by the third-person characters require the teller's characters to negotiate, and therefore to perform, their own identities. This dynamic positioning between the characters in

the storyworld is significant not only to identity work in personal narratives, such as those presented in this chapter, but also in vicarious narratives, such as those presented in Chapter 5, in which there are only third-person characters.

Disability discourse driven by characters without disabilities

The narratives are analyzable as examples of disability discourse: they can only be understood by being aware of the disability practices of the tellers and tellers' characters. Before each of the habitual narratives is told, the eliciting question I ask explicitly mentions a disability practice, the teller's wheelchair. This mention occurs within constructed dialogue that may then be incorporated into the storyworld of each habitual narrative. In all the habitual narratives, direct mentions of disability are assigned to other character's besides the tellers' character. The tellers do not highlight their own disability practices in these narratives. Nor do the tellers at any time specify the disability status of the other characters. Both as the listener and as the researcher, I assume these characters are able-bodied not only because that is the unmarked category but also because there are no indirect mentions of disability status that suggest otherwise.¹⁵ My question leaves the disability status of the characters open, although it may be that the tellers assume I mean able-bodied strangers because the strangers are asking about disability.

Schiffrin (1996) argues that one advantage of using narrative discourse to construct identities is that narratives allow the teller to create a social structure within the storyworld. Schiffrin also claims that narratives allow tellers to attribute values and beliefs to (third person) characters, particularly through constructed dialogue; her argument is concerned with the way this allows tellers to express their own values and beliefs without taking full responsibility for them. Earlier

¹⁵ In other narratives in the data set, both Tawnya and Min directly mention when characters have disabilities. Derek directly mentions that his *friends* do not have disabilities.

in this section, I showed how the tellers use the third person characters (Derek and Tawnya, especially the parents and Min, especially the children) to drive the positioning moves in the storyworld. The same use of the characters can be seen by looking at the mentions of disability. The first person characters with disabilities do not refer directly to disability in the storyworlds, but the third person characters without disabilities do.

Each of the tellers is responding to a question that I asked that deals with one of their disability practices: using a wheelchair. I chose this practice for my eliciting question not only because all of the participants with disabilities have it in common, but also because this is one disability practice that is instantly visible to strangers. In his work on “spoiled” identity – that is, when an individual’s multiple identities are overshadowed by a single, societally-stigmatized identity such as having a disability – Goffman (1963) distinguishes between discredited and discreditable. Discredited means that a societally-stigmatized identity is readily apparent, while discreditable means that it is not. Using a wheelchair is a disability practice that makes an individual’s identity “discredited”: that aspect of their identity is readily apparent to strangers they encounter. In the storyworld, the disability practice of the tellers’ characters is visible to the other characters.

When I ask the question, I propose a storyworld in which disability practice is part of the third person characters’ dialogue. Thus the narrative events proceed with the tellers’ disabilities being salient in the storyworld and the interaction, and the elicited habitual narratives can be classified as disability discourse. Yet my question is one of few direct mentions of disability practice in each of the interactions. Derek’s response to the question makes the fewest mentions of disability practice:

1 **Leslie:** have you ever had someone

2 like I don't know a stranger or a kid or somebody
3 just come up to you and say like
4 "why are you **using a wheelchair**"
5 **Derek:** yeah. I mean it happens all the time um
6 but one of the things I ca:nnot stand is when parents //

In my question, a character who is a stranger explicitly names Derek's disability practice of *using a wheelchair* [4]. By responding that *it happens all the time* [5], Derek as the teller provisionally accepts the third-person character's constructed dialogue as part of a storyworld. However, he immediately introduces with *but* [6] a new event that eventually becomes parents pulling their kids away; *but* conveys contrast between the two events (Schiffrin 1987). It is understood that Derek's narrative includes being asked the question about disability practice, but Derek himself does not explicitly mention his wheelchair, his disability, or the questions he is asked. In the irrealis events, *they* [the children] *'re not asking personal questions* [17], implying that Derek finds questions about using a wheelchair to be acceptable and not personal. But Derek makes no direct mention of what the children are actually asking in the storyworld.

Furthermore, Derek makes no other direct mention of disability at all except for a verb of motion related to using a wheelchair rather than walking: near the end of his narrative, Derek describes his character *rolling away* [23]. As discussed in the first chapter, although this type of verb makes it clear that the teller's character is using a wheelchair, it is not sufficient to characterize the surrounding discourse as disability discourse. In Derek's narrative, that characterization comes first from the content of the story; it is not possible to understand the characters' interaction without knowing what the children are asking questions about. The verb of motion is the only direct mention Derek makes of his disability practice throughout his narrative.

Indirectly, Derek alludes to the disability practice as what he wants to 'teach' about:

19 **Derek:** but I wanna tell- I wanna tell people uh .. you know **my story**

20 I want to tell people what uh what the: what **the situations** are so.

Derek characterizes the disability practice that the children are asking about as *my story* [19], making it a part of his autobiographical life story. (Derek also mentions his disability experiences as leading to *the great stories* in the excerpt given in Section 1.1.) By broadening from *my story* [19] to *the situations* [20] in these parallel clauses, Derek implies that he is also teaching about disability practice in general. This indirect mention occurs in the context of what Derek wants to teach the third person characters, *people* [19, 20] who are presumably able-bodied like the parents' and children's characters.

Without directly mentioning disability practice, Derek strongly positions himself as a teacher regarding it. Derek's story is understandable as a narrative and as disability discourse without any more direct mentions of disability than my initial question. Derek's lack of disability mentions becomes the point of a narrative co-told with his friend Russell, discussed in Chapter 6. I examine how Derek's disability discourse, when it is direct, focuses on his practice rather than his underlying medical condition; in turn, Russell's discourse reflects this usage.

In Tawnya's narrative, direct mentions of disability practice occur in the storyworld only within the thoughts of the third person characters; she also makes a mention during the irrealis section, in order to refute the parents thoughts. My question introduces a direct disability mention to the storyworld:

2 **Leslie:** have you ever been like you know I don't know out sho:pping

3 or just doing something

4 and like a stranger or a kid or somebody comes up and asks you

5 about you know [**why are you in a wheelchair**] or that kind of thing?

6 **Tawnya:** [definitely] oh kids ask me all the time

Tawnya accepts the storyworld events that I set up, but like Derek she does not repeat my direct mention of disability practice. In the first telling, she says *kids ask me* [6]; in the second, she says *they ask things* [32]. What things the children ask, however, remains unstated.

Direct mentions of disability in Tawnya's narrative occur in the third person character's thoughts and in the irrealis section. Beginning with the parent's thoughts in storyworld, Tawnya connects parents' positioning of her character as dangerous to the parents' erroneous idea that she is both blind and in a wheelchair.

13 **Tawnya:** they think I'm going to **run** them **over** //

14 you know it's like I haven't heard on the news

15 you know "**wheelchair lady runs down** four year old"

16 you know and I'd like tell them that

17 I'm like "Look it's okay I'm not going to **run** them **over** I can **see**:"

The indirect constructed thoughts of the parents use the verb of motion that relates to a wheelchair rather than a walking: *run them over* [13] as opposed to, for example, *step on them*. In order to refute this idea of the third person characters, Tawnya begins the irrealis section in which she repeats verbs: *runs down* [15] and *run them over* [17]. The first repetition occurs in the hypothetical news headline, which is the constructed dialogue of a third person able-bodied character (see discussion above). In the news headline, Tawnya's character is generalized as *wheelchair lady* [15], expanding the hypothetical scenario to include others with this visible disability practice. The second repetition is hypothetical constructed dialogue of Tawnya's own character. She repeats the parents' exact constructed thoughts only in order to negate them. At this point, Tawnya also shifts the danger from being run over by someone using a wheelchair to

being run over by someone who uses a wheelchair and cannot *see* [17]. She continues this interpretation in the final direct mention of disability in the irrealis:

19 **Tawnya**: you know it's like if I had **thick glasses on that were dark**

20 they might be worried

21 but I also wouldn't be frigging **driving a wheelchair**

Again, this direct mention of disability practice occurs within the irrealis section, in a negated clause that refutes the preceding worry of the third person characters (*they might be worried* [20]). While Tawnya makes a few direct mentions of her disability practice in the narrative, they are all either attributed to the third person characters or in negated clauses refuting ideas attributed to the third person characters.

Tawnya also directly mentions a disability practice that is not her own: wearing *thick glasses* [19] as a person who is blind might do. She continues to allude to blindness in the second telling (*I see [...] I see* [39]). Tawnya thus changes the interpretation of the parent's fears and makes the combination of blindness with wheelchair-use the source of any danger to the children. By doing so, she avoids the possibility that wheelchair-use alone can be seen as dangerous – even in irrealis events created specifically to do negative evaluation, even by characters who are being positioned as unreasonable, even by storyworld and irrealis characters who have been shown to be outsiders. The use of a disability practice that is not her own heightens the evaluation of the parents' characters as unreasonable. The parents' character in the storyworld may not actually think Tawnya is blind, but by setting up this interpretation in the irrealis events, Tawnya is able show how ridiculous the parents' fears are.

Tawnya may be indirectly alluding to her experiences relating to disability in the coda of the narrative: *that's my only really pet peeve* [42]. Presumably Tawnya has other pet peeves, but this

one, consisting of the third person characters believing her a danger, seems to be related directly to her experience of disability. Her mention of one pet peeve leads Tawnya to add a second pet peeve, staring. She proceeds to tell a series of two narratives about people staring at her. Neither of them contains any direct mentions of disability practice; however, it can be assumed by the listener that the third person characters are staring because of Tawnya's visible use of a wheelchair.

Min's habitual narrative about little kids does not directly mention disability at all; however, the small story before it – also elicited by my question – does. Like Derek and Tawnya, Min accepts the constructed dialogue I propose:

- 2 **Leslie:** Have you ever had anybody like a stranger or a kid
- 3 just come up and ask you why **you use a wheelchair**?
- 4 **Min:** Yeah.
- 5 But I don't mind **that**, I really don't cause I know-
- 6 I know people are curious and that's fine with me, // but um

Min's *that* [5] refers back to being asked about her disability practice, but omits my direct mention of disability. In the storyworld in which children ask, Min also does not repeat the question; she says *they ask me* [17] without saying what they ask.

In response to a second elicitation, Min tells a small story (omitted in the analysis above) that does mention disability directly:

- 7 **Leslie:** so do you have an example of when that happened or?
- 8 **Min:** I was getting um my house inspected a few weeks ago? //
- 9 For termites.
- 10 And the inspector who came in to look for termites he said
- 11 um "Do you mind me asking about what **type of disability** you have" //
- 12 and I told him and he said oh well I- before this I used to be a firefighter //

13 we used to raise money for **muscular dystrophy**.

14 **Leslie:** okay

15 **Min:** So I mean it's things like that.

In this storyworld, the direct mentions of disability occur only within the dialogue of the third person character (who can be assumed not to have a mobility-related disability due to his occupations and Min's lack of mentioning it). The inspector asks Min's *type of disability* [11] and shows he has some knowledge of Min's medical condition. Yet whereas the inspector's character's constructed dialogue about disability is direct, Min's character's is indirect: *I told him* [12]. As the listener, I only know what Min told the inspector in the storyworld because of the inspector's following direct mention of *muscular dystrophy* [13]. Moreover, this is the first and only mention of Min's medical condition (as opposed to her disability practices) in the conversation. Despite the fact that this is the first time that Min and I met and that the stated purpose of our meeting was for Min to talk about her experience of disability, she did not refer to her disability to me by a diagnostic name. (I had heard through the "friend of a friend" recruitment method that Min had a form of muscular dystrophy, but Min never brought it up by name until I asked over email six months later for participants to label their medical conditions.) In both the storyworlds Min creates in response to my elicitation, direct mentions of disability are made only by third-person characters without disabilities.

The narratives that each participant tells are examples of disability discourse that revolve around a theme of disability practice introduced by my eliciting question and its direct mention of disability. Derek's narrative has no direct mentions of disability, except for one verb of motion. Tawnya's narrative has direct mentions only in the constructed dialogue/thoughts of third person characters and in negated clauses that she uses to refute the erroneous assumptions of third person characters. Min's two narratives have direct mentions of disability only in the constructed

dialogue of third person characters. Just as third person characters drive the positioning moves in the storyworld, so third person characters make the most direct mentions of disability. This pattern is especially noticeable because the third person characters in these narratives do not have disabilities themselves. The characters (and the tellers) who have disabilities do not discuss them directly. In part, this may be because Derek's, Tawnya's, and Min's use of a wheelchair is salient in both the storyworld and the interaction; it does not need to be mentioned. In part, however, this reflects a larger trend in the data in which disability is not explicitly discussed. When it is directly mentioned, the tellers with disabilities usually refer to disability practice (e.g. Derek and Tawnya's use of verbs of motion and Tawnya's reference to her wheelchair and to hypothetical glasses) rather than medical condition (e.g. the inspector's – not Min's – mention of *muscular dystrophy*). The larger point for the teller's identity work is that they use the third person characters both to make positioning moves that the teller's characters can refute and re-position, and to mention disability in ways that contrast with the teller's own usage.

Telling a disability identity through positioning

Positioning moves made at the levels of the interaction and the storyworld lead toward a third level of higher level identity work (Bamberg 1997a; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). Bamberg (1997a) characterizes the third level of positioning as answering the question *who am I?* In other words, how does positioning in the storyworld and the interaction support the ongoing identity work that the tellers are engaged in? At this level, the identities being constructed are “more portable” (De Fina 2013) than the local positions taken up in specific narratives and discourses. The positions taken up by the tellers in the example narratives display an aspect of their disability identities. The research setting and the eliciting question have created a situation in which the tellers are invited to “do disability” through their narratives. I am asking them to

explain – to an able-bodied stranger – how they construct their identity as people with physical disabilities for able-bodied strangers. Thus, the answers to the question *who am I?* in these narratives speak to the tellers' identities as people with disabilities. As both Bamberg (2011a) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue, local positioning at the levels of the storyworld and the interaction gives rise to higher level identities. Thus the positioning within each teller's narrative shapes a particular form of disability identity.

In some ways, the narratives that the participants tell are similar. The tellers relate habitual narratives about themselves, children, and parents and position the triad of characters in comparable ways. The fact that the narrative events are habitual lends weight to the experience; these are not one-time events, but typical, repeated experiences. As Carranza (1998) and Cheshire and Ziebland (2005) show, these habitual narratives provide a basis for tellers to make argumentative points about their experiences. Although three examples are not sufficient to make predictions about disability discourse, the fact that Derek, Tawnya, and Min all tell similar stories is suggestive. First, it shows that children coming up and asking questions happens *all the time* and is a shared experience for the participants with disabilities. Second, it reveals a shared response to the situation: the participants all express their willingness to interact with the children and respond to their curiosity. Derek puts it most strongly when he says he wants to tell people his story and that anything else *breeds ignorance*. This willingness was also expressed outside the recorded data during my recruitment of the participants with disabilities. Third, the narratives show that the parents are behaving in ways the tellers find counterproductive. There are both commonalities in experience and similarities in attitude that may hint at the existence of a master narrative among the tellers with disabilities. But ultimately the disability identities that

the tellers construct are individual ones, formed by the moment-to-moment positionings they take up in stories and interactions.

De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg (2006: 2) describe the social construction of identity as a process that “yields constellations of identities” for each individual. In the same way, positioning is a process that continuously shapes, modifies, and regulates what form an identity takes.

Although the participants tell similar stories, each of them answers Bamberg's (1997a) *who am I?* question differently. In my analysis, I have labeled the positions taken up by Derek, Tawnya, and Min as “teacher”, “advocate”, and “ambassador”, respectively. Derek, as “teacher”, focuses on the children and his desire to tell them about his situation; he reinforces his positioning in the interaction as he makes didactic evaluations of the parents to me. Tawnya, as “advocate”, has greater concern for refuting the misunderstandings that the parents – and able-bodied people in general – have of her as a person using a wheelchair. Her attitude in her personal narrative echoes her professional occupation. Min, as “ambassador”, shows some distance between herself and the able-bodied characters; at the same time, she bridges the gap both by reported speech in the storyworld and by her participation in my research.

Each of the tellers has a strong identity as a person with a disability, as told in their narratives of encounters with able-bodied strangers. In the lived experience of the encounter, in the storyworld recreating it, and in the interaction in which they tell about it, each teller positions their self with a disability. All of the tellers thereby add disability to their unique collection of identities. Their positions -- which are emergent from, dynamic within, and grounded in a particular discourse -- shape what kind of disability identity each teller constructs. As a person with a disability, Derek presents himself as a teacher about his experiences; Tawnya as an advocate for her community; and Min as an ambassador to people without disabilities. In another discourse, other positions

might stand out as part of each teller's disability identity. Although the identity work being done pertains to disability, the differences in positioning moves result in different disability identities among the tellers. To modify De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg's (2006) metaphor, each identity an individual has is actually a constellation of the identities they construct during social interactions. It is not only the individual who is multifaceted, with many identities, but each identity itself that has different aspects in play in different interactions. Derek, Tawnya, and Min each have a constellation for their disability identity, but for each of them the individual arrangement of positions is different. When they told their stories of children asking questions, the most prominent positions were "teacher", "advocate", and "ambassador" respectively. Thus, while all the tellers engage in constructing a disability identity, drawing on common experiences and displaying shared attitudes, the identity constructed by each teller is unique to them. They "tell disability" through positioning themselves in individual ways.

4.5 Summary and implications

This chapter has explored narratives about cross-community interaction between tellers with disabilities and able-bodied strangers and children. The fact that these were habitual narratives highlighted the typicalness of the recounted experiences and pointed to the durability of the positions being taken up. The analysis examined positioning at the levels of the storyworld and the interaction in order to reveal higher-level identity work. At the level of the storyworld, the tellers positioned the characters of their self, the children, and the parents in a triadic relationship; at the level of the interaction, their positioning was done with respect to me, the able-bodied researcher. The analysis showed that the tellers take up similar but distinct positions that can be characterized as "teacher", "advocate", and "ambassador". I argue that the third-person characters without disabilities drive the positioning moves in the story world and the

direct mentions of disability; thus, they are catalysts for the tellers' construction of their identities as people with disabilities. I show that each of the tellers is engaged in identity work that yields a unique disability identity.

The analysis has implications for analyzing the positioning done by third-person characters within the storyworld. It highlights how positioning moves and competing storylines introduced by third-person characters enable the teller's characters to negotiate and perform, their own identities. Thus, dynamic third-person characters can be as significant to the identity work in a narrative as the teller's own character. This observation is especially useful for its potential application to vicarious narratives, in which all the characters are third-person. In the next chapter, I argue that tellers nevertheless can use vicarious narratives to construct personal identities.

The analysis also has implications for the medical model of disability, which still influences societal attitudes toward people with disabilities. The medical model portrays disability as a personal problem of the individual. Limitations on a person's activities arise directly from a unique medical diagnosis. This understanding of disability places responsibility for navigating life with a disability on the individual person, rather than acknowledging society's share in maintaining or avoiding barriers; it isolates each individual's lived experience, rather than recognizing a community of people with disabilities. In contrast, the habitual narratives in this chapter highlight cross-community interactions with able-bodied strangers and children as a part of everyday life. Moreover, the similarities among the narratives point to a common experience of disability that an emphasis on isolated individuals obscures. I have argued that disability identities are particular to the individual, but it is clear that certain experiences of living with a disability are shared among a community.

A third implication of the data set pertains to my commitment to the community as a linguist studying it. All three sets of positions in the data -- teacher, advocate, ambassador -- indicate willingness to engage with people who are curious about disability. In both the storyworlds and in the research sessions with me, Derek, Tawnya, and Min take action to answer the questions that able-bodied people pose. At the same time, they address the (often incorrect) assumptions that able-bodied people make about the experience of living with a disability. Moreover, during my recruitment of the participants with disabilities, it was clear that for them a major goal of any research concerning people with disabilities is to raise awareness of their experiences. As discussed in the first chapter, I make an effort as a researcher to address the goals of the community, that is, what Candlin and Sarangi (2004) call the “motivational relevancies” of the research for the participants. In the conclusion chapter, I discuss further how research on disability discourse can be made relevant to the community of people with disabilities.

Chapter 5: Telling disability in vicarious narratives

5.1 Introduction

In the analysis so far I have examined personal narratives told about encounters between a teller's character who has a disability and third person characters who do not. I have analyzed the narratives in terms of how tellers position themselves and others, characterizing the individual aspects of their disability identities as “teacher,” “advocate,” and “ambassador”. In these narratives, the portrayal of the third-person characters, the kids and the parents, is essential to the teller's own identity construction as individuals with disabilities.

In this chapter, the focus shifts from personal narratives in which the teller's character plays the protagonist's role to vicarious narratives¹⁶ in which a third person character is in the spotlight. I consider the research question of how third person characters in a narrative can help to create and display the teller's first person identity, even in the absence of first person characters. In the background section, I define vicarious narrative as narratives that tell about the lived experience of someone besides the teller. I situate this working definition within a discussion of previous explanations and critiques of this type of narrative. In the analysis, I examine identity construction in vicarious narratives of both witnessed events and secondhand experiences. The analysis of these narratives shows that identity work takes place in narratives beyond the first-person narrative of personal experience. I claim that these narratives are chosen by tellers in order to supplement their repertoire of personal narratives; in other words, vicarious narratives are told when tellers wish to draw on lived experiences in a storyworld that they themselves do not have in the real world.

¹⁶ For convenience at the beginning of this chapter, I use “vicarious narrative” to encompass what others have also termed “third person”, “non-participant”, or “constructed” narratives. At the methodology section, I present a working definition of the term to apply during the analysis.

Chapter 4 used as examples three narratives that were told during the first individual participant sessions in response to the same question. In that chapter, I emphasized similarities between the three tellers' experiences and tellings. This chapter makes use of narratives told by a single speaker about lived experiences (marriage and starting a family) that she herself has not had. For the example narratives here, the unifying factor is that the main teller is not the main protagonist. Cheshire (2000) comments that such "third person" narratives are less likely to occur in research interview settings, in which participants understand that their personal experiences are valued and researchers usually ask about those experiences. Although I deliberately tried to set up circumstances in which vicarious narratives could be told (as mentioned in Chapter 3), there are far fewer of them in the data than there are personal narratives. An additional reason for this may be that the participants with disabilities knew that I chose them in order to learn about their own life experiences, so they told about them. For the same reason, the co-participants told more vicarious narratives about their friend or family member, though many of these were about events they themselves witnessed. In naturally occurring conversation, I suspect that there would be a much higher number of narratives of secondhand experience. While the research participants did tell stories about other people's experiences, the examples in this chapter are not representative of a large portion of the data. The selected narratives do, however, serve to show the richness of vicarious narrative and its use as a site of identity construction.

In this chapter, Section 5.2 begins by examining prior analyses of vicarious narratives. It discusses the long-standing preference in narrative literature for focusing on personal rather than vicarious narratives (Section 5.2.1.1). It also lays out the arguments that have been made concerning identity (Section 5.2.1.2). It then outlines methods of categorizing narratives that include someone else's experiences (Section 5.2.2.1), with the purpose of giving a working

definition of vicarious narratives (Section 5.2.2.2). The analysis section (Section 5.3) argues that they are sites of identity construction. I demonstrate how vicarious narratives can be used to display identities using the examples told by Min: *I'm never getting married* and *she had the child for her* (Section 5.3.1) and *she was like me* (Section 5.3.2). I argue that in this story sequence Min tells about the experiences of friends with disabilities in order to construct her own identity (Section 5.4). The conclusion (Section 5.5) uses the analysis to address the prior findings. This chapter demonstrates the importance of examining vicarious narratives as a site of identity construction.

5.2 Vicarious narrative

It is widely accepted that narratives of personal experience told about the teller's character are sites of identity work (e.g. Schiffrin 1996). I argue that narratives of vicarious experience, told about third-person characters, also accomplish the construction of the teller's individual identity. In the past, when the tools of narrative analysis have been applied to third-person narratives of vicarious experience, studies have found that these narratives lack certain elements of personal narratives, including evaluation and coherence (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Norrick 2000). This deficiency has been accounted for by the claim that someone else's experience can never have the same sensory detail as the teller's personal experience (Sacks 1970/1992, 1984; Chafe 1994). Despite isolated evidence of the effectiveness of vicarious narratives (Macaulay 1987, 1991; Labov 2004), the focus of narrative analysis has remained fixed primarily on first-person narratives of personal experience.

Studies of identity work in narrative have also focused mainly on personal narratives; Norrick (2013) claims that vicarious narratives have no automatic relation to teller's identities. However, some work has been done on the construction of group identities through the use of vicarious

narratives (Linde 1996, 2000, 2001, 2009; Cheshire 2000). Moreover, Bamberg (e.g. 1997b, 2004a) has considered identity work in both personal and vicarious person narratives. He argues that the same methods can be used to analyze identity work in narratives regardless of whether they are first- or third-person narratives. My approach follows Bamberg's claims by analyzing positioning in vicarious narratives.

I begin this section by discussing prior studies of narratives of vicarious experience, both as narratives and as sites of identity work. I use these studies to explore three questions: first, whether vicarious narratives can include evaluation, coherence, and sensory details; second, whether they are sites of identity work; and third, whether they can be examined using the tools of narrative analysis. Having laid out the issues involved in studying narratives that are not about personal experience, I examine how to categorize vicarious narratives in such a way that they can be studied as one type of narrative. To do so, I offer a discussion of how vicarious narratives have been labeled, defined and categorized. The group of narratives that I am calling vicarious always consists of stories in which the teller is not the protagonist. However, accounts vary as to whether these narratives include fictional or lived experience, events told to or witnessed by the teller, and tellings from the character's perspective or from the teller's. I propose a broad working definition that comprises narratives about lived experience in which the central character is not the teller's character. I use the term "vicarious narrative" to suggest that tellers are borrowing the experience of others in place of their own and that they are sharing imaginatively in the events and effects of the narrative. The key aspect of these narratives is that they can be told in the same places and for the same purposes as personal narratives of lived experience. Although there may be fewer vicarious narratives in research settings (where the

teller's own experiences are naturally emphasized), they appear in contexts where the teller wishes to extend their repertoire of storyworlds.

5.2.1 Relevant prior analyses of vicarious narrative

The category of narratives that are not personal -- that excludes those told in the first person about the teller's lived experience -- has been named and defined in a number of ways. Labov and Waletzky (1967), giving as examples two narratives that reported the plots of television shows, called these "narratives of vicarious experience" in contrast to "narratives of personal experience". Norrick (2013) returned to this term. Macaulay (1987, 1991) characterized the category as narratives that were "constructed" from the experiences of others.¹⁷ One narrative in his data, in which a woman told about her mother's experience of her father's death, was re-analyzed by Labov (2004) who kept the term "vicarious narrative". Linde (1996) coined "non-participant narrative" to indicate that the teller had not taken part in the narrative events. Both Cheshire (2000) and Norrick (2000) use the term "third person narrative"; however, Cheshire includes narratives in which the teller was a witness to the events; Norrick (2000) does not include these in "third person narratives", though he (2013) later discusses them as "narratives of vicarious experience". Bamberg (e.g. 1999, 2004a, 2004c) also uses "third person narrative"; in his work, this covers narratives re-told from experimental prompts, fictional sources, and lived experiences. It is apparent that not only do the terms applied to these sorts of narratives differ but so too do the boundaries of what these narratives are.

In this section, I begin by discussing the ways in which vicarious narratives have been characterized in contrast to personal narratives. In particular, I lay out the reasons why vicarious

¹⁷ It could be argued, however, that personal narratives are also "constructed" in the sense that they are not objective, accurate reports on events but subjective, selected tellings (cf. De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) on selection and Tannen's (2007) reasons for using the term "constructed dialogue" instead of "reported speech").

narrative is less studied than personal narrative, including the arguments that have been made as to the relative impoverishment of vicarious narratives. I then turn to the relationship between vicarious narratives and identity, notably the bodies of work by Linde, Cheshire, and Bamberg that view these narratives as a viable site for identity work. Having established some of the theoretical issues that linguists face in studying vicarious narratives, I proceed in the next section to develop a working definition of what a vicarious narrative is.

5.2.1.1 Personal versus vicarious narrative

In many ways, Labov and Waletzky (1967) set the tone for how linguists have approached vicarious narratives. In their foundational work on narrative structure, they dismiss vicarious narratives as lacking the elements that make personal narratives of interest. Labov and Waletzky give two specific examples of these narratives in their set of transcribed narratives. One example (Narrative 11) is told in response to questions from the researcher about television and briefly relates what happened on *The Sandy Becker Show*; another example (Narrative 13) is an excerpt from a story in which the teller relates what happened in an episode of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*. Thus both these narratives re-tell fictional events rather than events that happened to another person. (It is not clear in this article whether narratives about other people's experiences are included in the term "vicarious narrative", but Labov (2004) uses it that way, as discussed below.) Labov and Waletzky use the term "narratives of vicarious experience" to contrast them with the "narratives of personal experience" with which their study is concerned. Furthermore, they note that these narratives "are lacking the evaluation section that is typical of narratives of personal experience" (1967: 29). Because of this lack, the authors argue, "[s]uch a narrative lacks significance: it has no point" (1967: 28). Since a major purpose of Labov and Waletzky's study is to argue for the structure and coherence of oral narratives, their claim that the effect of

vicarious narratives is “confusion and pointlessness” (1967: 29) serves to dismiss these narratives as an object of study.

Later studies also made the connection between telling vicarious events and a lack of evaluation and coherence. In his earlier work on vicarious narratives, Norrick (2000) echoes Labov and Waletzky’s observations. In his work, Norrick (2000) describes “third-person stories” as being “told not from events remembered first-hand but about someone else” and contrasts these to “personal narratives, that is stories in the first person in which the teller is the central actor or affected participant” (149). Norrick gives an example of a third-person story about lived experience and comments that its “inchoate storytelling also lacks evaluation, and leaves a disconnected impression unlike the personal involvement characteristic of first person stories” (2000: 151). He also notes a dearth of sensory details and posits that the teller of the narrative lacks the knowledge to relate the experience fully, since it was not drawn from his own lived experience but someone else’s. In his later work, Norrick (2013) revised some of these observations, as discussed below, while retaining his view that personal and vicarious narratives are fundamentally different.

The concern about tellers having experienced the original events – and thus having the access to sensory details and emotions when they tell about them – is another critique raised with regard to vicarious narratives. Sacks (1984) makes the argument that conversationalists – by extension, the tellers of narratives – have particular rights to tell about their own experiences. This claim is similar to Heritage’s and Raymond’s (Heritage and Raymond 2005; Raymond and Heritage 2006; Heritage 2012) work on epistemic rights, in which the authors propose that certain speakers have the authority to talk about certain topics and this epistemic authority interacts with identity. (Epistemic rights in vicarious narratives are discussed further in Chapter 6, with the

narrative analysis in Section 6.3.2). The telling thus becomes problematic when done by a third party. Labov takes this a step further when he claims that narrative has the capacity to transfer experience from the narrator to the audience: “[t]his capacity is seen to depend upon the unique and defining property of personal narrative that events are experience as they first became known to the narrator” (1997: section 12). In other words, it is only in personal narratives of their own experiences that tellers can transfer those experiences to listeners.

Chafe (1994) notes that in fact speakers most often relate events in which they themselves participated, describing them from their own point of view. He claims that the emotions and evaluations of the protagonist are “directly available only to the consciousness from whose point of view something is being told” (1994: 133), that is, only to the teller. The example he gives is a narrative about two women, told by and from the point of view of one of them. Chafe draws attention to the point that, though he titles this example the “The Two Women” story, the point of view and evaluation are those of only one of the central characters. Judging by Chafe’s argument and example, narratives whose tellers are not the protagonist will be lacking in evaluation, as well as in those sensory details that their consciousness did not experience firsthand.

So far in this section, I have discussed studies that have contrasted vicarious narratives with personal narratives to the disadvantage of the former. The arguments that vicarious narratives lack evaluation, coherence, and sensory detail, and ultimately fail to transfer experiences from teller to listeners, raise the question of whether these narratives should be of interest to linguists studying narrative. Counterarguments for the validity of vicarious narrative are given in psychological studies done by Bamberg. Like Labov and Waletzky (1967), Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) and Bamberg and Reilly (1996) analyze narratives about fictional events; in

this case, the participants told about the events in the picture book *Frog, Where Are You?*. The authors seek to trace the development of expressions of emotional awareness from childhood to adulthood. They were particularly interested in narrative evaluation of “the emotional significance of events for a [third-person] story character” (Bamberg and Reilly 1996: 330; brackets theirs). The findings indicate, first, that evaluation in the Labovian sense does occur in these narratives, and second, that tellers become more adept at incorporating it as they get older. This suggests that a lack of evaluation is not an invariable characteristic of vicarious narratives. Furthermore, drawing on the results of the *Frog, Where Are You?* data, Bamberg (1997b) argues that narratives can be analyzed using the same methods, regardless of whether they are told in the first or the third person. However, the studies of *Frog, Where Are You?* differ from the other work on vicarious narrative reviewed in this section in that they were conducted using methods from psychology as well as from narrative analysis. The experimental setting and use of the picture book as a prompt make it difficult to compare this data to more naturalistic oral narratives.

One possible example of an effective vicarious narrative in the linguistic literature is a narrative analyzed by Macaulay (1987, 1991) and later by Labov (2004). The narrative is told by a woman called Ellen Laidlaw about her mother’s experiences on the day Laidlaw’s father died. It was originally collected by Macaulay while studying the Ayrshire dialect in Scotland; he analyzes it for its examples of quoted direct speech (1987). Although Macaulay does not make a sharp distinction between personal and vicarious narratives in his work, he does consider this an example of a narrative “constructed” from the experience of others. Labov (2004), however, repeatedly refers to the Laidlaw narrative as a “narrative of personal experience”, despite acknowledging that “[t]hough it is a narrative of personal experience, the experience is her

mother's as retold by the daughter" (2004: 2).¹⁸ My own basis for viewing it as a vicarious narrative is that it is a narrative told about events experienced by another person and not witnessed by the teller.¹⁹

In his discussion of the Laidlaw narrative, Labov (2004) revisits his (1997) earlier point that it is a central task of narrative to transfer the narrator's experience to the audience. In this example, however, the lived experience is not the narrator's but her mother's. Labov acknowledges this when he notes that "[i]n this *narrative of vicarious experience*, the animator (Laidlaw) allows us to view the action through the eyes of her mother" (Labov 2004: 8; emphasis mine). This is the only point in the study when Labov refers to Laidlaw's narrative as vicarious. The confusion between what constitutes "personal experience" versus "vicarious experience" in the Laidlaw narrative seems to stem from the fact that Laidlaw's telling of the events that happened to another person is comparable to a telling of narrative events that happened to the teller. Labov does not address this comparability directly. The overall argument that Labov is trying to make with this example deals with the reasons behind including "ordinary" non-reportable events (such as Laidlaw's mother's conversation with a bus conductress) in a narrative. Hence Labov is not concerned here with questions of the levels of evaluation, coherence, or sensory detail present in the narrative. He does, however, equate elements of the Laidlaw narrative with "other effective narratives of personal experience" (2004: 17), in sharp contrast to the dismissal of vicarious narratives by Labov and Waletzky (1967). Furthermore, he finds that Laidlaw's story fulfills the task of narrative to transfer experience to the audience. Thus the way that Labov uses the Laidlaw narrative as an example (going so far as to borrow it from Macaulay's data) suggests

¹⁸ This particular use of the terminology by Labov (2004) seems to imply that Labov and Waletzky's (1967) term "narrative of vicarious experience" means a narrative of non-personal or fictional experience, but that is contradicted by Labov's (2004) one use of the term "narrative of vicarious experience" to refer to the Laidlaw narrative.

¹⁹ The Laidlaw narrative also fits other scholars' criteria (e.g. Norrick 2000) for "third person" narratives as it is told entirely in the third person.

that Labov believes this narrative can be analyzed using the same methods that apply to first-person narratives of personal experience.

Following his earlier work (2000) on “third person narratives”, Norrick re-examines vicarious narratives using Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) term “narratives of vicarious experience.” Norrick is especially interested in how these narratives can be co-told among tellers who know each other well, building on his analysis (1997) of family members co-telling familiar stories. Norrick uses grammatical person to distinguish between personal (first-person) and vicarious (third-person) narratives. In addition, he applies Goffman’s (1981) participant roles to explain how these narratives differ: in personal narratives, the teller has two roles as the animator and as the protagonist, while in vicarious narratives, the teller is the animator but not the protagonist. Norrick argues that having these two participant roles in personal narratives “creates a natural pivot ... [m]emories, thoughts, and feelings flow from the protagonist in the taleworld to the teller in the storyrealm and vice versa” (2013: 388). This observation harkens back to Norrick’s (2000), and Chafe’s (1994), notion that tellers in personal narratives have special access to the experiences and consciousness of the protagonist. Indeed, Norrick (2013) points out that evaluation in vicarious narratives requires additional stance-taking work, since the standpoint of the teller is not inherently clear. In contrast, he states that in a personal narrative, the teller’s sympathies are assumed to be with their own character. He argues that evaluation in vicarious narratives is based on context; for instance, when a narrative is being used to illustrate a larger argument. Norrick (2013) uses the Laidlaw narrative (as borrowed by Labov (2004) from Macaulay (1987)) to show that narratives about family members are a unique case for vicarious narratives: Laidlaw shares in the events her mother tells because of her family relationship to the characters. Norrick argues therefore that vicarious narratives offer insight into epistemic rights

and collaborative telling. Norrick concludes that vicarious narratives, like personal narratives, can be used to make a point, share news, or entertain. However, he argues that, unlike personal narratives, they “have no automatic relation to the teller’s identity” (2013: 404). In other words, personal narratives are a privileged site for identity construction in a way that vicarious narratives are not.

Labov’s (2004) analysis of the Laidlaw narrative and Norrick’s (2013) examination of vicarious narratives both support the idea that narratives about events experienced by someone besides the teller are worth studying with narrative analysis methods. Yet neither Labov’s study, nor the experiments conducted by Bamberg and his colleagues, directly compare the analysis of personal and vicarious narratives in oral data. Norrick’s analysis does so, but he concludes that personal and vicarious narratives have fundamental differences; in particular, he claims that personal narratives have a natural relation to the identity of the teller that narratives about someone else’s experiences lack. In this chapter, I argue that vicarious narratives can be studied using the methods developed to analyze personal narratives. Moreover, I provide examples of vicarious narratives functioning as sites of identity work with the same effectiveness as personal narratives.

In the next section, I consider studies that have examined identity work in the context of vicarious narratives. In addition, the contrast between Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) conclusions about Narratives 11 and 13 – re-telling fictional events – and Labov’s (2004) findings about the Laidlaw narrative – re-telling a personal experience – suggest that the kinds of narratives that are included within the definition of vicarious narratives must be carefully considered before drawing conclusions about their effectiveness. In section 5.2.2, I lay out the ways in which such narratives have been categorized in order to build a working definition of vicarious narrative.

5.2.1.2 Vicarious narrative and identity

The construction of identity by means of vicarious narrative does not receive much attention in the literature on narrative analysis. As discussed below, Bamberg, Georgakopoulou, and colleagues, working within the fields of psychology and narrative analysis, have examined individual identity in both first- and third-person narratives. Aside from this work, I am not aware of other linguistic studies that analyze how tellers construct their individual identities in narratives about someone else. However, Linde (1996, 2000, 2001, 2009) and Cheshire (2000), working within the realm of sociolinguistics, have examined group identity in vicarious narratives. The study of identity in vicarious narratives affirms their status as narratives and as sites of identity work alongside personal narratives. The past analyses discussed below establish that vicarious narratives can be studied in this way. The results provide insights into the identity work done by tellers.

Bamberg (e.g. 1997b, 2004a, 2004b) has argued for “third person narrative” as a site of identity work, as have scholars working with him (Bamberg and Damrad-Frye 1991; Bamberg and Reilly 1996; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). Bamberg demonstrates through analyses of positioning that identity work can be done in third person narratives. In a study of male identity construction in adolescent boys, for example, Bamberg (2004a) analyzes a third person narrative told by one of the boys about a promiscuous girl at school. While the teller has firsthand knowledge of the narrative events, the girl is the central character of the story: the events happen to her and no other characters have large or agentive roles. However, despite the fact that the teller is relating someone else’s experiences, he narrates the motivation, emotion, and evaluation from her perspective. The teller offers his own evaluation of the girl only when prompted to do so by the researcher. This narrative provides an example of a third person narrative with rich

evaluation from the character's viewpoint. Moreover, Bamberg's analysis reveals that the narrative displays the teller's identity work as a young male. Bamberg thus puts into practice his argument that the same methods of analysis can be used for third person narrative as are applied to first person narratives. Bamberg's method of analyzing identity is to analyze the three levels of positioning he proposes (see Bamberg 1997a), including those between the characters in the story and between the participants in the interaction. He argues that positioning at these levels reveals identity, regardless of whether the teller also makes themselves a character in the story.

My characterization of vicarious narrative differs from Bamberg's of third person narrative: I define vicarious narratives as those that tell about someone else's lived experience. Bamberg's work defines third person narrative solely with respect to grammatical person; he does not consider fictional or lived experience to be a differentiating factor. His work on the *Frog Where Are You?* data, for example, includes stories (re-)told about fictional events in a picture book.

The important point for Bamberg – coming from a psychological perspective – is how the tellers construct and connect emotions and motivations. In Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2008) analysis of adolescent boys' stories of lived experience, they demonstrate how a male identity is constructed in a small story without commenting on its potential to be understood as a third-person narrative. Although Bamberg has consistently maintained that third person narrative is as much a site of identity work as first person narrative, he has not been concerned with defining the linguistic category of third person narrative. Thus I propose a definition of vicarious narrative as telling about someone else's lived experience, which applies to some of the data which Bamberg and colleagues have successfully analyzed for individual identity construction. My goal is to demonstrate that this kind of identity construction occurs specifically in the vicarious narratives previously dismissed by linguists who study oral narrative.

While Bamberg, Georgakopoulou, and their colleagues have studied the construction of individual identities, other scholars have analyzed group identity in narratives told about third person characters. The construction of group identity has been examined in “non-participant narratives” (Linde 1996), which are re-told about events not witnessed by the teller, and “third person narratives” (Cheshire 2000), which are told about characters other than the teller. In both cases, these narratives not only function as effective tools for doing identity work, but serve to complement the use of personal narratives as tools.

Linde (1996, 2000, 2001, 2009) argues that “non-participant narratives” figure in the construction of group identity. The narratives she analyzes are taken from the institutional discourse of a large insurance company. Linde (2000, 2001, 2009) is particularly interested in the way that the story of the company’s founder, “Mr. McBee”, is used to create a company culture and to socialize new employees. She (2000) also examines how the stories of certain individuals become part of the “paradigmatic narrative” of a successful professional life within the company. Most significantly, Linde’s findings show uses for non-participant narratives that cannot be duplicated by personal narratives. Telling about the founder of the company not only communicates the values of the company, but also serves as a marker of group membership in a way that personal narratives do not. By comparing their attitudes and actions to the founder’s, employees use non-participant narratives to do identity work. In a similar way, the paradigmatic narratives provide “a representation of the ideal life course” (2000: 621) that may not be duplicated in the teller’s own lived experience. Thus, these non-participant narratives, both the founder’s story and the paradigmatic narratives, offer resources for expressing a group identity that a personal narrative does not.

Following Linde's work, Cheshire (2000) demonstrates how adolescent girls and boys²⁰ use narratives to ratify their membership in single-sex friendship groups. Cheshire, however, expands the definition of what she terms a "third person narrative" to include narratives about vicarious experiences for which the teller was present. In most cases, the boys took the subjectivity, or point of view, of the third person protagonist, often a tough, male family member. Girls kept the point of view of an observer but took up affective stances toward their third person narratives in the same way they did toward their first person narratives. Cheshire argues that both the girls and the boys claim group membership through these ways of telling; the boys by taking the viewpoint of tough males and the girls by expressing group values in their stance.

The experimental studies done by Bamberg and his colleagues suggest that tellers make use of evaluation in stories told about other people. Additional analyses by Bamberg use positioning to investigate individual identity work in both personal and vicarious narratives. Linde's and Cheshire's work shows that group identity can be constructed in vicarious narratives in ways that are not available through telling personal narratives (Linde 1996) and that show patterns according to social groups (Cheshire 2000). The findings of these studies of identity work indicate that vicarious narratives can be a productive subject for research. They do not aim, however, to refute the specific critiques of these narratives put forth by other linguists, nor to analyze individual identity from a solely linguistic perspective. In this chapter, my focus is on defining and describing vicarious narratives themselves, rather than on utilizing them to uncover a specific identity. I demonstrate by means of disability narratives that the same sort of

²⁰ Cheshire's (2000) data was taken from her small-n study of working-class children in Reading, England in the late 1970s.

individual identity work accomplished through personal narratives in the previous chapter is accomplished in this chapter through vicarious narrative.

5.2.2 Current methodology

In the first half of the section (Section 5.2.1), I have traced prior research regarding narratives about someone else's experiences. While some studies have put forth examples of vicarious narratives lacking in evaluation, coherence, or sensory details, other studies have shown that such narratives are sites of identity work that can be examined using the tools developed to analyze personal narratives. Having introduced both the research that dismisses vicarious narrative and the research that includes or foregrounds it, I aim to operationalize the concept of vicarious narrative. In the following section (5.2.2.1), I propose a heuristic adapted from Linde (1996) to categorize narratives. Using this system, I characterize the kinds of vicarious narratives discussed in the literature according to their grammatical person, point of view, and story source. I discuss the ways in which these three categories influence how vicarious narratives are defined and analyzed. As in Labov's (2004) discussion of the Laidlaw narrative, the question of whether a story is a personal narrative or a vicarious one may be open to interpretation. In the next section (5.2.2.2), my purpose is to provide a working definition of vicarious narrative that draws on the existing literature and allows for further analyses. I use the term "vicarious narrative" not in the general sense of any narrative that is not termed "personal", but rather as a term for a narrative in which the teller relates the events of someone else's lived experience. In the last section, I discuss reasons for telling vicarious narratives and the domains within which these narratives are found in the data. I argue that tellers use vicarious narratives to add to their repertoire of available storyworlds; the example narratives in this chapter show how one speaker,

Min, expands her repertoire of narratives about marriage and starting a family and about moving away from home.

5.2.2.1 Categorizing vicarious narrative

In reviewing the literature, it is apparent that not only do the terms used for vicarious narratives vary, but so too do the definitions of what this category comprises. The terminology includes “narrative of vicarious experience” (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Norrick 2013), “non-participant narrative” (e.g. Linde 1996), and “third person narrative” (Norrick 2000; Cheshire 2000, e.g. Bamberg 1997b). The data that have been analyzed run the gamut from Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) recountings of television shows – fictional events for which the teller could not be present – to Cheshire’s (2000) tellings of shared stories – lived experiences which the teller observed. In this section, I characterize the data given for each scholar’s term using a modified version of Linde’s (1996) system for categorizing a narrative.

Linde (1996) proposes that grammatical person, point of view, and “participation relation” are among the ways a narrative can be categorized, noting that discourse analysts most often categorize narratives by the grammatical person of the protagonist. Her concept of “participation relation” captures whether or not the teller was a participant in the events and thus has first-hand knowledge of them.²¹ According to Linde, the teller in a third person narrative may or may not

²¹ Linde may be referencing Goffman’s (1981) “participant relations”. The relationship between the teller of a vicarious narrative, previous teller(s) of the narrative events, and the person who experienced the events can be described in these terms. Goffman distinguishes between the “principal” who originates a belief, the “author” who composes the words to express it, and the “animator” who actually utters those words. In the case of a vicarious narrative, the “principal” can be seen as the person who experienced the events; this person could also be an “author” who tells about them. The “animator” or teller of a vicarious narrative is different from the principal who experienced them; this person is also an “author” unless they tell a story they have heard using a previous teller’s words. Thus, the animator (teller) of a vicarious narrative is not the principal, or even necessarily the author, of the narrative events they re-tell. In contrast, the animator (teller) of a narrative of personal experience is also both the principal and the author, even when the narrative is re-told on multiple occasions. Therefore the distinction between a personal narrative and a vicarious narrative, in terms of participant relations is whether the principal and the animator are the same person or not.

be a witness to the events. This category is closely related to evidentiality as it inquires how the teller knows about the story's events. In the table below, however, I have expanded the category to include not only whether the teller witnessed the story's events but whether anyone could have witnessed the events, that is, whether the narrative is fictional. The "story source" category covers events that are the teller's lived experience, someone else's lived experience, or fictional events.

In the table below, I categorize vicarious narratives according to grammatical person of the protagonist, point of view, and story source. Not all the studies I have examined make explicit use of these or similar categories to characterize the narratives in their data. For studies that do mention them, I have used the authors' own categorization of their narratives. For studies that do not, I have considered the example narratives and categorized them myself (indicated in italics below). Note that these judgments may differ from the authors' larger intentions for their terms since I have access only to the examples given.

Table 5.2.2.1 Terms and definitions used for vicarious narratives

Narrative term	Grammatical person	Point of view	Story source
narrative of vicarious experience (Labov & Waletzky 1967)	<i>third</i>	<i>character</i>	fictional (non-participant)
non-participant narrative (Linde 1996, 2000, 2001, 2009)	third, first plural	character ²² , teller	experienced & non-participant
third person narrative (Cheshire 2000)	third	character, teller	experienced & non-participant; experienced & participant
third person narrative (Norrick 2000)	third	<i>character</i>	experienced & non-participant
vicarious narrative ²³ (Labov 2004)	third	<i>character</i>	experienced & non-participant
third person narrative (Bamberg & Damrad-Frye 1991, & Reilly 1996, 1997b, 2004a, & Georgakopoulou 2008)	third, <i>first singular</i>	teller (1997b), character (1991, 1996, 2004a, 2008)	fictional (1991, 1996, 1997b), <i>experienced & non-participant</i> ²⁴ (2004a, 2008)
narratives of vicarious experience, vicarious-experience stories (Norrick 2013)	third	<i>character</i>	experienced & non-participant, <i>experienced & non-participant</i> , fictional

The first category for characterizing the narratives, and the one most often explicitly discussed in the literature, is grammatical person. The most easily identifiable grammatical person for

²² Linde (1996) specifically makes the argument that tellers use the point of view of the character when they wish to assert their membership in a group the character belongs to. Cheshire (2000), below, cites this observation.

²³ Labov seems to use the terms “narrative of vicarious experience” and “vicarious narrative” interchangeably in his work, but the former appears more often in Labov and Waletzky (1967), while the latter appears in Labov (2004). I use the different terms – as well as two separate rows on the table – to highlight the point that Labov’s later work is less dismissive of this sort of narrative than his and Waletzky’s account.

²⁴ The story source for the narrative *It wasn’t me, hey, I’m Shaggy* (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) is complicated by the ambiguity of who actually experienced the events (cf. the authors’ discussion); ultimately, however, the teller did not experience the events.

vicarious narratives is the third person, as it is unlikely to be used exclusively in personal narrative (Norrick 2000, 2013). As the table shows, however, Linde (1996) found that non-participant narratives can be told in the first person plural in such a way that it is clear that the teller did not participate in the actual narrative events. It may also be the case that when the teller is a witness to the narrative events, as in Cheshire's (2000) third person narratives, the first person singular is used to a limited extent. Finally, some narratives include evaluation in the first person, as in Bamberg's (e.g. 2004a) data, even though they are told mainly in the third person. Therefore, although use of the third person provides strong evidence to categorize a narrative as vicarious, I do not use grammatical person as a criterion for my own definition.

The second category for characterizing the narratives is point of view. Linde defines point of view as "whose interests, knowledge, and evaluations shape the narrative" (1996: 333). Chafe (1994) provides more specific evidence for determining the referent from whose point of view a story is told: first, the frequency with which a referent is activated; second, its association with the subject position or "starting point function" (133); third, references to the referent's emotions and evaluations; and fourth, status of the referent as a center for spatial deixis. Drawing on these, I assigned a point of view to the examples given in studies that did not explicitly discuss the point of view of vicarious narratives, although I did not apply to Chafe's criteria to studies where the point of view was already stated. Chafe goes on, however, to argue that the point of view of a story is not always that of the central character or characters that the story is about. Genette (1980, 1988) poses a similar issue when he makes a distinction between the voice of the narrator and the focus of "perception" or point of view²⁵. Moreover, both Linde (1996) and Cheshire (2000) find that variation in the point of view of third person narratives not only exists, but is

²⁵ However in replacing "point of view" with "perception", Genette (1980, 1988) goes further: while the narrator is always a person, he claims, the focus of perception is not always a character.

significant for identity work. In narratives about groups the teller would like to belong to, they both note, the teller will recount the central characters' point of view even when the teller was not a witness to the events. In other narratives, however, identity work may be done by retaining the teller's own point of view and reacting to the narrative events from this perspective. Thus point of view is a significant category for vicarious narratives, but taking a particular point of view does not define whether or not a narrative is vicarious.

The third category is the source material for the story. To Linde's (1996) original "participant relations category", which considered whether the teller had lived the events, I have added the element of whether the events were lived experience or fictional. This category for characterizing narratives varies widely in the literature, to the extent that the data in some studies does not seem comparable to that found in certain others. The two questions posed by this category are whether to include events witnessed by the teller and whether to include fictional events. I follow Cheshire's (2000) third person narratives, rather than Linde's non-participant narratives, by including narratives about events witnessed by the teller. Cheshire found that the girls in her study especially told these "stories about events at which tellers were present, even though they were not themselves the principal protagonists" (2000: 253). In some cases, these narratives are ambiguous; although it is clear that the protagonist is not the teller, it is not possible to tell whether the teller witnessed the events. As Cheshire shows, however, both participant and non-participant narratives about third person protagonists serve a similar purpose. Although narratives of witnessed events are distinct, including them in the category of vicarious narrative encompasses all narratives that are about the experiences of others and that would otherwise be excluded from the categories of both personal and vicarious narrative.

Nevertheless, I exclude narratives that are told about fictional events. Labov and Waletzky's (1967) critique that vicarious narratives are incoherent in structure seems to hold good for re-tellings of fictional events outside an experimental setting, such as their examples about television shows. I propose that, especially for the linguistic study of narrative and identity, oral narratives about lived experience will prove to be productive sites of identity work. This is not to say that fiction – or even re-tellings of fiction – cannot also produce identity work. Rather, I propose that the difference between telling lived experience and telling fictional events is wide enough to merit separate analysis. Fictional narratives, whether they are invented by the teller or (as in the examples on the table above) re-told by another animator, are not included in my definition of vicarious narrative.

5.2.2.2 Towards a working definition of vicarious narrative

I use the term “vicarious narrative”, first introduced in Labov and Waletzky (1967), for several reasons. First, as in its original context, “vicarious narrative” directly contrasts with the term “personal narrative”. A “vicarious narrative” is, roughly speaking, a narrative that is not the widely-studied first-person narrative of personal experience. The term instead is able to encompass a number of narratives that have been dismissed as not having the elements that make personal narratives worth studying. Second, the alternative terms take their names from a single defining category: “third person narrative” and “third person story” from grammatical person and “non-participant narrative” from one aspect of the story's source. The term “vicarious narrative” allows for a less restrictive definition; for instance, it can include narratives that are told in the first person plural (as some of Linde's (2000, 2001) non-participant narratives are) or that are told about events witnessed by the teller (as some of Cheshire's (2000) and Bamberg's (2004a) third person narratives do). Third, the word “vicarious” itself suggests the way in which I

characterize this kind of narrative. Among the definitions of “vicarious”, the Oxford English Dictionary gives both “performed or achieved by means of another, or by one person, etc., on behalf of another” (2012: definition 4a) and “experienced imaginatively through another person” (2012: definition 4d). By “vicarious narrative”, I want to convey: first, the sense of the lived experience being performed by someone else before being used on behalf of the teller; second, the sense of the teller living those experiences imaginatively so that they become a part of the teller’s own narrative repertoire.

My essential criterion for vicarious narratives is the one on which the literature mainly agrees: the narrative must be about the lived experience of someone who is not the teller. This characterization is a mirror image of Norrick’s definition of personal narratives as “stories in the first person in which the teller is the central actor or affected participant” (2000: 149). In vicarious narratives, the teller is not the central actor or affected participant (cf. Linde 1996 and elsewhere; Cheshire 2000; Norrick 2000; Labov 2004). Yet vicarious narratives tells the same sort of lived events that would appear in a personal narrative. My characterization of vicarious narrative thus encompasses the narratives in almost all of the studies reviewed above, excepting only those with fictional sources in the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967) and of Bamberg and his colleagues (Bamberg and Damrad-Frye 1991; Bamberg and Reilly 1996; Bamberg 1997b).

In this chapter, I connect my characterization of vicarious narrative (telling about the lived experience of someone else) with their use as a site for individual identity construction. In doing so, I seek both to address the critiques of linguists such as Labov, Chafe, and Norrick and to provide a necessary complement to the work of linguists such as Bamberg, Linde, and Cheshire.

5.2.2.3 Choosing to tell vicarious narratives

In this chapter, I claim that tellers create storyworlds about other people's lived experience in vicarious narratives in order to construct their own personal identities. Tellers use vicarious narratives to expand their narrative repertoire to include situations outside their own lived experience. Borrowing and sharing imaginatively in those situations permits tellers to construct varied storyworlds. Schiffrin (1996) shows that telling a narrative creates a storyworld and thus an opportunity to set up a social order and position characters within it. She proposes this as a reason why tellers choose to tell personal narratives about their own experiences, and argues that storyworlds are what make personal narratives a unique site of identity construction. I argue that vicarious narratives, too, can be used to construct and display identities. I suggest that one reason why tellers would choose to tell a vicarious narrative is to expand their repertoire of storyworlds to include lived experiences they themselves have not had.

Cheshire (2000) points out that third person (vicarious) narratives are rare within sociolinguistic interview data. In part, this is because participants are aware that researchers are interested in the participants' own lived experiences – that is the reason they were chosen for a study.

Researcher's questions are often aimed at eliciting such personal information and narratives. I propose that one instance in which participants do tell vicarious narratives within interview-style data is when the tellers want to go beyond the scope of their own experiences.

In my study, I attempted to set up situations where vicarious narratives could be told and to elicit them indirectly; even so, vicarious narratives are limited within the data set. They occurred, by design, in contexts where the co-participants without disabilities were talking about the participants with disabilities. In order to tell about disability, the co-participants needed to draw on others' lived experiences. An example of this is the second vicarious narrative analyzed in

Chapter 6, which was told by an able-bodied teller about people with disabilities. Vicarious narratives also appeared spontaneously, however, in other contexts where tellers are discussing other kinds of experiences they do not have themselves. In these cases, a vicarious narrative is a resource for the teller to create a storyworld about (someone else's) lived experience.

In this chapter, I analyze three narratives told by the same participant with a disability, Min. Min uses vicarious narratives to expand her repertoire of storyworlds about marriage and starting a family and about moving away from home. She has not had either of these experiences herself, and so tells stories about the experiences of other women with physical disabilities. I begin by analyzing a personal narrative (*I'm never getting married*) and a vicarious narrative (*she had the child for her*) that were told consecutively within the same story sequence, in order to demonstrate how Min does consistent identity work across these two types of narrative. I go on to analyze a second vicarious narrative (*she was like me*) about moving away from home. In both the vicarious narratives, Min draws on someone else's lived experience in order to expand her repertoire of storyworlds. Because the third person characters in these storyworlds are people with disabilities, Min is able to borrow and to share imaginatively in their experiences. She uses vicarious narratives in the same way as personal narratives to construct her identity as a person with a disability. This chapter lays the groundwork for the portion of chapter six in which I discuss how telling a vicarious narrative allows one of the able-bodied co-participants to construct his own "shared" disability identity.

5.3 Constructing a personal disability identity in vicarious narratives

By defining and categorizing vicarious narratives, I have laid the groundwork for examining them. In this section, I demonstrate how vicarious narratives about someone else's experience can be used to construct the teller's own identity. I begin by examining a story sequence told by

Min about relationships and marriage (Section 5.3.1). In these two narratives, Min contrasts her attitudes and decisions with those of the third-person characters in the story world. Next, I go on to analyze a narrative in which Min compares herself to the third-person protagonist: *she was like me* (Section 5.3.2). In this narrative, Min tells about and evaluates the experiences of another friend with a disability.

Min told the narratives *I'm never getting married, she had the child for her*, and *she was like me* during our first individual session. The conversation took place in Min's bedroom, with her friend and able-bodied co-participant Simone present. Simone did not interact with us during the recording, but her presence as an overhearer may have had a limited effect on the talk (Bell 1984). This was an everyday context for Min to have a conversation: it is usual for Simone to stay with Min throughout her weekend activities. The story sequence of *I'm never getting married* and *she had the child for her* was continuous. The next narrative, *she was like me*, was told three minutes later.

5.3.1 Navigating coherence and uniqueness in Min's story sequence on marriage

In this section, I analyze a story sequence in which Min tells a habitual personal narrative, *I'm never getting married* (Section 5.3.1.1), as a prelude to a vicarious narrative, *she had the child for her* (Section 5.3.1.2). The entire sequence centers on Min's attitude toward marriage and starting a family, which she displays as an aspect of her disability identity. In the conversation, this story sequence followed about five minutes of talk about relationships and marriage. While I contributed only backchanneling, Min discussed her own dating history, Tawnya's and Jason's attitudes toward relationships, and marriages within her family. The story sequence, then, is part of a longer segment of conversation in which Min does identity work.

Sacks (1970/1992) observes that stories often spark a sequence of related “second stories”. In these examples, Min uses a habitual personal narrative to set up an aspect of her identity that she then expands upon in a vicarious narrative. The personal narrative establishes that Min has held an attitude of not caring about marriage since she was a child. In order to create a story world in which someone is married, however, Min has to borrow someone else’s experience since she herself has not been married. Accordingly, she immediately follows the personal narrative with a vicarious narrative, in which another person with a disability is married and starts a family. The story sequence allows Min to navigate her identity in Bamberg’s (2011a) dilemmatic spaces of both coherence of a self over time and uniqueness of a self among others.

Furthermore, the vicarious narrative has an argumentative function. Van Dijk, describing certain narratives told about ethnic groups, points out that “such stories usually have an argumentative or persuasive point rather than an entertaining function” (1993: 126). Carranza (1998), De Fina (2003), and Bülow (2004) agree that narratives can be used to support controversial claims or experiences. Bülow, for example, shows how narratives are used to justify tellers’ contested experiences of chronic fatigue syndrome. Van Dijk argues that in such stories “the events told about are [suggested to be] a reliable source of knowledge, because they represent a lived, personal experience” (ibid.). Thus, in the absence of her own lived experience to represent in the storyworld, Min borrows someone else’s experience vicariously and uses it to support her conclusion that she does not care to get married personally.

5.3.1.1 Personal narrative: Min’s *I’m never getting married*

The first narrative in Min’s story sequence about marriage, *I’m never getting married*, is a personal narrative because the source of the story is Min’s own lived experience. It is told in the first person from the point of view of the teller and the teller’s character. The story is a habitual

narrative, but the orientation and the direct and indirect constructed dialogue ground the narrative events. This personal narrative then leads into the vicarious narrative.

Narrative: *I'm never getting married*

- 1 **Min:** When I was growing up
- 2 I had .. three: .. besties²⁶ //
- 3 we - is - not Tawnya but it was like my friends Katrina and Tara //
- 4 we spent the night at each other's hou:ses
- 5 and this is like when we were kindergarten first grade
- 6 **Leslie:** [Right.]
- 7 **Min:** [to] whatever.
- 8 a:nd we used to talk about ...
- 9 who we were going to marry //
- 10 and my friend Katrina said
- 11 and- oh we were all disabled //
- 12 and Katrina said she was going to marry Jack Wagner
- 13 and he's from General Hospital
- 14 um Tara used to say she was going to find a prince and marry him /@@/
- 15 **Min:** and even in kindergarten first grade
- 16 I always said "I'm never getting married //
- 17 I don't want to get married
- 18 I don't want to .. you know deal with that"
- 19 my .. my mom didn't pass away until I was in high school //
- 20 but even in elementary school I just was like
- 21 I'm not worried about it
- 22 I don't // you know
- 23 I want to kiss a lot o-
- 24 I remember I wanted to kiss a lot of boys /@/
- 25 **Min:** but I just didn't want to commit to it you know
- 26 **Leslie:** Yeah.

²⁶ In current slang, *besties* has the meaning of "best friends".

In the narrative, Min navigates her identity in two of Bamberg's (2011a) dilemmatic spaces: the space of the sameness of self over time, and the space of uniqueness in contrast to others (see Chapter 2 for further discussion of Bamberg's work). Min presents a coherent self (Linde 1993; Bamberg 2011a) in her attitude toward marriage. She uses orientation, constructed dialogue, and verb tense and aspect to display this attitude over time. The narrative begins with an orientation clause, *When I was growing up* [1]; the progressive aspect indicates that the events in the narrative happened continuously over the course of Min's childhood. A subsequent orientation clause is inserted between the habitual events of the sleepovers: *and this is like when we were kindergarten first grade / to whatever* [5, 7]. This orientation to the friends' exact age is repeated later just before Min's character states that she's *never getting married: and even in kindergarten first grade* [15]. The repetition of the orientation draws attention to Min's young age when she made her decision. The placement of this orientation between event clauses, rather than at the beginning of the narrative, reinforces the earlier point in time. In lines 19 to 20, *my mom didn't pass away until I was in high school / but even in elementary school*, the preposition *until* and the repeated (from line 15) intensifier *even* show the length of time that Min has held to this view. Both the orientation to an earlier time and the emphasis on the length of time show the coherence of Min's self over time (Linde 1993). The orientation then introduces the constructed dialogue in lines 20-21: *I was just like I'm not worried about it*. The quotative *like* may be taken here as introducing direct speech or as indicating attitude (Cochrane 2006). The quotative also helps to create involvement in the narrative action. In line 23, Min does shift to the historical present when she says *I want to kiss a lot o-* (though she corrects in line 24 to *I remember I wanted to kiss a lot of boys*). The historical present is another device that draws the listener into the narrative action (Schiffrin 1981). By having her own character express an unworried attitude,

Min portrays her past self as interested in boys but not in marriage. By slipping into the present tense, Min connects her past view on marriage to her present self. The fact that this is a habitual narrative further emphasizes the coherence of Min's attitude in the storyworld: the events are typical and repeated over time. Min navigates her identity in Bamberg's (2011a) first dilemmatic space – the sameness of a self over time – as consistently uninterested in marriage.

This identity construction also takes place in Bamberg's second dilemmatic space: the uniqueness of a person as compared to others. Although *I'm never getting married* is told in the first person from the teller's point of view, it makes use of third person characters to set up a contrast with the teller's character. Central to the complicating action are the instances of constructed dialogue in which Katrina, Tara, and Min talk about their future marriage plans. Min as the teller uses both the content of and the type of the constructed dialogue to underscore how Min's character's plan contrasts with her friends'. The content states that while Katrina *was going to marry Jack Wagner* [12] and Tara *was going to find a prince and marry him* [14], Min *was never getting married* [16]. The type of constructed dialogue reinforces the contrast. Katrina's and Tara's constructed dialogue is indirect speech: Katrina *said she was* [12]; Tara *used to say she was* [14]. Min's, however, is direct speech, *I always said* [16], with the teller's voice quality animating the character's dialogue. Using direct speech gives Min's utterance more immediacy.

The three-part structure of the constructed dialogue segment also underscores the opposing nature of Min's plan. Jefferson observes that, because it is such a common structure, a list with three parts can “orient [speakers and hearers] to such matters as a “weak,” “absent,” or “missing” third part” (1991: 63). This is especially the case when the third part undergoes “de-listing” (Jefferson 1991: 76) through a change from the parallel structure of the first two parts. The

phrasing of Katrina's and Tara's constructed dialogues in lines 12 to 14 is not entirely parallel, but they do function to set up a list. Each begins with a character speaking; each is indirect speech; and each identifies a person the speaker wants to marry. Min's constructed dialogue is differentiated by the phrase *even in kindergarten first grade* [15] interposed between the "link term" *and* (Jefferson 1991: 82) and the constructed dialogue; by a switch from indirect to direct speech; and by the contrasting content of the dialogue. Min's plan to never marry gains emphasis from its position in the list and its somewhat de-listed form.

This emphasis on Min's plan is made possible by the inclusion of the two other characters'. Their different plans contrast with Min's, especially in light of the similarities between the three characters (see Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) principle of relationality, discussed in Chapter 2). In line 11, Min (the teller) backtracks from Katrina's incipient constructed dialogue and truncates her own utterance in order to point out that characters are all people with disabilities: *oh we were all disabled*. This point removes the expectation that Min's choice will be based on her disability, particularly necessary if the listener (myself) buys into a cultural master narrative that limits the sexuality of people with disabilities (see Shakespeare et al. 1996). Because the characters have much in common – gender, age, school grade, and having a disability – the contrast between the plans of Min and of her friends is sharpened.

Bamberg (2011a) argues that identities are navigated in the dilemmatic spaces of the sameness of a self over time and the uniqueness of a self among others. This narrative allows Min to navigate the first dilemmatic space when she tells about the more distant past of her childhood; it also allows her to navigate the second dilemmatic space when she contrasts her attitude to that of her friends'. In *I'm never getting married*, Min displays a coherent identity over time through her consistent attitude as a young child in kindergarten or first grade, as a teenager in high school,

and, by implication, as an adult in the present interaction. Min tells about this self by contrasting her “unique” character to the two third person characters. However, telling this narrative does not allow Min to situate her identity as a person with a disability who does not wish to get married within a storyworld where marriage actually takes place. This is a personal narrative of Min’s own experience in which she explores her attitude toward marriage and starting a family. Since she has no lived experience of such events herself, she must vicariously borrow someone else’s. Thus, immediately after telling *I’m never getting married*, Min goes on to tell a vicarious narrative, *she had the child for her*.

5.3.1.2 Vicarious narrative: Min’s *she had the child for her*

Next in the story sequence, Min tells a vicarious narrative about someone else’s experience in which she also reveals her own attitude toward marriage. In *she had the child for her*, Min tells about Pauline, an acquaintance with a different physical disability, who got married and had a baby just before dying. The grammatical person of this narrative is primarily third person, with some first person pronouns in evaluation; the source of the story is Pauline’s experiences, which Min did not witness. Min tells the narrative in order to expand her repertoire of storyworlds. Because Min has no lived experience of getting married, she borrows and evaluates Pauline’s experiences in the storyworld in order to further her own identity work. Telling this story permits Min to highlight the sameness and differences (Bucholtz and Hall 2005) between her choices and Pauline’s, navigating the second dilemmatic space (Bamberg 2011a).

The narrative can be divided into five segments, roughly corresponding to Min’s turns and separated by my lexical backchannels. (Note that the line numbers are continuous with *I’m never getting married*.) In the first segment [27-36], Min gives the orientation; in the second [37-42], she tells the narrative events. In the third segment of the narrative [43-51], Min gives external

evaluation that segues into a reprise of some of the orientation and narrative events (cf. Gee 1989, 1991; Peterson 2000). In the fourth segment [52-63], Min discusses Pauline's disability, which is different from Min's own, and again gives external evaluation. In the final segment [64-67], Min concludes the narrative with a coda and external evaluation. Whereas the narrative is told from Pauline's point of view and includes internal evaluation of her thoughts and feelings, both the initial telling of the narrative (the orientation and narrative events) and the reprised and expanded elements conclude with external evaluation from Min's viewpoint.

Narrative: *she had the child for her*

1. Orientation [27-36]

27 **Min:** so and I think

28 And I s- I had another, um she wasn't really a friend but she was a acquaintance //

29 in my circle of friends

30 her name was Pauline.

31 and she had the type of muscular dystrophy that affected her heart //

32 and she was on heart medication

33 and she so badly so badly wanted to be married //

34 and so badly wanted to have children

35 and not adopt children but give [birth] to children

36 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

2. Narrative Events [37-45]

37 **Min:** um and the doctor said "you can't

38 because you're going to have to stop taking your heart medication //

39 and - to have a child"

40 she didn't care.

41 she stopped taking her heart medication

42 and a month after her baby was born she died. //

43 And to me um that is just really selfish //

44 you know um because she didn't have the child for the child

45 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

3. Reprise [46-51]

46 **Min:** [she] had the child for her

47 and it was like an accomplishment that she wanted before she died

48 and she knew she was dying.

49 it was just a matter of time

50 the heart medication was just keeping her alive [temporarily]

51 **Leslie:** [Right.]

4. Discussion of Disability [52-63]

52 **Min:** and um so - and her disability was one that progressed //

53 um but she didn't have it when she was born

54 and it's genetic

55 so her child could very well have this disability

56 or be a carrier of it

57 and she didn't think about that

58 she didn't care

59 even though her brother had died from it //

60 before she did

61 she just didn't care and she -

62 and I just think that is so selfish

63 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

5. Coda [64-67]

64 **Min:** [she] left a husband you know and- I don't know

65 that's another reason why I just don't care //

66 to get married or not.

67 um it's just putting people through that // you know so

Point of view is crucial to the identity construction in this vicarious narrative, as Min navigates

the dilemmatic space of sameness and difference with others. As mentioned in Section 5.2.2.1,

Chafe provides four criteria for determining the referent from whose point of view a story is told:

first, the frequency with which a referent is activated; second, its association with the subject position or “starting point function” (Chafe 1994: 133); third, references to the referent’s emotions and evaluations; and fourth, status of the referent as a center for spatial deixis. The fourth criterion is not as significant to this narrative, since the events do not involve much physical movement. However, frequency of activation, starting point function, and references to emotion and evaluation all play a role in how this narrative functions as both a story of vicarious lived experience and a site of personal identity work. The table below outlines which character or referent meets Chafe’s criteria in each section of the narrative.

Table 5.3.2 Point of view in *she had the child for her*

	Frequency of activation in the storyworld	Starting point function in the storyworld	Emotion and evaluation
1. Orientation lines 27-36	Pauline One mention: <i>I</i> (Min)	Pauline One mention: <i>I</i> (Min)	Pauline
2. Narrative Events lines 37-45	Pauline One mention: <i>the doctor, her baby</i>	Pauline One mention: <i>the doctor</i>	Internal: Pauline (negated) External: Min
3. Reprise lines 46-51	Pauline	Pauline	Pauline
4. Discussion of Disability lines 52-63	Pauline One mention: <i>her child, her brother</i>	Pauline One mention: <i>her child, her brother</i>	Internal: Pauline (negated) External: Min
5. Coda lines 64-67	Pauline One mention: <i>a husband</i>	Pauline	Min

In each segment of the narrative, the character of Pauline is mentioned or activated most frequently. She is the only character in the orientation and in the reprise; the narrative events include only one other character, *the doctor* [37]. The characters of *her baby* [42], *her brother* [59], and *a husband* [64] are mentioned once each, appear “off screen”, and are only referred to by their relationship to Pauline. Min herself appears as a character in the storyworld only in the orientation segment that introduces Pauline: *I had another [...] acquaintance \ in my circle of*

friends [28-29]. According to the first criterion, the point of view of the narrative is unambiguously Pauline's. In the same way, Pauline most often has the starting point function. She is the referent in subject position throughout the narrative events except for one clause each that has the subject *I* [28], the *doctor* [37], *her child* [55], and *her brother* [59]. It is the outside evaluation clauses, taken alongside the internal evaluations, that complicate the point of view of the narrative.

The third criterion for point of view is that the narrative mention the referent's emotions and evaluations. Since this is a vicarious narrative, Pauline's emotions and storyworld evaluations are filtered through Min's telling. This is especially evident when Min uses negation to point out what Pauline did not -- but by implication ought to have -- felt. Furthermore, although Pauline's internal evaluations are mentioned more frequently, Min's external evaluations appear at significant points in the narrative, when the structure of the narrative leads the listener to expect a "concentrated" evaluation of the narrative events (Labov 1997). By putting her own evaluations there, Min ensures that the narrative advances her own identity work. While the overall point of view may be Pauline's, the inclusion of Min's evaluation is what pushes forward the identity construction.

As the teller, Min presents her own opinion of Pauline's feelings and thoughts throughout the story. Mentions of Pauline's emotions appear in each segment of the narrative except the coda. In the orientation (segment 1) and the reprise (segment 3), these internal evaluations are positive. Min (as the teller) highlights Pauline's desire to start a family with parallel structure and repetition in the orientation: *and she so badly so badly wanted to be married \ and so badly wanted to have children* [33-34]. The emotive verb *wanted* [47] is repeated in the reprise of the narrative events. Pauline's thought are also presented in the reprise: *she knew she was dying* [48].

This attention to Pauline's emotions and evaluations suggest that she is the point of view referent for the third criterion. Yet in the narrative events (segment 2) and the discussion of disability (segment 4), Min presents Pauline's internal evaluations in negated clauses. The repetition in these segments is of the phrase *didn't care*. It first appears in the events in response to the doctor's dialogue, *she didn't care* [40]. It is repeated in the discussion: after the points that the child could have the disability, *she didn't care* [58]; and that her brother had died from the disability, *she just didn't care* [61]. The use of negation in these clauses about Pauline's emotions suggests Min's reaction. By introducing the notion of Pauline caring and then negating it, Min suggests that caring should be expected in this situation. The negated clauses are less an internal evaluation by Pauline's character and more an external evaluation - through irrealis (Labov 2004) -- by Min as the teller. So while Min is presenting Pauline's point of view, Min does so in such a way that it is clear she disagrees with it. In this way, Min is able to present her own viewpoint through the vicarious narrative. Min also uses negation to tell about Pauline's thoughts: *she didn't think about that* [57]. By referring to Pauline's emotions and thoughts in this way, the narrative follows Pauline's point of view overall, but at the same time subverts it by showing Min's perspective.

Min's own external evaluations – which provide her own assessment of Pauline's narrative actions – occur in three places: at the end of the orientation and narrative events segments (segments 1-2); at the end of the reprise and discussion of disability segments (segments 3-4); and at the end of the coda that concludes the narrative (segment 5). As Labov and Waletzky (1967) theorize, “evaluation is characteristically concentrated in an evaluation section, placed just before the most highly evaluated action, or 'point' of the narrative” (quoted in Labov 1997). The “concentrated” evaluations in this narrative are Min's external ones, placed at the end of the

narrative's segments. The first external evaluation acts almost as a coda to the initial telling: *to me um that is just really selfish \ [...] because she didn't have the child for the child* [43-44]. Min evaluates Pauline's actions as *selfish* and cites Pauline's motivations, going on to state that *she had the child for her* [45]. Although Min's own evaluation is external (she is no longer a character in the storyworld at this point), as the teller she also has control over the character Pauline's internal thoughts and feelings. Thus she is able to juxtapose her evaluation with Pauline's motivation in order to construct her own identity in opposition to Pauline's actions. A similar contrast occurs with the next instance of external evaluation. Directly after the repeated internal evaluation *[Pauline] just didn't care* [61], Min truncates an intonation unit to repeat the external evaluation *I just think that is so selfish* [62]. Min is stating directly the criticism implied by the repeated negation of *care*, i.e. Pauline's not caring is selfish. Min is also making a larger point about Min's own choices, which is relevant to the on-going conversation. Note that after both the external evaluations, I as the listener respond *yeah* [45, 63]. Min is supporting her own decision not to get married and start a family by contrasting Pauline's selfishness and lack of caring with Min's own attitude. Min's final external evaluation occurs in the coda of the narrative. This evaluation displays Min's purpose in telling the story directly after explaining her lifelong attitude toward marriage and relationships: Min says *that's another reason why I just don't care \ to get married or not* [65-66]. Min's external evaluation in the vicarious narrative sharply contrasts with the point-of-view character's actions within the storyworld.

By providing a real-life example of negative consequences pertaining to starting a family, Min is able to advance her argument against getting married with even more force than she did by telling a personal narrative. Her own experiences do not prove her point, but Pauline's do. Min's decisions that she *do[es]n't care to \ to get married or not* [65-66] could be considered

controversial if society expects adults to marry and start families. Min's vicarious narrative thus serves an argumentative function (van Dijk 1993). By telling about Pauline's negative experience – and evaluating her as selfish – Min advances her point that marriage is not necessarily the best choice for Min.

Min (as the teller) uses the vicarious narrative about Pauline in much the same way as she uses the narrative actions of her two friends in the preceding personal narrative. The actions and attitudes of the third-person characters with disabilities oppose Min's own. In the personal narrative, Min's character is unique in planning not to get married. In the vicarious narrative, Min critiques Pauline's choices in starting a family. Both narratives show Min navigating her identity in the second of Bamberg's (2011a) dilemmatic spaces: uniqueness of a self among other selves. Both narratives also employ what Bucholtz and Hall (2005) term the 'principle of relationality' by constructing an identity that shows both sameness and difference in relation to the others around it. In the personal narrative, Min points out the sameness of her character's and the other characters' selves in all having a physical disability. In the vicarious narrative, Min constructs a self that is different in relation to the point-of-view character, Pauline. Min is only able to make use of Pauline's story, however, because of their sameness in relation to each other – they both have physical disabilities, albeit different ones. The difference in their attitudes toward marriage, then, does not stem from this aspect of their identities. Rather, Min navigates the second dilemmatic space by highlighting the sameness between herself and the third person characters – they all have physical disabilities – and then contrasting their attitudes – Min is unique in not wanting to get married. Thus the vicarious narrative contributes as much to Min's identity construction as the personal one. Min does identity work in choosing to tell this vicarious narrative, evaluating the narrative actions, and implicitly contrasting herself to the main

character. Min uses both the personal and vicarious narrative in the story sequence to construct an identity as a person with a disability who does not plan on marriage.

5.3.2 Navigating uniqueness and agency in Min's *she was like me*

This narrative occurs in the context of talk about Min's friends. Min explains that she keeps in online contact with her childhood friend Tara, who was introduced earlier in the conversation within the narrative *I'm never getting married*. Previously in the conversation, Min has informed me that Min spends a large amount of time each day online. (She has also told a small story about another third person character who spent too much time playing computer games.) At this point in the conversation, Min has just explained that Tara's medical conditions include cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder and begins a vicarious narrative about Tara's recent experiences.

This vicarious narrative is told in the third person, but from the teller's point of view. The story source is Tara's lived experience, which Min knows about secondhand.

The identity construction in *she was like me* is navigated within the second of Bamberg's (2011a) dilemmatic spaces, the synchronic differentiation and integration of a self vis-à-vis other selves. In this space, Bamberg argues that tellers navigate their "alignment with—or better: positioning with regard to—others" (2011a: 6).²⁷ The vicarious narrative is analyzed below with respect to this second dilemmatic space. Throughout the telling, Min explicitly compares herself to the character of Tara. The data is given below in four segments, interspersed with analysis: in the first segment, the narrative events include Tara's doctor telling her parents that Tara had a seizure as a result of time spent on the computer; in the second, the events include Tara being in the hospital and Tara's parents throwing out her computer; and in the third, the narrative events

²⁷ When applied to narrative, this dilemmatic space, which Bamberg (2011a) describes in terms of positioning, has similarities to his positioning model's first level: positioning vis-à-vis characters in the storyworld.

include Tara moving away from home. In the fourth segment, occurring slightly later in the interaction, Min adds the event of Tara going to a day program.

Narrative: *she was like me*

Segment 1

- 1 **Min:** So um ... and her doctor told her parents that
- 2 one of these last seizures that she had sent her to the hospital //
- 3 um it was caused because she was on the computer too much
- 4 **Leslie:** [Oh.]
- 5 **Min:** and she was like [me]
- 6 she was - except I think she was worse than me //
- 7 she was on the computer like
- 8 from the moment she got up in the morning //
- 9 till the time she went to bed.
- 10 and um ... so ...

Throughout the narrative, Min makes explicit comparisons between herself and the third person protagonist, Tara, constructing identity within the dilemmatic space of sameness/difference. In the segment above, Min describes Tara's computer use with respect to her own, which Min has already told me about. When Min explains that Tara *was on the computer too much* [3], I give a nonverbal backchanneling indicating comprehension of the problem and its immediacy even before Min has finished the utterance comparing her computer use to Tara's. The comparison *she was like me* [5] makes Tara's situation relevant to Min's by aligning their computer use. The following comparison *she was worse than me* [6] differentiates between them once again. As the teller, Min shows the similarity between her self and Tara's character, making the problem Tara's character faces in the storyworld relevant to Min.

Segment 2

- 11 **Min:** yeah I mean she had to go the hospital over in {inaudible}
- 12 it was just //

13 and she was in the hospital for a few da:ys //
14 it wasn't like in and out emergency [room.]
15 **Leslie:** [yeah.]
16 **Min:** And um ...
17 so .. just like a couple weeks ago
18 she got - her parents threw out her computer //
19 after that.
20 even though she's in her thirties
21 **Leslie:** oh wow.
22 **Min:** she's older than I am
23 and she can make her own decisions //
24 her parents took the computer out of the house
25 and threw it away

The identity construction in this segment involves both the second dilemmatic space of sameness/difference and the third dilemmatic space of high/low agency (Bamberg 2011a). The comparison between Tara and Min concerns their ages: *she's in her thirties* \ *she's older than I am* [20, 22]. The point of this comparison, however, also speaks to the navigation of Tara's agency in the narrative. In her study of agency in disability discourse, Al Zidjaly (2009) defines power as implementing one's own agenda (following Berger and Luckmann 1966), and argues that agency and power are interconnected. Following Al Zidjaly's definition, Tara has little power and thus low agency in the first two narrative segments. In the first segment, Min begins the narrative events by saying *her doctor told her parents* [1], omitting Tara from their conversation -- or, rather, showing that her doctor and her parents are omitting Tara from it. In this second segment, Min truncates her utterance *she got-* (with Tara in subject position) to say *her parents threw out her computer* [18]. Leaving Tara's character out of these events gives her no agency in them; repeatedly describing the parents' actions as throwing out the computer

(*threw out* [18]; *took the computer out* [24]; *threw it away* [25]) emphasizes that they are the ones exercising power.

Min uses a comparison to support the idea that Tara has (or should have) agency. Min uses *even though* [20] to juxtapose the parents' actions with Tara's age, *in her thirties* [20]. Min implies that the parents' exercise of power is inappropriate given Tara's age; my *oh wow* [21] is in appreciation of the implication. Min's comparison of her own age to Tara's - *she's older than I am* [22] - furthers Min's point about Tara's agency. If Min has an agentive self and Tara is even older than Min, then Tara also has an agentive self that is being ignored by the parents' actions. In other words, Min believes both she and Tara *can make* [their] *own decisions* [23]. In telling the narrative, Min is making a point about Tara's agency. Min implies that, despite Tara's lack of power in the storyworld, both Min and Tara are alike in having high agency.

At the same time, Min is constructing her own identity throughout the vicarious narrative. In the first two segments, Min uses comparisons to do identity work: in the first, she makes Tara's problems relevant to her self; in the second, Min ties Tara's agency to her own. In the next segment, Min concludes the narrative while continuing to provide her own perspective on the events.

Segment 3

- 26 **Min:** and so: I think it caused her
27 to really want to be independent. //
28 And a couple of weeks ago
29 I think she went t- been working with a counselor //
30 because she moved out into her own apartment
31 **Leslie:** Oh [cool.]
32 **Min:** [which is] really great
33 but it was so unexpected to me:. //

In this segment, Min shows Tara gaining the high agency that Min implied she should have. Tara becomes *independent* [27] by *mov[ing] out into her own apartment* [30]. Even working with a counselor is an agentive for Tara's character; Min puts Tara in the actor role in the sentence, in contrast to her complete absence from the conversation between her parents and her doctor. At the end of the narrative, Min provides the external evaluation that Tara's move *is really great \ but it was so unexpected to me* [32-33]. This evaluation touches on the sameness/difference space. It is positive but it suggests a difference – at least in expectations for Tara's actions – between Tara and Min. As Tara's narrative comes to a conclusion in which she achieves agency through her independence from her parents' home, Min continues to relate the narrative events to Min's own perspective. Thus, while the protagonist of the narrative is Tara and the point is about Tara's agency, the identity construction is Min's.

The external evaluation serves as a coda to the narrative and a transition into Min telling how she came to hear about Tara's move (through email). Min continues to talk about Tara, describing where Tara is now living. Below, Min provides a final comparison between her self and Tara before introducing a new topic.

Segment 4

- 34 **Min:** and I- I know that she's ... in a day program
35 and I could ne:ver // ever go to a day program
36 to me that's like something that .. people with no life do.=
37 **Leslie:** =Yeah. @@
38 **Min:** And um ... if I ev- absolutely had to
39 you know ... I don't know
40 I think I'd rather just stay home
41 and watch TV. //

Min ends the talk about Tara with a final comparison: *she's ... in a day program \ and I could never ever go to a day program* [34-35]. In his discussion of the synchronic dilemmatic space, Bamberg argues that “[i]n order to differentiate (and integrate) a sense of self, others are “brought to existence” (constructed) in terms of social categories” (2011a: 6). Min implicitly aligns herself with those who could potentially attend a day program for people with disabilities: *if I ev- absolutely had to* [38]. Yet Min differentiates between Tara’s choice to be in the day program and her own choice not to. First, she uses the phrase *never ever* [35], said with a prolonged vowel and emphasis on the second word. Next, Min characterizes those who actually do attend the day program as *people with no life* [36]. Finally, she ends the segment by saying that *I’d rather just stay home \ and watch TV* [40-41]. By talking about Tara’s life, Min is also able to comment on her own. In the vicarious narrative *she was like me*, Min navigates her identity in the synchronic dilemmatic space identified by Bamberg (2011a) by both aligning her self with and differentiating her self from the character of Tara.

5.4 Discussion

I have shown that Min uses vicarious as well as personal narratives to construct her identity as a person with a disability in story worlds populated by other characters with disabilities. In the example narratives, third person characters are key to the identity construction of the teller. The story sequence containing *I’m never getting married* and *she had the child for her* conveys Min’s attitude toward marriage and family by contrasting it with those of her friends and acquaintances. In the vicarious narrative *she was like me*, Min links her own sense of agency to that of her friend. The first narrative is personal and other two are vicarious, but all allow Min to construct her identity.

According to the definition I propose, vicarious narratives tell about the lived experience of someone who is not the teller. In my discussion of this definition, I highlight two senses of the word “vicarious.” The narratives I discuss are vicarious in the sense that Min is telling about narrative events that are the lived experience of Pauline and of Tara; the third person characters are clearly the protagonists. The narratives are also vicarious in the sense that Min imaginatively reconstructs the events to the point where she can tell stories about them. Even though Min did not experience what the characters experienced, as the teller she can authoritatively narrate their actions, thoughts, and emotions. The vicarious narratives become Min’s own stories to the point where she can construct her own identity by telling them.

In *I’m never getting married*, Min separates her own attitude toward marriage from that of the third person characters. At the same time, however, she points out that both she and her two friends have disabilities. By doing so, she removes the possibility that her personal decision is one made by people with disabilities in general. Yet in *she had the child for her*, Min emphasizes Pauline’s disability as a reason why Pauline was *selfish* -- and presumably wrong -- to start a family. Despite the fact that Min’s underlying medical condition is entirely different from Pauline’s, Min draws a comparison between their circumstances. She concludes the narrative by saying that Pauline left behind a husband and gives that as *another reason* for Min herself not to get married. Thus, Min simultaneously connects her personal decision not to get married to her disability and denies that having a disability automatically precludes marriage. Min’s individual disability identity -- her unique “constellation of identity” -- includes the aspect of not being married. Vicarious narratives are one way she constructs that identity.

The third example narrative, *she was like me*, is a vicarious narrative punctuated by comparisons between the protagonist and the teller. By telling about her friend’s lived experience, Min is able

to expand her repertoire of storyworld events. Tara's computer use, struggle for agency, and participation in a day program all become sites for Min's own identity work. By telling a story about a friend with a disability, Min adds to the constellation of her own individual disability identity. She uses her own (assumed) agency as an adult to bolster Tara's agency in the storyworld; she places herself within the pool of people who could attend day programs and underscores her choice not to do so. When she "tells disability" in the vicarious narratives, Min draws on the lived experience of her friends with disabilities and imaginatively tells the narrative events in order to construct her own disability identity.

5.5 Summary and implications

This chapter has argued, on solely linguistic evidence, that vicarious narratives can be used to construct individual personal identities. I provided a working definition of vicarious narrative as a narrative that principally tells about the lived experience of someone besides the teller. The analysis examined diachronic and synchronic identity construction in one personal narrative and two vicarious narratives featuring third person characters with disabilities. In particular, it focused on expressions of a coherent self, on point of view, and on comparisons between the protagonist and the teller. The analysis demonstrated that narrative structure, evaluation, and identity construction occur in vicarious narratives as well as in personal ones.

The analysis addresses the critiques that vicarious narratives are lacking in structure, evaluation, and emotion, and thus are not worthwhile objects of study. Although the two vicarious narratives given here as examples do not represent a large portion of the collected data, they serve to demonstrate three things. First, vicarious narratives have the same structure as personal ones: for example, analysis of she had the child for her labels parts of the narrative that correspond to a Labovian structure (e.g. orientation, narrative events, evaluation; cf. Labov and Waletzky 1967).

Second, vicarious narratives contain evaluation: for example, the analyses of *she had the child for her* and *she was like me* specifically examine external evaluation. Third, vicarious narratives tell about the emotions and evaluations of the third person protagonist: for example, in *she had the child for her*, Min states repeatedly that Pauline didn't care; in *she was like me*, Min states that the actions of Tara's parents caused her to really want to be independent. Min who was not present for the events, and does not have access to Pauline's or Tara's consciousness (cf. Chafe 1994), nonetheless provides these details about the characters. As the teller, she has control over the emotions and evaluations she portrays in the storyworld she has created. Since the two example narratives are not especially rich in sensory details, Chafe's (1994) claim that vicarious narratives lack them is not specifically addressed here. It could be that sensory detail, considered apart from evaluation, is a difference in the features of personal and vicarious narratives.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that, while certain vicarious narratives may lack many of the typical features of a personal narrative (cf. Norrick's (2000) example of a 'third person' narrative), others are indeed comparable (cf. Labov's 2004 'Laidlaw narrative' as well as the examples in this chapter).

The analysis also addresses Norrick's (2013) contention that personal narratives are privileged over vicarious narratives for the construction of the teller's identity. In the first example narrative, Min begins doing identity work surrounding marriage and families in the personal narrative *I'm never getting married*. In the second example narrative, which follows immediately, Min continues to construct the same identity in the vicarious narrative *she had the child for her*. Whereas Norrick (2013) argued that vicarious narratives offer no natural connection between the protagonist and the teller's identity, Min makes this connection in her evaluation by contrasting her perspective with the protagonist Pauline's. Norrick also claims that

vicarious narratives have no natural standpoint from which evaluation are made: in personal narratives, evaluation comes from the teller's perspective. Furthermore, he claims that in personal narratives, the teller's dual role as animator and protagonist "automatically reveals [the teller's] own attitudes and emotions in ways a third person story would not" (2013: 388). (An exception, according to Norrick, may be family narratives, in which the teller has an automatic relation to a family member's character. But in *she had the child for her*, Min describes Pauline as an *acquaintance*, who is *not really a friend*.) In her vicarious narratives, Min establishes a perspective in order to reveal her own attitude through the protagonist's experiences. In the first vicarious narrative *she had the child for her*, Min establishes the perspective of the vicarious narrative – the point of view is largely Pauline's, while the evaluation is largely Min's – and is able to use Pauline's experiences to comment on her own attitude. In the second vicarious narrative *she was like me*, Min uses the similarities between herself and the protagonist Tara – both have physical disabilities and are often on the computer – to establish a connection between them. Min navigates her own identity in the dilemmatic space of sameness/difference between herself and Tara and in the dilemmatic space of high and low agency in Tara's lived experiences. The analysis of these example narratives shows that both personal and vicarious narratives can be used to do the teller's identity work, especially in contexts where the teller has no relevant lived experience of their own to draw upon.

The analysis provides a complement to work on vicarious narratives in the construction of group identity. Vicarious narratives are used in the construction of group identities, as has been shown by Linde (1996) and Cheshire (2000), but they are also used to construct individual identities, as Min does with her identity. In the narrative sequence about marriage and family, Min contrasts her attitudes and decisions to those of her friends with disabilities. She makes it clear in *I'm*

never getting married that her attitude is not held by a group she belongs to; the characters of Katrina and Tara, who have disabilities, plan to get married. Yet Min also connects the decision to start a family to having a disability in *she had the child for her*. The identity Min constructs in these narratives is part of the constellation of identities that relate to disability; she is a person with a disability who chooses not to get married. Similarly, in *she was like me*, Min's comparisons between herself and Tara do not lead her to the same decisions as her friend (e.g. Min still lives at home and states that she *could never ever go to a day program*). Min uses vicarious narratives in a way that is similar to the narratives analyzed by Linde and Cheshire: the identity work involving the third person characters impacts the identity Min constructs for herself. However, the (disability) identity Min creates in these examples is an individual one. Finally, the analysis fills a gap left in the linguistic literature between the dismissal of vicarious narratives as a site of identity construction by scholars such as Labov, Chafe, and Norrick, and the analysis of identity construction in vicarious narratives undertaken by Bamberg, Georgakopoulou, and colleagues. Bamberg's linguistic studies²⁸ assume without argument that vicarious narratives can be productively analyzed alongside personal ones. By providing a working definition for vicarious narrative and applying that definition to an analysis of identity construction, this analysis bridges the theoretical critique of vicarious narratives and the practical application of identity analysis methods (including, in fact, Bamberg's [2011a]) to those narratives.

In this chapter, I have defined vicarious narrative as telling about the lived experience of someone else; this definition encompasses prior definitions of vicarious, third-person, and non-participatory narratives without being bounded by grammatical person or point of view. I have

²⁸ Bamberg's studies in experimental settings relied upon fictional, written narratives; this analysis has excluded fictional sources as needing separate consideration in linguistic analysis.

proposed that vicarious narratives can be a resource for expanding tellers' repertoire of storyworlds by allowing them to tell about lived experiences they themselves have not had. The analysis in this chapter shows that identity can be constructed by telling both personal and vicarious narratives. I argue that future linguistic analyses of identity in narrative should include vicarious narratives. Accordingly, in the next chapter, I analyze both personal and vicarious narratives told within communities of people with disabilities. I claim that those communities include able-bodied people who, through their close association with a person with a disability, have become "wise to" the experience of having a disability. I also argue that able-bodied people who are "wise" may co-construct shared disability identities with people with disabilities. I examine wiseness and shared identity to show how people with disabilities and people without them tell disability in personal and vicarious narratives.

Chapter 6: Telling Disability within the Community

6.1 Introduction

Throughout this study, I am concerned with the ways that speakers construct their identities in relation to other people: people whom they have never met before, people with whom they talk every day, and people whose physical abilities and attributes differ from their own. In the previous two chapters, I have examined stories told by the participants with disabilities about first- and third-person characters with disabilities. In this chapter, I turn to narratives told by and about the family and friends of people with disabilities. This chapter returns to the theme of interaction between people with disabilities and people without them. In Chapter 4, I explored such interactions in cross-community encounters with able-bodied strangers. I emphasized the “stranger” status of the able-bodied interlocutors. In this chapter, by contrast, I argue that some able-bodied interlocutors are nonetheless to be considered as part of the community. They are “wise” (Goffman 1963) to disability: able-bodied people whose own experiences have made them familiar with, and accepted by, a disability community. This chapter also analyzes vicarious narrative on an equal footing with personal narrative, as I advocated in Chapter 5.

People with physical disabilities may not have a large amount of everyday contact with other people with disabilities; they often come from households and speech communities comprised primarily of able-bodied interlocutors. The lack of a geographical speech community of people with disabilities means that disability discourse takes place among the other communities to which they belong. People with disabilities thus do identity work in speech with able-bodied interlocutors; this chapter explores whether and how those able-bodied interlocutors do identity work of their own regarding disability.

In this chapter, the first section (Section 6.2) begins by considering the different linguistic communities in which people with disabilities do identity work through discourse (Section 6.2.1). It introduces Goffman's (1963) concept of "the wise" and adapts his definition for research in the community of people with disabilities (Section 6.2.2). It connects communities of disability and the wise to epistemic rights in personal and vicarious narratives (Section 6.2.3). It discusses the construction of shared identities among family members and argues that an identity may also be shared through the ties of a social network because of the epistemic rights accorded to both family and friends (Section 6.2.4). The analysis section (Section 6.3) examines a vicarious narrative told by Min, *we call each other gimps*, that portrays her family members as wise (Section 6.3.1). It analyzes a vicarious narrative, *his current back-up chair*, told by Russell, Derek's able-bodied friend, that demonstrates Russell's epistemic rights in relation to Derek's lived experiences (Section 6.3.2) and a personal narrative, *he asked me what you had*, co-told by Russell and Derek that constructs a shared disability identity (Section 6.3.3). The discussion considers how identity work surrounding disability is done in discourse within the communities in which people with disabilities live (Section 6.4). The conclusion (Section 6.5) discusses the implications of analyzing wiseness and shared identity for the linguistic study of disability.

6.2 Communities of disability

In this section, I lay the groundwork for examining the construction of disability identity in narratives told by and about able-bodied people. In Section 6.2.1, I discuss the linguistic communities within which people with disabilities construct their identities. First, I explore the theoretical strengths and weakness of considering people with disabilities a community of practice and an imagined community. Second, I focus on social networks as a community in which people with disabilities interact closely with people without them. With social networks as

a starting point, in Section 6.2.2, I recast Goffman's definition of "the wise" to apply specifically to family, friends, and other associates of people with disabilities. In Section 6.2.3, I connect wiseness to epistemic rights in narrative. In Section 6.2.4, I explore the construction of a shared identity among groups of family members and close friends, who have epistemic rights to speak about one another. Finally, in Section 6.2.5, I describe how these concepts of community, wiseness, and shared identity are applied in the analysis.

6.2.1 Linguistic communities of disability

The prevalent model of disability in the discipline of disability studies in the United States considers people with disabilities to be a minority group (Hahn 1988, 1993, 1997; Altman 2001). This model is useful in scholarly work that applies approaches used with other minorities to people with disabilities. It is also applicable in social and political contexts to address the needs of people with disabilities as a group. In the disciplines of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, however, it is typical to categorize people by the speech communities to which they belong. In addition to describing people with disabilities as a minority group, I propose to describe them in terms of the communities in which their identities as people with disabilities are created and displayed.

One way to describe the community of people with disabilities is as a community of practice. In their foundational paper on communities of practice and gender identities, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet argue for "a view of the interaction of gender and language that roots each in the everyday social practices of particular communities and sees them as jointly constructed in those practices" (1992: 91). The community of practice is modeled on the speech community (cf. Gumperz 1968/2009) but separate from its customary reliance on geographic or population boundaries; instead, the community of practice is defined by social engagement. It has proved to

be a robust construct for studying the language of groups of people, and it has some strengths for research about people with disabilities. I have stated (see Chapter 1) that “disability” can be understood as a set of habits, accommodations, strategies; in short, a set of practices. Given that perspective, it makes some sense to view people with disabilities as a community of practice as Eckert defines it: “a collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor” (2006: 18). Eckert further states that two necessary conditions for a community of practice are that members have shared experiences and engage in shared sense-making.

The principal weakness of treating the community of people with disabilities as a community of practice is that the members do not necessarily engage with each other. In certain communities of practice, interaction may occur non-geographically. For instance, Hamilton (1998) presents an online support group as a community of practice when she analyzes the narratives of bone marrow transplant survivors. Similarly, Hanson-Smith (2012) argues for the examination of online communities of practice, particularly of professional- and education-oriented communities. It is generally understood, however, that members of a community of practice will interact with each other linguistically, and this is not necessarily the case for members of the disability community. Furthermore, it is problematic to assume that disability “practices” are all comparable; I have argued (see Chapter 1) that a set of practices varies for each individual. Thus, while community of practice may be a helpful lens to use for viewing a particular group of people with disabilities, it is not always applicable for disability research.

Another way to describe the community of people with disabilities is as an imagined community. In his work on nationalism and communities, Anderson (1983) proposes the construct of an imagined community. Members of an imagined community recognize that they belong to the same collection of people, even though that group includes people who they may never meet and

with whom they may have little in common. Though Anderson applies this to nation-states, an imagined community solves the problem of community members not engaging in any contact with each other. Anderson claims that “communities are to be distinguished ... by the style in which they are imagined” (1983: 49). For example, Anderson points to a Javanese community that may define itself by kinship, as opposed to a French community that may define itself by social class. To build on Anderson’s argument, a community of people with physical disabilities may define itself by the use of practices, accommodations, and adaptations to move through the world with physical impairments. In a sense, people with disabilities belong to an “imagined community of practice”²⁹: they may not interact with other members of the community or engage in identical practices, but they may still recognize themselves and others as belonging to such a community and “engaging on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor” (Eckert 2006: 18).

Communities of people with disabilities are not the only linguistic sites for identity work concerning disability, however. People with disabilities also belong to social networks (Milroy 1987) that include able-bodied people. Although the construct of the social network has been most commonly used to track language variation and change, as an ethnographic approach it is well suited to exploring a community in which identity work takes place. Milroy and Llamas define an individual’s social network as the “aggregate of relationships contracted with others” (2008: 549); among these, those with whom an individual directly engages with on a regular basis are “first-order network ties” (ibid.: 550). These are the people with whom an individual interacts discursively while constructing an identity. Among these first-order network ties, the strong ties are between friends and family (as opposed to weak ties between acquaintances). Milardo (1988, cited in Milroy and Llamas 2008: 1992) makes this distinction in terms of an

²⁹ Thanks to Claire Wimbush for this insightful comment.

“exchange” network (strong ties) from whom the individual receives material or symbolic resources in the form of help, support, and advice and an “interaction” network (weak ties) with whom an individual merely engages regularly. In this study, each participant with a disability has strong first-order network ties – an exchange network – formed mostly with members who are able-bodied. Identity work surrounding disability takes place not only among people who have disabilities themselves but within their social networks that include people without disabilities.

6.2.2 Goffman on the wise

I follow Goffman (1963) in arguing that able-bodied individuals who have strong social network ties to a person with a disability may gain special knowledge of what it means to live with a disability; they become “wise” to disability and can gain acceptance in the community of people who have disabilities. This concept of “wiseness” helps to delineate those able-bodied individuals who regularly engage in disability discourse (cf. Al Zidjaly 2006, 2009).

Goffman’s (1963) influential work on stigma laid a foundation for work in linguistics, sociology, and disability studies. Goffman argues that a stigmatized condition – such as a physical disability – leads to a “spoiled identity” for the person with the condition. In other words, the one stigmatized aspect of their identity overshadows any other aspect. Goffman was concerned with how identities could be “discredited” when a stigma was perceived, as with a visible disability, and with how individuals could “pass” as unstigmatized (see Okada (2011) on the distinction between visible and invisible disabilities). The broad picture Goffman painted has been filled in by later scholars, as well as reworked to apply to different identities. In the literature on physical and mental disabilities, “beyond stigma” has been used both as a slogan for social action and a

call for new scholarly approaches to disability.³⁰ Some of Goffman's categories, however, remain vivid for describing disability. In this chapter, I borrow Goffman's term "the wise" to describe certain able-bodied people within the social networks of the participants with disabilities.

Goffman (1963) borrows the term "wise" from gay slang of the 1940s and 1950s; people who were "wise to" homosexuality were people who were not necessarily gay but with whom it was safe to be openly gay. Goffman defines "the wise" as "persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it, and who find themselves accorded a measure of acceptance, a measure of courtesy membership in the clan" (1963: 28). By particularizing the definition to people with disabilities (and replacing the theoretically problematic and socially offensive term "normal"), those wise to disability can be defined as those whose experiences have made them familiar with, and accepting of, the experiences, practices, and accommodation strategies of having a disability. Moreover, the wise are able-bodied people who have "a measure of courtesy membership"; that is, they are recognized by someone with a disability as being "wise to" that group. Goffman distinguished two types of wise people. First, those who have a professional connection to the group in question may come to be accepted as wise. For instance, Goffman suggests that "physical therapists can be wise" (1963: 29) to those who use prosthetics, though he does not claim that a professional connection alone equates with acceptance in the group. Second, the family and friends of a person in the group may come to be wise. For instance, Goffman lists "the parent of the cripple"³¹, the friend of the blind [sic]" (1963: 30) as among those who take on

³⁰ See especially Fine and Asch's (1988) article with this phrase in the title, which offers both a critique of Goffman's (1963) approach and an argument in favor of a minority-group model of disability.

³¹ N.B. Goffman's terminology regarding disabilities reflects common usage at the time at which he was writing; it would not be acceptable in current literature.

membership in the group. In cases where the group is discredited and ostracized, Goffman argues, the wise who have relationships with an individual in the group may share in these social consequences. The wise thus come to be wise by being a member of the social network of someone with a disability.

In Goffman's (1963) discussion of the wise, he exemplifies acceptance of the wise by the community with a story taken from the work of Birdwhistell (1955). In it, the first-person narrator (presumably a male American of European descent) tells about his relationship with a group of African American boys *of about my own age with whom I used to fish* (Goffman 1963: 28). The narrator explains that, while initially the other boys *would carefully use the term "Negro"* (the common term at the time), as he became more accepted by the group, they would use the problematic in-group word *"nigger"* (ibid.). The final marker of acceptance, according to the narrator, was when he himself was able to use the in-group word when joking with the boys. This example of the use of a potentially offensive in-group word indexing group membership has parallels in the disability community with the words *gimp* and *cripple*, both of which are not socially acceptable when used outside of certain contexts or certain groups of speakers.³²

Goffman's concept of the wise has continued to resonate in studies of disability discourse. For example, Cahill and Eggleston (1995) reference the term in a study of conversational interviews and autobiographical accounts of wheelchair users. Citing Goffman (1963), they coin the alternate term "the knowing" for "walking friends or family members who are aware of, sympathetic with, and prepared to deal with the needs and public plight of a wheelchair user" (1995: 688). Al Zidjaly's (2005, 2006, 2009) research on the disability discourse of a man with a physical disability in Oman incorporates his family members, friends, and caregivers (including

³² For some people, *gimp* and *cripple* are offensive in any context. For an example of *cripple* used as a carefully chosen label for an identity, see Mairs's (1996) collection of essays on her own experience of physical disability.

herself). She classifies family and friends as “wise” by name in her study on “empowering a person with a disability through discursive means” (2009: 195). Al Zidjaly argues that the person with a disability co-constructs agency in conversations with the wise. Many other linguistic studies focus on the family and caregivers of people with disabilities, without necessarily using a term for them (e.g. Capps and Ochs 1995a; Barton 1999, 2004). The concept of the wise is similarly utilized in sociology of disability (e.g. Green 2003, 2007; Green et al. 2005) and disability studies (e.g. Altman and Bamartt 1993; Ryan and Runswick-Cole 2007). Donovan (2012) has recently recast the wise in business terminology as “stakeholders in disability”. As discussed Chapter 2, scholarship about people with disabilities routinely includes research on able-bodied family, friends, caregivers, and professionals who have acceptance in the community. In this chapter, I examine narratives told about members of the wise, who I identify as able-bodied people who have strong social network ties to a person with a disability and who have gained a measure of acceptance into the imagined community of practice of disability.

6.2.3 Epistemic rights

In this section, I connect being one of the wise to epistemic rights and authority. I consider epistemic “telling rights” with regard to personal and vicarious narratives. A teller has the epistemic authority to tell personal narratives because they are stories about the teller’s own lived experience, what Labov and Fanshel (1977) term A-events, to which the teller has privileged access. In vicarious narratives, however, the teller takes on the epistemic right to tell about someone else’s lived experience. Raymond and Heritage (2006) argue that taking on the epistemic authority to tell about someone else is a way to do identity work; Norrick (2013) finds that family members especially can do identity work in vicarious narratives. Epistemic rights can be used to describe how able-bodied members of the wise engage in disability discourse.

Labov (1972b) distinguishes between three types of events known to participants in a conversation: an A-event is known personally by speaker A; a B-event is known personally by speaker B; and an A-B event is known by both. He argues that if A makes a statement about a B-event, it can be understood as a request for confirmation since B has epistemic rights to that information and A does not. Heritage (2012) terms this a “declarative question”. Schiffrin (1993) analyzes B-events that are “speaking for another”; that is, B-events being told by A in contexts where B is present. Schiffrin comments that speaking for another may be interpreted differently based on “how responsibility for speaking comes to be transferred” (1993: 235); for example, whether A has an institutional role that gives A the right to speak for B. Schiffrin also explains speaking for another in terms of Goffman’s (1981) participant roles: B is the principal who is responsible for the content of the B-event, while A is the animator who is producing the actual message about the event. I use this idea of epistemic rights and responsibilities being borrowed from one speaker to another to discuss how able-bodied wise individuals are able to speak about disability in a similar way to their families members or friends with disabilities.

Labov and Fanshel (1977) refine the framework of events in a way that is useful for discussing narratives: an A-event is known to the teller, an A-B event is known to both the teller and at least one interlocutor, and an O-event is generally known. The authors argue that A “has privileged access to these [A-]events and can deal with them as an expert without fear of contradiction” (1977: 62). In other words, A has epistemic authority to tell others about the events that only A knows. Norrick considers A-events, those “known only to the primary storyteller” (2013: 392), to be the basis for personal narratives. According to Norrick, A-B events allow both A and B the epistemic authority to co-tell a story to a group, while O-events mean that epistemic authority is shared by the group and yield “third person narratives of vicarious experience conducive to co-

narration” (ibid.) Norrick’s framework implies that A-events are known to primary storytellers through their own lived experience - hence they yield personal narratives – rather than known secondhand but still only to the primary storyteller. However, events that have been told to teller A may be the basis for a vicarious narrative that is known only to A but told secondhand. In Labov and Fanshel’s (1977) framework as discussed by Norrick (2013), events that are known secondhand to only one teller are not distinguished from events a teller knows from personal experience. If events known secondhand but only to the teller are still A-events, then they can be the basis for vicarious narratives. Further classification of the source of A’s knowledge may be needed to describe the intersection between the axes of personal or vicarious narrative and single or co-tellership. But in either a personal or a vicarious narrative, A-events give epistemic rights to the teller A because the events are known only to A.

Norrick (2013) also argues that when telling narratives about family members, the teller “owns telling rights and claims epistemic authority by virtue of [their] membership in the family (390). Raymond and Heritage (2006) highlight this connection between epistemics and family relationships in their study of epistemic rights and authority. The authors argue that epistemic authority is connected to identity. They examine a phone call between two middle-aged British women that centers on the grandchildren of one woman, Vera, who earlier in the day were at the house of the other woman, Jenny. The authors analyze the connection between the identities of the speakers and epistemic rights – explained as “the local distribution of rights and responsibilities regarding what each party can accountably know, how they know it, whether they have rights to articulate it, and in what terms” (2006: 681). The authors echo Sacks (1984) in claiming that “conversationalists treat one another as having privileged access to their own experiences and as having specific rights to narrate them” (2006: 680). In other words, as Labov

and Fanshel (1977) and Norrick (2013) concur, teller A has the right to tell a personal narrative involving A events. Yet while Jenny has epistemic rights to talk about the grandchildren by reason of her own lived experience, Vera has epistemic rights to talk about them by reason of her identity as “grandparent”. Raymond and Heritage show that both Vera and Jenny co-construct Vera’s identity as a grandparent. Jenny participates in the identity work by deferring to Vera’s epistemic authority rather than insisting on her privilege to discuss her own lived experience. Raymond and Heritage conclude that maintaining the epistemic right to speak about something, such as Vera’s grandchildren, is a way to do identity work.

Having strong social network ties with someone, such as the ones that Vera has with her grandchildren in Raymond and Heritage’s (2006) study, are one basis for the epistemic authority to tell narratives about that person. They are also the basis for becoming wise to disability practices. While not all people in the social network of a person with a disability are necessarily wise to that person’s experiences of disability, those who are wise cannot become so without strong ties. The person with a disability becomes a ‘local authority’ on their own individual set of disability practices, and a member of the wise is wise to that particular set of practices.

Participating in disability discourse as one of the wise can also be seen as what Schiffirin (1993) calls ‘speaking for another’ through borrowing epistemic rights. The epistemic right for an able-bodied member of the wise to talk about disability practices comes from knowledge of a person with a disability’s individual set of practices. The right to talk about them is borrowed through the close relationship. The person with the disability has the epistemic authority to speak about their own experiences, but the able-bodied person may speak of them secondhand and so construct an identity as one who is wise. In the next section, I propose that not only a wise

identity but a “shared disability identity” can be co-constructed in narratives told by tellers within the same community, particularly within the same social network.

6.2.4 Shared identity

In order to examine how disability identities are constructed in communities that include both people with disabilities and the wise, I use the concept of a “shared identity”: an identity that is co-constructed in similar ways by multiple individuals. Shared identity may be indexed by borrowing of epistemic rights, such as a member of the wise taking on epistemic authority to talk about disability practices. Shared identity is often studied within a group of family members, who have the opportunity to co-construct identity through strong social network ties and frequent spoken interactions. Many studies have shown that narratives are a vital tool for maintaining identities in families and communities of practice, just as they are for constructing individual identities. Narratives allow families and groups to share values and attitudes (Blum-Kulka 1993; Schiffrin 1996; Tovares 2010) and to contrast those shared attitudes to those held by outsiders (Ochs et al. 1992; LeVine 2007). With regard to narratives told in communities of practice, De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) argue that the practice of telling narratives, like any other common activity, functions as a shared resource within the community. Citing also Goodwin (1990) and Georgakopoulou (2006c), the authors claim: “In particular, [narratives] often form an integral part of a community’s shared culture, as well as being instrumental in negotiating and (re)generating it” (2012: 384). Ochs et al. propose that families use storytelling to “affirm their own shared beliefs and values and to contrast them with those of “others” (1992: 38). Similarly, Ochs and Capps (2001) tie the moral stance dimension of their narrative model (discussed in Chapter 2) to community, arguing that one sign of membership in a community is accepting its moral standards. Being able to tell narratives with the same moral stance shows membership in

the community. Studies of narratives within social networks also attest to this dimension of narrative. Norrick (1997) argues that co-told and re-told stories encourage group rapport and display group values in his research on families and in laws. For example, he discusses the rapport created by a story about a funny experience that family members shared, and the value of frugality underscored in stories told by a mother and two daughters-in-law. Norrick's work suggests that narratives can be co-told among family members "ratify group membership" (1997: 204), as well as to display shared values. Georgakopoulou (2005) observes the same phenomenon in "shared stories" co-told and re-told among three sets of Greek families and close friends. Analyzing shared identity in a group is thus closely linked to analyzing narratives told in that group.

Vicarious narratives in particular can be used to display a shared group identity, as discussed in Chapter 5. Linde describes a process of "narrative induction into a new identity ... [by] being encouraged or required to hear, understand, and use someone else's story as one's own" (2000: 613). She analyzes narrative induction into professional identities, but also gives the example of religious conversion narratives. In both cases, Linde argues that "non-participant narratives" (included in the definition of vicarious narratives given in Chapter 5) are re-told and revised in order for new members to display their identities as part of the group. Cheshire (2000) makes a similar point about "third person narratives" (also included in the definition of vicarious narratives) told by adolescent girls and boys in single-sex friendship groups. In the boys' narratives, she finds that "[n]arratives about groups in which the speaker would like to claim membership are told as if the teller was party to ... their feelings, judgments, reasons and motives despite the fact that they can have no knowledge of these" (2000: 255). In the girls' narratives, the tellers show agreement with the affective responses of the protagonist. Through these ways

of telling the vicarious narratives, the boys and girls construct identities as group members.

Although the studies vary as to whether they concentrate on “family”, “group”, or “shared” identity, there is a strong body of research indicating that narratives can be told by a collection of individuals in such a way that they reflect a shared identity.

While research on shared identity has often focused on the construction of an identity as a family or as a group per se, Gordon (2004) analyzes a shared identity built around a specific aspect of the family’s life. In her study of an American family, Gordon explores how a shared political identity is co-constructed by a mother, father, and four-year-old son by examining the linguistic devices in their everyday conversations. Gordon argues that “a group identity may be constructed through many of the same linguistic means as individual identities, while also showing how every family member participates in constructing this identity” (2004: 628). Gordon’s analysis of the shared political identity is conducted in the same way an analysis of an individual identity would be; however, she finds that the shared identity is present and consistent across all three family members. Thus she claims that all of them “exhibit a coherent family political identity that includes even the family’s youngest member” (2004: 628). Crucially, the shared identity is co-constructed by the four-year-old son, who cannot participate in political activities or necessarily understand them. Despite his exclusion from the practice of politics, he is included in the shared political identity. Gordon thus shows that a shared identity is co-constructed by all the individuals in the group, even when it is not the identity of the group itself or of every individual member of the group.

6.2.5 Current methodology

Whereas previous chapters focused on narratives by and about people with disabilities, this chapter analyzes narratives told by and about people who are wise. In this section so far, I have

laid out theoretical linguistic concepts to be used for analyzing narratives about able-bodied people in the context of the disability community: social networks, the wise, epistemic rights, and shared identity. I proposed that able-bodied people are often found among the social networks of people with disabilities and that those able-bodied people who accept and are accepted into the disability community are the wise. All the participants with disabilities in the research for this study have predominantly able-bodied social networks. Although Derek, Tawnya, and Min all work or volunteer at places that serve clients with disabilities (weak ties/interaction network), they all grew up and currently live in households in which they are the only person with a disability (strong ties/exchange network). Likewise, each able-bodied co-participant has only one person with a physical disability in their first-order social network. While gathering the sociolinguistic background for the co-participants Russell, Lois, and Simone, it became apparent that each of them has learned about the personal experience of having a disability from Derek, Tawnya, and Min, respectively. Each participant functions as the ‘local authority’ on what it is to have a disability for the members of their social network. It is their experiences, and their acceptance of an able-bodied individual as wise, that allows members of their social network to be wise to disability. In this study, those who are shown to be among the wise -- both those who are present among the participants and those who are characters in the narrative data -- become wise through personal relationships with people with disabilities. They have strong first-order network ties to an individual with a disability: they both interact discursively on a regular basis, and they provide mutual help and support. These relationships allow for the borrowing of some epistemic rights; for example, the wise characters in the example narratives *we call each other gimps* and *his current back-up chair* exercise the right to

use in-group terms such as *gimp* (in certain contexts) for a person with a disability and *chair* for *wheelchair*.

It should be noted that membership in the first-order social network of a person with a physical disability does not automatically confer wisdom on an able-bodied family member or friend. According to the definition used in this analysis, the wise are able-bodied people whose own experiences have made them familiar with the experience of having a disability, and who are accepted as wise by a community of people with disabilities. Thus, the wise are not synonymous with the able-bodied people in a person with a disability's social (exchange) network. Being a family member or a friend of someone with a disability is a necessary condition for wisdom, but it is not sufficient. For instance, in the example narratives *we call each other gimps* and *he asked me what you had*, there are characters who are in the exchange network of a person with a disability but who are not proven to be wise in the storyworld.

I have also discussed the construction of shared identities. In this chapter, I use shared identity as a concept distinct from group identity, although those terms have also been used synonymously (cf. Tovaes's (2010) use of the term "shared family identity"). In Gordon's (2004) study, for example, the family may have had a collective identity as family, that is, as a group. Her analysis, however, reveals a 'shared identity' regarding politics. The distinction I draw in this chapter is between a group identity of disability, which includes only those whose individual experiences and identities place them in the group (people with disabilities themselves) and a shared identity of disability, which extends to those whose experiences and relationships give them access and acceptance among the group (both people with disabilities and the wise). Just as the four-year-old son in Gordon's (2004) work was able to co-construct a shared political

identity without participating in politics, I argue that members of the wise are able to co-construct a shared disability identity without having disabilities themselves.

In the first example narrative in the analysis, I focus on wiseness. I examine a story told by Min featuring characters from her strong, first-order social network: her nephew, her aide, and her aide's children. In this narrative, I explore how Min portrays her nephew in particular as wise through the use of linguistic devices such as repetition, referring terms, and in-group terms. In the second example narrative, I focus on Russell's epistemic rights to tell a vicarious narrative involving Derek. The small story's events include ones that Derek must have told Russell secondhand, yet Russell tells them to me as A-events that he has privileged access to. I also show how Russell and I both display our wise identities. I claim that epistemic rights are another way of understanding wiseness. In the third example narrative, I argue that Russell and Derek construct a shared disability identity, demonstrated here in a co-told narrative in which Russell tells most of the narrative events and Derek tells most of the coda. Through repetition, referring terms, and performative features, Russell and Derek each participate in constructing a shared disability identity. The narrative events show how Russell does so in contrast to an "other" outside Derek's group; the coda confirms that Derek agrees with Russell's values and attitudes regarding disability. Russell is not only wise to disability, he also constructs a shared disability identity.

6.3 Constructing wiseness and shared identities

The narrative and identity analysis in this chapter examines narratives that feature characters who are wise, as well as characters who have disabilities. I posit the wiseness of certain able-bodied characters based on the discourse by and about them in the data. Although the term itself

is not one used by the participants, data from the participants with disabilities reveals their recognition of their family member's or friend's wiseness.

The example narratives were told spontaneously as part of the ongoing conversation. In Section 6.3.1, the vicarious narrative *we call each other gimps* is told by Min, who has a disability. I argue that the way Min tells about her family, specifically the character of her nephew, shows that she considers her family members to be wise. In Section 6.3.2, the vicarious narrative *his current back-up chair* is told by Russell, Derek's able-bodied best friend. I examine how it demonstrates his wiseness and his epistemic rights when telling about Derek's lived experiences. In Section 6.3.3, the personal narrative *he asked me what you had* is co-told by Russell and Derek. I show that Russell performs a shared disability identity that matches the one Derek constructs.

6.3.1 The wise in Min's *we call each other gimps*

Min told this narrative to me (with Simone as an overhearer [Bell 1984]) about midway through my first conversation with Min at her home. It is an example of a vicarious narrative as I defined them in Chapter 5: a narrative about someone else's lived experience. The narrative tells primarily about the experiences of Min's nephew and her aide's children, although Min was present for the narrative events. Aside from Min, all the characters are able-bodied. On one level, the narrative belongs to a genre in which children make funny or inappropriate remarks; as the audience, I laugh at Min's humor concerning her nephew. On another level, Min makes a point about how her family talks about disability; she especially stresses the use of in-group terms. I argue that Min's family and nephew can be identified as wise in this storyworld.

Narrative: we call each other gimps

- 1 **Min:** Yeah so my family's always joked about .. you know .. disabilities //
2 cause we've just been around our whole life and.
3 a:nd um ... one day we were in a restaurant
4 and my nephew made a crack about my-
5 I call it my gimpiness? //
6 and he said it loudly, and in public,
7 and my aide had her three children there //
8 and they were ... shocked /@/
9 because they couldn't bel- I mean they –
10 My aide's three children //
11 I've known them since they were born //
12 so they're like my nephews too.
13 and um they know when the appropriate time to make jokes are //
14 and they just could not believe my nephew said something like he did //
15 I can't even remember
16 I'm so used to jokes that I don't even [remember] what he sa:ɪd
17 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]
18 **Min:** but I just remember the horrified shock /@/
19 that came across everyone's face at the table //
20 and then my nephew was like "What? What did I say?" {higher pitch} /@@/
21 cause he was just so used to joking around with people's disabilities //
22 a:nd where other people um
23 they're like "I can't say this // or say that" {softly}
24 my family and I we just don't have any problems
25 we call each other gi:mps, or cripples, or // you know.

Min repeats different forms of *joke* throughout the narrative: *joked about* [...] *disabilities* [1], *jokes* [13, 16], *joking around with people's disabilities* [21]. In this linguistic context, the *crack* [4] that the nephew makes is seen to be normal; it is not shocking because it is a joke about disability. Min stresses that such jokes are so common she *can't even remember* [...] *do[es]n't*

even remember [15-16] this particular joke. Thus the point of the story is not the content of the joke the nephew made, but the incongruity of making it in a public place. In the story world, Min represents the aide's children as knowing *the appropriate time to make jokes* [13] and being *shocked* [8] because this setting is not appropriate. As the teller, Min says she does *remember the horrified shock* [18] in response to the joke in this setting. The resolution of the narrative, and the punch line of the humor, is the constructed dialogue in which the nephew fails to recognize that the setting as inappropriate. I laugh in response this utterance.

Min presents her family, and in particular the character of her nephew, as wise. Min's use of plural referring terms and nouns in the abstract and coda of the narrative include her able-bodied family members as wise. In the abstract, she comments, *we've just been around* [disabilities] *our whole life* [2]. The *we* refers back to *my family* [1] and unites them with Min. The emphasis on *around* underscores the family's familiarity with disabilities stemming from Min's physical disability and also from her aunt's mental disability, which she has just told a narrative about. The plural (dis)agreement of *our whole life* (as opposed to *our whole lives* or *my whole life*) strongly presents Min and her family as sharing a singular experience of living with a disability. A similar unity is present in the coda when Min says *we call each other gimps, or cripples* [25]. Again, the *we* refers back to *my family and I* [24]. *Gimp* and *cripple*, both associated with physical disabilities and particularly with an impaired ability to walk, would not easily apply to anyone in the family other than Min (neither her aunt's lifelong mental disability nor her father's acquired impairment affects their walking). Nevertheless, Min uses the reciprocal pronoun *each other*, implying that she and her family members make the same use of the words.

As in Goffman's (1963) example of the wise -- the Birdwhistell (1955) story in which joking use of an in-group term signifies acceptance -- Min points to jokes and the use of *gimp* and *cripple* to

characterize her own and her family's talk about disability. The character of the nephew in this narrative is classified as wise according to my adaptation of Goffman's definition: an able-bodied person whose own experiences have made them familiar with the experience of having a disability, and who accepts and is accepted by a disability community. Min states that her whole family is familiar with disabilities: *we've just been around our whole life* [2]. The nephew's relationship to Min gives him familiarity with her experiences: *he was just so used to joking around about people's disabilities* [21]. More importantly, however, the character of the nephew is accepted as wise by Min. She accepts her family's prerogative to use jokes and in-group terms: *we just don't have any problems \ we call each other gimps* [24-25]. The characters of the aide's children are arguably also wise. Min breaks off an utterance to explain their relationship with her: she has *known them since they were born \ so they're like [her] nephews too* [11-12] and have familiarity with Min's disability. Her evaluation that *they just could not believe my nephew said something like he did* [13] could be interpreted that they were shocked by the content of the joke but, in light of Min's previous utterance, it likely means that they were aware it was not *the appropriate time* [13]. Min's attitude as the teller, however, is clear: her family's jokes and in-group terms are appropriate aside from a public setting. Min's narrative shows them to be wise through their epistemic rights to use in-group terms.

At the same time that Min is creating a storyworld that portrays her family members as wise, Min and I are participating in an interaction that negotiates my own status as able-bodied and wise. First, Min describes her nephew's joke as being about *my gimpiness* [5]. She truncates her initial utterance *my-* [4] and instead hedges with *I call it* [5] and a rising intonation. My nonverbal backchannel to this is particularly emphatic, indicating understanding of the term. Second, in this narrative, there is a character referred to as *my aide* [7, 10]. In most places in the

data, however, Min refers to this character as the family *friend* who helps her on the weekdays (note that this character is not Simone, Min's able-bodied co-participant in the study). Another context when Min does not use *friend* is in the group conversation with the other participants with disabilities in which she calls both this family friend and her friend Simone *aides*. The word is an in-group term for personal care assistants; all the participants with lifelong disabilities use it when speaking to each other. Min's use of it here is interesting because it seems to indicate that she expects me to be wise to that term and possibly even to find it a clearer reference to the individual than her usual reference to a *friend* would be. Min's introduction of the words *gimpiness* and *aide* into the narrative show a level of negotiation of my own identity as one of the wise. While Min does not use the term, her narrative about her family shows an awareness of how her wise able-bodied relatives participate in disability discourse. In the next section, I discuss how wiseness is related to epistemic rights.

6.3.2 Wiseness and epistemic rights in Russell's *his current back-up chair*

Russell, Derek's able-bodied co-participant, told this vicarious narrative to me during the individual session I had with him at his home; we had met before in his pair session with Derek. The narrative is vicarious because it concerns Russell's friend Derek and it features another third person character in most of the narrative events. Russell himself did not witness these events at all. The transcript below is split into four segments. When the narrative begins, Russell and I have been talking about Derek's past work history. In the first segment (*Opening*), I ask about Derek's current job at the wheelchair repair shop. Russell starts to talk about what Derek does and then cuts himself off to illustrate his point with a narrative. Bamberg (2004a) finds that small stories are often tellable because they back up a point the teller is making. In the second segment (*Small story*), Russell uses habitual and hypothetical narrative events to create storyworlds and

evaluate the characters in them. In the third (*Continuing talk*), I bring up a point about Derek's wheelchairs and Russell clarifies. In the fourth (*Reprise*), in response to a comment from me, Russell re-tells and adds to the habitual narrative events, leading to further evaluation clauses and a coda for the narrative. I analyze the small story and surrounding talk with particular attention to the wiseness that Russell and I display, and to Russell's epistemic rights to tell about Derek.

Narrative: *his current back-up chair*

1. Opening

- 1 **Leslie:** So he's like in in customer service? [{inaudible}]
- 2 **Russell:** [Yeah] yeah customer service
- 3 getting people's chairs fixed or ordered or ...
- 4 taking care of - putting out fires.
- 5 he does- // he puts out a lot of fires. (3.6)
- 6 He deals with (2.9)
- 7 customers who ...
- 8 want more than what they agreed to //
- 9 in their contract?
- 10 and that sort of thing?
- 11 and trying to accommodate those when he can,
- 12 like he's given up-

My question implies that Derek's job is a B-event (Labov and Fanshel 1977), an event known only to Russell the interlocutor, but not to me the speaker. I already know that Derek works in customer service, however: my first individual session with Derek was held at his workplace. I ask the question not for information but to continue the topic of Derek's work history. Because I put it in the form of a "declarative question" (Heritage 2012), it indexes a B-event and Russell provides confirmation as though I did not know the answer. My use of a question acknowledges that Russell has the epistemic authority to talk about Derek in a way that I do not. We agree that

Russell's epistemic status (Heritage 2012) in relation to Derek is different than mine, and thus Russell has the right to tell me things about Derek's life.

Note that this status is based on Russell's strong ties to Derek within their social network, rather than on Russell's identity as one of the wise. Russell has epistemic rights to talk about Derek – and Derek's individual experience of disability – because they are best friends. Both Russell's epistemic rights and his membership in the wise, then, are based on his friendship with Derek. Epistemic rights are another lens through which to look at wiseness. As shown in the rest of the example, I am also constructing a wise identity in this conversation. At this point, Russell is showing his own wiseness through the use of the in-group term *chairs* [3] for wheelchairs.

In this opening segment, Russell builds up a case about how Derek typically does his job. He repeats that Derek's work involves *putting out fires* [4]: *he puts out a lot of fires* [5]. The present tense of verbs and plural on nouns function as a marker of events that happen more than once: *He deals with \ customers* [6-7]. The phrase *that sort of thing* [10] also indicates that these events are all of a type. The small story to come exemplifies *that sort of thing* [10] and is linked to Derek's *trying to accommodate* [11] customers with the comparative *like* [12]. Russell uses the small story to provide a case-in-point of what he has been describing about Derek's working habits. The small story is composed mostly of orientation, with a few habitual, present, and hypothetical events. It is recognizable as a narrative partly for the place that it takes in the conversation when Russell begins to give an example: *like he's given up-* [12]. At this point, Russell truncates his own utterance to begin a small story that explains the example more fully.

2. *Small story*

13 **Russell:** he currently doesn't have a back-up chair. //

14 because his current back-up chair,

15 i:s with a client {breathy quality} /@/

16 Because there were issues with her chair, //
17 and so ...
18 but it's o- her own fault that there're issues //
19 she keeps spilling on her chair //
20 which keeps shorting out things on her chair.
21 **Leslie:** hh
22 **Russell:** So currently her chair is being repaired agai:n.
23 this is like the fourth time or [something.]
24 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]
25 **Russell:** And so yeah.
26 Um so his current back-up chair
27 which normally just stays at work
28 **Leslie:** Right.
29 **Russell:** is not there.
30 So should something happen /@@@/ to his chair
31 **Russell:** um someone's pushing him around.
32 Cause he doesn't have another chair to go to.
33 **Leslie:** Yeah.

According to Labov (2006), a narrative is initiated when the teller reports something that has happened and turns that happening into events. The initial report may function as an abstract of the narrative to come. In this way, Russell's small story begins with an abstract, *he currently doesn't have a back-up chair* [13], which indicates what the story will be about. The adverb *currently* [13] creates a point in time that is returned to later in the telling [22]. Notably, this utterance is a repair from the previous one, *like he's given up-* [his chair] [12], which Russell makes in order to start the story at a different point. Labov (2006) claims that narratives are "pre-constructed" before they are told: tellers begin in their own minds with the most reportable event and proceed backward in time to show the chain of cause and effect before it. Russell's narrative shows evidence of this process happening during the telling itself, rather than beforehand. In

lines 13 through 18, Russell moves backward from effects to causes in order to reach the narrative events in lines 19 and 20. This movement is signaled with discourse markers *because* [14, 16] and *but* [18]. *Because* marks the cause of a preceding effect; *but* marks a contrast to the expectations of the preceding idea (Schiffrin 1987). Here, *but* [18] links the orientation clause *there were issues with her chair* to the evaluation *but it's o- her own fault that there're issues*.

Put into a chronological cause-and-effect order, the events would be:

19-20 she keeps spilling on her chair \ which keeps shorting out things on her chair.
18 [but] it's o- her own fault that there're issues
16 [Because] there were issues with her chair,
14-15 [because] his current back-up chair, \ i:s with a client
13 he currently doesn't have a back-up chair.

As it is, the events are told almost entirely in reverse. The first narrative clause in the past tense does not appear until line 16: *there were issues with her chair*. Directly after, Russell seems about to move forward from a cause to an effect – marked by the discourse marker *so* [17] – but instead Russell introduces a new cause with *but* [18]. He evaluates the repeated *issues* [18] as *her own fault* [18] and goes on to tell habitual narrative events to prove this point. These events are told in the historical present, reinforcing that they are typical happenings.

The habitual narrative events, *she keeps spilling* [...] \ *which keeps shorting out things* [19-20], are the pivot point for the small story. They form a minimal narrative, made up of a singular temporal junction (Labov 1997). Because they are typical and repeated in the storyworld, (as well as repeated when Russell re-tells them in the fourth segment below), the habitual events give some weight to the small story. After Russell tells these events in lines 19 and 20, the chain of cause and effect begins moving forward, marked by the discourse marker *so* [22, 25, 26, 30].

Thus these two narrative events are the turning point for the timeline of the narrative.

The narrative continues in a more chronological order. After the habitual narrative events in the storyworld past, there is a following event in the present, introduced with *so*: *So currently her chair is being repaired again* [22]. The adverb *currently* repeats from the abstract of the narrative; the emphasized *again* continues to stress the habitual nature of the events. However, Russell grounds the habitual actions by saying that *this is like the fourth time or something* [23] that the sequence of events has occurred. The number helps to establish the events as separate happenings, as well as implying that this is a high number of occurrences. Still moving forward in the timeline using *so*, Russell arrives back at the point where the story began: *so his current back-up chair* [26] [...] *is not there* [29].

Russell introduces hypothetical events with another *so*: *So should something happen to his chair \ um someone's pushing him around* [30-31]. Because they are unrealistic, these events serve as evaluation. Russell evaluates Derek not having a back-up power wheelchair – and potentially relying on another person to help him be mobile in a manual wheelchair – as negative. These two hypothetical events also form a minimal narrative with a temporal juncture. The hypothetical storyworld extends the previous small story into the (potential) future. Russell repeats the ‘effect’ of the previous habitual events as the ‘cause’ of these hypothetical ones, introduced with the discourse marker *because*: *Cause he doesn't have another chair to go to* [32]. The absence of the wheelchair, repeated in lines 13, 29, and 32, ties together this whole segment as a small story about Derek's wheelchair, even more than about Derek himself or the client.

In telling this vicarious narrative, Russell exercises his epistemic authority to talk about Derek, specifically the present situation with Derek's back-up wheelchair. Yet the actual habitual events, as well as much of the orientation and evaluation, concern the third person character of the client. Russell must have learned of these events third hand; neither he nor even Derek would

have witnessed the client spilling on her wheelchair. Russell is taking on the right to talk not only about Derek but to re-tell a narrative he has heard from Derek. In the on-going interaction, these events could be classified as A-events, known to the teller Russell but not to me. Yet they are not A-events that yield personal narratives (cf. Norrick 2013). That Russell does not know the events from his own lived experience but from Derek's and the client's sets them apart from the classic example of an A-event (cf. Labov and Fanshel 1977). Russell has the epistemic right to tell the events about the client in the vicarious narrative for the same reason he would if it were a personal narrative: they are A-events that only he knows. In order to characterize Russell's small story, therefore, it is necessary to point out both that the events are A-events that Russell has the epistemic right and that they are vicarious events that Russell did not witness. Russell has epistemic rights to tell about Derek because of their close relationship; he has epistemic rights to tell about the client because I do not know about those events.

The first telling of the narrative ends at this point, but Russell and I continue to talk about the topic of Derek's wheelchairs.

3. Continuing talk

34 **Russell:** [Yeah.]

35 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

36 He has a second electric

37 [like a {inaudible}]

38 **Russell:** [His old chair] [yeah.]

39 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

40 **Russell:** Actually I don't know what he –

41 this is like his fourth chair.

42 So I don't know what he did with the first two //

43 um whether they were repaired and went to new clients

44 or were donated to somewhere

45 I don't know.

46 that's [it.]

Like my statement about Derek's work in line 1, my statement *He has a second electric* [36], is not made to seek information. Derek has previously given me a history of his wheelchair use in our individual session, and Russell has already mentioned that Derek has a new wheelchair in this session. I am aware that Derek's current wheelchair is relatively new while his current back-up chair is his previous power (electric) wheelchair. I am also wise to the practice of keeping an older wheelchair as a back-up. However, I use a declarative question here to continue the topic. Because of Russell's epistemic status in relation to Derek, Russell and I both treat Derek's wheelchairs as a B-event that Russell can confirm for me. Russell has known Derek long enough and well enough to state that *this is like his fourth chair* [41]. Moreover, Russell's epistemic rights to talk about Derek allow him to continue the topic, despite his repeated claim not to know what happened to Derek's previous wheelchairs: *I don't know* [40, 42]. The fact that Russell has to state he does not know what happened to the other wheelchairs still implies he has greater epistemic authority to talk about Derek than I do: if I made the same statement about not knowing it would be taken (and meant) as another declarative question. At this point, I make an evaluative comment that prompts Russell to tell the narrative events again.

4. Reprise

47 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]

48 But he just - he let someone .. walk off with his chair.

49 that's really.

50 **Russell:** Yea:h um.

51 He wasn't ... overly thrilled about it /@/

52 **Leslie:** Okay. {breathy quality}

53 **Russell:** because ... like it wasn't a manufacturer's defect //

54 or something had broken,

55 it's the girl spilled ... drinks on her [chair]
56 **Leslie:** [Yeah.]
57 **Russell:** multiple times,
58 and they keep telling her
59 that if she keeps spilling stuff
60 it's going to keep doing this? and=
61 **Leslie:** =Yeah.
62 **Russell:** This is not rocket science. //
63 you spill ... liquid on electric stuff [it's going]
64 **Leslie:** [It's not] going to get=
65 **Russell:** =you know.
66 um but he did it.
67 it's ... he's a nice guy.

At the beginning of this segment, I return to the events of Russell's small story: *he let someone .. walk off with his chair* [48]. In this utterance, I am displaying my own identity as one of the wise. I use two in-group terms in line 48: *chair* for wheelchair and *walk* for movement made with a wheelchair. (Derek most often uses *ride* or *drive* and so does Russell, but my friend Claire uses *walk* exclusively; for me to use *walk* shows my wiseness to my local authority's disability discourse.) I also perform a wise identity with the content of the utterance. In my understanding, to allow someone to borrow a wheelchair you still use is a very personal action; I would consider it more like loaning a stranger clothes you still wear than like loaning them the car you drive. Derek's willingness to help a client by loaning her his wheelchair surprises me because it seems to me to be beyond what he should be expected to do for his job. My utterance shows that I am wise to the significance of his action: I use the falling intonation on *that's really* [49] to indicate I am finishing the utterance without being able to come up with a suitable adjective. However, my statement could also be interpreted as critical of Derek (though I did not intend it to be so), and thus requiring Russell to defend his actions.

Russell responds with the evaluation *He wasn't ... overly thrilled about it* [51]. The past tense places Derek's emotion back in the storyworld (Russell could have used the present tense since the loan is a current state of affairs). I laugh at the negated overstatement. Russell goes on to reprise (Gee 1989, 1991; Peterson 2000) his small story, with slightly different narrative events and a higher degree of evaluation. He uses the negated clauses, *it wasn't a manufacturer's defect \ or something had broken* [39-40], to evaluate the wheelchair's issues as being the client's fault. He makes this connection by repeating the null-subject *it: it's the girl spilled ... drinks on her chair* [41]. The construction is slightly awkward syntactically, but the null-subject marks the direct contrast between the unrealis events in the negated clauses (which would not be the client's fault) and the actual narrative events (which are). This event, *the girl spilled drinks*, is in the past but is marked as habitual by *multiple times* [57]; the new event that follows, *they keep telling her* [43], is also habitual. As in the first telling, the events are shown to be repeated and typical of the client's character. Russell adds new characters, *they* [58], who can be understood to be people at the wheelchair repair shop, possibly including Derek. These characters speak the indirect constructed dialogue, which also serves as internal evaluation by setting up unrealis habitual events: *if she keeps spilling stuff \ it's going to keep doing this* [59-60]. Having the anonymous characters in the storyworld speak the cause and effect relationship between the client's actions and the wheelchair's issues reinforces the idea that the client is at fault. Russell add his own external evaluation by saying to me: *This is not rocket science \ you spill ... liquid on electric stuff its going* [62-63]. The impersonal *you* helps to place the evaluation outside the storyworld; Russell is inviting my agreement with his negated – and negative – evaluation of the client's actions. I respond by cooperatively overlapping with Russell to finish his utterance: *it's not going to get* [64]. At this point, Russell's reprise of the small story and strong negative

evaluation of the client has ameliorated any perceived criticism of Derek. Russell's and my parallel utterances show our agreement that the client is at fault.

While the first telling of the narrative events focuses on Derek's wheelchair, this re-telling focuses on the client. Until this point, Derek is present in the storyworld of the reprise only during the first evaluation clause. At the end, however, Russell includes Derek in a final event, *he did it* [66], and an evaluation, *he's a nice guy* [67]. These final clauses act as a coda that sums up the point of the narrative. In the opening segment, Russell states that Derek works *to accommodate those* [clients] *when he can, \ like he's given up* [his chair] [11-12]. The small story and its reprise provide an example of Derek doing so, even when a client is at fault.

Russell's final evaluation of Derek as *a nice guy* [67] recasts the events as speaking to Derek's generosity and makes the vicarious narrative about Derek, as well as his back-up wheelchair and the client. In his discussion of the argumentative function of narratives, van Dijk states "stories provide concrete information, which is used as supporting evidence for a more general, argumentative conclusion" (van Dijk 1993: 126). In *his current back-up chair*, the small story and reprise segments serve this function of supporting Russell's points about Derek *putting out fires* [4] in the opening segment and Derek being *a nice guy* [67] in the coda. By re-telling the habitual events, Russell lends more weight to small story and re-connects the events to Derek.

As Derek's best friend, Russell has epistemic rights to talk about him. Russell tells a vicarious narrative in which he exercises those rights by telling about Derek and about Derek's emotions (*he wasn't overly thrilled* [51]). I acknowledge Russell's epistemic authority regarding Derek by asking declarative questions about Derek that assume Russell can confirm the answers. Russell also has epistemic rights to tell me about the client because I am unaware of those events. The narrative events in Russell's small story and its reprise are thus both A-events that only Russell

knows in the interaction and vicarious events that come to him secondhand from someone else's lived experience.

Epistemic rights are another way to understand wiseness. The same strong social network ties that give Russell the right to tell about Derek in general also make Derek Russell's local authority on disability. When Russell talks about disability practices, he draws on his knowledge of Derek's individual practices as A-events, in the sense that they are events known (secondhand) to Russell. I demonstrate my own epistemic right to talk about disability practices in one of my own utterances after Russell's story. Referring back to Derek's generosity, I say: *your chair, you're kinda attached to it ... in more ways than one*. The impersonal *you* figuratively extends the disability practice of using a wheelchair to include Russell, who does not use one. I do identity work for myself and Russell as members of the wise by implying that we are both wise to the importance of wheelchairs as a source of personal mobility. In this utterance, I feel I have the epistemic right to make a comment about a disability practice that I do not use myself because I feel I am wise to it through Claire, my local authority with a disability. Russell answers *Yeah* at the end of my utterance; we both treat this disability practice as something that is known to us and within our epistemic domain to discuss. In the next section, I examine a narrative in which Russell co-constructs a shared disability identity with his local authority, Derek.

6.3.3 Shared identity in Russell's *he asked me what you had*

This personal narrative was told to me during the pair session with Derek and Russell at Derek's apartment. Although the main teller of the narrative is Russell, to some extent it can be considered to be co-told, especially during the orientation when Derek refers to another character and during the coda when Derek provides external evaluation.

In this narrative, Russell's own character – an able-bodied member of the wise – interacts with another member of the wise when Russell and Derek are at a bar. As the teller of the story, Russell makes the point that Derek's medical condition is not particularly salient to Russell; after the story, Derek validates this aspect of his disability identity by saying that neither he himself nor any of his other friends find his medical condition relevant in everyday life.

Narrative: *he asked me what you had*

- 1 **Russell:** A:nd so the guy I was talking to
- 2 I don't even remember his name
- 3 **Derek:** you were talking to Kramer
- 4 **Russell:** No not no some other guy
- 5 um ... I think he was {inaudible} but I don't know if he was ... um ..
- 6 he asked me what you had
- 7 and it seriously took me like ten minutes to think of what his disability was //³³
- 8 [pause 3 tenths]
- 9 {good lord}
- 10 **Derek:** Huh.
- 11 **Russell:** I swear we discussed it like ten minutes ago /@/
- 12 **Derek:** That's the other thing I d-
- 13 I don't think that i-it comes up a lot
- 14 **Russell:** Well I don't think about it so-
- 15 that's why it took me like ten minutes // to figure it out
- 16 [pause 2 tenths]
- 17 "uh: NO no /@/=
- 18 [pause 2 tenths]
- 19 **Derek:** most of my friends th-th-
- 20 **Russell:** ="oh right he has that"
- 21 he was li- and the guy was like "that's what I thought he had cause my son has that too"
- 22 and I was like "oh well you could have like mentioned it /@@@/

³³ // represents only Leslie's non-lexical backchanneling in this narrative

23 ten minutes {on} the time /@@@/

24 I'm fishin for scientific names in my hea:d?" /@@@/

Russell's point – that he does not think about Derek's disability in medical terms – is made in the narrative through his use of referring terms, repetition, and performative features. Russell begins the action of the narrative with the clause: *he asked me what you had* [6]. The emphasis Russell puts on *had* highlights the point of this story: that Derek's underlying medical condition – what he has – is not relevant to Russell and their relationship. It is so far from being salient, in fact, that it is difficult for Russell to remember its name. It only becomes relevant when the *other guy* reveals that his son has the same condition, and thus the stranger is trying to make a solidarity move toward Russell. Throughout the story, the Derek's disability (or medical condition) is referred to but never named. The initial mention is *what you had* [6]; later mentions by Russell include *what his disability was* [7], *we discussed it* [11], *I don't think about it* [14]. Derek, in his utterance above (and throughout the coda segment below), also uses only the pronoun *it* to refer to the medical name of his disability: *I don't think that it comes up a lot* [13]. Even after Russell remembers the name in the storyworld, Russell as the teller does not reveal it in the constructed dialogue: Russell's character says *he has that* [20] and the guy's character says *my son has that* [21]. Russell shows that the name of Derek's disability is non-salient by never mentioning it within the storyworld or the interaction.

In the narrative events, Russell both describes and performs his character's inability to think of the name. He highlights the amount of time it takes by repeating *ten minutes* three times: *took me like ten minutes* [7, 15]; *ten minutes* [23]. He performs his hesitation in the storyworld with three noticeable pauses in the telling. After the first mention of *ten minutes* [7], Russell pauses [8], and then gives a whispered exclamation [9] of frustration, performing his difficulty. After the second

mention of *ten minutes* [15], he pauses again [16], and constructs dialogue in which he is rejecting various possibilities “*uh: NO no*” [17]. In response to this, I as the listener laugh [17]. He pauses again after that [18] (for long enough that Derek begins speaking) before using constructed dialogue to perform his remembering the name: “*oh right*” [20]. The entire narrative both tells about and shows Russell *fishin for scientific names in my head* [24].

Russell’s interaction with the guy’s character in the story demonstrates that Russell is wise to Derek’s disability. In some ways, this spontaneously-told narrative is similar to those I elicited by asking *has anyone, like a stranger or a kid, ever asked you why you use a wheelchair?*, with one key difference: the teller is not the person who uses a wheelchair. In this case, it is an able-bodied person who is asked by a stranger about his friend’s disability. Russell does not highlight this angle to his story; the emphasis is not on *he asked me what you had*. The lack of emphasis itself, however, suggests that this is not a surprising event. Within the storyworld, the guy, by asking, assumes that Russell does know Derek’s medical condition. In the interaction, neither Russell nor Derek himself raises the question of whether Russell is allowed to give this potentially private information to a stranger. Evidently, Russell has the right to talk about Derek’s disability. According to recent work on positioning theory, speakers construct their identities by taking up positions that are defined by the ascription of rights and duties (Moghaddam et al. 2007; Harré et al. 2009; Harré 2012). The act of asking ascribes to Russell the duty of naming Derek’s disability and Russell accepts this responsibility by spending ten minutes trying to answer the question. Russell not only knows information about Derek’s disability but shares in the epistemic right to discuss it. Thus, Russell is positioned here as a member of the wise.

Russell's understanding of disability mirrors Derek's in a way that shows the shared identity they have constructed around disability. Russell connects *his disability* [7] to *scientific names* [24]; unlike in the academic model I use, the word *disability* here can be used synonymously with a medical condition. Derek uses the word the same way in the data; for instance he refers to his *disability* as the medical condition *CP* (cerebral palsy). The main point for this narrative, however, is that both Derek and Russell believe that Derek's underlying medical condition is not something that is particularly relevant to everyday life. This is not to say that disability, in the sense I use it of practices, assistive devices, and accommodations that Derek uses in everyday life, is not relevant to Derek and Russell. On the contrary, they tell many narratives that show how Derek's disability affects them individually and together. Derek's wheelchair, a practice, is referred to many times in the data from both participants, but his cerebral palsy, a medical condition, is not. As Derek states during Russell's telling narrative, he doesn't *think that i-it comes up a lot* [13].

Immediately after Russell finishes telling the narrative events, Derek begins to talk about his and his friends' attitude toward his disability. This segment is co-told with Russell and shows the tellers' shared disability identity. Derek begins it by speaking about *a lot of my friends* [25], picking up on his earlier utterance about *most of my friends* [19], which was truncated during Russell's telling. Derek generalizes how his friends talk about his disability, making the specific actions in Russell's telling into habitual events. In this way, the short unit of talk that follows serves as a long coda to the narrative, continuing the construction of a disability identity. After it, the topic is changed to talk about Russell's life, including his choice to transfer colleges from the University of Virginia (*UVA* [line 37]).

Narrative Coda: *he asked me what you had*

- 25 **Derek:** Well and I think that goes for a lot of my friends like
26 I don't tend to think about it //
27 so: they don't tend to think about it
28 cause I don't harp on it
29 I never have ..
30 you know um cause I just don't have time.
31 .. um and miss out on a lot- a lot of things if I felt sorry for myself so I don't. uh
32 But do I ever wonder? Yes.
33 But no I don't- d- I don't feel sorry for myself. //
34 **Russell:** That's like saying do I ever wonder, {progressively lower}
35 **Derek:** Yeah. If I had been a parking lot attendant. /@@@/
36 **Russell:** No: .. it's more of like ..
37 do I wonder what would've- what my life would be like had I finished at UVA.

Directly before the coda, Russell uses the quotative *like* to construct his character's internal dialogue -- or attitude (Cochrane 2006) -- towards the narrative events as *fishin for scientific names in my head* [24]. Derek responds *I think that goes for a lot of my friends* [25]. The *that* seems to refer to the point of (his and) Russell's narrative. Derek uses paradigmatic repetition (Tannen 2007) to reinforce this point: *I don't tend to think about it \ so: they don't tend to think about it* [26-7]. He then uses the structure of *I don't tend to think about it* [26] a final time by adding *I don't harp on it* [28]. Since Derek, as the local authority on disability, does not dwell on his medical condition, the friends in his social network do not dwell on it either. Derek essentially is asserting here both that his medical condition is not relevant to everyday interactions and that those who are wise to his disability share this understanding.

Derek also repeats the idea that he doesn't feel *sorry for* [him]self [31, 33]. The first time he says it is as a hypothetical (*if I felt sorry for myself* [31]) as he is searching for words. The second time he says it is as a negation (*I don't feel sorry for myself* [33]) within a question and answer

sequence. The hypothetical and the negative indicate that Derek believes someone might think he feels sorry for himself, and he is refuting this idea.

This repetition of *sorry for myself* is connected to *wondering*. The concept of *wondering* also occurred in the data from Derek's first individual session (transcript in Chapter 1). In that data, Derek gives a pair of question and answer units:

Do I wonder what'd be like? Yeah.

Do- Do I necessarily- Am I bitter about not being able to change it? No.

The structure in the present data is similar, with a question and answer in the first intonation unit and an answer to an implied question in the second:

But do I ever wonder? Yes.

But no I don't- I don't feel sorry for myself

The content of these *wondering* utterances is also remarkably similar. Derek does not state precisely what he wonders in either of them (or in the surrounding discourse). In keeping with his stated attitude, he does not talk about his medical condition or disability directly in these segments. However, Derek states in both that he does wonder what life would be like without a disability but that he does not feel negatively about living with a disability. The repetition across two different conversations suggests that Derek often uses this pair of questions and answers to discuss *wondering*.

Russell begins to talk about *wondering* by using a comparison, which Derek finishes for him: *if I had been a parking lot attendant* [35]. Derek's utterance ends in a final intonation that would serve to end the topic. My laughter at Derek's comparison acknowledges the implication that the speculation is idle. However, Russell rejects Derek's hypothetical situation with an elongated *No* [36]. He instead offers the alternative comparison of *what my life would be like had I finished at*

UVA [37]. This comparison is interesting in two respects. First, Russell is making a comparison to his own life: Derek's life with or without a disability compared to Russell's life with or without graduating from UVA. Derek's offered comparison was either to Derek's own life (with the pronoun *I*) or to a generally different life (none of the interlocutors is a parking lot attendant). Second, Russell mentioned in this session that he finished his bachelor's degree at another university after starting at UVA. The comparison is neutral, since there was no negative consequence to Russell not graduating from UVA. Russell is saying that Derek's life would be different, but not necessarily better or worse. Derek's dismissive comparison and Russell's unmarked one characterizes disability (in the sense in which I use the term) as a neutral difference. In the narrative and its coda, Russell and Derek construct a shared disability identity, in which disability is a different but neutral way of living in the world and the underlying medical condition is not relevant to everyday life.

6.4 Discussion

In the analysis, I have emphasized the concept of able-bodied people being wise to disability. As the teller of *we call each other gimps*, Min displays the wiseness of her nephew and describes the wiseness of her family in general. As the teller of *his current back-up chair*, Russell both shows his epistemic authority to discuss Derek and displays his wiseness to disability. I also do identity work with regard to my own wiseness in that interaction. In *he asked me what you had*, Russell's wiseness is displayed through the shared disability identity he co-constructs with Derek. The concept of wiseness provides an understanding of how both people with disabilities and people without them can participate in a disability community.

The point of Min's narrative, as stated in the abstract, is that her family have always been around disabilities and always joked about them. In the storyworld, the nephew's actions embody this

form of disability discourse; his constructed dialogue (*what did I say*) demonstrates the attitude that jokes are acceptable. The constructed dialogue of other people (*I can't say this*) contrasts with Min's family's use of jokes and in-group terms such as *gimp*. Min is the only person with a mobility-related physical disability in her family; when she engages in disability discourse, she often does so with able-bodied people. Moreover, through their relationship to Min, her nephew and other family members also engage in it. She tells her narrative to illustrate their wiseness. In Min's narrative, part of "telling disability" is telling about the wise.

Russell's vicarious narrative, *his current back-up chair*, displays his epistemic right to tell about Derek's experiences and to retell narrative events he has heard from Derek. Russell's epistemic rights to talk about Derek come from the same source as Russell's wiseness: his close relationship with Derek. As in the vicarious narratives told by Min in Chapter 5, Russell's vicarious narrative in this chapter allows him to extend his repertoire of narratives. Unlike Min, however, whenever Russell tells narratives about disability, he has to draw on other's lived experience. By telling about Derek and Derek's client, Russell can create a characters who use disability practices that he himself does not participate in. Thus, Russell's vicarious narrative not only shows that he has epistemic rights with regard to Derek, it shows that his repertoire of storyworlds includes disability discourse.

In *he asked me what you had*, Russell performs the same disability identity that Derek displays in the coda and elsewhere in the data set. Being wise opens up the possibility for a person without a disability to co-construct an identity around disability. For Russell, this is a disability identity shared with Derek; Derek is his local authority on what it means to have a disability. The stranger in the storyworld -- who may be wise to his son's disability -- does not share Russell and

Derek's attitude that the name of Derek's medical condition is not relevant. The stranger's approach to disability appears to differ from Derek's and Russell's.

Both as the teller and as a character in the storyworld, Russell displays a shared disability identity and assumes the right to talk about Derek's medical condition. Significantly, Russell has no legal or biological relationship to Derek that would give him the responsibility to speak for Derek. But because Russell is wise to Derek's experience of disability, his character is able to take on this responsibility when asked by the stranger. The shared disability identity has spread through a strong tie of Derek's social network -- through Derek and Russell's friendship -- by means of their frequent interactions. In this narrative, disability is being "told" within the social network, by both an individual with a disability and his wise able-bodied friend.

In these narratives, able-bodied people display wisdom to disability as an aspect of their constellation of identities. In each case, these wise identities depend upon the identity of someone with a disability. Min's nephew can use the in-group term *gimp* because of his relationship to Min, who has privileged use of the word as someone to whom it can be applied. Russell gains his knowledge of the in-group word *chair* through his close friendship with Derek. I also display a disability identity through my use of in-group words, as well as through my assumptions about the significance of lending a wheelchair. Like Russell, I have a wise identity through my friendship with a person with a disability; because both Russell's friend Derek and my friend Claire use power wheelchairs, Russell and I have show some shared ideas about that practice. Russell's wisdom is even more apparent in the narrative he co-tells with Derek: his ability to co-construct a disability identity is evidence of his wisdom. Since an individual's set of disability practices are unique, each member of the wise will have somewhat different ways of speaking about disability practices: for example, my use of the verb *walk* with a wheelchair as

opposed to Russell's typical use of *ride*. Despite having some common ideas about wheelchairs, Russell and I have different understandings of disability. The particular way each of us views disability practices is based on the way our individual local authorities experience them. The shared identity that Russell constructs is shared specifically with Derek, shaped by Derek's disability identity. Wiseness is conferred through strong social network ties with a person with a disability and acceptance by them as wise; thus, it is an identity that rests on someone else's identity and on honorary membership within a community.

Both the storyworld in Min's *we call each other gimps* and the storyworld in Russell's *he asked me what you had* show people with disabilities and people without them participating in a community. The narratives feature protagonists who are able-bodied members of the first-order social networks of a person with a disability. Moreover, the third-person character of Min's nephew and the first-person character of Russell are also members of the wise. In both storyworlds, the characters are in a public setting: Min's nephew is at a restaurant (where the presence of strangers is implied); Russell is at a bar, speaking to a stranger. These settings allow the discourse of the members of the social network to be contrasted to "others" (Ochs et al. 1992; Bamberg 2011a). In *we call each other gimps*, the contrast is between the nephew's epistemic right -- as a member of the wise -- to make jokes about disability. In *he asked me what you had*, the contrast occurs when a wise stranger's question about a medical condition conflicts with Russell's shared identity of disability in which medical conditions are not relevant. Both of these narratives lay out a view of the social order that highlights the distinction between a community and those outside it. The community consists both of the wise and the person whose disability they are wise to.

Disability discourse takes place within linguistic communities: geographic speech communities, communities of practice, imagined communities, and social networks. For narrative and identity construction -- “telling disability” -- the relevant communities include not only people with disabilities themselves but able-bodied people as well. These able-bodied people may be members of a first-order social network that includes a person with a disability. When they engage in disability discourse, they have the opportunity to become familiar with the experience of having a disability, and to accept and be accepted by a disability community. In other words, they can become wise. In the narratives in this chapter, the protagonists or tellers are wise to the experience and practices of a particular local authority on disability. As the wise, the protagonists in the first two narratives participate in discourse about disability. In Min’s narrative, the nephew uses jokes and in-group terms; in Russell’s first narrative, both he and I display aspects of a wise identity; and in Russell’s second narrative, Russell – as one who is wise – participates in co-constructing a shared identity and “telling disability” himself.

6.5 Summary and implications

This chapter has examined narratives about people with disabilities and the wise. It has discussed linguistic communities of people with disabilities, with a particular focus on their social networks; it proposes specific definitions of the concepts of “the wise” and “shared identity” that can be applied to discourse about physical disability. The analysis applied the concepts of the wise, epistemic rights, and shared identity to narratives that feature able-bodied characters from the social networks of people with disabilities. It found evidence of wiseness in characters without disabilities and of a shared disability identity among an able-bodied teller and his friend with a disability. I argue that these narratives are examples of how disability discourse and a

shared disability identity occur in a broader community of people with disabilities and their wise family members and friends.

I have discussed possibilities for approaching people with disabilities as a linguistic community. Taking this viewpoint is productive for two reasons. First, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) argued in relation to communities of practice and gender identity, this viewpoint moves the study of disability identity away from abstractions about an undefined population and instead grounds the research in a particular community and its interactions. Even if a community of practice is not chosen as the best model for the disability community, discussing the community as a community is crucial for research. Second, identifying a linguistic community, as opposed to another type of group, keeps the research focused on the language of (and about) the community; it ensures that the research is comparable to other sociolinguistic studies about identity and community. In the discussion, I suggested that the disability community may be styled an “imagined community of practice”.

The concept of the wise harmonizes with this approach to people with disabilities as a linguistic community. It provides a way to systematically include individuals who already appear in disability research, such as parents and caregivers. At the same time, it places an even stronger emphasis on the person or people with a disability, since they are the local authorities whose experience and acceptance confer wisdom. Recognizing that individuals are wise to disability only through their engagement in the community allows the wise to be included in studies on disability, while still establishing clearly that people with disabilities are the central members of such a community. This approach has implications for broadening the range of participants of studies that focus on individuals with disabilities without taking into account their social

networks and of studies that focus on caregivers or parents without incorporating their local authorities on disability.

I have suggested in this chapter that epistemic rights can be a way of understanding what it means to be wise. An able-bodied person's measure of acceptance into a community of people with disabilities could be shown through their epistemic rights to use in-group terms and engage in disability discourse about the set of practices they are wise to. Because the borrowing of epistemic rights happens within a relationship in a social network, I propose the term 'local authority' to refer to the person with a disability whose practices an able-bodied person becomes wise to. While I have examined epistemic rights in the analysis, more work remains to be done with regard to local authorities and the wise.

Finally, separating the concept of shared identity from group identity has implications beyond linguistic research on the community of people with disabilities. It allows for the sort of analysis done by Gordon (2004), who showed a shared political identity within a family; the members co-constructed their political identity, not just their group identity as a family. My analysis also examines co-construction of a specific shared identity within a group, in this case, a shared disability identity. It opens up possibilities for exploring a shared identity among other groups who have "wise" members, since the identity can be shared even when the qualifications for group membership may not be.

In the next chapter, I complete the analysis by tying together themes of disability identity and vicarious narrative from across the three analysis chapters. I discuss identity construction among people with disabilities particularly in encounters with people without disabilities, both strangers and the wise. I conclude the study by pointing out the limitations of the study and proposing its wider implications.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In our individual session, Russell encapsulated the approach to disability that I have taken in this study. He talked about moving into a new house with front steps that Derek's wheelchair cannot navigate. Russell commented: *we're going to have to figure out- \ but it shouldn't be that difficult [...]\ he'll just need to bring his ramp*. As a member of the wise, Russell looks on disability as a part of everyday life that is centered on practices -- such as carrying a portable ramp in his van -- that Derek uses to move through the world. Russell himself is wise to those practices because he is part of a linguistic community with Derek. As a member of the wise myself, I have focused my analysis on everyday disability discourse that takes place among people with disabilities and their wise friends and family. In this concluding chapter, I bring together themes from the analysis chapters and give their implications.

In Section 7.2, I lay out the major themes of the study, tying together strands from past literature and current findings. In Section 7.3, I discuss limitations of the study. In Section 7.4, I consider implications of the findings for linguistic theory, methodology, and practice. Finally, in Section 7.5, I conclude with directions for future research.

7.2 Review of themes

In this section, I review the findings of all the analysis chapters thematically. My study has taken a sociolinguistic approach to narrative and identity, with a particular focus on disability discourse and disability communities. I begin by discussing third-person characters as a resource for identity construction in narrative (Section 7.2.1). I continue with a discussion of vicarious narrative: how I define it and how I have demonstrated its use as a site of identity work (Section

7.2.2). Next, I review my approach to disability discourse, including my model of disability as practice and its application to the example narratives in the analysis (Section 7.2.3). I renew my argument for viewing people with disabilities in terms of linguistic communities; I also point out the presence of the wise in those communities (Section 7.2.4). I bring together the themes of narrative and identity, and disability discourse and community, under the theme of disability identity (Section 7.2.5). I summarize the findings on disability identities, wise identities, and shared disability identities from all three analysis chapters.

7.2.1 Identity work using third-person characters

In both personal and vicarious narratives, third-person characters can be used to support the identity work of the teller. In the personal narratives *parents that pull their kids away*, *parents will pull the kid away*, and *parents are like “don’t stare”* (Chapter 4), the tellers use the able-bodied third-person characters of the parents and the children as resources for positioning. Davies and Harré (1990) propose that speakers can position both their own selves and each other’s selves in conversation. After being positioned by another, a speaker may refuse that position and re-position their self. In Chapter 4, I showed that the third-person characters position the teller’s characters in the storyworld. The teller’s characters then refuse and reposition their selves; these positions in the storyworlds build toward higher-level identity work. In Derek’s narrative *parents that pull their kids away*, Derek positions himself as a “teacher” who can alleviate ignorance about disabilities. Interestingly, Derek never mentions disability directly, though he accepts my mention of his *wheelchair* as what the children ask about in the storyworld. Derek’s position of teacher is taken up in response to the questions from the third-person character of the children. Moreover, he positions himself along a storyline of “curious child and willing teacher” that is created in opposition to the storyline of “rude child and

responsible parent” along which the parents’ character position him. The positioning done by the parents’ character allows Derek as the teller to juxtapose the positioning done by his character. In Tawnya’s narrative *parents will pull the kid away*, the parents’ character positions Tawnya as a danger to the children because of her wheelchair. Tawnya refuses this position and re-positions herself as an “advocate” for people with disabilities in the irrealis segment of her narrative. As the teller, Tawnya uses the parents’ character as a resource. Through their constructed dialogue and thoughts, Tawnya introduces ideas that neither her character in the storyworld nor even her self in the interaction can voice. In Min’s narrative *parents are like “don’t stare”*, the third-person characters position Min as a stranger while she positions herself as willing to engage with them. The third-person character’s positioning of Min as well as her positioning of herself result in an overall position that can be characterized as an “ambassador”. As the teller, Min uses the positioning moves of both her own character and the third-person characters to shape the position she takes up. In these personal narratives, the positioning moves introduced by the third-person characters require the teller’s characters to negotiate their own identities. When Derek, Tawnya, and Min take up positions as teacher, advocate, and ambassador respectively, they are each able to add these positions as aspects of the overall “constellation” (De Fina et al. 2006) of their disability identity. Thus third-person characters are a vital resource for doing positioning in narratives. This dynamic positioning between the characters in the storyworld is significant not only to identity work in personal narratives but also to identity work in vicarious narratives in which there are only third-person characters.

7.2.2 Vicarious narrative

I define vicarious narratives as narratives about someone else’s lived experience. This definition encompasses the type of narratives that previous studies have termed “narratives of vicarious

experience” (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Norrick 2013), “non-participant narratives” (Linde 1996), and “third person narratives” (Cheshire 2000; Norrick 2000; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). I do not define vicarious narratives based on their grammatical person, because of evidence that they may be told in first- or second-person as well as third-person (see Linde 1996). Neither do I define them based on their point of view, since there is evidence that point of view can vary in vicarious narrative (see Cheshire 2000). Instead, I consider the identifying characteristic of vicarious narratives to be whether the teller experienced the events of the narrative. These events may include those that the teller witnessed or those that the teller learned of second-hand (many studies do not include witnessed events in the ‘vicarious’ category: see Cheshire (2000) on third person narratives; cf. Linde (1996) on non-participant narratives). However, I do not include narratives of fictional events, which I claim require separate consideration (see Labov and Waletzky (1967) on narratives told about TV shows; cf. Bamberg and Reilly (1996) on third person narratives told about a picture book). By my definition, the events in vicarious narratives were experienced by someone, though not by the teller. Thus, in contrast to Norrick’s definition of personal narratives as stories in which “the teller is the central actor or affected participant” (2000: 149), vicarious narratives are those in which a third person character is the protagonist.

Previous work on narrative discourse has largely focused on personal narratives, following Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) finding that narratives of personal experience showed coherent structure while narratives of vicarious experience did not (but note that their examples of vicarious narrative were about fictional events; cf. Labov [2004]). Vicarious narratives have been deemed to be lacking in structural elements such as evaluation and coherence (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Norrick 2000) and in sensory details (Chafe 1994). As Labov (2004) argues, one

task of narrative is to transfer experience from the teller to the audience; he finds this is possible in the Laidlaw narrative (borrowed from Macaulay [1987]) in which Laidlaw tells the story of her mother's experiences of discovering Laidlaw's father's death. Labov (2004) is ambiguous as to whether this is a personal or vicarious narrative in his terms. Norrick (2013) labels the Laidlaw narrative one of vicarious experience, but claims that it is a special case because Laidlaw is telling about her mother's experiences. The close family connection gives the narrative a clear standpoint from which it can be told, according to Norrick (2013), just as in a personal narrative the lamination of the teller and protagonist roles provides a natural connection between the teller's and protagonist's perspectives. Norrick (2013) argues that typically narratives of vicarious experience lack a standpoint for evaluation and that their tellers do not have particular "telling rights" or epistemic authority to tell them. Although he shows that personal and vicarious narratives fulfill several of the same functions in conversation, Norrick concludes that vicarious narratives "have no automatic relation to the speaker's identity" (2013: 404). In sum, vicarious narratives have been less studied than personal narratives and are often considered less of a resource for tellers to create coherence, transfer lived experiences, and construct identities. Nevertheless, I have shown that speakers create and display their personal identities within vicarious narratives.

I find that tellers use vicarious narratives to expand their repertoire of storyworlds beyond their own experiences. Schiffrin (1996) proposes that telling a narrative creates a storyworld and thus an opportunity to place characters within a social order. She argues that personal narratives thus are a site for constructing identities. I suggest that this is true for vicarious narratives as well: tellers borrow the lived experiences of others to create storyworlds and use them as resources for identity construction. In the example narratives *she had the child for her* and *she was like me*, the

teller Min uses the experiences of other young women with disabilities to create storyworld events she would not have access to in personal narratives. For instance, Min tells a personal narrative, *I'm never getting married*, to display her attitude toward marriage at the beginning of a story sequence. Immediately afterward, however, Min tells the vicarious narrative *she had the child for her*. Min uses the experiences of the third person protagonist Pauline to support Min's own decision not to get married. Pauline marries and starts a family in the storyworld, events which Min cannot tell about from her own experience. By comparing herself to Pauline with respect to having a physical disability and by contrasting her point of view to Pauline's with respect to having a child, Min is able to do identity work within the borrowed storyworld. In the storyworld, Min places Pauline in a situation that shows negative consequences of Pauline's decision to have a child; in the evaluation, Min describes Pauline's actions as selfish. By telling this vicarious narrative about Pauline, Min is able to construct her own an identity as a person with a disability who has made a responsible decision not to start a family. Likewise, in the vicarious narrative *she was like me*, Min aligns herself with the third person protagonist Tara in certain respects: Tara has a physical disability, uses the computer often, and is an adult with agency. These similarities help Min to use the vicarious events to construct her own identity. At the same time, Min shows the differences between herself and Tara, such as Tara's decision to participate in a day program. In this way, Min navigates her identity in Bamberg's (2011a) second dilemmatic space of sameness/difference. She is able to do so because of the presence of a third person character who is both similar and different to herself. Telling a vicarious narrative allows tellers to navigate their own identity within a storyworld made up of lived experiences they have not had themselves.

7.2.3 Disability discourse

The narratives that I have analyzed in this study are examples of what I have called ‘disability discourse’. Disability discourse, as I use it, involves talk that can only be understood in relation to an individual’s experience of disability. In modeling that experience, I highlight the set of practices and strategies that individuals use to accommodate their physical impairment(s) as they move through everyday life. Thus, I emphasize disability as practice. This view of disability is reflected in the participants’ narratives.

In Chapter 1, I distinguished between medical models and social models of disability. The medical model has been rejected by both disability studies scholars (see chapters in Shakespeare (ed.) 1998 and Albrecht et al. (ed.) 2001) and disability activists. The medical model equates disability with an underlying disease, disorder, or injury, locates disability in an individual person, and predicts negative social consequences for that individual as an inevitable result of having a disability. In contrast, social construction models of disability reject the idea that disability is a problem inherent to an individual. They view disability as multi-faceted, rather than strictly medical, and place responsibility for negative social consequences of disability on society.

I introduced the minority group model of disability as the social construction model of disability that is currently prominent in the United States. This model asserts that people with disabilities undergo the same discrimination that affect other minority groups and should have the same rights and protections given to other minorities (Hahn 1997; Bickenbach 2001). The minority group model has been particularly crucial to securing legal protections, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). Both my four-category model of an individual’s experience of

disability and my approach to people with disabilities as a linguistic community are compatible with this macro-level view of people with disabilities.

One criticism of social models of disability is that by focusing on disability as a sociocultural construct, they ignore aspects of disability such as chronic pain and progressive changes.

Echoing the concerns of disability studies scholars such as Shakespeare (2006), Ramanathan and Makoni (2007), and Okada (2011) have argued that a strictly social model is inadequate for capturing the physical experience of disability. Ramanathan (2009) proposes greater attention to how bodies are “languaged”. Attending to their critiques, I propose a model for the individual experience of disability (see Table 1.2.1b) which follows earlier models (e.g. Nagi 1965; Kasnitz and Shuttleworth (2001) in using multiple categories. It considers physical, individual, and social components of disability. I propose medical condition, impairment, disability, and external factors as the relevant categories. While medical condition, impairment, and disability pertain to an individual, external factors pertain to society, making this a socially constructed model of disability.

The emphasis of this model is on disability as practice. The medical model uses the term ‘disability’ for a medical diagnosis. Some social models use it to mean the social disadvantages that attach to having an impairment. These usages make the term ‘disability’ synonymous with limitations, which is problematic in light of the widespread and accepted use of term ‘people with disabilities’. Discussing disability as practice, by contrast, emphasizes the ways in which the participants choose to “compose” their lives (to borrow Bateson’s (2001) metaphor). It permits a focus on the whole person and their lived experience. Using this model, a person with a physical disability is a person who uses an individual set of practices and strategies to accommodate their physical impairment(s) as they move through everyday life.

I define disability discourse as discourse in which the model of disability becomes relevant to understanding what is being said. In Chapter 1, I gave the example of Tawnya using the novel expression *we gimped out the boat* about going on a cruise with several friends with disabilities. This is a direct reference to disability that is only interpretable given the knowledge that Tawnya has a disability herself and has the epistemic right to use the in-group term. I also gave the example of Russell telling a story, *the sidewalk was like three inches*, about Derek moving off a curb onto a cobblestone street. Derek's individual disability practices -- such as using a power wheelchair that has difficulty negotiating three-inch curbs and cobblestones -- must be salient if the point of Russell's story -- that both Derek and Russell are behaving wildly -- is to be understood.

My model's emphasis on disability as practice is reflected in the analysis. In Chapter 4, I pointed out that the first-person characters with disabilities did not typically mention their disabilities directly. Instead, the most explicit mentions of disability were made by third-person characters without disabilities. For example, just before telling *parents are like "don't stare"*, Min tells a small story about a termite inspector who asked about her *type of disability*. Min's character does not answer directly in the storyworld; as the listener, I only know that Min named a medical condition because the third-person character's subsequent dialogue mentions *muscular dystrophy*. In the example narratives in this chapter, the only teller to mention disability directly does so to refute the third-person characters' false assumptions. In the irrealis segment of *parents will pull the kid away*, Tawnya re-positions herself as someone who is not going to run over children in response to the parents' character positioning of her as a danger. She mentions disability practice directly when she says *if I had thick glasses on that were dark \ they might be worried \ but I also wouldn't be frigging driving a wheelchair*. Here, Tawnya suggests that her

own disability practice of using a wheelchair is safe unless it is combined with another disability. Interestingly, Tawnya uses *thick glasses*, a practice, to imply blindness; she does not name a medical condition. This emphasis on disability as a set of practices rather than disability as a medical diagnosis is consistent in my data.

In Chapter 5, however, Min does mention the medical condition category of disabilities in narratives where it is relevant to the narrative events. In *she had the child for her*, Min mentions that the protagonists' medical condition was progressive and affected her heart; in *she was like me*, Min tells about a seizure the protagonist had. Beyond these necessary mentions, Min typically mentions the disability status and practices of the characters less explicitly. In *I'm never getting married*, Min interrupts a complicating action clause to interject the orientation clause *oh we were all disabled*, almost as an afterthought, to strengthen the comparison between herself and the third-person characters. In *she was like me*, Min describes a *day program* as something that *people with no life attend*. It can be understood from context that the *program* is a disability practice for the *people* but Min does not mention disability explicitly. In Chapter 6, Russell co-tells with Derek a narrative about disability discourse, *he asked me what you had*. Russell and Derek construct a shared disability identity around the idea that Derek's medical condition (which they call his *disability*) is irrelevant in everyday conversation. My model emphasizes disability as practice to better reflect the lived experience of individuals with disabilities.

7.2.4 Linguistic communities of disability

Disability discourse takes place in communities of people with disabilities and the wise. I have considered how people with disabilities can be understood as a linguistic community. One way to discuss people with disabilities is as a community of practice, "a collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor" (Eckert 2006: 18) and who share

experiences and sense-making. This is in accord with a view of disability as practice, although it should be noted that the set of practices that different individuals with disabilities use will necessarily be varied. The difficulty with this approach is that a community of practice, even a virtual or online one, is expected to interact linguistically. People with disabilities may live in families and geographic communities in which the other members are able-bodied. All the participants with disabilities in this study identified themselves as people with disabilities; they see themselves as belonging to a community which is larger than the individuals they can meet and interact with. I suggested that community of practice may be applied to people with disabilities in conjunction with Anderson's concept of imagined communities, which are "distinguished ... by the style in which they are imagined" (1983: 49). In a sense, people with disabilities are an imagined community of practice that distinguishes itself by the use of practices, accommodations, and adaptations to move through the world with physical or mental impairments.

The social networks of people with disabilities are also a community in which both disability discourse and regular linguistic interaction occur. People with disabilities belong to social networks, an "aggregate of relationships contracted with others" (Milroy and Llamas 2008: 549), which include people without disabilities. Since there is regular linguistic interaction between members of a social network with strong ties to each other, it is in interaction with these members -- whether disabled or able-bodied -- that disability discourse and disability identity construction takes place.

Following Goffman (1963), I have used term 'wise' to apply to able-bodied people who, through their close social network ties to people with disabilities, gain an understanding of the experience of having a disability and a measure of acceptance in an (imagined) disability community.

Through these same social network ties, the wise may be able to borrow the epistemic authority to talk about disability. Goffman (1963) shows this borrowing in an example taken from Birdwhistell (1955) in which the (presumably European American) narrator gains the epistemic right to use in-group terms for his African American friends through his relationship with them. The parallel example in the analysis is Min's narrative *we call each other gimps*, in which her close family members like her nephew have the epistemic right to use in-group terms such as *gimp* by virtue of being wise to Min's disability. The same indicator of wiseness can be seen in Russell's use of words like *chair* for *wheelchair* and my own use of *walk* for the movement of a wheelchair. Like Min's nephew, Russell and I are each close to a person with a disability and are wise to that person's disability. I proposed the term 'local authority' for the person with the disability from whom an able-bodied person acquires wiseness: knowledge of a set of disability practices; epistemic rights to engage in in-group disability discourse; and a measure of acceptance in a community of disability. Wiseness is worth investigating – especially in a study of identity – because it is an aspect of a person's identity that depends on someone else's prior identity work.

7.2.5 Disability identities

The identity work that I have examined in Chapters 4 and 5 creates and displays aspects of the tellers' disability identities. I understand a disability identity as one of many identities an individual may have and as itself a constellation of lower-level positionings and local identities. In Chapter 4, I applied Bamberg's (1997a) model to analyze how disability identities for Derek, Tawnya, and Min emerged from local identity work done through positioning (Davies and Harré 1990). In Chapter 5, I examined how a disability identity emerged from Min's navigation of Bamberg's (2011a) dilemmatic spaces. In Chapter 6, I explored wise identities in Min's narrative

about her family and Russell's narratives about Derek. In the narrative Russell co-told with Derek, I investigated a shared disability identity, which is co-constructed by both tellers.

In their habitual narratives in Chapter 4, Derek, Tawnya, and Min 'tell disability' by positioning their selves in storyworlds with able-bodied third-person characters and interactions with an able-bodied researcher (me). As discussed, all three use dynamic positioning between the characters in the storyworld to do identity work. They also take up positions in the interaction that parallel their positions in the storyworld. Derek, as "teacher", focuses on the children's character and his desire to tell them about his disability; Tawnya, as "advocate", has greater concern for refuting the misunderstandings that the parents – and able-bodied people in general – have of her as a person using a wheelchair; Min, as "ambassador", shows some distance between herself and the able-bodied characters but then bridges the gap. These local positions -- which may be characterized as "teacher" (Derek), "advocate" (Tawnya), and "ambassador" (Min) -- shape what kind of disability identity each teller constructs in their ongoing disability discourse. Each of the tellers add to the constellation of their disability identities by telling these narratives about encounters with able-bodied strangers.

In her narratives in Chapter 5, Min 'tells disability' in narratives that feature third-person characters with disabilities. In *I'm never getting married* and *she had the child for her*, Min adds her attitude toward marriage and starting a family to the constellation of her disability identity. She places this attitude in relation to having a disability by navigating the dilemmatic space (Bamberg 2011a) of sameness and difference. In *I'm never getting married*, Min directly mentions that the third-person characters of her friends -- who wish to get married -- have disabilities. By pointing this out, Min makes it clear that having a disability does not prevent a person from wanting to be married. Rather, Min creates an individual disability identity that is

the ‘same’ as her friends with respect to their disability status and ‘different’ from them with respect to planning to be married. In *she had the child for her*, however, Min connects her personal decision to her disability status through the experiences of the protagonist Pauline, whose disability status is the ‘same’ as Min’s (though her disability is not). Min vicariously uses Pauline’s experiences to show negative consequences of someone with a disability getting married and starting a family. Min strongly and repeatedly evaluates Pauline’s decision to do so as *selfish*, in contrast with Min’s own attitude. In the narrative *she was like me*, Min navigates both the dilemmatic space of sameness/difference and the dilemmatic space of agency. Min asserts the agentive aspect of her disability identity through the protagonist Tara’s experiences. Although Min herself lives at home, she is able to explore agency through Tara’s experience of moving away from home. Min navigates ‘sameness’ through her and Tara’s common disability status and through their agency. She navigates ‘difference’ with regard to Tara’s attendance at a day program; Min constructs a disability identity as someone who is not the kind of person who attends a program. By telling narratives about other people with disabilities, Min is able to construct her own disability identity.

In Chapter 6, the focus of the analysis shifts from identity construction of people with disabilities to identity construction of the wise. In the narrative *we call each other gimps*, Min displays the wiseness of her nephew and other close family members. Russell constructs his own wise identity in *his current back-up chair* and *he asked me what you had*. As the interlocutor in *his current back-up chair*, I also display a wise identity. As I have argued, these wise identities depend upon the nephew’s, Russell’s, and my close connection to a person with a disability identity. In this chapter, I also investigated the co-construction of a shared disability identity among a person with a disability and a member of the wise. As with group or community

identities, a shared identity is built by affirming what the group has in common, such as a shared moral stance (Ochs and Capps 2001). However, I separate a shared identity from a group identity for which the identity is connected to being an individual member of that group. Gordon (2004) makes a similar point although she does not make the same distinction between shared and group identity as terms. Gordon shows the co-construction of a shared political identity among the members of a family. Crucially, the shared identity extends to the four-year-old son, who constructs the same political identity as his parents even though he cannot participate in any political practices. In the narrative *he asked me what you had*, Russell and Derek construct a shared disability identity, in which Derek's underlying medical condition is not relevant to everyday life and his set of disability practices is a different but neutral way of living in the world. Although Russell does not have a disability, he is able to enter into aspects of Derek's disability identity through their close relationship. Notably, the shared disability identity that Derek and Russell co-construct is different from the one displayed by the stranger in the storyworld. The stranger is also potentially wise, through his close relationship with his son who has a disability, but his question about Derek's medical condition indicates that the stranger finds it relevant, as Derek and Russell do not. Thus the shared disability identity that the tellers co-construct is unique to them, as Derek's individual disability identity is unique to him. I predict, however, that the phenomenon of a shared disability identity could be found in other communities of people with disabilities and the wise. The findings from the narratives in this chapter suggest directions for further exploration of wise identities and their relation to disability identities, as well as of shared identities. In the next section (Section 7.3), I explain some limitations of the current research before discussing the implications of these findings (Section 7.4).

7.3 Limitations

In this section, I lay out three major areas of limitation in the present study. First, the study was affected by my presence as the researcher and by the fact I do not have a physical disability. Second, the small sample size limited the conclusions that can be drawn. Third, the methodology of planned rather than naturally-occurring conversations impacted the types of narratives that were collected.

One limitation in the data collection was my own presence as a researcher and as a person without a disability. Labov's (1972b) classic statement of the Observer's Paradox – the problem of observing how people speak when they are not being observed – implies that collecting narratives in pre-planned interactions limits their authenticity. Conversations that are planned and recorded are different than conversations that are not. In this study, the fact that I am able-bodied also affected the way that the research participants engage in disability discourse during interactions with me. Although I tried to overcome this limitation to a certain extent by presenting myself as one of the wise, I am still visibly an outsider.

While the presence of the researcher will affect the interaction, De Fina points out that “both insider and outsider status for researchers ... may provide opportunities for insights into the nature of social phenomena, as long as one is willing to treat research contexts as truly interactional settings” (2011: 36). My focus in the analysis has been on the narratives told by the participants; however, I have addressed my own discourse when appropriate. For instance, I examined my talk at the level of the interaction in the example narratives in Chapter 4 and my performance of a wise identities in one of the example narratives in Chapter 6. Nevertheless, the narratives told by the participants were told in a research setting, to an able-bodied researcher, and will inevitably reflect that social context.

A related limitation is that the research setting did not produce many vicarious narratives in comparison to the number of personal narratives. Cheshire (2000) makes this observation about narratives collected with similar research methodologies. I attempted to set up situations in which telling vicarious narratives about disability practices would occur without direct elicitation, but I was only partially successful. In part, this may have been because the participants with disabilities knew that I was interested in hearing them tell about their personal experiences, while participants without disabilities were reluctant to talk too much about their friend or family member with a researcher. I had originally planned to have the able-bodied co-participants meet together to set up a situation in which narratives about the participants with disabilities could be told. I realized once recruitment was completed, however, that the co-participants' relationships to the core participants (mother, best friend, friend and hired caregiver) were so dissimilar that a group session would be socially awkward and likely not produce the narratives I was interested in. Using my methodology, I did collect vicarious narratives in which the tellers constructed identities, but a larger corpus of vicarious narratives about disability practices might yield further insights.

A third major limitation in this study was the small number of participants. A larger sample of both people with disabilities and able-bodied people who are wise to their disabilities would be needed to draw strong conclusions about the community as a whole. I hope by doing a close qualitative analysis of the data collected from six participants -- represented by the example narratives in the analysis chapters -- that I have raised issues that can be investigated in future research.

7.4 Implications

In this section, I discuss the implications of the findings laid out in the first section of the chapter. First, I consider two findings of the current study that have implications for linguistic theory: the use of vicarious narratives to extend tellers' repertoires of storyworlds and to do identity work, and the construction of wise identities and shared identities that depend upon someone else's individual identity work. Second, I propose two implications for methodology: the need for data collection methods that will elicit vicarious narratives and the importance of viewing disability as its own area within sociolinguistics. Finally, I argue that identifying the wise as part of the disability community has implications for practice.

I have argued that vicarious narratives are sites of identity construction. As mentioned above, many previous linguistic studies have either discounted the validity of vicarious narratives (e.g. Labov and Waletzky 1967; Chafe 1994) or found that they are not productive for individual identity work (Norrick 2013). By contrast, I have shown that the vicarious narratives in this study fulfill the same functions as personal narratives. Vicarious narratives such as *she had the child for her* and *she was like me* can and do allow their tellers to construct personal identities. This suggests that the conception of identity work in narrative needs to be broadened. Future studies might add to Schiffrin's (1996) "Narrative as Self-Portrait" and Hamilton's (2008) "Narrative as Snapshot" a third option: "Narrative as Collage." Just as collage artists build from previously created materials in order to create new art, tellers of vicarious narrative draw on the lived experiences of others to expand their repertoires of storyworlds. Further exploration of identity construction in vicarious narratives is needed. An associated implication for methodology, discussed below, is that vicarious narrative need to be collected and analyzed alongside personal narratives.

A second implication for linguistic theory is based on the concepts of a wise identity and a shared identity. These identities are different from other types of identities an individual may have because they are shaped by the identity work of another person. A person's wise identity depends upon their relationship with a person with a disability identity. In a similar way, a shared identity must be shared between an individual and another person or persons, most likely in a group or community the individual already belongs to (such as in Gordon's (2004) analysis of shared political identity in a family). An examination of epistemic rights and the borrowing of epistemic rights offers a starting point for a linguistic analysis of wiseness and shared identity. I have examined wise identities and shared identities specifically in relation to disability identity, but I expect that it can be a useful to other 'core' identities as well. Further research might examine in more detail how being wise to – or sharing in – someone else's identity is co-constructed within linguistic communities. The concept of a wise identity also has implications for method and practice, discussed below.

My study has two main implications for methodology. First, I propose that more studies be designed to deliberately collect vicarious narratives, which were much rarer in my data than personal narratives. Second, I argue for treating disability as its own area in sociolinguistics, in order to incorporate disability models, parallel the study of other minority groups, and recruit linguistic communities of people with disabilities as research participants. Although this study was small in scale, I attempted to implement this methodology in it.

I have commented in this chapter on the scarcity of vicarious narratives in my data set. In the methodology of my study, discussed in Chapter 3, I attempted to set up circumstances in which vicarious narratives could be told about family and friends. In particular, I anticipated that the able-bodied co-participants might tell vicarious narratives about the core participants' experience

of disability. This was true in narratives such as Russell's narrative *his current back-up chair*, but more narratives were similar to his narrative *he asked me what you had*. That is, they were told about experiences involving disability that the co-participants witnessed or participated in. I suspect that a higher number of secondhand vicarious narratives would be told in spontaneous conversation. However, there may also be ways to indirectly elicit vicarious narratives in planned interactions. For example, if the co-participants had had less diverse relationships to the participants -- all friends or all caregivers or all parents -- I would have set up small group sessions for them away from the participants. In that type of session, the fact that they would know the study was about people with disabilities would work in favor of them borrowing the disability experiences of their local authorities and telling vicarious narratives. Nevertheless, I was able to examine vicarious narratives told in other sessions. Min's narratives in Chapter 5 provided examples of vicarious narratives performing the same functions as personal narratives. Most importantly, Min did her own identity work in these narratives about other people. The construction of personal identity in vicarious narratives is a gap in the current literature (cf. Norrick 2013), which my study shows can be filled with further collection and analysis of vicarious narratives.

In Chapter 2, I placed this study within a small body of sociolinguistic literature that examines disability as its own area, separate from health communication. The health communication literature on disability and long-term illnesses offers many important insights, such as attention paid to families and caregivers (e.g. Hamilton 1994; Capps and Ochs 1995a) and inclusion of physical experiences alongside social constructions (e.g. Ramanathan and Makoni 2007; Ramanathan 2009; Okada 2011). However, I argue that disability needs to be approached as its own area of study (e.g. Barton 1999, 2004; Al Zidjaly 2006; 2012).

Treating disability as its own area reconciles models of disability with the linguistic study of disability. Although a strict biomedical model of disability may not be employed within health communication studies, there is a natural tendency to focus on gate-keeping and institutional contexts, such as provider-patient interactions and support groups. A multi-category model of disability, such as the one I proposed in Chapter 1, requires a holistic approach to the experience of having a disability that incorporates both everyday and institutional contexts. In particular, mine emphasizes ‘disability’ as a set of practices, a focus that is echoed in my participants’ narratives. Identifying and categorizing research participants by their underlying medical conditions runs counter to this focus on disability as practice. Current models of the community of people with disabilities also require disability to be studied as its own area. If linguists adopt the prevailing American social model of people with disabilities as a minority group, then studies need to approach them in the same way as other minority groups. In other words, the discourse of people with disabilities cannot be studied solely in medical or institutional settings anymore than the discourse of any other minority group.

I have proposed two ways in which people with disabilities can be viewed as a linguistic community. To approach people with disabilities as an imagined community of practice means identifying research participants through their disability practices. To approach people with disabilities through their social networks, which may include people without disabilities, means recruiting networks of research participants in their home communities rather than in institutional situations. Entering a community in this way is a typical sociolinguistic strategy (Schilling 2013), although it may be complicated by a lack of readily identifiable geographic communities of disability. I was fortunate in my own recruitment process to have the help of a friend of a friend whose personal and professional connections allowed me to find research participants who

shared the disability practice of using a wheelchair. I was then able to include members of their social networks by asking the participants themselves to recruit them (see Milroy and Gordon's (2008) 'snowball' sampling method for social networks). My core participants thus shared disability practices and their co-participants were in their social networks. Including the able-bodied co-participants allowed me to investigate wise identities.

Understanding the role of the wise in the community of people with disabilities also has implications for practice. I have defined the wise as able-bodied people whose experiences have made them familiar with, and accepting of, the experiences, practices, and accommodation strategies of having a disability. In particular, I have located members of the wise among the close social networks of people with disabilities: family, friends, and caregivers who regularly interact with a person with a disability. I suggest that one linguistic indicator of wiseness is the borrowing of epistemic rights to tell about disability practices and to use in-group terms. Since people with disabilities are the local authorities whose experience and acceptance confer wiseness, the concept of the wise keeps people with disabilities as the core of the disability community. At the same time, defining the wise as a part of the disability community provides a way to systematically include individuals who do not have disabilities themselves.

Able-bodied family, friends, and caregivers are already included in some studies about disability and in some groups related to disability, such as caregiver support groups. What makes a concept like wiseness especially useful in practice is that it identifies those who have, as Goffman (1963) put it, "courtesy membership" in the community. Not all family, friends, and caregivers are necessarily wise to disability practices, nor are they necessarily seen as part of the community. But when they are, it is necessary to include them, not only in the methodology of a study but also in larger endeavors in the community. Donovan (2012) recently termed the wise

“stakeholders in disability”. He used this business concept to propose that the disability community, including the wise, is large enough to have buying power and to merit attention from businesses. However, like the wise family and friends in my study, these “stakeholders” may not put a name to the identities they are constructing in connection to their local authority’s disability. Implementing the term wise (or another term with that definition) is the next step in practice for the community.

A possible parallel can be found in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. Goffman (1963) originally borrowed the term “wise” from gay slang; in that community, the current version of the term is “ally”. Like wise, ally indicates that the person is not necessarily a core member of the community -- they likely do not identify as LGBT themselves -- but that they are in sympathy with the community and its goals. Ally can also be used to show “courtesy membership” in the LGBT community. By using the concept of an ally, straight people can construct an identity that connects them to the LGBT community without equating themselves with people who are gay. Ally has thus been used to great effect in the gay rights movement to be inclusive of straight people who would otherwise be marginalized in LGBT rights organizations (Cortese 2004). The concept of the wise could yield similar results for the disability community by connecting able-bodied people, who are wise to a particular person, to the larger disability community. Identifying those with courtesy membership in the community and labeling them as wise has implications for the community that go beyond linguistic methodology.

7.5 Directions for future research

In this final section, I list four questions coming out of the present study that point toward directions for future work on narrative and identity, especially in regard to disability discourse.

In what further ways do vicarious narratives function as sites of identity work? I have argued in this study that vicarious narratives allow tellers to construct identities. One reason to use vicarious rather than personal narrative is to borrow someone else's lived experiences in order to expand the repertoire of storyworlds in which identity work can be done. However, one limitation of the current study was the rareness of vicarious narratives, with the implication that methodologies should be developed to target vicarious narratives. Future work is needed to explore all of the situations in which vicarious narratives might be used to construct identity. Related questions are: *How could past studies of identity in personal narrative be applied to vicarious narratives? How might the functions of personal and vicarious narratives differ when they are not being used as tools for identity work (see Norrick 2013)?*

How are wise identities created and maintained? I have re-defined wiseness, following Goffman (1963), and examined wise identities in the community of people with disabilities. One of the limitations of this study, however, was the small number of participants. Future work should incorporate larger samples of both people who are wise and the local authorities they are wise to. Related questions are: *What other communities give rise to wise identities? For example, is an identity as an ally in the LGBT community constructed in a similar way to an identity as someone who is wise to a person with a disability? What implications do these linguistic strategies have for communities that employ them to include non-core members?*

In what ways do shared disability identities emerge from other groups or communities? I have analyzed a narrative that reveals a shared disability identity for two participants, one with a disability and one without. Derek and Russell's shared disability identity emerges from their friendship and close social network ties. In Gordon's (2004) study, a shared political identity is formed within a family. In both cases, the group identity and the shared identity are distinct.

Related questions are: *How does (co-)tellership affect the construction of shared identities in narrative? How are wise identities and shared disability identities distinguished?*

How are disability identities constructed by people with acquired disabilities? I collected data from two people who acquired physical disabilities later in life as part of the larger research project. While I did not examine their narratives in the current analysis, I plan to do so in the future. People who acquire a disability later in life may navigate Bamberg's (2011a) dilemmatic spaces of coherence/change, sameness/difference, and agency in their disability identities differently than people with lifelong disabilities. Related questions are: *How does having a local authority with an acquired disability affect the construction of a wise identity? How is an individual's disability identity impacted by physical and social changes over time?*

The final question concerning people with acquired disabilities relates to a somewhat unique aspect of having a disability. While all of the participants whose narratives I analyzed here have had disabilities all their lives, that is not the case for all people with disabilities. Disabilities may be acquired at any point in life. Some people in the disability community refer to this as being “temporarily able-bodied”: the potential is always there for a person without a disability to sustain an injury or illness that leads them to become – from a personal or a legal or a societal perspective – a person with a disability. It is equally possible for someone who is temporarily able-bodied to become wise at any point in their life by developing a close relationship with someone who has a disability identity. Since this is so, linguistic and social questions of disability are relevant to everyone. In this study, I have shown how disability identities emerge from personal and vicarious narrative. Narratives are a powerful tool for people with disabilities and the wise to “tell disability”. At the same time, disability discourse can be a fruitful site for exploring narrative and identity.

Appendix: Transcription Conventions

.	final intonation
,	continuing intonation
?	rising intonation
:	lengthened syllable
th-	truncated word
the –	truncated intonation unit
<u>the</u>	emphasis
..	pause during intonation unit from half a second to one second
...	pause during turn from one to three seconds
()	pause greater than 3 seconds timed to a tenth of a second
@	laughter (more indicates greater length and/or intensity)
hh	audible breath out
“	constructed dialogue (often indicated by voice quality)
{ }	voice quality or non-linguistic information
[]	overlapping speech
=	latching
//	non-lexical backchanneling by interlocutor (e.g. <i>mhm</i>)
	line breaks indicate the end of intonation units in transcripts
\	end of intonation unit in in-text quotation
[...]	omitted from in-text quotations

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