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Center Stage: Direct and Indirect Reported Speech in Conversational Storytelling

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This paper explores how speakers use direct reported speech (DRS) and indirect reported speech (IDRS) in conversational narratives to establish the importance of particular story characters to the plot and to display the interactional goal of the story. When the story is designed as being about a particular person, the speaker uses DRS to depict the character's behavior and qualities, thus marking the centrality of the character to the plot. When the story is designed as being about a non-human phenomenon (e.g., the quality of health care, the noise in the neighborhood, etc.), the narrator may use IDRS to mark characters as secondary or even tangential to the plot. By manipulating the grammatical resources of reporting someone else's talk, storytellers can also manipulate the centrality of the story characters to the interactional point of the narrative, or the story's "aboutness."

This paper launches an initial exploration of how speakers in ordinary conversation use direct and indirect reported speech (DRS and IDRS, respectively) to establish the importance of selected story characters to the development of the plot. The analysis suggests that when the story is designed as being specifically about the character, the speaker utilizes the direct-quote format to construct the narrative. By attributing utterances to story characters, the storyteller is able to depict the desired aspects of their personalities and to express his/her own stance towards the events of the story. On the other hand, when the story is designed as being about a non-human phenomenon, which nevertheless may be exemplified through human actions, the storyteller may use grammatically indirect ways of reporting the characters' speech, thus minimizing their roles and transforming their experiences and behavior into illustrations of the story's main point. By manipulating the grammatical resources of reported speech — from the direct-quote format to the nearly complete appropriation of the character's words through the use of specific reporting verbs and evidentials — the storyteller is able to cast his/her narrative as being "about Person X" or as being "about something else."

To date, most conversation-analytic work has focused on story prefaces as the primary means of projecting for the recipient how to understand what the story is about and how it fits in the current conversation (Sacks, 1974). The present study's findings, although they are based on a small corpus and therefore preliminary, indicate that reported speech may be another such means. The findings also suggest the need for further investigation of other interactional resources by which speakers mark the "aboutness" of their conversational tellings.

Reported Speech in Previous Research

The study of reported speech has long attracted attention in a wide range of scholarly disciplines from linguistics to philosophy. In linguistics, the traditional distinction between DRS and IDRS has been based on the precision with which the words in the report are preserved. DRS is generally defined as the exact rendition of the original utterance, while IDRS is characterized as the reporter's approximate representation of the original content, albeit not the original words. From the syntactic point of view, DRS consists of authorial speech, including a reporting verb or another quotative, followed by an independent clause containing an allegedly exact repetition of prior talk. The reported talk contains no subordinator connecting it to the authorial speech, no deictic shifts in pronouns or adverbials (e.g., the pronoun "I" would refer to the original speaker, not the reporter), and no verb tense shift anchored to the tense of the main verb (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). IDRS, on the other hand, is a complex sentence, in which authorial speech with a reporting verb is placed in the main clause, and the reported talk is placed in the subordinate clause connected to the main clause with an appropriate subordinator. The reported talk generally involves a deictic shift in pronouns and any temporal markers such as adverbials and verb tense forms (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

The majority of theoretical linguistic studies of reported speech, both direct and indirect, have focused on such phenomena as the selection and modification of reporting verbs, complementation, tense sequencing, and pronominal and deictic shifts in embedded clauses (i.e., clauses containing the ostensibly reported speech). Boogaart (1996), for example, argued that aspectual information is crucial in determining whether the past tense verb in the embedded clause of an IDRS sentence in Dutch or English may be interpreted as expressing an action simultaneous with or prior to that of an action in the matrix clause. Bamgbose (1986) examined structural properties of reported speech in Yoruba, concentrating on the analysis of deictic pronominal shifts, complementizers, and grammaticalization of markers for general and specific hearsay. Overall, research has demonstrated that the syntactic distinctions between DRS and IDRS are not always clear-cut, especially in natural discourse (e.g., Bamgbose, 1986; Bolden, 2004; Coulmas, 1986b; Ebert, 1986; Golato, 2000; Haberland, 1986; Hewitt & Crisp, 1986; Holt, 2000; Meyes, 1990). Furthermore, the semantic distinction based on the faithfulness of the report to the original wording is also somewhat problematic. Reports in the DRS format, in fact, are not – and frequently cannot be – accurate, as they often present literary fictional material (Haberland, 1986; McCarthy, 1998; Tannen, 1989), unarticulated prior thoughts (Haakana, 2007; Tannen, 1989; Vlatten, 1997), thoughts attributed to others (Buttny, 2004; Tannen, 1989), hypothetical utterances and otherwise invented talk (Buttny, 2004; Goodwin, 1990; Tannen, 1989; Vlatten, 1997), or summaries of others' statements, which, due to the limitations of human memory, cannot be reported precisely (Buttny, 2004; McCarthy, 1998; Tannen, 1986, 1989). Tannen (1986) introduced the term "constructed dialogue" to emphasize the distinction between the grammatical format of DRS and the report's potential of being true (or not) to the original wording.

On the other hand, when it comes to the IDRS format, the lack of exact correspondence in the wording need not imply the lack of accuracy in the report. In fact, minimal grammatical changes may allow for the preservation of the lexical and semantic content of the original utterance (Coulmas, 1986b; Li, 1986, Stein, 1982). Moreover, as Bertolet (1990) argues in his philosophical examination of IDRS, an indirect report may be considered accurate when the original utterance and the predicate of the report are co-referential, and when the original speaker's intended meaning is preserved irrespective of the words chosen to encode it (pp. 161-162).

While formal linguists have tended to concentrate on investigating syntactic and semantic distinctions between DRS and IDRS, discourse analysts have pursued the study of the functions of reported speech in ordinary and institutional talk-in-interaction. In their definitive work, Clark & Gerrig (1990), for example, examined the role of reported speech as a form of demonstration, which allows the current speaker to "perform" prior talk, thus highlighting its particular elements and making them relevant to the social actions accomplished in the ongoing discourse.[1] Specifically, DRS has been shown to act as an effective positioning device, allowing current speakers to display alignment with or opposition to the recipients (e.g. Bolden, 2004; Gooodwin, 1990; Vlatten, 1997), claim rights to express judgments, make pronouncements, or ask questions (Clayman, 2007; Clift, 2007; Couper-Kuhlen, 2007; Galatolo, 2007; Wooffitt, 2007), construct themselves and other discourse participants as particular kinds of individuals, e.g., victims of racial discrimination (Buttny, 1997, 2004; Buttny & Williams, 2000), shrewd tacticians (Rae & Kerby, 2007), justice seekers or brave and manly persons (Goodwin, 1990), intimates (Holt, 2007), and so on. A related function of DRS is that of an evidential — a discursive tool allowing speakers to present an instance of past interaction for the recipient's present judgment (Bolden, 2004; Haakana, 2007; Holt, 1996, 2000).

The majority of conversation-analytic studies have focused on the discursive marking and roles of DRS. Little attention has been given to the functions of IDRS in talk-in-interaction. Those researchers that have mentioned IDRS in their analyses (e.g., Bolden, 2004; Holt, 2000, 2007) have generally restricted their claims to the lack of a clear distinction between DRS and IDRS in natural conversation. The present study begins to extend the inquiry into the functions of reported speech by contrasting strategic use of both DRS and IDRS in constructing conversational narratives as different types of stories or, more specifically, stories that are about persons vs. stories that are about non-human phenomena.

Data and Methods

The stories analyzed in this paper were told in the course of ordinary telephone conversations between adult native speakers of North American English. The conversations were recorded over a period of several weeks in the fall of 2001 with the informed consent of all participants. The data were transcribed and analyzed using a methodology grounded in Conversation Analysis. All participants and

third parties referred to in the stories have been given fictitious names to preserve their confidentiality.

In identifying stories, or tellings, for the analysis, this paper employs an approach rooted in the conversation-analytic rather than Labovian paradigm. In other words, a story is not defined as a narrative structure with an abstract, orientation, complicating event, and coda, which suggests a canonical, almost literary plot development. Rather, it is characterized as a multi-TCU turn presenting a coherent order of events and sequentially positioned in talk through three segments in its production: the preface, the telling and the recipient uptake (Sacks, 1972, 1995). This operational definition of story is similar to the approaches taken in story analysis by Goodwin (1984) and Duranti & Goodwin (1992, pp. 157-158).

Story Characters at Center Stage: The Use of Direct Quotation

The first story, Tom Brokaw, was recorded in the fall of 2001, shortly after anthrax was sent in the mail to several public figures, including this story's protagonist — the eponymous NBC Nightly News anchor. The interlocutors, Ed and Diane, have been discussing these attacks immediately prior to Ed's introduction of the narrative. The story refers to Brokaw's televised public reaction to being targeted in the attack.

"Tom Brokaw"

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1          Ed:      [>Did you see Tom Broka]w last night by the way?
2          Diane:   [ (y e a h b u t you know).] No.
3 →        Ed:      Oh he wz fun- I mean he wz:: u:h ˙hhh. He wz quite succinct.
4 →                 =End he wz>there< Hey y'kno- cuz the-
5                   this letter had been sent to him.
6                    (0.5)
7          Diane:   Uhum.
8 →        Ed:      A:nd h(h)e (h) s(h)aid something like y'know ˙hh
9 →                 Well, y'know, u:h I:'m I'm really upset, 'n tha:t but- s- but-
10 →                uh I ca:n't really express myself
11 →                in socially acceptable t(h)er(h)m(h)s hehehuhuh.=
12         Diane:   °Right°.
13 →       Ed:      =So now of course all of thee u::h th-the-
14 →                you know morning dee-jay people are all like you know
15 →                hO:H huhuh w(h)e w(h)ould have loved to see Tom Brokaw just
16 →                y'know cussin'- c(h)uss(h) i(h)t ou(h)t on th(h)e a(h)ir hehhehheh.
17                  ((Laughter - 2.0))
18         Diane:   Well. [°Can't do that.° Can't do that.=
```

The name "Tom Brokaw" is first brought into the discourse in the story preface (line 1). One purpose of story prefaces, inter alia, is to project for the recipients what kind of a multi-TCU (turn-constructional unit) turn is being proposed — a joke, a sad story, a complaint, etc., thus allowing the teller to secure an appropriate response from the recipient upon the completion of the telling (Sacks, 1974). By

introducing Tom Brokaw in the story preface, Ed projects for Diane that for the kind of story he is about to tell, the news anchor will be an important personage. Upon receiving a go-ahead for the telling (line 2), Ed proceeds to characterize the story (line 3) by first describing the main character as "fun." This description is immediately repaired to "quite succinct" in the same line.

Both assessments display Ed's positive stance toward the events of the story. They nevertheless achieve somewhat different purposes. After a brief background to the focal event (lines 4-5), Ed reports Tom Brokaw's public reaction to receiving an anthrax-filled letter by quoting the news anchor as ostensibly having said, "I'm really upset and that, but I can't really express myself in socially acceptable terms" (lines 9 – 11).[2] The reported words do not contain anything designedly amusing and, therefore, do not fit Ed's earlier description of Brokaw as "fun." They do, however, express Brokaw's reaction in a brief and clear way, and so are consistent with the characterization as "succinct."

At the same time, the authorial speech preceding the quote as well as the final words of the quote itself are interspersed with laughter tokens. Laughter also intersperses the quote attributed to the second set of story characters ("morning DJ people") in lines 14 -15, and an extended stretch of it follows the end of the story in lines 16 – 17. The laughter displays Ed's own view of the events as amusing, i.e., "fun," and invites Diane to join him in this assessment (Jefferson, 1979). In other words, the term "fun" describes Ed's experience with the reported event, while the term "succinct" describes the story character. Yet, the assessment "fun" is first produced in describing Tom Brokaw, not the event (e.g. "he was fun," not "it was fun" in line 3), thus making the character the subject of the sentence and marking him and his words as the source of amusement for Ed.

Through the direct quote format, Ed continues to cast Tom Brokaw as a central figure in his story. Despite a marker of the quote's imprecision ("he said something like…" in line 8), the words attributed to Tom Brokaw act as a demonstration (Clark & Gerrig, 1990) and the best evidence (Couper-Kuhlen, 2007; Clift, 2007; Holt, 1996, 2000, 2007) of his succinctness: Brokaw is depicted as capturing in a short utterance both his emotions and his orientation to his public status. Thus, by using the grammatical resources of DRS (the authorial speech and the direct quote following it without a subordinator or a deictic shift in pronoun use), Ed depicts his character rather than describes him, creating a scenario in which Diane may assess for herself both Tom Brokaw's laconicism and its potential for amusing the audience.

The next installment of the story beginning at line 13 is produced after Diane's rather lukewarm reception of the first episode (line 12). This reception lacks laughter tokens or assessment terms overtly aligning with Ed's initial characterization of Tom Brokaw as "fun." In line 14, Ed introduces a new set of characters, "morning DJ people" — a formulation that requires some work on his part, as evidenced by the word search in line 13. This formulation evokes the category-bound traits and activities (Sacks, 1972) commonly associated with the particular genre referred to — morning talk shows, which tend to blend news reporting, political and social commentary, and entertainment. The direct quote attributed to "all the morning

DJ people" (lines 15-16) — allows Ed to validate his own perception of the main character's behavior as fun by depicting a similar attitude of those mass media representatives whose métier is to mix the newsworthy and the amusing.

To sum up, from the time this story is introduced into the discourse, it is projected and told as a story about Tom Brokaw: He is introduced in the story preface, he is characterized as a source of amusement for the teller, the first episode of the telling relates his purported words (and not merely their content), and the second episode relates the reaction of others to his behavior. The grammatical resources of DRS — authorial speech followed by direct quotes without subordinators or deictic shifts in pronoun use and verb tenses — are used in the portrayal of Tom Brokaw as a central character in the narrative.

Characters on the Periphery: Shifting Between Direct Quotation and Indirect Report

Unlike "Tom Brokaw," the "Health Care" episode is not about a particular individual, but rather about the quality of health care provided to a third party. By way of the story, the teller gives an account of why her daughter Clara is not doing well, blaming insufficient therapy and the reluctance of those involved in the care to improve it. The narrator, who is also one of the story characters, relates a conflict that serves to highlight the deficiencies in the care. The characters are, thus, important as exemplars of these deficiencies, but are not central as specific individuals to the upshot of the narrative.

"Health Care"

1		Bonnie:	HOW's Clara?
2		Diane:	.hhh a:ah (0.2) it's (.) not so good.
3		Bonnie:	O:h[hh. Too ba:d.
4	→	Diane:	[It's not too good. An' it's y'know we uh I HAVE complained
5	→		about the fact that y'know she has twenny minutes of therapy abe-
6	→		once a month.
7		Bonnie:	Oh, God, it's nothing.
8	→	Diane:	A:nd that's just not doesn't do it.= [A:nd tha:t resulted in that=
9		Bonnie:	[It's:: absolutely nothing.
10	→	Diane:	=in the lady told me that maybe I- because I was very anxious
11	→		about my daughter maybe I need'd some therapy.
12		Bonnie:	[.hheh
13	→	Diane:	[.heh an' I s-h-h-said ↑ y'know my daughter w'z getting some therapy.=
14	→		= I (would) feel a lot better.
15		Bonnie:	[.hh Yeah.
16		Diane:	[.hh She needs somebody who c'n- c'd- c'n do the medication?
17			(0.2)
18		Bonnie:	Mhm.
19		Diane:	A::nd see her.
20			(0.5)
21		Bonnie:	.hh Yeah.
22			(0.2)

23	Diane:	So.
24	Bonnie:	[Yeah.]
25	Diane:	[B u t] anyway. That's not har(d at all).

The story in lines 4-14 is told as part of Diane's dispreferred response (Sacks, 1987) to Bonnie's question about Clara's well-being. Dispreferred responses, including unexpected answers to questions,[3] are often accompanied by delays and accounts (Levinson, 1983, p. 334-335), as is the case with Diane's extended turn. Interestingly, in assessing Clara's well-being, Diane refers to an inanimate entity — note the pronoun "it" rather than "she" in lines 2 and 4. This pronominal use may project for the recipient that the crux of the account may not be a description of Clara's health issues, but rather another aspect that contributes to Clara's not doing well.[4]

Indeed, Diane proceeds to tell Bonnie of two factors affecting Clara's well-being. Reference to one of them — insufficient therapy (lines 5-6) is embedded in the story about the other — namely, the dismissal of Diane's parental concern by a health professional involved in the provision of therapy. Throughout the story, Diane positions herself as her daughter's health advocate. This is achieved by her claiming the right to complain on Clara's behalf (line 4) and by reiterating her familial relationship with the patient (lines 11 and 13). The other story character, however, is positioned as an exemplar of the poor care Clara is receiving. First, the character is referred to vaguely as "the lady." The term conveys the gender of the complaint addressee and, possibly, a certain amount of condescension that Diane expresses towards her,[5] but it provides no clues as to her professional standing except for her affiliation in some way with the therapy provider. This affiliation is invoked when Diane presents "the lady" as a valid addressee of the complaint. Not including the character's professional standing allows Diane to mark the mere existence of this affiliation as more relevant to the story's point than its exact nature (e.g., being Clara's therapist, a clinic or insurance administrator, etc.). The character is constructed as somebody who has legitimate authority to do something to improve the quality of Clara's care, but who refuses to do so.

In relating her exchange with "the lady," Diane employs the IDRS format. The reporting verbs in lines 4 and 10 are followed by either a prepositional phrase or a subordinator, indicating that what follows is the content, not the exact wording, of what was said during the complaint exchange. The subordinate clause reporting the speech attributed to "the lady" also contains a deictic shift in pronouns (lines 10, 11) — a common grammatical feature of IDRS. Only Diane's own retort to the dismissal of her complaint is done, potentially, in the direct-quote format, as indicated by the rise in pitch after the reporting verb in line 13 and the lack of explicit grammatical markers of IDRS.

The choice of reference terms and speech reporting formats allows for different positioning of the characters with respect to their significance to the story's main point. The IDRS format at the beginning of the story, when it is produced as an account of Clara's not being well, allows the narrator to focus on the content of the confrontation rather than the exact words used in its production. It also

allows Diane to construct her opponent's side in the conflict as patently absurd. By invoking her familial relationship with Clara (lines 10-11), Diane is able to portray the health care representative as intimating — albeit not directly stating — that a mother's anxiety about her child's health constitutes abnormal behavior. By shifting the focus from the wording of the complaint exchange to its content, Diane constructs the story as still being about the poor quality of the health care, of which the said exchange is just one example.

The direct-quote format used in the report of Diane's rejoinder (lines 13-14) is consistent both with the fact that this is the climactic event in the story, complete with a corresponding increase in granularity (Schegloff, 2000), and with the fact that Diane has positioned herself in the narrative as a lead character in protecting Clara's well-being, thus taking on a more central role than "the lady."

To sum up, in a story about a non-human phenomenon — in this case, the quality of health care — human characters may play somewhat peripheral roles. Their behavior may be used as an exemplar of the main point, but the portrayal of this behavior is not the main point itself. The speech of such peripheral characters may be reported using IDRS. The IDRS format, which centers on the content of the talk rather than on the wording, allows the narrator to focus on what is meant rather than on how this meaning is formulated.

The Storyteller at Center Stage: Indirect Speech Reporting

The last data segment, "Quiet Neighborhood," demonstrates further use of IDRS to mark the tangential role of the story characters to the plot's upshot while at the same time putting the storyteller in the interactional spotlight. The story is produced as an illustration of a phenomenon perceived by human senses — quietness — that is accessible for the teller's but not the recipient's direct personal evaluation.

"Quiet Neighborhood"

1 →	Diane:	Is it a quiet area you are in?
2	Ed:	U:uh. I:t i:s- Yeah. oh very much I mean y'know the-the-the
3 →		Oh it- kss- xtremely quiet= [in fact 's so quiet that one=
4	Diane:	[good.
5	Ed:	=of our neighbors u:h came by: the other day b'cuz.hhh
6 →		there seems to be a lady in the next-door building,
7	Diane:	Yeah.
8 →	Ed:	We think it's a lady >or 'least that's what [she said't w'z<
9	Diane:	[(right)
10	Ed:	who has an alarm clock that goes off at six thirty.
11	Diane:	Oh.
12	Ed:	And just keeps on going.
13	Diane:	O:h.
14 →	Ed:	En then apparen'ly she has the TV go off.
15	Diane:	Uhum.
16 →	Ed:	En I think wha- what I think h'z happen' is she's hard of hearing,

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17 →                    .hhh  Her alarm clock goes off, but en she wakes up but fer
18 →                    she doesn' know how she woke up?
19        Diane:        Right. Right.
20 →      Ed:           But she doesn' realize (her) alarm clock is still going?
21        Diane:        Uhum.
22 →      Ed:           En then she switches on the TV en turns it on too loud.
23        Diane:        Uhum.
24        Ed:           .hh A:::nd u::h >this lady w'z very upset about it cuz it's been
25                      going on for a ye:ar, < and uh so I- I- I agreed to sign her petition,
26                      .hh u:h but I: =
27        Diane:           [( )]
28 →      Ed:           =[I: ] have heard this- this alarm clock,
29        Diane:        Uhum.
30 →      Ed:           En that's how (.2) .h  i' is quiet aroun' here, th't I c'n hear .h
31 →                   an alarm clock that's gotta be .hh y'know k- nex' door e:n maybe
32 →                   three or four units down. = En it's not th't they're close, = it's j's
33 →                   (.) u:h at night you c'n hear crickets at night here.
34        Diane:        Uhum.
```

The story is triggered by Diane's question about the tranquility of Ed's neighborhood and is produced as a follow-up to Ed's assessment of the neighborhood as "extremely quiet." As Pomerantz (1987, p. 57) points out, in producing an assessment, the speaker claims access to and the knowledge of the phenomenon he/she is assessing. By calling the neighborhood "extremely quiet," Ed claims adequate authority to evaluate its noise level.

Ed's assessment, however, is unexpected at least in one respect: The beginning of his turn is shaped as a dispreferred one, with multiple delays and perturbations (line 2), projecting a potential "no" answer to Diane's question. By the end of the turn, however, not only has Ed shifted to a preferred (aligning) answer, but has also upgraded the positive assessment with the qualifier "extremely" (line 3). The unexpectedness of the answer, therefore, lies not in the content of the assessment, but in the shape of the turn. This level of unexpectedness may, nevertheless, require an explanation, which Ed provides through the story exemplifying quietness.

Yet, the story itself is interactionally problematic as a convincing illustration of quietness. At the core of its plot lies a complaint about a noise disturbance. Throughout the telling, Ed engages multiple linguistic resources to cast the story in such a way as to minimize the gravity of this disturbance and present it as so miniscule that it can be audibly perceived only in an environment where other noises do not overshadow it, i.e., in a neighborhood that is otherwise extremely quiet. Because quietness and noise are phenomena perceived by senses, their evaluation is subjective. One way for Ed to claim authority in evaluating his neighborhood as quiet is to construct his story as being about his experiences with the said disturbance. He achieves this by minimizing the experiences of his story characters and maximizing his own perspective through the choice of broad non-specific terms of reference to the characters, indirect ways of reporting their speech, and incorporating his own speculations as to the reasons for the noise into the narrative.

Ed introduces his story characters through the formulations relevant to the plot — as a neighbor (line 5) and "a lady in the next-door building" (line 6). No further information about these characters is provided, suggesting that they are relevant to the plot primarily as particular social types (Schutz, 1967), i.e., people who, like Ed himself, are capable of evaluating, contributing to, or detracting from the neighborhood's quietness.

Furthermore, Ed recounts his conversation with the neighbor (lines 5-15, and 24-25) in a highly indirect way, essentially appropriating her talk and reporting it as his own knowledge, with minimal markers of this knowledge being second-hand (e.g., the evidentials "at least that's what she said" in line 8 and "apparently" in line 14). In the only utterance that does contain a report — of thought, not speech — Ed includes himself in the list of the reported thinkers, as evidenced by the use of the pronoun "we" (line 8). In avoiding clear grammatical markers of either DRS or IDRS (i.e. subordination and deictic shifts or the lack of such) and in including himself in the list of people whose thoughts are being reported, Ed deprives the neighbor of her authorship of and, to a degree, responsibility for the content of her talk. To use Goffman's (1981) terms, she is presented as a figure in the telling, but neither the author nor the principal of anything she might have said during the reported interaction. At the same time, Ed casts himself as an experiencer of the noise disturbance. (Note the epistemic verb "seems" and the first person pronoun "we" in lines 6 and 8, respectively.)

In the next segment of the story (lines 16-22), Ed utilizes IDRS four times to report either his own (line 16) or the noise perpetrator's (lines 18 and 20) cognitive states ("I think …," "doesn't know …," and "doesn't realize …"). Biber (1998, as cited in Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p. 654), notes that reporting verbs of cognition tend to take on clausal complements (which creates the grammatical format of IDRS) if they are related to the expression of the speaker's stance. Indeed, this segment of the story is devoted almost entirely to Ed's own speculations about the causes for the noise. The IDRS format allows Ed simultaneously to heighten his own role as an adequate assessor of the noise and to focus on the reasons for its existence rather than on specific thoughts that may or may not be going through the noise perpetrator's mind.

The empathetic light in which Ed casts the noise-creating character (that she causes noise not because she is careless, but because she has a physical disability) is consistent with the initial projection of the story as exemplifying the quietness of the neighborhood. By presenting the lady next door as an unwitting perpetrator of commonplace and relatively minor disturbance (a notion he returns to in lines 30-32) rather than a person who wantonly disrupts the neighborhood's tranquility, Ed is able to focus on the perceptual aspects relative to the evaluation of quietness and to convey that the noise perceived as a nuisance by the neighbor does not necessarily bother Ed himself.

As Ed approaches the end of the telling, he continues to highlight the percep-tual insignificance of the noise disturbance. His story, in effect, has two endings: the culmination of the neighbor's visit to him and the validation of Ed's assessment

of the neighborhood as extremely quiet. These two endings are distinguished by different levels of granularity (Schegloff, 2000). Ed's report of the end of the neighbor's visit to him is presented in rather coarse detail. To achieve this level of coarseness, Ed eschews reporting — even through the IDRS format — the words that may have expressed the complaining neighbor's emotions (line 24) or his own response to her (line 25). Instead, he provides characterizations of the actions that were performed through these words (Lucy, 1993, p. 10): "… was very upset about it" (line 24) and "… agreed to sign" (line 25). The decreasing the level of granularity through such glossed reporting projects for the recipient that although Ed is recounting how the visit ended, the story as an illustration of quietness may not yet be complete.

The second ending of Ed's story — the one that demonstrates how quiet his neighborhood is (lines 30 – 33) — contains much higher levels of granularity, including a detailed description of the location of the noise source (lines 31-32). This description, as well as the inclusion of another source of noise not mentioned in the main plot of the story ("you can hear crickets at night here" in line 33), confirm that situating himself as a primary experiencer of the supposed disturbance is critical for Ed in order to carry out the story as a successful illustration of quietness.

To sum up, in this narrative, the teller utilizes highly indirect forms of speech and thought reporting, including IDRS and appropriated speech, in which verbal actions are glossed and the credit to the original speakers is given mainly through evidentials and pronominal choice. This way of reporting talk and cognitive states allows the teller to diminish the role of specific human characters in the narrated events and present information gained from others as his own knowledge. Such "plagiarism" is an interactional tool in gaining credibility when evaluating a phenomenon which can be perceived only by senses, which the story recipient cannot evaluate directly, and which may require illustration in order to properly appreciated.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to show that reported speech is an essential resource that speakers utilize in storytelling in order to realize the desired social actions through their talk. Tellers can employ direct quotation to cast the characters as central figures in the telling, as people whom the story is "about." On the other hand, tellers can also report the speech of others in a way that is extremely indirect. In fact, they can appropriate the information received from a third party with only a minimal acknowledgement of the originator of the talk. This technique allows tellers to shift the focus of attention from the characters per se to other aspects of the story and tell the story as being about something else, be it a sensate phenomenon, such as quietness, or a social phenomenon, such as the quality of health care.

This study is exploratory in nature and, as such, it is certainly not without limitations. Its conclusions are preliminary, and further study of the functions of indirect reported speech employing larger corpora of ordinary conversational data as well as institutional talk data will be necessary. Nevertheless, the findings also

indicate the need to expand the scope of research into interactional devices that speakers may rely on in projecting the "aboutness" of their talk. So far, story prefaces have been studied as the main, if not only, devices of doing so. The present paper suggests, however, that the grammatical format of reporting the speech of story characters may be another subtle tool that speakers use to position characters as either central or peripheral to the plot, and thus to manipulate the story's aboutness.

Finally, this study shows that reported speech is not an isolated resource. It is inextricably intertwined with other tools of talk-in-interaction, such as invocation of particular membership categorization devices, story prefaces, and granularity. The inseparability of these resources from one another is the evidence of the amazing complexity of the phenomenon that is human language.

APPENDIX A

Transcription Notation

[Can't do that.	Left-hand bracket	Begin overlapping talk
…you see Tom Broka]w	Right-hand bracket	End overlapping talk.
(0.2)	Number in parentheses	Silence measured in seconds
(.)	Period in parentheses	Micro-pause less than 0.2 sec
hehehuhuh.=So now…	Equal sign	Latched talk; minimal or absent transition space
I'm really upset,	Comma	Slightly rising, "continuing" intonation
… by the way?	Question mark	Rising terminal (interrogative) intonation
No.	Period	Falling terminal intonation
u:h I:'m	Colon(s)	Stretched sound. Multiple colons indicate prolonged stretching
Oh he wz fun-	Underlining	Marked stress on the underlined word or syllable
°Right°.	Degree signs	Low volume
hO:H	Capital letters	Loud talk. Standard abbreviations written in caps are not subject to this interpretation; they are to be read as produced in a normal volume
'Least not o-	Dash	Cut-off prior to completion of the sound or word
cussin'	Apostrophe	Commonly omitted or affected sounds, such as the omission of "t" in "just" or the pronunciation of /⏁/ as /n/ in the –ing suffix
>Right. Right. Right.<°	"Greater than" signs	Sped up talk (faster and "lesser" production) between the signs
h(h)e (h) s(h)aid	An h in parentheses	Injection of laughter into talk
.hh	An h preceded by a period	In-breath. Length of the in-breath is indicated by the number of h-s.
hehehuhuh		Laughter
((Laughter - 2.0))	Italicized text in double parentheses	Transcriber's comments on the activity
(y e a h b u t you know)	Text in parentheses	Transcriber's most accurate hearing of the parenthesized talk
( )	Empty parentheses	Parenthesized talk not clearly hearable
→	Right-hand arrow	Utterance under discussion in the text of the article

Endnotes

[1] In a similar vein, Sidnell (2006) examined reenactments in conversation from a multi-modal perspective, including gesture, gaze, and talk in his analysis.

[2] The words immediately preceding the quote – "Well, y'know, u::h" – cannot be definitively included either in the quote or in the authorial speech. In the absence of any signals, such as changes in voice quality, pitch, or intonation clearly distinguishing between the authorial speech and the quote itself, these words may be either markers of the quote's imprecision and, thus, be part of the quotative, or they may be discourse markers of dispreferred turn delay attributed to Tom Brokaw.

[3] See Sacks (1975; 1995, p. 557) on ordinary (non-accountable) and accountable responses to "How are you?" type questions.

[4] The pronoun "it" has no apparent referent in the preceding conversation, and since the data do not allow for the unambiguous identification of what Diane may mean by "it," I can only speculate that one likely possibility is that she is referring to Clara's overall health care situation. I cannot, however, make such a claim definitively.

[5] See Lakoff (1975) on the use of "lady" vs. "woman" in professional settings.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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