

“‘WELL I DON’T LIKE ABORTION’ WELL THEN DON’T HAVE ONE”: A
CORPUS-ASSISTED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE STANCE
FUNCTIONS OF SOME DISCOURSE MARKERS IN
MEDIATED ABORTION DEBATE

by

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

“‘WELL I DON’T LIKE ABORTION’ WELL THEN DON’T HAVE ONE”: A CORPUS-ASSISTED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE STANCE FUNCTIONS OF SOME DISCOURSE MARKERS IN MEDIATED ABORTION DEBATE

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This dissertation examines the use of discourse markers as a stance-taking resource in written discourse on abortion. Drawing from four corpora collected from editorials, blogs, Twitter, and Reddit, I focus on the discourse markers *I mean*, *of course*, *okay*, and *well* and their use in concessive repair sequences, as prefaces to constructed dialogue, and as interpersonal stance markers. Within the corpora, both concessive repair and constructed dialogue serve to reinforce a positive-self, negative-other evaluative split, although they differ in the types of stance objects that writers position themselves in relation to. Writers use concessive repair to evaluate distal stance objects - and, in particular, women as a broader social group - while within constructed dialogue there is a split between reported speech and reported thought, with reported speech being used to evaluate distal objects and reported thought evaluating proximal objects such as the writer’s previously held positions. *Well*-prefaced constructed dialogue, in particular, is used to convey negative attitudinal information when there is tension between the writer’s beliefs and those expressed in the constructed dialogue, and the discourse marker helps the writer to position and align themselves to construct a specific identity. This dissertation shows, however, that stance-taking in abortion discourse is not a straightforward matter of expressing

the writer's personal opinions. Instead, the pattern of stance-taking with meta-stance markers and the use of discourse marker *of course* to coerce a sense of shared background knowledge indicate that writers also place emphasis on the construction of shared group membership in order to mitigate potential points of conflict.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the United States, people's rights to access abortion services were affirmed by the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Despite this ruling, however, reproductive rights and the legal status of abortion access remain widely contested issues in U.S. politics. A significant amount of legislative debate is spent on bills that largely aim to curtail access to abortion services, with 338 anti-abortion provisions having been passed by states between 2010 and 2016 (Guttmacher Institute 2017). Discussions and debates on abortion rights are not restricted to legislative chambers, however, and occupy a space in the broader cultural discourse as a contested and polarizing social issue.

The frame analysis of political discourse (Lakoff 1996, 2014) argues that the language that people use to discuss a topic constructs a point of view that further shapes how people think and feel about that subject. At the heart of this theory is the idea that the ability to create and shape meaning is inherently socially powerful (Lakoff 2000); this is reflected in discourse of abortion on a number of levels. In legal writings, courts have contributed to the conflation of abortion as infanticide by labeling the individuals involved in the procedure as the *mother* and *child* (Abrams 2013). This labeling further draws on the gender-role driven stereotype of women as mothers.

(1) Respect for human life finds an ultimate expression in the bond of love the **mother** has for her **child** (Abrams 2013: 297, *Gonzalez v. Carhart*)

This discourse of abortion as infanticide has contributed to shaping how individuals who want abortions conceive of the procedure; in counseling abortion-seeking patients, doctors report that

these patients increasingly use words like *murder* and *killing the baby* to refer to the procedure (Joffe 2013).

There has also been a shift in the language used by both sides of the issue of abortion access. In the time period leading up to and immediately following the *Roe v. Wade* decision, members of the pro-choice movement spoke of *abortion on demand* and *abortion without apology*, using liberatory language to express the demand for unqualified access to abortion. In the decades following *Roe v. Wade*, however, such liberatory language has largely been replaced by the more conciliatory qualification that abortion should be *safe, legal, and rare* in response to the increasingly charged nature of the debate (Weitz 2010). In contrast, the language of pro-life rhetoric has focused on what they have named *partial birth abortions*, which has served to focus the larger debate about general abortion access on what is, in actuality, an infrequently conducted procedure (Armitage 2010).

The way that language shapes how people think and feel about abortion is further clarified when women are asked to share their experience-based perspective on abortion. Although people rarely discuss their individual experiences without prompting, when they do, there is a linguistic distinction drawn between *abortion* and *termination of a wanted pregnancy* (Waldman 2009; Sanger 2016). In other aspects, linguistic structures provide a way for women to emphasize their agency in discussing their abortions and to push back against the idea that having an abortion is necessarily a traumatic event or that it was something that was done to them rather than a choice they made (Beynon-Jones 2017). The use of active voice, the repetition of the first person pronoun *I*, and the explicit refutation of any kind of trauma in (2) illustrates this point.

- (2) It was totally fine. It was kind of, you know, because I was 100 per cent sure about my decision I was fine. I really didn't think about it. There was no trauma about it.
(Beynon-Jones 2017: 230)

These existing studies on discourses of abortion in the United States have largely focused on lexically contentful and grammatically meaningful words and phrases, where the term lexically contentful refers to words from major part of speech categories such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives. However, I posit that Lakoff's frame analysis (1996, 2014) is equally applicable to the linguistic class of discourse markers such as *well* and *okay*, which, although they are often edited out of transcripts and thought of as simply fillers or disfluencies – words that are either produced by accident or that do not have meaning – they should instead be seen as a resource for positioning and identity management in ways that are less overt, but no less powerful, than lexically contentful words.

1.2 Research questions

Evaluation and judgment are at the core of the frame analysis; both contribute to the linguistic choices that individuals use to express their thoughts and opinions as well as to how those expressions are interpreted. As such, the linguistic theory of stance – the idea “that a speaker or writer's internal thoughts, opinions, and attitudes about a topic can be expressed subtly or boldly through the lexico-grammatical choices they make” (Gales 2010: 3) – presents the ideal theoretical framework through which to interpret discourse markers as a resource for positioning and identity management. Linguistic indexes of stance influence how an audience interprets a text, as well as how they come to understand and think about the topic of discussion. This is the perspective from which the present dissertation approaches abortion discourse, with Chapter 2 providing a more comprehensive discussion of stance theory. Specifically, I seek to answer the following questions over the course of this dissertation:

- (i) How do discourse markers act as a resource for positioning and identity management in written abortion discourse according to stance theory? How do individuals use discourse markers to construct their own stances and how do they attribute stance to others?
- (ii) How is the use of discourse markers as stance markers influenced by register variation?
- (iii) How do these findings on stance-taking in abortion discourse reflect larger societal ideologies and power structures? How do these ideologies ultimately shape the ways in which stance-taking strategies are expressed and understood?

To address these research questions, I take a discourse analytic approach to studying abortion discourse.

1.3 Background on discourse analysis

The broadest definition of discourse analysis involves examining how language works in actual use (Brown & Yule 1983) beyond the level of a single sentence. It takes into account the “bigger picture” (Riggenbach 1999) of language that is often overlooked in more micro-level analyses of language use (Paltridge 2006), and examines the ways in which people use their linguistic awareness to construct and reinforce social realities (Johnstone 2002). As a result, discourse analysis requires looking beyond the level of just the language itself to consider how context might affect the discourse structures and even discourse topics that are produced. This level of study provides a deeper understanding of how language becomes meaningful to its users (Chimombo & Rosenberry 1998), helping us to understand why people use language the way that they do. Within the broader field of discourse analysis, researchers have examined a wide range of topics, from looking at how language and thought are organized into structural units (Mitchell 1957) to conversation analysis, which aims to create a fine-grained analysis of spoken interactions. It also involves looking at how language is used by particular cultural groups (Hymes 1964) in discussions about particular cultural issues, and, based on the resulting

linguistic patterns, language use can be described across discourse communities rather than speech communities based on what speakers do with language rather than who they are (Swales 1990).

There are two main approaches to discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003). The first is a textually oriented discourse analysis, where the focus is more directly on the language and the discourse itself, while the second is an approach that is grounded in a socio-theoretical basis. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, and it has been argued that they should be viewed as complementary (Fairclough 2003; Cameron & Kulick 2003). Language use cannot be fully divorced from the social setting in which it occurs, and, as a result, the language under a textually oriented approach is socially situated and needs to be interpreted relative to its social meaning and function (Cameron & Kulick 2003). This dissertation adopts both approaches; specific structures and pragmatic functions of discourse markers will be examined from a textually oriented standpoint in order to determine how, on a linguistic level, discourse markers function in abortion discourse. The use of these discourse markers will also be situated within a socio-theoretical context by examining how their use plays into and/or reflects existing power structures. This enables us to determine not only how important discourse markers can be in signaling writer attitude, but also how their use fits in to Lakoff's (1996, 2014) frame analysis.

1.4 Outline of the dissertation

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are organized in the following manner: Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the literature on linguistic stance. It also provides a background explanation on the connection between discourse markers and stance, as well as that of stance as a linguistic resource for identity construction. In Chapter 3, I discuss how I collected the corpora (large bodies of data) from which the data that I discuss throughout this dissertation

come, as well as the methodological considerations that went into designing and structuring each corpus. Chapter 3 also includes a discussion of the manual coding methods that I employed to narrow down the full amount of data in my corpora to a workable dataset of discourse markers. In Chapter 4, I investigate stance in concessive repair sequences and argue that people participating in abortion discourse use concessive repair to contribute to negative stereotypes of people who have abortions as well as to contrastively position themselves in a positive light. In Chapter 5, I focus on the discourse marker *well* and its use in constructed dialogue. In particular, I show that *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue works as a similarly positive-self, negative-other identity resource to concessive repair. Chapter 6, in contrast, focuses on interpersonal and how discourse markers such as *of course* are used to create a sense of shared group membership among individuals who may, in fact, have different perspectives on the topic. I also discuss how discourse markers can be used at the beginning of a reply structure to mitigate potential sources of conflict. Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude this dissertation by summarizing the patterns of discourse markers as stance markers in mediated abortion discourse.

CHAPTER 2

STANCE LITERATURE REVIEW

Before I address the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, I use the present chapter to provide definitional framework for linguistic stance and explain how and why I chose to focus on discourse markers as stance markers. In section 2.1, I provide a discussion of the general theory of stance in sociolinguistic and discourse analytic literature. Following this, I present a discussion of previous studies that have focused on stance and evaluative positioning in section 2.2. Section 2.3 outlines different linguistic expressions of stance, including a discussion of lexical markers in section 2.3.1 as well as grammatical markers in section 2.3.2. From there, I use the remainder of this chapter to explain my approach to stance for this larger dissertation study in section 2.4. While section 2.3 discusses prior research on lexical and grammatical expressions of stance, I use section 2.4.1 to provide an explanation for why discourse markers are not covered under either of those categories. In addition, I discuss the previous literature on the specific discourse markers *well*, *I mean*, *of course*, and *okay* and their function as stance markers. The remaining section of 2.4, section 2.4.2, contains a discussion of literature on stance as an identity marker. Finally, in section 2.5, I summarize the literature on linguistic stance as a whole.

2.1 Theories of stance

Though stance has been widely studied from a cross-disciplinary perspective, it has generally been defined in a number of different ways and has been broadly applied, leaving multiple theories and understandings of what a linguistic approach to stance involves. In its most agreed upon context, stance is defined as “the lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes,

feelings, judgements, or commitment” (Biber & Finegan 1989: 124) relative to what a speaker says and to whom they say it (Johnstone 2009). This same concept is also frequently discussed under different categorical labels, such as evaluation (Hunston & Thompson 1999) and metadiscourse (Hyland 2005), though these labels are all roughly equivalent. With this understanding, there are two major approaches to stance: epistemic and affective (Ochs 1990; Kiesling 2009). Epistemic stance focuses on the speaker or writer’s certainty and is “a socially recognized way of knowing a proposition, such as direct (experiential) and indirect (e.g., secondhand) knowledge, degrees of certainty and specificity” (Ochs 1990: 2). In example (3a), the speaker’s use of the factive verb *know* positions them as being highly certain and having a high degree of commitment to the truth of their assertion. The speaker in (3b), on the other hand, uses a weaker cognitive verb, *think*, to take a stance that asserts a weaker degree of certainty as to whether or not it rained the previous day.

- (3) a. I **know** that it rained yesterday.
- b. I **think** that it rained yesterday.

Affective stance, on the other hand, is an emotional stance that can examine how people linguistically express their evaluation of or feelings toward some object or entity, as shown in example (4). In (4a), the speaker states a positive affective stance, indicating their affinity for the book in question, while in (4b) the speaker expresses their negative evaluation.

- (4) a. I really **like** this book.
- b. I think this book is **terrible**.

Affective stance can also be more interactional in nature, signaling a speaker’s relation to their interlocutors, the other people involved in the conversation or dialogue, by indicating authority or solidarity. This is the case in example (5), where the speaker issues a directive to the person

they are talking to, instructing their interlocuter to be nice and not to use a particular tone of voice, all of which indicates the speaker's position of authority relative to the hearer.

(5) Sandra, I can't just tell you. If I'm gonna also do this you have to be nice to me okay.
Don't talk to me in that tone of voice. (Goodwin 2007: 65).

Kiesling (2009) argues that the two types of stance are often interconnected; when a speaker expresses something in a condescending manner, for instance, they are simultaneously expressing that they view themselves as being in a social position above their interlocuter (affective stance) and that they are very certain about their assertion (epistemic stance). I adopt this perspective for the current study, and view epistemic and affective stance as largely related linguistic phenomena.

2.2 Stance and evaluative positioning

Stance is perhaps best conceived of as an interactional process (Ochs & Schieffelin 1983; Du Bois 2007) which emerges from joint participation in conversation (Kärkkäinen 2007). When one person in a conversation takes a stance and expresses their judgment or evaluation on a conversationally relevant topic or issue, it invites others to do the same, creating an ongoing process of stance-taking (Sakita 2013). It is this understanding of stance as an interactional process, one which focuses on the one-one-one conversational interactions between a speaker and a hearer or between a reader and a writer, that informs the idea of stance as a strategy for evaluative positioning; in positing a system for stance, Du Bois (2007) suggests that the act of stance-taking takes place within the framework of the stance triangle. That is, there are three central components of a stance act: evaluation, positioning, and alignment. Further, each stance act has three key entities that represent the nodes of the triangle: the first interlocuter, the second interlocuter, and the stance object. It should be noted that my terminology here differs from Du Bois's (2007) labels for the conversational participants, which he calls the first and second

subject. Since this label is not related to the syntactic subject position, however, I refer to them as the first and second interlocuters for the duration of this dissertation to avoid confusion. These pieces – the first interlocuter, the second interlocuter, and the stance object – all come together into a stance act when the first interlocuter evaluates a stance object, positions themselves with relation to the stance object, and aligns with the second interlocuter who has also evaluated the object. From a first-person perspective, this definition can be paraphrased as:

(6) I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and thereby align with you. (Du Bois 2007: 163)

The alignment between the first and second interlocuters can be convergent or divergent, depending on whether they are in agreement in their evaluation and positioning with respect to the stance object. Converging alignments indicate that both interlocuters share the same evaluation and positioning relative to the stance object, while diverging alignments suggest disagreement between their evaluations. Figure 2.1, below, illustrates the interactive process of the stance triangle.

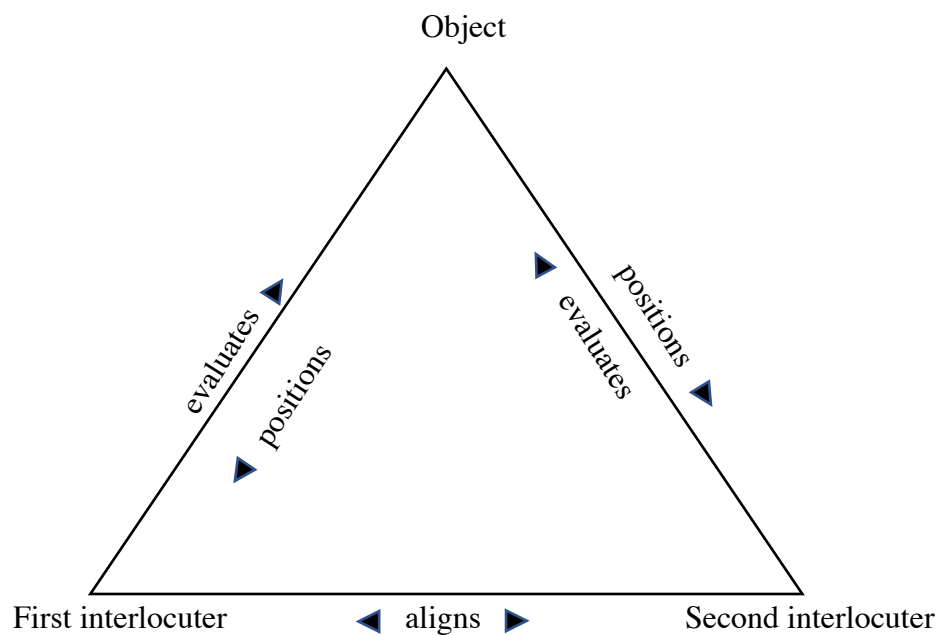


Figure 2.1: Adapted stance triangle (Du Bois 2007: 163)

The example in (7) shows the stance triangle as applied to real language. In this example, Sam, the first interlocuter, negatively evaluates some stance object indicated by *those*. Angela, the second interlocuter, similarly provides a negative evaluation for the same object, though in her utterance *those* is not phonologically realized, or explicit in what is said, and indicates a convergent alignment between herself and Sam using *either*.

- (7) Sam: I don't like those.
 Angela: I don't either. (Du Bois 2007: 165)

This same stance move is schematically illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Stance and evaluative positioning (Du Bois 2007: 165)

Speaker	Stance interlocuter	Positions/ Evaluates	Stance object	Aligns
Sam	I ₁	don't like	those	
Angela	I ₂	don't {like}	{those}	either

Returning to the idea that epistemic and affective stances are related, Kiesling et al. (2018) propose a different set of stance-taking dimensions that interact in a similar manner to the stance triangle. Under this framework, the relevant stance-taking dimensions are evaluation (or affect), alignment, and investment. Affect here refers to the positive or negative evaluation attributed to the stance object or stance focus, and is illustrated in (8). The speaker provides a positive evaluation of a conversationally relevant game, stating that they love it.

- (8) I love that game. (Kiesling et al. 2018: 686)

Alignment follows roughly the same definition as that outlined by Du Bois (2007), where it refers to how much the first interlocuter's stance aligns with the second interlocuter. Alignment can either occur as an alignment, in which the second interlocuter provides the same evaluation of the same stance object as the first interlocuter, as in (9a), or as a disalignment, where the

second interlocuter provides an evaluation that is counter to that of the first interlocuter, as in (9b).

- (9) I love that game.
a. I love it too.
b. I hate that game.

(Kiesling et al. 2018: 686)

The dimension of investment, however, is used in place of positioning, and refers to how strongly committed a speaker is to their conversational contribution. Epistemic stance falls under investment, while affective stance is counted under affect and alignment (Kiesling et al. 2018). In the response in (10), the second interlocuter has a lower level of investment as indicated both by the predicate adjective *all right* in place of *love* and by the removal of the first person pronoun attributed to the speaker.

- (10) I love that game.
That game is all right.

(Kiesling et al. 2018: 686)

Though there are differences in the specific terminology that each approach to stance and evaluative positioning uses, the frameworks encompass the same general idea that stance is an interactional process by which objects are evaluated and alignment is linguistically signaled.

As an interactional process, stance relies on specific interactional contexts to be interpreted and can be driven by ideology. Linguistic expressions of stance, which will be discussed further in section 2.3, can be defined and interpreted differently across various discourse and speech communities. For instance, both *dude* (Kiesling 2004) and *güey* (Bucholtz 2009) are used as in-group terms of address that index a stance of solidarity, but when used by out-group individuals they do not have the same stance-taking function. This is because speakers and writers draw on culturally constructed frames (Goffman 1974) that might not be available to people who are out-group to enact stances, none of which are constructed in a vacuum. Instead, because the evaluative positioning involves drawing on culturally available resources, stances

not only represent the speaker or writer's individual position, but also the larger value systems of the communities to which they belong (Thompson & Hunston 2000). With this perspective that stance reflects larger social and cultural values in mind, I argue that linguistic stance is the ideal lens through which to examine abortion discourse because analyzing how these interactional moves are performed can reveal how a particular issue or topic – abortion in the case of the present study – is evaluated within a wider cultural context (Paterson et al. 2016). Moreover, stance can reveal affect or emotion even when it is not overtly marked in obvious ways (Du Bois & Kärkkäinen 2012). Before I discuss more covert expressions of stance, however, it is important to first discuss what constitutes an overt expression of stance.

2.3 Expressions of stance

Among the more explicit and overt ways that stance can be marked within an interactional process is through the use of linguistic forms that signal directly to the speaker or writer's evaluative position. These cues are largely lexical and grammatical in nature (Biber et al. 1999). In the following sections, I provide a discussion of the way such stance expressions have been found to function in existing research.

2.3.1 Lexical expressions

There are a wide variety of lexical categories in which stance markers have been found. Adverbs such as *surely* can index a confrontational stance when combined with a *you*-predicate (Downing 2001), while other adverbs such as *unfortunately* or *hopefully* provide information about a writer's attitude and values (Hyland 2005). Similarly, adjectives, and in particular evaluative adjectives like *good*, *certain*, *appropriate*, and *remarkable*, reveal a speaker or writer's judgment on a conversationally relevant stance object (Hunston & Sinclair 2000). The particular choice of referring expression, nouns and pronouns, that an individual uses can also

provide a signal for interpreting their evaluative positioning (Hunston & Sinclair 2000; Biber 2006). For instance, first person pronouns in academic writing indicate that the author wishes to highlight the role that they played in crafting a particular argument and to emphasize their individual contributions to the field of knowledge (Hyland 2005).

2.3.2 Grammatical expressions

Grammatical markers of stance differ from lexical markers because they not only involve a larger syntactic structure, but they are also made up of two separate linguistic elements: the stance itself and the proposition in which the stance is embedded (Biber et al. 1999).

Complement-taking predicates such as *think*, *guess*, or *believe* allow individuals to place emphasis on speaker attitude and evaluation of the embedded proposition at the beginning of the utterance (Field 1997; Hyland & Jiang 2017). Passives similarly allow for information to be fronted, revealing the evaluative emphasis of what the speaker or writer personally finds most important within an utterance (Baratta 2009). Finally, while they do not have as clear a distinction between the stance itself and the fronted proposition as other grammatical markers, modals (*must*, *should*) and semi-modals (*have to*, *ought to*) are commonly used methods of expressing stance (Thompson & Hunston 2000; Gales 2010).

2.4 Current approach to stance

Not all stance markers are as overt as those discussed in the preceding section, however. Instead, there is a growing body of research that indicates that discourse markers, primarily understood as contributing no lexical or grammatical content to a sentence, contribute to stance-taking. In the following section, 2.4.1, I outline the attested stance-taking functions of the set of discourse markers that I analyze in the remaining chapters of this dissertation. From there, I discuss the literature on stance as a linguistic resource for identity construction in order to

provide a relevant background for my analysis of stance and identity construction in abortion discourse.

2.4.1 Discourse markers and stance

In addition to the lexical and grammatical expressions of stance discussed in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, respectively, some discourse markers – particles such as *oh*, *well*, *so*, *I mean*, and *um* – are also known to perform stance-taking functions in addition to their other discourse marker uses. As a broader pragmatic class, discourse markers are generally thought of as containing little representational meaning in the same sense that lexical expressions such as *guess* or *prefer* do (Blakemore 1992), and, as a result, I count their contribution to stance literature as separate from other lexical expressions. Similarly, they exist independent of the syntax, as illustrated in (11a) where the discourse marker *well* appears outside of the structure of the main clause. Further, removing a discourse marker from an utterance leaves the sentence's grammaticality and semantic meaning intact and unaffected, as seen in (11b), which is grammatical and has the same propositional meaning as (11a). As such, discourse markers cannot be considered a grammatical expression of stance.

- (11) a. **Well**, [that was a bad idea]
DM. DP VP. DP
b. That was a bad idea.

Instead, discourse markers are inherently pragmatic in nature, imparting information about how a discourse is organized and revealing speaker attitudes. They are effective signals of author or speaker stance because one of the functions of discourse markers is to indicate attitudinal information, a function they share with other classes of stance markers (Jones 2016). Neither discourse markers nor stance markers contribute solely propositional content to an utterance, and

instead, they can be used to indicate how the speaker or author feels about the information contained within the utterance.

There are a number of discourse markers that have been previously identified as serving a stance-taking function in existing literature. *Well*, one of the most widely used discourse markers, is used as a spoken resource to navigate conversational situations in which competing stances are taken within a single conversation (Sakita 2013). When a speaker wants to make a statement that involves a stance that is not consistent with that of the previous speaker, adding *well* to the beginning of their response allows the second speaker to signal ahead of time that there is an upcoming stance divergence in the conversation. It is worth noting here that prefacing a response with *well* to mitigate potential sources of conflict between different stances is likely influenced by the turn-taking rules that govern English conversation; in some contexts, when the first speaker's utterance ends, concluding their turn, another speaker is either allowed to participate in the interactional activity by taking the next turn, or is required to do so by conversational norms (Sacks et al. 1974). In instances where a response is expected or required, *well* allows the second speaker to fulfil their turn-taking obligation while helping them to avoid conflict. *Well* can also be used to signal that a speaker has changed their stance toward a conversationally relevant stance object from their prior evaluation. Rather than indexing a specific stance itself, the way that lexical and grammatical stance markers have been attested to do, *well* serves an interactional stance function where it negotiates the co-existence of what would otherwise be competing evaluative positions.

Of course has also been found to do stance work. In written registers, it serves an epistemic stance function where it signals at the writer's certainty in the likelihood of the event that their statement refers to. Beyond the epistemic level, though, *of course* also foregrounds the

fact that the author and the audience share some background knowledge or expectations (Adams & Quintana-Toledo 2013); it acts as an interpersonal or affective stance marker by drawing on this sense of sharedness to establish a bond between the writer and the reader. In order for there to be some element of shared knowledge, they must, on some level, belong to the same discourse community (Adams & Quintana-Toledo 2013), and the use of *of course* signals to that mutual affiliation.

There is some debate regarding clause-initial *I mean*'s status as a discourse marker given its attested ambiguity as to whether it is a matrix clause verb – one that appears in the main or independent clause – or whether it denotes a parenthetical. *I mean*, however, is rarely a main clause verb, and is, instead, predominantly a parenthetical according to Stenström (1995). As such, it has a pragmatic disclosure function in which it repairs potential miscommunications and indicates a mismatch between the speaker's intention and their words (Schourup 1985) and should be analyzed as a discourse marker (Brinton 2002). In its capacity as a discourse marker, *I mean* has a number of identified stance-taking functions, as a marker of speaker attitude it can express certainty (12a), evaluation or judgment (12b), and sincerity (12c), each in different discourse contexts (Brinton 2002).

- (12) a. But Cousin Alexander is rich! Really rich, **I mean**.
 - b. **I mean**, it's humiliating to be beaten by someone who doesn't even walk properly.
 - c. I would never pick up the phone and call him; **I mean**, I wouldn't do that.
- (Brinton 2002: 8)

Additionally, *I mean* also marks evaluative stance toward the content of a discourse, being used to navigate expression of highly personal information in providing self-accounts in therapeutic settings (Gerhardt & Stinson 1994).

The final discourse marker that I consider in this dissertation, *okay*, can be used as a releasing marker (Merritt 1984). Speakers signal that they are taking over the conversational floor and ending a previous speaker's turn, or releasing the previous speaker's hold of the floor, by starting their turn with *okay* in a clause-initial position; this conversational move can be either affirmative or negative, in which case the use of *okay* indicates the speaker's disapproval and negative evaluation of the previous speaker's utterance (Kovarsky 1989). While the stance-taking functions discussed above are undoubtedly not the only stance-work that the discourse markers *well*, *of course*, *I mean*, and *okay* do – indeed, their uses as other types of stance resources are further discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 – existing literature demonstrates that these specific discourse markers that I focus on in the remainder of this dissertation are also expressions of stance.

2.4.2 Stance and construction of individual and group identities

Like stance, identity construction is a nuanced interactional process that has been studied from a number of different theoretical frameworks and from a cross-disciplinary perspective. Within linguistics, stance is known to contribute to identity construction, where identity refers broadly to “the social positioning of self and other” (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 586). Social identities like gender (Ochs 1992; Kiesling 1998), professional status (Ochs 1993), and social class (Kiesling 1998; Bucholtz 2007) are constructed over time through the performance of socially specified acts and the verbal expression of certain stances. An individual stance expressed once does not necessarily constitute the immediate construction of an identity. Rather, many theorize of social identities of being “built up through the habitual taking of stances, and interactional dynamics may sediment into social relations” (Bucholtz 2007: 379). Under this perspective, identity formation is temporal. While an individual stance may be momentarily

salient to a specific conversational interaction, the social identity construction requires repeated stance-taking over time. In fact, repeating patterns of stance-taking can be taken together to form part of an individual's style and consistent personal identity (Johnstone 2009).

Other perspectives consider identity to be fluid and to fluctuate depending on the interactional context. Identity may need to be negotiated and renegotiated depending on context, particularly in discursive settings like classrooms, where multiple interlocutors are simultaneously negotiating multiple sources of knowledge, authority, and identity (Kirkham 2011). There are five principles that govern the fluid interactional construction of identity: emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). Stance is included in these factors as one element of construction. The second principle, positionality, and the third principle, indexicality, are central to the analysis I present in this dissertation, as I focus on the construction of identity as it emerges from specific discourse contexts. The positionality principle states that:

Identities encompass (a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions, and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 592).

Stance factors in here as the third level of positionality. By looking at how people interactionally enact certain stances and what stances they enact for others, it is possible to tell how they position themselves and how they would like to be understood to be positioned by others. The indexicality principle focuses on the connection between ideological structures and language in terms of identity construction. It states:

Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions; (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 (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 594).

Stance is developed and signaled in the ongoing conversational moves that individuals make to indicate their evaluative and epistemic positions. As such, by enacting and linguistically expressing evaluations and judgments, people mark their orientation to existing discourse in ways that indicate stances such as forcefulness, uncertainty, etc. that are often associated with specific social groups. These associations are inherently ideological and may occur at an individual level, or may be socially imposed (Inoue 2004; Bucholtz & Hall 2005). The indexicality principle provides an ideal lens through which to analyze discourse on abortion, then, because it is such an ideologically charged topic where individual and social perspectives influence the negotiation of discursively constructed stance.

2.5 Conclusion

Stance-taking is an interactional linguistic process by which individuals signal their evaluation of the content of their conversational contributions and negotiate their position relative to their interlocuter. As an interactional process, stance-taking is best conceived of through the stance triangle, a figure that relies on three central components (evaluation, positioning, and alignment) with conversational entities representing the triangle's nodes (first interlocuter, second interlocuter, and stance object). The stances that are enacted through the stance triangle can be linguistically signaled in both explicit and inexplicit ways. Explicit signals of stance fall into lexical and grammatical categories, while inexplicit signals, such as discourse markers, are equally capable of expressing stance but have been less widely studied. I ended this chapter with a discussion of the literature connecting linguistic stance to identity construction, setting up that, in the following chapters, I intend to bring together the ideas of discourse markers as stance markers and stance as a strategy for identity construction within the specific discourse framework of mediated debate on abortion. In the next chapter, I explain the methodological

considerations and collection techniques that went into the formation of the corpora that I used throughout the remainder of this dissertation in addressing the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 3

CORPUS COLLECTION & METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the previous chapter, I outlined the general sociolinguistic theory of stance, with a focus on how stance factors into the linguistic construction of individual and group identities. This chapter picks up on those ideas, laying out an explanation of how and why I chose the data sources that I used to investigate stance in abortion discourse and providing a more detailed account of the corpus collection process. In section 3.1, I discuss my reasoning for incorporating corpus linguistic methodology into a more traditional discourse analytic approach. From there, I discuss the specific methodological considerations that went into constructing the corpora used for this study (section 3.2) and explain how the data for each corpus was collected (sections 3.2.1-3.2.4). Section 3.3 provides a quantitative description of the data, and finally, in section 3.4 I provide a summary of the methodological considerations that went into collecting my corpora and introduce the specific stance-taking strategies that I will investigate in more detail in the following chapters.

3.1 Rationale for corpus-assisted discourse analysis

A growing body of research has advocated for the use of corpus linguistic methodology in discourse analysis. Broadly speaking, discourse analysis argues that language use can be analyzed to reveal both an individual's ideological stance toward a subject as well as how that subject is evaluated within wider cultural discourse (van Dijk 1993). While discourse analysis does not specifically require the use of corpus linguistic methodology, the use of concordance software and collocation tools allows for the discovery of linguistic differences that might not otherwise be noticeable, as well as for discourse to be analyzed on a much wider scale than

would be possible by hand (Orpin 2005). These differences may be hidden to the researcher's naked eye and are often unknown and unintentional to the speaker or writer themselves, but can make for hypotheses that are testable using corpus techniques (Partington 2004). Additionally, because corpus-based approaches involve analyzing naturally occurring language data, they are not subject to the same kind of researcher bias that elicitation tasks or grammaticality judgments might entail (Baker 2006). The discourse that is under analysis is produced without an observer or a researcher directing the context, which helps ensure that the interactional structure is natural and that the patterns of language use that may arise in the analysis are not a product of the observer effect. Triangulation of data is also possible using corpus linguistic methods, which increases the validity of the study (Baker 2006). For example, comparison of several types of datasets from different genres on the same topic allows us to examine the effects of the level of formality (or amount of editing) and of whether the genre is monologic or dialogic on the types of linguistic expressions used throughout the dataset. With respect to the specific question of stance, corpus linguistic methodologies are especially beneficial because the stance function of an individual word is not immediately apparent from linguistic form alone; by analyzing potential stance markers as used in a corpus, linguists are better able to use context to analyze and quantify stance functions (Hunston 2007).

Existing research has also shown that corpus-assisted discourse analysis is a useful approach in determining how marginalized identities are linguistically constructed. Studies on the discourse surrounding sexual identities, such as gay men (Baker 2005) and bisexuals (Wilkinson 2019), have used corpus linguistic methodologies to highlight how perceptions and understandings of different sexual orientations have shifted over time. Other corpus-assisted discourse analytic studies have looked at how media coverage shapes perception of minority

immigrant groups with a particular focus on the ways in which Muslims are discursively constructed as the ‘other’ (Baker et al. 2013). In addition, attitudes toward different sub-communities of women have been the subject of linguistic inquiry, such as McEnery & Baker’s (2017) diachronic research on the representation of prostitutes. Taken as a whole, this body of research effectively illustrates that the complex and nuanced ways that language factors in to identity construction can best be understood by looking at large quantities of data. Keeping this fact in mind, I adopt a similar methodology and take a corpus-based approach to examining how discourse markers as stance markers function as a marker of group-membership and identity construction in abortion discourse. The first step in this analysis was to consider potential data sources for a corpus.

3.2 Corpus collection

While established corpora such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the Brown corpus, and the Frown corpus each contain many instances of the lexeme *abortion* (a frequency of 20,533 in COCA), as general corpora they do not provide specialized enough language data to reveal much about larger stance trends in abortion discourse. Instead, they are better suited for revealing patterns in American English as a whole. In order to focus more specifically on abortion discourse, I constructed four specialized corpora that were composed of texts from editorials, Reddit posts, Twitter, and blogs. Many studies that have taken a discourse analytic approach to various topics have included newspapers as a source of data because newspapers “have a dialectal relationship with their audience and may try to reflect the attitudes of their target audience, while they also function as ‘controllers’ of discourses” (Baker & McEnery 2015: 244). Editorials take this generalization a step further than hard news stories in that they integrate facts with opinions and more overtly encourage readers to think or behave a

certain way. Additionally, editorials benefit from the “hierarchy of credibility” (Becker 1972) due to their association with the preference granted to opinions put forth by the media. These data sources, then, illustrate how the individuals at the forefront of the abortion debate, namely the people who seek abortions and the doctors who perform them, have their identities constructed for them by more powerful actors (Baker & McEnery 2015). In contrast, digitally mediated data sources like Reddit, Twitter, and blogs are more democratic in nature, allowing almost anyone to participate in the discourse if they so wish; combining data from editorials with digitally mediated data allows for a comparison between how social actors in positions of power linguistically enact their stances toward abortion with the stance-taking strategies of those without social power.

Within the category of discourse, there are subtypes that can differ. The language register, or “situationally defined” variety (Biber 1995) similar to genre, in which a discourse is situated can have important linguistic implications; the individual lexical and grammatical choices that an individual makes are, in part, based on the specific register that a speaker is using (Hymes 1984) as well as the particular discourse function that the speaker intends to convey (Biber & Conrad 2001). As a result, the linguistic forms found in many discourses are fundamentally different from those found in many types of written discourse, especially as crossed with aspects of formal, edited discourse as opposed to informal discourse, narrative vs. informal discourse, etc. To address the ways that certain linguistic features seem to systematically pattern together to typify registers, a multi-dimensional (MD) analysis has been proposed (Biber 1988), which groups language registers along an informative-interactional scale of language use depending on the clusters of features that the register exhibits where the dimensional scores of a text are independent of one another. For instance, science fiction writing,

one of the registers analyzed by Biber, has a similarly strong association with informational linguistic features as does academic prose. In looking at the dimension of narrative vs. non-narrative features, however, the registers differ; science fiction contained more narrative features, while academic prose was highly non-narrative (Biber 1988).

It is not always intuitive where a certain register will fall along the informative- interactional scale; corpus linguistic analyses that have looked at online register variation using websites like Facebook and Twitter found that, while the websites have an interactional or informal nature, the language used is more in line with descriptive and informational dimensions of register variation (Titak & Roberson 2013). This understanding adds to the imperative that research begin with the assumption that register differences exist and should include these differences as a factor in the analysis unless they are empirically shown to be unimportant, as the actual ways in which the linguistic features vary across register type cannot necessarily be intuitively known or guessed. Because the use of linguistic features are not distributed along a binary of 'frequent' versus 'rare,' and are, instead, distributed on a continuous range of variation, quantitative findings are necessary to fully capture the distributional patterns; relying on generalizations of which features are expected to be associated with a certain register often leads to over-estimation of some features while overlooking or omitting others (Biber 2012).

Although it cannot be predicted where a discourse register will fall along the informative- interactional scale, there are typically differences between monologic and dialogic text; online conversation structures that involve replies are more likely to show features generally associated with conversation analysis, including turn-taking organizational structures such as adjacency pairs and repair sequences, which orient them toward a personal narrative focus or involved, interactive discourse. With respect to digitally mediated communication, where the asynchronous

nature of the medium means that disrupted turn adjacency is a problem for conversational coherence, strategies such as back-channeling (13), cross-turn references where users quote or link to content from a previous message to create a sense of adjacency (14), and the use of specific terms of address to point out to which specific user a response is aimed (15) are likely to be used (Herring 1999).

- (13) S5: Didn't Miss Lewis ever tell you about like her nephew or something
S6: ([no she did]) I probably forgot
S5: In the navy
S6: **Mm[mm I dunno**
S5: [ok- ok she had this nephew that was like- he was in the navy
and you have to be short cause to fit in the submarine you know
S6: **Uh huh**
S5: like cause they only make it like a certain height and he was like only 5'6" or 8"
S6: **Uh huh**
S5: and then like he had a growth spurt while he was in the navy
S6: **Uh huh**
S5: and this is like bef- when he was twenty or twentyone and he turned to like six
something. (Tolins & Fox Tree 2014: 157; 4)
- (14) <http://janed@ABC.bigtel.com> (Jane Doe) writes:
>I can't believe how horrible Natalie looks. Has she put on a lot of weight?
I agree, but she has always had a somewhat round face, so if she did put on weight,
I think that would be accentuated. (Herring 1999: 4)
- (15) **Marci**, thank you so much for sharing your story! I pray that your vulnerability will
speak to young women who think they don't have an option. May the Lord bless
your ministry! [Blog: *Thankful Homemaker* 2013]

Monologic texts such as editorial writing, on the other hand, which are designed to be persuasive and informative, are less likely to have the same sorts of conversational structures because they do not include direct replies. They are also more likely to orient toward descriptive, informational language production. In order to capture the range of conversational and discursive strategies used by writers in different registers of language use, I chose to collect my data for analysis from editorials, Reddit, blogs, and Twitter. Reddit and blogs both allow for comments and reply structures, which means they are more likely to contain interactional discursive

features, while editorials and individual tweets are more monologic in nature and are not expected to show the same features of asynchronous conversations.

I chose the time period between January 2012 and December 2017 as the starting and ending point for corpus collection. During this five-year period, there were a number of events that sparked renewed interest in the abortion debate, which led to more frequently published editorials on the topic as well as more discussion in digitally mediated spaces. For example, the Contraceptive Coverage mandate of the Affordable Care Act went into effect in 2012, resulting in arguments that mistakenly conflated birth control with abortion. Several employers filed subsequent legal suits against the government, which were widely covered across new and traditional media outlets. Discussion of abortion and reproductive rights carried into 2013, which represented the 40th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision; in 2015, the U.S. saw the first female presidential candidate for a major political party, Hillary Clinton, and her candidacy brought discussions of sexism to the forefront of political coverage. Part of the broader public discourse about her candidacy involved questioning the motives of women who expressed their support as single-issue voters only concerned about abortion access and reproductive rights. 2017, the final year I included in my corpora, marked the first year of Donald Trump's presidency, which featured a rollback of several of the Obama-era advances in reproductive rights. The considerations outlined above informed the formation of the four corpora that I use for the analysis of the present study, and in the following sections I explain how they factored into the collection techniques for each individual corpus.

3.2.1 Editorial corpus

Editorials from U.S. news outlets were used to analyze how formal written discourse on abortion functions. These editorials were collected through the Nexis Uni newspaper database,

formerly LexisNexis Academic; to gather editorials written on the subject between January 2012 and December 2017, the following search term was used, where the asterisk represents a wildcard for any additional characters:

abort* OR reproduction OR reproductive rights OR reproductive health OR fetus OR fetal OR unborn OR pro-life OR pro-choice OR pro-abort* OR pro-birth OR feticide OR right to life OR Planned Parenthood AND editorial

This search allowed for the exclusion of any hard news article and limited the results to only those found in the editorials section. Stance, similar to appraisal theory in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), is constructed differently in news stories and editorials; according to McCabe & Heilman (2007) and White (2002), an SFL approach to appraisal in news and editorials demonstrated that, while stances are taken in news stories, they are constructed through the use of relevant quotes. This generalization held for a small corpus of news articles on abortion that I constructed (100,564 tokens). As illustrated in (16), the overt stance markers *absolutely* and *spineless*, which indicate disagreement with cutting funding to an educational program run by Planned Parenthood, is contained within a direct quote.

(16) “It’s **absolutely** a **spineless** move,” Goldberg said, “and doesn’t have anything to do with the facts or reality of the situation.” [News: *The Salt Lake Tribune* 2015]

While the decision to include such a quote may be indicative of the journalist’s position on the issue, by attributing the words to an outside source, they can avoid being viewed as subjective sources (White 2002). Editorials, on the other hand, allow more freedom for the author to use their own voice in making explicit judgments, claims, or accusations. This difference is reflected in (17), where the same stance-marker *absolutely* is used directly by the author of the editorial to signal their own position.

(17) There's also a suggestion that the release of Planned Parenthood undercover videos were responsible for the slaying of several abortion clinic employees, something that has **absolutely** no factual or legal justification. You would think the bar association would be wary of honoring an organization that engages in such propaganda. [Editorial: *The Philadelphia Inquirer* 2017]

The search query I used to find editorials in the NexisUni database also included a broad number of search terms encompassing the various ways that people discuss abortion. This allowed me to focus my corpus collection techniques on aboutness, or the topic or central element of a text. Only those editorials that listed *abortion* as a subject tag with at least a 90% relevance match were included in the corpus, and I further used AntConc (Anthony 2018) and #LancsBox (Brezina et al. 2015; Brezina et al. in prep) concordance software to ensure that abortion was in the top five most frequent content words. The search was further narrowed to avoid editorials published outside of the United States by limiting the location settings in Nexis Uni and selecting all of the individual states, the District of Columbia, and the broader category of the U.S. In some instances, the same editorial was published in multiple outlets. When this occurred, only the instance where it was first published, as noted in the editorial information in the database, was added to the corpus. All of the articles in the corpus were individually stored in text files for later analysis with the AntConc and #LancsBox software, and also sorted into a single, larger Excel file to be tagged and sorted.

3.2.2 Reddit corpus

In order to analyze how informal discourse on abortion functions, two separate corpora composed of posts from social media were collected using script packages for RStudio and Python. In particular, the popular social media websites Reddit and Twitter were chosen as the focus of these corpora due to their social influence as well as the discursive nature of both platforms in allowing users to respond to one another. Neither site places limits on privacy

settings with respect to which posts or users can be replied to, and the data is openly available to public domain. Reddit, in particular, has been found to have distinct patterns of language use for more specialized communities (Zhang et al. 2017).

Data from Reddit was collected using RStudio, with the assistance of the RedditExtractoR 2.0.2 script package (Rivera 2015) designed specifically for scraping data from this website. This script allows the researcher to limit web scraping to specific subreddits -- user-created forums within Reddit dedicated to specific topics -- or by search term; while there are specific subreddits dedicated to the discussion of abortion, namely /r/ProLife and /r/ProChoice, posts in both subreddits date back only to the beginning of 2017. Because of this limitation, the general search term *abortion* was used to collect posts with at least one comment to capture the dialogic element of the language used in any subreddit published between 2012 and 2017, matching the time frame set for all four corpora.

The data contained in the Reddit corpus comes from the subreddits /r/ProLife, /r/ProChoice, /r/Abortion, /r/TwoXChromosomes, /r/AskReddit, /r/IAmA, /r/Politics, and /r/News. While the anonymous nature of Reddit makes it impossible to determine with absolute certainty from where a user is posting, posts in subreddits such as /r/WorldNews and those on discussions of abortion-related issues outside of the United States were excluded from the corpus, as were posts in languages other than English, to keep the corpus as focused on U.S.-based discourse as possible. Once collected, the data was stored in a CVS file and also sorted into individual text files to preserve and account for comment threading and reply structures. To assist in the analysis, each post was saved to a separate text file and tagged with the specific subreddit where it originated, with the comments saved to a corresponding text file. An Excel

workbook containing all of the sentences within the Reddit corpus was then created to allow for categorization and tagging of the data to reveal larger trends in language use.

3.2.3 Twitter corpus

Data from Twitter was collected using the TwitterScraper code (Taspinar 2016) for Python. Packages for collecting data from Twitter through RStudio do exist, but they require the use of Twitter's Search Application Programming Interface (API), which limits accessible data to only those tweets written in the seven days prior to collection. The TwitterScraper Python code does not rely on the Search API to access tweets, and, as such, is not subject to the same recency restrictions that RStudio codes exhibit. Using the TwitterScraper code was crucial to the development of the Twitter corpus, as it allowed for the date range to be held constant across corpora in collecting tweets written between 2012 and 2017. Similar to the RStudio script for Reddit, the Python code allowed for data to be collected directly from Twitter based on specific search terms, which could be in the form of words or hashtags, keywords or phrases preceded by a pound sign (#) that were frequently used at a given time; in order to determine which words might serve as salient search terms in abortion discourse, the Reddit corpus was compared to COCA, and the words that most frequently appeared were used as search terms, including *abortion* and *unborn*. Trending hashtags were also used as search terms, including *#ReproRights*, *#ReproHealth*, *#DefundPPP*, *#AbortionIsMurder*, *#AbortionIsHealthcare*, *#ProLife*, and *#ProChoice*. This combination of search terms covered the various ways that abortion is often framed in order to collect data from a variety of ideological perspectives. It should be noted that although Twitter provides users with the ability to reply to tweets from other users, and, as a result, to construct larger conversation threads, using automated web-scraping methods to collect the Twitter data that I analyzed meant that I was only able to collect individual initial tweets.

The anonymous nature of the internet again makes it difficult to limit the collected data to only that discourse taking part in the U.S.; however, any tweets in languages other than English were removed from the dataset, as were those tweets where the writer explicitly discussed abortion access or abortion rights in other countries or used a hashtag that grounded their tweet in abortion discourse outside of the U.S. For example, both *#repealthe8th* and *#savita* have been used to discuss abortion in Ireland, and any tweet that was automatically collected by the TwitterScraper code that contained either of these hashtags was removed from the dataset. The collected tweets were saved to a combined CVS file to preserve username information as well as retweet and favorite counts. I then grouped the tweets into separate text files by year, resulting in a total of five files of tweets to be read into the concordance software. Individual tweets were also sorted into an Excel workbook for data categorization and tagging.

3.2.4 Blog corpus

The final corpus collected for this study is composed of blog posts and comments. Unlike the construction of the other three corpora, there is no centralized database of blogs or single website from which they can be located. As a result, I used Google's advanced search interface to find blogs that were either dedicated to posting about abortion or that featured individual one-time posts on the topic. For instance, the following search term was used to locate blog posts on the topic of abortion that are hosted on the WordPress blogging platform.

abortion site: wordpress.com

A similar search term was used to locate blog posts hosted on the Blogger, BlogSpot, LiveJournal, and Tumblr platforms.

As with the editorial corpus, I focused the blog corpus collection techniques on aboutness. Both AntConc and #LancsBox concordance software were used to evaluate each post

for the frequency of the word *abortion*, and only those posts in which it was among the five most frequent content words were included in the corpus. This ensured that the blog corpus itself truly reflected discourse about abortion rather than discussion where it came up incidentally and was tangential to the main conversation. I further excluded any posts that were written in languages other than English or that clearly involved discussion of abortion rights in another country in order to keep the blog corpus focused on abortion discourse in the U.S. As in the case of the Reddit data, each individual blog post was saved to its own text file, with the comments saved to a corresponding file to preserve comment threading and reply structures. From there, the blog data was also added to an Excel workbook for analysis.

3.3 Using corpus analysis as a framework

Before any patterns in specific expressions of discourse markers as stance markers can be analyzed, it is important to identify and contextualize which words within the corpora serve a discourse marker function as compared to their more literal part of speech counterparts. In the following section, I outline the shape of the corpora with respect to the four discourse markers that I consider in this study.

3.3.1 Description of the data

In the case of each corpus, the initial data required some cleanup and trimming after it was collected. The editorial corpus involved the least intensive data trimming, since it was collected manually and I was able to eliminate editorials that did not meet the established threshold for aboutness as they came up in the database. I included author and title information in the initial collection of each individual editorial so that the information was available to index into the Excel file. Trimming the editorial data, however, required that I go back to each text file and remove the author's name and title of the editorial to avoid their being read into the

concordance software and confounding the data. In the end, the editorial corpus consisted of 216,458 tokens with 12,620 word types. Additionally, there were 342 individual editorial texts represented within the editorial corpus. This information, along with the text and word counts for The other three corpora, is summarized in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Description of the corpora

	Text Units	Words
Blogs	188 posts	239,713
Editorials	342 editorials	216,458
Reddit	49 posts	228,301
Twitter	17,220 Tweets	237,119

The data in the Reddit corpus required more cleaning and trimming than the editorial corpus, partly because its collection was automated and partly due to the nature of internet-based discourse. The first step I took was to remove posts and comments where the author only posted a link to an outside website with no commentary of their own; this step was designed to ensure that the data that makes up the corpus comes from individuals rather than from headline writers at other media outlets. I further removed data from the comments where the discussion had shifted to a topic that did not deal with abortion in some capacity to keep the topic of the corpus focused. While username information was preserved in the Excel spreadsheet, it was removed from the text files, leaving the corpus with 228,301 tokens and 9,716 text types from 49 texts.

Cleaning the Twitter data involved a similar process to the Reddit data. Tweets that consisted of just a link or a link with the associated title in the body of the tweet without any other comment were removed from the corpus. In addition, in the case of retweets where the

same text was tweeted over again without any additional comment, only the first instance of the tweet was kept in the corpus in order to avoid a corpus dominated by the same utterance tweeted multiple times. However, due to the nature of Twitter and the various Python and RStudio codes that exist for scraping data from Twitter, it was not possible to collect full reply threads. Instead, the Twitter corpus is largely made up of individual tweets. There are 237,119 tokens in the Twitter corpus, with 10,638 text types.

Finally, cleaning and trimming the blog corpus data involved similar processes to the editorial corpus. Because each individual blog post was collected by hand, I was able to filter out links, spam comments, and off-topic comments before they were added to the corpus. Usernames of the commenters and the blog post titles were included in the text files in the first pass scraping of the data. Once this information was indexed in Excel, however, it was removed from the text files to be read into the collocation software. After trimming the data, the blog corpus consisted of 239,713 tokens with 12,600 word types. In addition, there were 188 texts making up the corpus.

While trimming and cleaning up the corpora data was a necessary first step, the bulk of the analysis in the present study relies on an interpretation of the stance function of different discourse markers. In order to begin analyzing stance as indicated through discourse markers, it was first necessary to identify which instances of *well*, *I mean*, *of course*, and *ok/okay* within the corpora are acting as discourse markers and which instances are the words being used in their literal semantic sense. I combined characteristic features of discourse markers identified by Brinton (1996) and Hölker (1981) as a diagnostic tool for identifying the discourse marker tokens. Discourse markers:

- Are often restricted to a sentence-initial position
- Appear outside of the syntactic structure or may be loosely attached, and have no clear grammatical function
- Are optional
- Have little to no semantic meaning
- Are multifunctional and operate on both a local and global plane
- Are related to the larger speech situation and not to the situation talked about
- Have an emotive, expressive function rather than a referential, denotative, or cognitive function

Each instance of *well*, *of course*, *I mean*, and *okay* in all four corpora were tagged for part of speech information by three separate coders (myself, a graduate research assistant, and an undergraduate research assistant) who were all native speakers of English with various educational backgrounds. Only those instances of *well*, *I mean*, *of course*, and *okay* that all three coders considered to be a discourse marker were counted toward the total discourse marker count and included in the dataset of discourse markers that I use for the analyses presented in the following chapters. This allowed me to be sure that the instances that I considered to be discourse markers were, in fact, discourse markers and that the dataset accurately reflected the set of discourse markers within the four corpora.

3.3.2 *Well*

Across the corpora, there are 709 instances of *well*. Of these, 218 are discourse markers. These instances excluded from consideration any uses of *well* where it functioned as non-discourse marker categories, such as an adverb (18), as a degree word (19), as a verb (20), or a coordinating conjunction (21):

- (18) Abortions of viable fetuses after the first trimester do not sit **well** with me, and I can understand why politicians want to buy into that. [Reddit: */r/TwoXChromosomes* 2015]
- (19) I find it obvious that the beginning of human life is **well** before conception. [Blog: *Honest Search for Truth* 2012]

(20) My chest tightened as I looked at Lori and saw tears begin to **well** up in her eyes once more. [Blogs: *Jarrett Banks* 2014]

(21) We expect anti-abortion activists and their political allies to continue to release more edited tapes and seize on other false accusations as an excuse to push their dangerous agenda- to shut down health centers and cut off women from preventative health care as **well** as abortion services. [Editorials: *St. Louis Post Dispatch* 2015]

In each of the above examples, *well* serves a clear grammatical function that is not independent of the syntactic structure; is, with the exception of (19), not optional; and contributes to the propositional meaning. Even in the case of (19), where the intensifier *well* could potentially be omitted from the sentence without affecting grammaticality, doing so would change the overall intended meaning. In other words, the examples in (18) – (21) do not meet the diagnostic criteria for discourse markers and are not considered for further analysis as stance markers in this dissertation. Example (22), on the other hand, offers a token of discourse marker *well*. In this example, *well* is outside of the syntactic structure of the clause, is optional, and contributes little to no propositional meaning. These are the types of uses of *well* that will be examined in more detail in the following chapters.

(22) It sounds like a win-win, right? If only there were an organization that already worked to provide this sex education and contraceptive coverage to women of low-income status or without health insurance. **Well**, there already is: Planned Parenthood. [Editorial: *Washburn Review* 2015]

Following the same criteria identified in section 3.3.1, I now turn to a discussion of discourse marker *I mean*.

3.3.3 *I mean*

Of the four discourse markers discussed in this dissertation, *I mean* occurs with the lowest frequency, occurring only 75 times across all four corpora. Of the total occurrences of *I mean*, 51 are uses of the phrase in its discourse marker function. The relatively high frequency of *I mean* as a discourse marker is unsurprising, given Stenström's (1995) argument that it is

predominantly a parenthetical that carries pragmatic meaning rather than a matrix clause. The count of 57 discourse markers excluded instances where *I mean* was serving its grammatical function of indicating the speaker's intention, as in (23), but included examples such as (24) where the phrase appears outside of the syntactic structure, is optional, appears in a sentence-initial position, and does not contribute to the propositional content of the utterance. *I mean*, in the case of (24) could be removed from the sentence without affecting either grammaticality or propositional meaning.

(23) What **I mean** is if there is a legal protection for doctors who agree perform to late term, you WILL inevitably end with select individual doctors who would be performing very grotesque acts and be protected under law. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2016]

(24) **I mean**.... It kinda does. She should of course ask her SO and hear him out (which she did) and it would be better if they both agree (which, again, they did) but at the end of the day it is her choice. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2013]

In example (23), on the other hand, removing *I mean* would render the sentence ungrammatical, indicating that it is clearly part of the syntax as well as the propositional meaning. I now turn to a discussion of another phrasal discourse marker, *of course*.

3.3.4 *Of course*

There are a total of 203 instances of the phrase *of course* across all four corpora, with 202 of these being counted as discourse markers. This phrase was the most difficult to code for its discourse marker function because it has a high degree of pragmaticalization, the development of discourse pragmatic particles from other lexical or grammatical elements (Diewald 2011). Where discourse markers like *well* have clearly developed a new grammatical and pragmatic function that is clearly distinct from their lexical functions, the discourse marker *of course* has picked up a new discourse marker function, but is still capable of fulfilling its original grammatical functions at the same time (Furkó 2007); the discourse marker function of *of course* is always an available

interpretation of the particle because it always indexes a degree of attitudinal information. As a result, I relied more on the phrase being used to serve an emotive or expressive function instead of a referential function than I did on *of course* being independent of the syntax in identifying the instances of discourse marker *of course*. The only example of *of course* that was not considered a discourse marker is in (25), where although *of* and *course* are collocates, the actual phrase is *matter of course* where *of course* modifies *matter* as an adjective.

(25) I for one am in favor of prosecuting women who have abortions for reasons of justice, and so this should be something we do as a matter **of course** if abortion is illegal. [Blog: *Lydia's Web Page* 2016]

There are a number of examples such as (26) where *of course* acts as a sentential adverb, modifying the entirety of Governor Kasich's statement.

(26) Gov. John Kasich of Ohio responded to Mr. Trump's comments by saying "**Of course** women shouldn't be punished." [Editorial: *New York Times* 2016]

In cases where *of course* acts as a sentential adverb, the phrase does pass the optionality requirement for discourse markers, as removing it from the sentence does not affect overall grammaticality. More importantly, though, sentential adverbs present attitudinal information on the speaker or writer's part that influences how the larger sentence is understood and interpreted. Since discourse markers have an expressive, attitudinal dimension, I analyze these sentential adverb instances of *of course* as discourse markers, a position which is supported by the grammaticalization and pragmaticalization process of sentential adverbs, wherein they represent an intermediate phase between internal adverbial phrases that modify verbs and discourse particles (Traugott 1997). With the exception of the example in (25), which was coded as an adjective by all three coders, 202 of the 203 instances of *of course* within my corpora were either coded as a discourse marker or a sentential adverb by all three coders, and, as such, all were added to the dataset of discourse markers for further analysis.

Example (27), on the other hand, illustrates what could perhaps be considered a more traditional example of discourse marker *of course*. In this example, *of course* is related more closely to the larger speech situation than to the situation being talked about, as it serves as a connector to organize the writer's argument in a way that is clear and cohesive to the reader. In addition, there is an emotive or expressive function to this instance of discourse marker *of course*, where the writer's use of the phrase signals that they expect the reader to agree with them and to have already arrived at the same conclusion.

(27) On Jan. 22, 1973, the Supreme Court legalized abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. Shortly thereafter, sterile clinics and hospitals replaced dirty basements. Medical professionals replaced quacks and Clorox. Abortion seekers became patients, not criminals. The result was a near-end to women dying from preventable complications. The other result, **of course**, was more abortions – or so we surmise, since the illegal ones weren't counted – roughly 1.2 million each year at this point. [Editorial: *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* 2013]

In the next section, I discuss how I identified and counted discourse marker *okay*.

3.3.5 *Okay*

While *okay* and its variant *ok* occurred 336 times across the corpora, it occurred with the lowest proportional frequency as a discourse marker, with only 77 instances of discourse marker *okay* or *ok*. The majority of the instances of *okay* within the corpora were in its adjective and adverb forms, as illustrated in (28) and (29).

(28) Still, the question looms: At what point is it no longer morally **OK** to perform an abortion? [Editorial: *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* 2013]

(29) My daughter and I are doing **okay**, but it's hard. [Reddit: */r/Abortion* 2016]

In both of these examples, *okay* is a required part of the syntactic structure, as removing it would result in an ungrammatical sentence, and it is part of the propositional meaning in each sentence. In contrast, example (30) illustrates the discourse marker function of *okay*, where it remains

independent of the syntax, is optional, does not contribute to the propositional meaning, and has an evaluative or attitudinal function.

(30) **Ok**, so you disagree with forcing women to birth children against their will. You stated that pretty much. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2014]

Table 3.2, below, summarizes the total discourse marker counts for each potential discourse marker that I investigated, as well as the total discourse marker count across all four corpora.

Table 3.2: Discourse marker counts

	Instances	Discourse Markers
<i>I mean</i>	75	51 (68.0%)
<i>Of course</i>	203	202 (99.5%)
<i>Okay</i>	336	77 (22.9%)
<i>Well</i>	709	218 (30.7%)
TOTAL		548

Well occurs with the greatest frequency, which is unsurprising given that it has a number of different lexical functions that all share the same form. Of the 709 instances of *well*, however, only 218 (or 30.7%) were discourse markers. *I mean* and *of course* both occurred less frequently than *well*, but both also had a higher proportion of their total number of occurrences that were discourse markers. For instance, of the 75 instances of *I mean*, 51 (or 68%) were discourse markers, and 202 of the 203 total occurrences of *of course* (99.5%) were discourse markers. *Okay* has a discourse marker proportion more similar to *well* in that 22.9%, or 77 of the 336 total instances, of the *okay* tokens were discourse markers. Altogether, I narrowed down the data from my corpora into a dataset of 548 discourse markers. It should be noted that, of these 548 discourse markers, not every discourse marker has a stance-taking function. The distributional breakdown of stance vs. non-stance functions is illustrated in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Comparative distribution of stance vs. non-stance functions

	Stance-taking Function	Non-stance Markers
<i>I mean</i>	37	14
<i>Of course</i>	166	36
<i>Okay</i>	23	54
<i>Well</i>	74	143

Over the course of the next three chapters, I unpack the stance-taking functions of *I mean*, *of course*, *okay*, and *well* into more specific categories, including concessive repair in Chapter 4, constructed dialogue in Chapter 5, and interpersonal discourse stance in Chapter 6.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter laid out the methodological frame work under which the rest of this dissertation functions, starting with the necessity and value of incorporating corpus linguistic methodology into discourse analysis. Within any discourse, it is important to consider the influence that the relevant registers of language use have on the types of linguistic structures present within the discourse; this consideration informed my collection of four separate corpora from different traditional and new media sources: editorials, blogs, Reddit, and Twitter. The majority of this chapter focused on explaining how I went about collecting my corpora and how I identified and coded the relevant discourse markers I intend to analyze and discuss in more detail in the subsequent chapters. In the next chapter, I focus on the concessive repair function of discourse markers, illustrating that within these repair sequences discourse markers act as scalar frames. From there, I discuss how concessive repair works as a stance-marker, and, specifically, how it is used to construct and indicate group identities.

CHAPTER 4

STANCE IN CONCESSIVE REPAIR

In Chapter 3, I provided a discussion of the methodological considerations that are central to the overall dissertation, explaining how the four corpora were collected as well as how the data within the corpora was narrowed down to a dataset of relevant discourse markers. The present chapter moves beyond this background information to present an analysis of how discourse markers factor into concessive repair structures and how concessive repair is used as a stance-taking strategy in abortion discourse. In section 4.1, I provide relevant background information on discourse markers for the chapter, while in section 4.2 I explore the framing functions of the discourse markers *well*, *I mean*, *of course*, and *ok/okay* within the relevant literature, building off of the existing understanding of discourse framing to present an analysis of discourse markers as scalar frames (section 4.2.3). From there, I discuss the relevant data sources for the current chapter (section 4.3), and in section 4.4 I analyze concessive repair as a stance-taking strategy, focusing on the types of stance that it is used to signal and the types of stance-objects that it takes. Finally, in section 4.5, I present a conclusion of my findings from this chapter.

4.1 Background

Discourse markers are a pragmatic lexical class of words that provide information as to how a discourse is structured, cueing the hearer in to changes in topic or signaling changes in speaker turn, in addition to providing attitudinal information on the speaker's part. They have been discussed under a number of different names in linguistic literature, including pragmatic markers, discourse particles, discourse operators, and conversation particles (Schourup 1999)

though for this dissertation I adopt the term discourse markers. As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, discourse markers are generally thought of as being optional because they are not required for the overall grammaticality of a sentence (Fraser 1988) and they do not contribute to the compositional semantics of a given proposition (Brinton 1996). This optionality is illustrated in (31); removing the discourse marker changes neither the grammaticality of the sentence, nor the semantic meaning.

- (31) a. oh I hear this Washington Improv Theater has classes. (Trester 2009: 148)
b. I hear this Washington Improv Theater has classes.

Instead, what the discourse marker contributes in (31a) that is absent in (31b) is the speaker's signal that new information is about to be presented. *Oh*, and indeed all discourse markers, contains procedural meaning rather than conceptual meaning (Blakemore 1987; Fraser 1999). That is to say that the discourse marker specifies how the sentence over which it has scope is intended to be interpreted, and in the case of (31), the procedural meaning manifests as a signal of new information.

Different discourse markers have different functions; there is no discourse marker that is used for all of the functions associated with the pragmatic class, and there are few functions that are specific to one discourse marker. Some of the functions attributed to discourse markers include interjections (Norrick 2009), filled pauses (Swerts 1998), a signal of a lower or more informal register (Schiffrin 1986), and information management in signaling the relationship between two adjoined clauses (Fraser 1999). This latter category is largely restricted to discourse markers that arose from conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs, such as *and*, *so*, *but*, *therefore*, *however*, and *thus*, and does not include the discourse markers that I examine in this, as well as subsequent, chapters. Instead, I focus on discourse markers that can act to frame pieces of discourse and that are known to do stance work as discussed in Chapter 2. These framing

functions, which I outline in the sections below, inform the specific structures that I focus on as being indicative of stance-taking in this as well as the following chapter.

4.2 Discourse markers as frames

4.2.1 Overview of *well* as a frame

Among the set of English discourse markers, *well* is particularly widely studied. It has been noted to serve a face-threat mitigating function (Brinton 2010), to act as a signal of a dispreferred start to a response (Pomerantz 1984; Heritage 2015), and to act as a marker of self-initiated repair in instances of inadequacy but not incorrectness (Lerner & Kitzinger 2019). One of the major uses of *well*, however, is as a frame (Hines 1977; Svartvik 1980; Jucker 1993). In this capacity, it usually occurs turn-medially and works to connect discourse units. The following example in (32), taken from the current data set, illustrates one such instance of discourse marker *well* as a frame.

(32) It sounds like a win-win, right? If only there were an organization that already worked to provide this sex education and contraceptive coverage to women of low income status or without health insurance. **Well**, there already is: Planned Parenthood. [Editorial: *Washburn Review* 2015]

In this example, the writer of the editorial uses *well* to signal a partial shift in topic away from the hypothetical scenario set up in the preceding clause. Beginning with *well*, the frame shifts to a discussion of real-world entities and events, and the discourse marker closes the previous discussion and focuses the following discourse on a different, but related, topic.

As a frame, discourse marker *well* can also be used to issue a clarification. This use is exemplified in (33) below, where the author of the blog post explains the relationship between the idea of a wanted pregnancy that poses a threat to the life of the woman and the sadness caused by having to terminate the pregnancy.

(33) What is it like doing abortions after 20 weeks? It's mostly very sad because no one is there because they are happy. A wanted pregnancy causing serious physical harm, **well**, no one is happy they are sick or that they have to terminate their wanted pregnancy to live. [Blog: *Dr. Jen Gunter* 2016]

This meaning could be similarly expressed by collocating *well* with an additional discourse marker such as *I mean* that explicitly signals that the clause which the discourse markers take scope over is intended to clarify a previous statement.

The final subcategory of frame for *well* that has been attested in the existing literature is the introduction of indirect speech, which I will return to in greater detail in Chapter 5.

(34) I really like this argument. But I can totally see their counter being “**Well**, if a woman doesn't want a child, then she shouldn't have had sex.” [Reddit: */r/TwoXChromosomes* 2015]

In this capacity, *well* functions to introduce reported or constructed dialogue, acting as a signal to the hearer where constructed dialogue begins (Svartvik 1980), similar to a turn-opener in a face-to-face conversation. As illustrated in the above example, the writer of the comment uses *well* to switch between their own voice and the arguing voice of a hypothetical individual with a different ideological perspective.

Much of the literature on the framing function of discourse markers has focused on *well*, in particular. In section 4.2.2, however, I demonstrate that discourse markers such as *I mean*, *of course*, and *ok/okay* show similar framing functions.

4.2.2 Framing function of other discourse markers

While *well* is among the more widely studied discourse markers, especially with respect to framing, discourse markers such as *I mean*, *of course*, and *okay* show many of the same properties. For instance, as the example in (35) shows, *I mean* can be used to signal a partial shift in the conversational topic.

(35) But it's in her own body. **I mean**, if the thing inside me is alive or not, human or not, if it's in my body it doesn't get to be there without consent. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2016]

In this example, as the writer switches between a discussion of the woman that the original Reddit post was about and their perspective on their own body, they preface the second sentence with *I mean* to signal the topic change to the reader. Further, *I mean* ends the previous discussion and signals an introduction of a different but related topic.

As a discourse marker, *I mean* can also be used to issue a clarification. In this capacity, *I mean* is a more overt signal of clarification than discourse marker *well*; it explicitly spells out the author's intention to rephrase or reframe their previous statement while still remaining an optional pragmatic element outside of the syntax of the sentence.

(36) There are all sorts of reasons to abort—for the woman, **I mean**. But the baby has zero reasons to want it. [Blog: *Lindsay's Logic* 2013]

In the example above, the author uses *I mean* to clarify their positions that it is women who have reasons to consider abortion rather than be understood as meaning that there is reason for anyone else. Although the discourse marker in (36) comes at the end of the clarification rather than the beginning, it can still be interpreted as framing the clarifying clause.

Similarly to *well* and *I mean*, *of course* exhibits the same kinds of framing functions, acting both to signal a topic shift and to issue clarifications.

(37) This might include making themselves happy and maybe even include not letting me know that they're actually working for my happiness. But **of course** in reality they couldn't know that so precisely so it wouldn't work. [Reddit: /r/Abortion 2013]

(38) As a married, father-of-two, Christian pastor, I strongly support the 1973 decision of the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Roe v. Wade*. And, **of course**, I do not believe I am making a decision to choose evil. My convictions about abortion are strong, because my convictions are personal. [Blog: *Jarrett Banks* 2014]

The example in (37) is similar to the previous example in (33) in that the use of the discourse marker signals a shift in perspective between a hypothetical scenario and reality. In (38), the writer uses *of course* to introduce a preemptive clarification of what might otherwise be perceived as a contradiction; readers of the blog might assume that a Christian pastor who is, himself, a father would be disinclined to support the decision in *Roe v. Wade*, and the writer uses the discourse marker to preface his clarification that such an assumption would be incorrect, as would the presupposition that, in doing so, he is embracing something “evil.”

Okay is somewhat different from *well*, *I mean*, and *of course* in how it functions as a frame to separate discourse units. Where the previously discussed discourse markers precede partial topic changes, discourse marker *okay* is more frequently used at the beginning of an utterance to signal an upcoming shift in background assumptions, shown in (39).

(39) A: Rape laws based “on” rape, sure; not abortion laws based on rape. Consent laws actually aren’t different from contract laws because they deal with the same kind of permanent consequences. Money and property for a mortgage, a biological process which begets new humans. In both things you have to make decisions prior to the consequences coming into play.

For abortjon [*sic*] once fetus comes into play its game over.

B: **Ok**, so if you want to make a law banning abortion but with an exception for rape (which seems to be what you’re going for here), how are you going to enforce it? What level of proof will you require? I for one will be extremely willing to falsely accuse someone of rape, even if it risked a prison sentence, if that was my only chance of getting an abortion. [Reddit: /r/Abortion 2014]

Here, writer A and writer B have different perspectives on how laws restricting abortion access should be implemented and on what legal basis they should be written, and writer B uses *ok* at the beginning of their reply in order to signal that they are moving away from writer A’s assumptions that abortion laws be based in contract law and to question some of the realities of how such a law would work.

As example (40) shows, *okay* can be used to issue a clarification in much the same way as demonstrated for *well*, *of course*, and *I mean*.

(40) Because I was having a surgical abortion, I hadn't had anything to eat (**okay**, let's be honest, I snuck some candy on the drive up) in several hours, and I was only allowed to have clear liquids. We sat at a diner while she sipped on coffee, and I drank iced water. No matter how warm it was outside, I couldn't stop shaking. [Blog: *Abortion Chat* 2014]

In this example, *okay* is used to introduce a qualification of what the writer means by not having had anything to eat and to signal their intent to clarify that they had not strictly been following their doctor's orders. It should be noted that such a clarification would still be conversationally possible without the discourse marker, but its use serves as a cue to the reader that the utterance that follows will be part of a different discourse frame. Given that optionality is a defining characteristic of discourse markers, this generalization holds true for the wider framing function of discourse markers in general. However, the current understanding of discourse markers as frames does not account for all of the ways in which they can act as discourse frames. In the following section, I provide evidence that concessive repair fits into the framing paradigm outlined above in that, in these constructions, discourse markers act as scalar frames.

4.2.3 Scalar frames: Evidence from concessive repair

Concessive repair is a type of self-initiated repair wherein a speaker or writer issues a clarification of an utterance that otherwise could have resulted in disagreement or misunderstanding. This type of repair strategy is considered self-initiated because the entire concessive move takes place within a single conversational turn by the original speaker and does not rely on prompting from a second speaker or conversational participant (Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson 2005). Each instance of concessive repair is made up of a three-part structure,

wherein an overstatement is made, a discourse marker prefaced concession is offered, and, finally, a revised statement is made. This structure is illustrated in (41) and (42) below.

(41) Ann’s daughter Cecile, president of Planned Parenthood, has carried on the tradition of joking about body parts. **Well**, not Cecile herself, but some of the people who work for her. [Editorial: *The Philadelphia Daily News* 2015]

<i>Overstatement:</i>	Cecile, president of Planned Parenthood, has carried on the tradition of joking about body parts.
(a) <i>Concession:</i>	Well, not Cecile herself,
(b) <i>Revised statement:</i>	but some of the people who work for her.

Figure 4.1: Schematic form of the concessive repair structure with *well*

(42) On the other hand, having an abortion has been described by some as being raped all over again. **Of course**, these experiences of women do not determine what is right in these cases, but they do show that having an abortion isn’t the easy fix for rape it is thought to be. [Blog: *Lindsay’s Logic* 2013]

<i>Overstatement:</i>	Having an abortion has been described by some as being raped all over again.
(a) <i>Concession:</i>	Of course, these experiences of women do not determine what is right in these cases.
(b) <i>Revised statement:</i>	but they do show that abortion isn’t the easy fix for rape it is thought to be.

Figure 4.2: Schematic form of the concessive repair structure with *of course*

There are two formal subtypes of concessive repair, affirmatively formulated overstatements and negatively formulated overstatements, both of which require a switch in polarity between the original overstatement and the repair sequence. Affirmatively formulated overstatements begin with an original overstatement that is positive, or affirmative, in polarity, which is then followed by a negative concession and an affirmative revised statement. Negatively formulated overstatements, then, follow the opposite pattern where they begin and end with statements that are negative in polarity, while the concession is affirmative. This is the framework from which most research has approached concessive repair (Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson 2005, Tanskanen & Karhukorpi 2008), as well as similar phenomena in languages

concession - a partial ordering R on a set B is a relation on B such that, for all $b_1, b_2, b_3 \in B$,

either:

(44) R is

- a. Reflexive: $b_1 R b_1$
- b. Antisymmetric: $(b_1 R b_2 \text{ and } b_2 R b_1) \rightarrow b_1 = b_2$, and
- c. Transitive: $(b_1 R b_2 \text{ and } b_2 R b_3) \rightarrow b_1 R b_3$; or

(45) R is

- a. Irreflexive: $b_1 \not R b_2$
- b. Asymmetric: $b_1 \not R b_2 \rightarrow b_2 \not R b_1$, and
- c. Transitive

Given the above definitions, a statement such as *Mary is as tall as or taller than Sue* satisfies

(44), while *Mary is taller than Sue* satisfies (45). Using this poset definition of scale, two values

b_1 and b_2 on a scale S demonstrate two possible relationships to one another. First, b_2 is higher on

S than b_1 iff $b_1 R b_2$. In such a case, b_1 is lower on S than b_2 . The other possibility is that b_2 is

lower on S than b_1 . Under this framework, scales in concessive repair sequences are evoked as

follows:

- (46) a. Some proposition P becomes salient in the discourse.
- b. A value b_1 referenced by the utterance of P is perceived as salient (P can then be represented as $P(b_1)$)
- c. b_1 is perceived as lying on some scale S
- d. $P(x)$ then represents the open proposition formed by substituting a variable x for b_1 in $P(b_1)$
- e. The speaker instantiates $P(x)$ with some b_2 that co-occurs with b_1 on S (but is ranked either lower or higher)

For example, in (47), b_1 , Cecile, is perceived as being at the far end of the scale of things or

people associated with Cecile. The concession, then, presents an alternate value for b_2 that is

lower on the scale of things associated with Cecile.

- (47) Ann's daughter Cecile, president of Planned Parenthood, has carried on the tradition of joking about body parts. **Well**, not Cecile herself, but some of the people who work for her. [Editorial: *The Philadelphia Daily News* 2015]

Given the established scalar nature of the relationship between overstatement and concession, it is important to examine the role that discourse markers play in the relationship between the two clauses. While most accounts of concessive repair note that discourse markers frequently occur in repair constructions (Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson 2005, Tanskanen & Karhukorpi 2008), I collected acceptability judgments from native English speakers that suggest that the inclusion of the discourse marker is obligatory for concessive repair, as illustrated in (48).

- (48) a. As in, nobody will say “I hate women” and wish harm to them. #_Some people do, but a minority.
b. As in, nobody will say “I hate women” and wish harm to them. **Ok**, some people do, but a minority. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2016]

In this example, without a discourse marker as in (48a), the sentence is judged as being pragmatically infelicitous, while the inclusion of the discourse marker in (48b) makes the statement pragmatically acceptable.

Studies on concessive repair in other languages have noted that discourse markers play an important function; the turn-final *mais* in French has been analyzed as being strategically used to garner attention (Pfänder 2016), while the regularity with which discourse markers are found in Finnish concession insertion sequences demonstrates that speakers use discourse markers to link actions together (Lindström & Londen 2014). It is unsurprising, then, that discourse markers in English concessive repair sequences would similarly serve an important function. I analyze this function as being to acknowledge that the overstatement p is at one end of a scale, and to signal that the concession q over which the discourse marker takes scope is either higher or lower than p along the same scale S . This relationship between overstatement and concessive move can be directly spelled out with adverbs that are semantically transparent with respect to the scale’s completeness; the discourse marker seems to signal a following qualification, which can be later be spelled out more explicitly without becoming redundant. According to acceptability

judgments, concessive repair is felicitous with only a discourse marker prefacing the concession, shown in (49a & 50a); only a scalar adverb in the concession, as in (49b & 50b); or with both a discourse marker and a scalar adverb, shown in (49c & 50c). When neither is present, however, the resulting concession is pragmatically infelicitous, as in (49d & 50d).

- (49) a. As in, nobody will say “I hate women” and wish harm on them. **Ok**, some people do, but a minority. [Reddit: */r/TwoXChromosomes* 2016]
b. As in, nobody will say “I hate women” and wish harm on them. **Maybe** some people do, but a minority.
c. As in, nobody will say “I hate women” and wish harm on them. **Ok, maybe** some people do, but a minority.
d. As in, nobody will say “I hate women” and wish harm on them. **#_Some** people do, but a minority.
- (50) a. On the other hand, having an abortion has been described by some as being raped all over again. **Of course**, these experiences of women do not determine what is right in these cases, but they do show that having an abortion isn’t the easy fix for rape it is thought to be. [Blog: *Lindsay’s Logic* 2013]
b. On the other hand, having an abortion has been described by some as being raped all over again. These experiences of women do not **completely** determine what is right in these cases, but they do show that having an abortion isn’t the easy fix for rape it is thought to be.
c. On the other hand, having an abortion has been described by some as being raped all over again. **Of course**, these experiences of women do not **completely** determine what is right in these cases, but they do show that having an abortion isn’t the easy fix for rape it is thought to be.
d. On the other hand, having an abortion has been described by some as being raped all over again. **#_These** experiences of women do not determine what is right in these cases, but they do show that having an abortion isn’t the easy fix for rape it is thought to be.

This relationship between discourse marker and scalar adverb is summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Acceptability of concessive repair with discourse markers (DM) and adverbs

DM	Adv.	
+	-	✓
-	+	✓
+	+	✓
-	-	#

Given this pattern, it is clear that discourse markers act as frames separating scalar units in concessive repair sequences. Their use signals an upcoming shift up or down a relevant scale for a given utterance to reorient the hearer or reader, similar to the attested pattern for frames between discourse units such as topics or direct speech (Svartvik 1980). Scalar frames, however, differ from these other functions, and, as such, constitute a new type of frame in that there is no partial topic shift or introduction of quoted information. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I explain how, in their specific use as scalar frames in concessive repair, discourse markers are used to signal a writer's stance and to construct specific identities for women within the broader context of discourse on abortion.

4.3 Discussion of data sources

Although I collected four corpora to address my overarching research questions, in my analysis of concessive repair I only examined data from editorials, Reddit, and blogs. Data from Twitter was excluded from this section of the analysis because of the character constraint on tweets. Prior to November 2017, the period during which most of my Twitter data was written, individual tweets were limited to a total of 140 characters; this constraint makes the platform incompatible with the specific structural format of concessive repair that requires three separate conversational moves within a single turn. While it is possible that concessive repair sequences

would be used on Twitter in threaded replies, where an individual Twitter user replies to their own tweets to create a series of connected tweets, scraping and collecting these larger threaded structures in a way that preserves the meaningful relationship between individual tweets within the thread is beyond the scope of the present dissertation. In contrast, editorials, Reddit, and blogs do not place limitations on the length of any user's online conversational contribution. As a result, I focused my analysis of concessive repair on data from these three corpora, as they are where concessive repair sequences are most likely to feature into the salient discursive strategies.

4.4 Concessive repair as stance marker

In addition to offering insight into how writers in abortion discourse negotiate potential miscommunications resulting from overstatements, I argue that concessive repair can also be used as a stance-marker, indexing how writers position themselves and how they construct othered group identities in both monologic and dialogic texts. This analysis draws on Baratta's (2009) assertion that the focusing or emphasizing of one sentential argument over another in written text allows for "the author's personal emphasis to be seen" (1141). While Baratta's analysis specifically addresses the stance-taking function of passive sentences, the choice to preface and follow a concession repair with an overstatement and revised statement that iterate the same basic idea serves to discursively emphasize the author's belief or opinion that is central to the original overstatement. In other words, as Schramm (1996) points out, "the rhetorical structure of a text is a medium for expressing writer opinion or viewpoint" (143), and concessive repair sequences factor in to the expression of the writer's opinion in the rhetorical move of overstating and later reaffirming a judgment or evaluative position. With respect to stance as a marker of identity construction, Ivanič (1995, 1998) argues that a writer's choice in using specific words, sentence structures, and semantic functions helps to construct their identity in

that the writer's innate sense of self, in conjunction with their personal background, informs how they choose to linguistically frame their identity. I argue that this generalization is equally true for discourse management strategies like concessive repair as related to the positionality and indexicality principles identified by Bucholtz & Hall (2005) and discussed in Chapter 2.

4.4.1 Identifying concessive repair

Before I analyzed the types of stances that concessive repair indexes, I first had to locate the specific instances of concessive repair within the larger dataset of discourse markers. Since the repair sequence does not necessarily involve a specific verb or set of verbs that I could search for in the dataset using AntConc, and does not follow a set pattern of tense or sentence length, there was not a regular expression, or defined search pattern, that I could use to identify instances of concessive repair. Instead, I used the dataset of 548 discourse markers and manually searched for instances of discourse marker-prefaced repair that followed the larger structural pattern for concessive repair. Working from the initial utterance containing the discourse marker, I first looked for and tagged repairs that were preceded by an overstatement and that were followed by a revised version of the original statement. Each instance of concessive repair was then sorted into a new Excel sheet to be further tagged for its part in an adjacency pair (i.e. whether it was a reply in a larger conversational structure or whether it was a single utterance in a monologic context) as well as for stance subject and object. Although all four discourse markers under consideration in the present study are used in concessive repair sequences, *of course* was the discourse marker used most frequently to introduce concessive repair in my dataset, prefacing 47.5% of the concessive moves. *Okay* was used with the second highest frequency of 20% of concessions, followed by *well* with 17.5% of concessions, and *I mean* at 15%.

Table 4.2: Discourse markers in concessive repair

Discourse Marker	Frequency
<i>I mean</i>	6 (15.0%)
<i>Of course</i>	19 (47.5%)
<i>Okay</i>	8 (20.0%)
<i>Well</i>	7 (17.5%)

Although all four discourse markers are used in concessive repair sequences across all four corpora, there are significant differences in the types of stances that concessive repair indexes in monologic and dialogic contexts, as well as differences in the types of stance objects that are evaluated across registers. These differences are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

4.4.2 Concessive repair in monologic contexts

Repair is currently thought of as an interactional resource (Jefferson 1974), and much of the existing conversation analysis literature on repair examines it within the context of dialogic conversations, where multiple speakers rely on different linguistic strategies to balance their conversational roles or statuses. Within more specific repair strategies like concessive repair, this background has resulted in an understanding that its use is largely restricted to spoken conversation, both face-to-face and across other synchronous lines of communication such as telephone calls (Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson 2005). Even the use of concessive repair in asynchronous communication, such as via email threads (Tanskanen & Karhukorpi 2008), has been previously thought to rely on back-and-forth conversational contributions from multiple discourse participants.

Within the specific context of mediated discourse on abortion, however, it is clear that concessive repair is used even in instances where there is not a specific second interlocuter.

Crucially, the repair works to position the writer rather than to help orient the reader. Of the 40 instances of concessive repair that I identified in my dataset, only 11 (27.5%) occurred as a reply within an adjacency pair. In contrast, the remaining 29 repairs, or 72.5%, occurred in monologic contexts such as editorials or blog posts, where the writer is not necessarily engaging in conversation so much as they are voicing their thoughts or opinions without further discussion. This is especially true for the repairs used in editorials, where the authors rarely engage directly with the readership, even through online digital comment channels. This is a notable and surprising finding because it suggests that repair sequences are not necessarily hearer- or reader-oriented, which challenges the current understanding of repair; the use of concessive repair strategies within written monologic texts, then, where the writer has no direct interlocuter with whom they have to navigate potential conversational breakdowns, and, further, has the ability to edit and correct the original overstatement prior to publishing their thoughts, suggests that this specific conversational strategy is invoked largely for rhetorical purposes, including implicit identity construction through stance-taking.

4.4.3 Distal stance objects – constructing women as ‘other’

The stance triangle, discussed in Chapter 2, outlines the idea that linguistic stance-taking is an interactional process composed of three parts: speakers first evaluate a stance object, then position a stance subject (self or other) with respect to the stance object, and finally align themselves with respect to the other interlocuter (Du Bois 2007). The stance object that is evaluated can be proximal, something or someone directly involved in the speech situation where stance-taking occurs, or distal, objects that are evaluated in the larger conversational context but that are not themselves participating in the stance-taking event (Lempert 2009; Stockburger 2015). Distal stance objects are particularly relevant in the context of the present study, where

writers end up projecting stances that position themselves as authority figures or voices of reason regarding women's access to abortion rights, as evaluating distal objects allows writers to create metaphorical distance between themselves and the larger groups with whom they disagree.

The concessive repair introduced in (51) is formatted as a direct quote from someone other than the journalist who authored the editorial, though the remainder of the text is written in the author's own voice. Since the repair sequence is a quote, it might seem as though the stance taken in it is not necessarily shared by the author, but given that in the larger context of the editorial the quote is preceded by the statement *I defer to Bill Maher* and followed by *indeed*, it is clear that the author is aligning their own stance with the one taken by Maher in the concessive repair. It should also be noted that although the discourse marker in this example comes at the end of the concession instead of the beginning, the overall structure retains the three discursive moves that characterize concessive repair – an overstatement, concession, and restatement of the original claim – and the discourse marker still serves as a marker of the scalar relationship between overstatement and concession.

(51) “We hear a lot about the Republican ‘war on women.’ It’s not cool Rush Limbaugh called somebody a slut. **OK**,” said Mr. Maher. “But Saudi women can’t vote, or drive, or hold a job or leave the house without a man.” [Editorial: *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* 2014]

At the start of this statement, the immediate stance object is the idea of a war on women. Beyond the immediate level, though, the choice to situate the object as something that is under discussion suggests an absent distal group whose beliefs are also being evaluated, and, given that the people most likely to talk about discrimination that women face are women themselves, I suggest that women as a collective are the distal stance object. Maher, and by extension the author of the editorial, raises the idea of this group without explicitly naming them in order to draw a distinction between his own position and that of the position discursively assigned to the distal

stance object. It is clear from this statement that Maher believes the idea of a war on women to be an exaggeration and that the people who claim such a war exists are hyperbolic in nature. This stance is further elaborated on in the concession, where it is noted that some of the complaints that women have voiced about the way they are treated by some figures within the Republican party are grounded in real events. The concession is then used to create a concrete resource that can be compared with the revised statement to recommit to the stance that, compared to the oppression that women in certain other countries face, the idea of a war on women in the United States is largely based in exaggerations.

While the example in (51) featured a direct quote inside of an editorial, concessive repair is more frequently constructed in the author of the text's own voice. This is seen in (52), where the blog writer uses it to comment on the perceived connection between the emotional impact of abortion and their ideological stance.

(52) Message: after an abortion, as long as it is done by professionals, a woman is liberated, happy and content and will remain so. **Of course**, forgiveness is a beautiful thing and love conquers a multitude of sins, but its [*sic*] just all a bit weird and unrealistic. [Blog: *That the Bones* 2012]

Here, the focus on the concept of abortion lifting an emotional weight off of some women is drawn on to project a stance against the idea that women can benefit from abortion. The stance object considered here seems to be not only the abortion itself, but also the ideological stance that access to abortion services is generally beneficial. A similar pattern of intertextual stance is evidenced in (53), where it is not just abortion that is the object of the stance-taking event, but also the purported stance that abortion represents a further violation for rape survivors.

(53) Many rape victims have testified that giving birth has helped them to see themselves as overcomes [*sic*] who found a way to make some good come from their terrible ordeal. They may not have had a choice over what happened to them, but they can choose to do what is right after the fact and give life. On the other hand, having an abortion has been described by some as being raped all over again. **Of course**, these experiences of women do not determine what is right in these cases, but they do show that an abortion isn't the easy fix for rape it is thought to be. [Blog: *Lindsay's Logic* 2013]

The intertextual nature of these stance-acts allows for the authors of both blogs to take stances that are more distinctly 'othered' than some of the previous examples. As Stockburger (2015) notes, intertextual stances can be used to address stereotypical stances attributed to different groups, and by addressing a stance that was not voiced by someone else in the same discourse, as evidenced by the fact that both example (52) and (53) come from a monologic discourse context, the authors of both blogs enact stances that evaluate a stereotypical position that they associate with the other side of the ideological divide. That both authors use indefinite noun phrases like *a woman* and definite noun phrases that encompass large groups like *these experiences of women* that do not point to a unique individual referent in the discourse is further evidence that the stances enacted in these repair sequences serve to evaluate distal objects, and in particular, women.

Even the reference to a specific individual, such as the naming of Cecile Richards in (54), can be used to enact a stance with respect to a distal object. Although Richards is explicitly named in this example, she is not a participant in the conversation and, as this example marks the first time she is mentioned in the editorial, is not intertextually relevant to be considered a proximal stance object.

(54) Ann's daughter Cecile, president of Planned Parenthood, has carried on the tradition of joking about body parts. **Well**, not Cecile herself, but some of the people who work for her. [Editorial: *The Philadelphia Daily News* 2015]

As a stance object, Richards is treated as more of a representative of pro-choice ideology than she is judged as an individual. This is evidenced in the concession, where the author of the editorial broadens the stance they are constructing to overtly include not Cecile herself, but others who work for a pro-choice organization with her, though at this point the author moves away from specific references and does not include direct terms of address.

In contrast to the previous examples, when concessive repair is used as part of a reply in a dialogic context rather than appearing in a monologic text, it can signal evaluation of a more proximal stance object. Reddit user B begins (55) by discussing their more general position toward sex education and access to birth control as someone who identifies as pro-life, ending with the indefinite *any woman*.

(55) A: One that needs to be pointed out to him: If abortion is such an aberration that there is no situation where it is justified. Shouldn't he support comprehensive sex education and easy birth control, to minimize the amount of unplanned pregnancies in general?

If he does, at least he's consistent.

If he doesn't the [*sic*] he, and people like him, don't actually care about babies at all. They just want to punish women for having sex.

B: I'm pro-life and I support not only comprehensive sex education and easy birth control, but I also support expanding options for mothers after their baby has already been conceived (improve foster care systems, expand day cares, make adoption easier, etc.) I feel like we as a society have failed if any woman decides her only option is to abort it.

On the contrary, I think it's a bit irresponsible for a woman to risk conception when she knows that the only thing she'd do if she got pregnant is to abort it. Of course, if you are pro-choice, you will not see it the same way because you don't put the same value on the fetus that I do, but that's my thought. [Reddit:

/r/TwoXChromosomes 2016]

Though their statement comes as a direct response to Reddit user A, and engages in evaluation of many of the same concepts, they do not start off specifically positioning themselves as being in alignment or opposition with Reddit user A. As they move into the concessive repair sequence,

underlined in the above example, the original overstatement maintains the same metaphorical distance as the first paragraph of their reply; rather than engage in a stance evaluation of a specific or particular woman, they state their broad position that women who risk potentially getting pregnant while knowing that they would have an abortion are irresponsible. From there, they move into a concession prefaced with *of course*. The phrasal discourse marker here linguistically marks the stance as being based on shared background knowledge, drawing the Reddit user in A, as well as all of the other commenters on the Reddit post, into the stance-taking event. Within the same stance move, the stance object shifts from the more distal referring expressions of *a woman* and *she* to the second person pronoun *you*. In doing so, the stance object becomes more proximal as the writer switches from evaluating women as a larger group to directly engaging with another writer in the same discourse; rather than constructing an evaluative stance toward women who would consider abortion as a first, or only, option, they draw on the shared background knowledge suggested in their use of *of course* to project a stance that suggests that the person whose comment they are replying to fits into the negatively othered identity they have constructed for the pro-choice ideology. In the next section, I examine how these same concessive repair structures are used by writers to construct a positive-self evaluation in contrast with the negatively othered identities I discussed above.

4.4.4 Stance subjects – evaluative self

The element of negative-other evaluation that was discussed in the previous section stands in contrast to the positive-self evaluation that is signaled through stance subjects in concessive repair. In the examples discussed in the previous section, as well as the example introduced below, the stance subject, or the individual whose stance is being linguistically positioned, is the writer of the repair. Positioning the self as the subject of a given stance is

generally the default for stance-taking (Du Bois 2007), as people are more likely to construct stances for themselves than they are to attribute stance to others, so while the choice of stance subject in the present dataset is not surprising, the specific stances that writers take in the dataset do reveal that concessive repair is used to position the self as an authority figure, both morally and intellectually.

The example in (52), above, provides perhaps the clearest example of a writer positioning themselves as a moral authority in conceding on the emotional impact of forgiveness and love but following the concession with an assertion that the originally stated expectations and beliefs are *weird* and *unrealistic*. In order to felicitously construct such a stance, they create for themselves a positional identity (Bucholtz & Hall 2005) that grants them the ability to decide what is forgivable and what is not. As stance subjects, writers in abortion discourse can also position themselves as intellectual authorities, as seen in (56).

(56) Literally nobody “hates women.” As in, nobody will say “I hate women” and wish harm to them. Ok, some people do, but a minority. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2016]

In the construction of this repair sequence, the Reddit user here evaluates women as largely exaggerating claims of discrimination and oppression, feeding into the idea that women are overly reactionary, and further implies that they, as the stance subject, have inside knowledge on the thoughts and beliefs of a broader section of society. They construct the idea that they, rather than the women who have voiced the idea that society hates women, are the expert on gender relations.

As a stance-marker, concessive repair fits into the framework of positive-self, negative-other evaluation in that it allows writers to evaluate distal stance objects, creating metaphorical distance between themselves as stance subjects and the evaluated object. In the pattern of

concessive repair use, they create a divergent alignment that sets subject and object, or self and other, respectively, as belonging to two separate groups. This divergence alone does not automatically mean that writers separate themselves into negative and positive evaluations, but it does indicate that they construct a binary presentation of identity. Instead, the idea of positive-self, negative-other evaluation in mediated abortion discourse arises from the specific stances that are signaled through the use of concessive repair. Next, we will examine some framework for addressing such stance signaling and situating it within larger social and ideological structures.

4.4.5 Critical discourse framework

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) seeks to uncover the underlying ideological values and representations of a text through examination of its lexical and grammatical patterns. According to Fairclough (1989), language use is never neutral and is informed by the social actions in which it is embedded; it is inextricably linked to the sociolinguistic contexts and social power structures that inform its use (Orpin 2005). One area of linguistic analysis that has arisen from CDA framework lies in examining how specific individual lexical choices can carry ideological information. The choice to mention some social actors over others within a discourse, as well as the participatory roles for which they have been chosen, denotes covert evaluative ideological positioning (White 2000). Building on this framework, I suggest that the choice of certain stance objects within a discourse is similarly indicative of covert ideological positioning and is informed by larger social structures.

Given that abortion is a highly contentious topic in U.S. politics, there are a number of relevant stance objects that could be evaluated in discourse, including doctors who offer abortion services and legislators who write and pass laws regarding abortion access, among others. These

groups are both featured in the broader corpora that I collected for this study, but remain largely outside of the set of stance objects evaluated using concessive repair. The choice to focus, instead, on evaluatively positioning women as ‘other’ is indicative of the idea that women are often the center point of abortion discourse. More specifically, it suggests that, even on a subconscious level, people view abortion as being fundamentally related to women rather than viewing it through the lens of medical procedures or legal rights. That women are othered in concessive repair sequences further suggests that the perceived connection between women and abortion is seen as an ideologically negative mark against women as a social group. The specific negatively evaluated identities constructed for women as stance objects in abortion discourse, including constructing women as overly sensitive, burdened by emotions, and frequently hyperbolic, further reflect larger social ideologies that feminist scholarship has long sought to push back against (Gorton 2007). While discourse on such a contentious issue ostensibly works to encourage change, it does so by falling back on stereotypically gendered identities for women.

4.5 Conclusion

Adding to the existing understanding of the framing function of discourse markers, in this chapter I have demonstrated that discourse markers act as scalar frames in concessive repair structures. In this capacity, small pragmatic bits of meaning like *well*, *okay*, *I mean*, and *of course* signal to the hearer or reader that a concession is further up or down a conversationally relevant scale than the original overstatement, which reorients the hearer or reader and resolves what otherwise would be interpreted as a pragmatically infelicitous contradiction. I further provided evidence that, contrary to the previously held understanding, concessive repair is used in several genres of written language, including those where there is no conversational partner. Again, this is a notable finding because it is counter to the current understanding of repair as

requiring a specific hearer or reader and, instead, suggests that concessive repair can be used for rhetorical purposes to position the speaker or writer rather than to necessarily address points of potential miscommunication.

Within the specific context of written mediated discourse on abortion, concessive repair is used to construct stances that signal positive-self, negative-other evaluations. In monologic contexts such as editorials and blog posts, the stance objects of these structures are distal to the discourse. The writers of these texts use concessive repair to take stances toward larger groups outside of the immediate conversation rather than individuals with whom they are in discussion. Women, and in particular women who support abortion or who identify as pro-choice, are othered by these stances, which contribute to the larger societal view of women as being over-reactional and in need of saving from their own choices. In contrast, the stance subjects are positioned as being the voice of reason and of coming from a position of moral or intellectual authority. In the next chapter, I shift away from examining the broader group of discourse markers in a specific discourse structure that was discussed in the present chapter to focus more narrowly on the use of *well* in constructed dialogue and how, like concessive repair, this function is used as a stance-marker for group and individual identity construction.

CHAPTER 5

STANCE IN CONSTRUCTED DIALOGUE

The previous chapter contained a discussion of the framing functions of discourse markers, with particular emphasis placed on discourse markers as scalar frames in concessive repair. This chapter builds on the investigation of different framing functions laid out in the previous chapter, and in the following sections I examine the use of discourse marker *well* to introduce constructed dialogue and how these constructions mark stance. In section 5.1, I provide background information on constructed dialogue and set up a contrast between constructed and verbatim dialogue. Section 5.2 contains a discussion of existing literature on reported speech and constructed dialogue and sets up the attitudinal use of discourse markers that informs my investigation of the identity construction potential of constructed dialogue. I discuss the sources of data involved in this specific analysis in section 5.3, and in section 5.4 I analyze how double voicing functions as a method of stance-taking and identity construction. From there, I discuss the evaluation of proximal stance objects in section 5.5, and finally, in section 5.6 I summarize the results and implications of my analysis.

5.1 Background

One of the ways that discourse markers can act as frames is in the introduction of direct quotes, as illustrated in the previous chapter. In prefacing a quote with a discourse marker, speakers separate their own thoughts and words from those of the individual they are quoting. Constructed dialogue differs from verbatim quotation in that it refers broadly to real, internal, or imagined speech or thought in a conversation (Tannen 1989) and can be used to represent dialogue that was never actually stated as well as to express generalizations, while verbatim

reproduction of a quote requires that the words were actually spoken and that the surface syntactic structure of the original quote is preserved (Clark & Gerrig 1990). This difference is illustrated in the contrast between (57) and (58), below, where (57) shows a verbatim reproduction with the original utterance in (57a). Examples (57b), (57c), and (57d) illustrate the multiple ways that the same utterance could be reported using verbatim direct quotes. Example (58), then, illustrates constructed dialogue.

- (57) a. I've only been...we've only been to like...four of his I...five of his lectures,
right?
b. Sidney says, "I...I've only been...we've only been to like...four of his I...five of
his lectures, right?"
c. Sidney says, "We've only been to, like, five of his lectures, right?"
d. Sidney says, "We have only been to five of his lectures." (Saxton 1992: 6)

(58) You can't say, "Well daddy I didn't hear you." (Saxton 1992: 6)

Example (57) shows different ways that the same utterance could be reported using verbatim reproduction. The original utterance is completely preserved in (57b), including the pauses and the use of the discourse marker *like*. In (57c), the pauses have been removed, but the discourse marker usage is retained and the syntax remains the same as in the original utterance. The example from (57d) is the most different from the original utterance in that the pauses and the discourse marker have been removed, as well as the contraction *we've*, but the speaker in (57d) has not added any of their own words and has preserved the overall syntactic structure of an utterance that was actually said, meaning that this is still an instance of verbatim quoting rather than constructed dialogue. In example (58), on the other hand, since the speaker is explicitly reporting on something that was never actually said, this cannot be an instance of the speaker directly repeating what they were told. Instead, it is constructed dialogue. Constructed dialogue has been studied from a number of different perspectives, and in the next section I outline the current understanding of constructed dialogue in discourse.

5.2 Reported speech and constructed dialogue

Within variationist sociolinguistic literature, narrative dialogue has been identified as an important resource for reporting thought and speech across non-standard dialects of British, American, and Canadian Englishes. Numerous studies have examined the specific verbal cues that speakers use to report or recreate their own speech and thoughts, as well as the speech and thoughts of others, starting with Butters (1980) investigation of *go* ‘say’ constructions to introduce direct speech in narratives, where *go* can occur in either the present tense, as in (59a), or in the past tense (59b).

- (59) a. “So George comes at Louis with the knife and Louis **goes**, ‘Don’t cut me, don’t cut me, I’ll do anything, just put up that blade.’”
b. “I looked George in the eye, and he **went**, ‘I don’t like nobody starin’ at me.’”
(Butters 1980: 305)

Since then, a great deal of attention has been paid to how the reported speech is presented, focusing on the use of quotative verbs such as *say*, shown in example (60) (Blythe et al. 1990; Buchstaller 2006), *go*, shown in (59a) and (59b) above (Singler 2001), or *be + like* in example (61) (Dailey-O’Cain 2000; Tagliamonte & D’Arcy 2004).

- (60) “We were on Route 13 between Cortland and Dryden, and the policeman pulled me over and **said**, ‘Did you realize you were going over 70?’” (Blythe et al. 1990: 218)
(61) “I’m like, ‘I know this stuff, I got a 77 last time.’” (Dailey-O’Cain 2000: 62).

These studies have been instrumental in documenting the development and expansion of quotative *like* from its function as a focuser discourse marker (Cukor-Avila 2002), as well as the stigmatized nature of its use (Hesson & Shellgren 2015), but have largely overlooked the discourse pragmatic reasons that would explain why a speaker might choose to use a particular quotative verb.

Additional insight into how reported speech is used discursively comes from interactional sociolinguistic perspectives, where research has sought to incorporate discourse context into an analysis of constructed dialogue. Some of these studies focus on how the use of constructed dialogue affects the connection between conversation partners; for instance, the use of *be + like* constructions combines with response cries (Goffman 1981) to heighten conversational drama by revealing the inner-state of the speaker and promoting more listener engagement (Ferrara & Bell 1995), shown in (62).

- (62) a. It's like, "Belgh" [revulsion]
b. I was like "Ahhgh" [mortification] (Ferrara & Bell 1995: 282)

Other studies, such as Johnstone (1987) and Hamilton (1998), analyze the ways in which the use of constructed dialogue functions for identity construction. Johnstone (1987) examines the alternation between past and present tense morphological marking on the quotative verb in recounting conversations with authority figures. She notes that the speech of authority figures is presented in historical present tense, while the speech of non-authority figures involves the use of a past tense quotative verb. Information regarding the speaker's perceived identity and lack of social authority is communicated through the careful shift in tense. Hamilton (1998) similarly examines alternations in direct and indirect speech in discussion of patients' experience with bone marrow transplants. Doctors' speech is likely to be reported directly in expressing negatively-evaluated stance, allowing patients to construct a self-identity as a survivor against compounded adversarial circumstances.

More recent research has sought to address how discourse markers fit into the identity construction potential of constructed dialogue. Trestler (2009) notes that discourse markers are a known identity construction strategy and tracks the function of *oh* in the left periphery position in constructed dialogue. In this position, illustrated in example (63) from the corpora collected

for the present study, *oh* not only introduces the quoted dialogue, but additionally serves an evaluative function, articulating the speaker's position with respect to the contents of the constructed dialogue.

(63) I agree with your overall premise, but actually watching this as an impressionable teen, the thing that struck me is that abortion came across as filthy butchery, regardless of its legality. Perhaps it was the use of the word “knife” but I certainly didn't think “**oh** if only she'd had access to safe abortion,” I just thought the whole situation was grubby & depressing & highlighted the dangers of sex. [Blog: *That the Bones* 2012]

Trester further demonstrates that *oh* is used to convey negative attitudinal information, particularly when there is tension between the speaker's beliefs and those expressed in the constructed dialogue. In these instances, “*oh* helps the speaker use constructed dialogue to position himself (relative to the quoted material) and align himself (to others in the interaction) to accomplish a specific identity” (Trester 2009: 163-164). *Oh* is not, however, the only discourse marker that appears in the left periphery of constructed dialogue. As illustrated in (64), *well* is also commonly used to introduce quoted material.

(64) Now, I could fight my conscience (God given moral compass) and think “**well** he/she's not moving, can't respond to anything, useless, cost a lot of money and heartache to the family...just unplug him/her. It's the “humane” way to go about my day” then do my best to justify my thinking or actions by collecting partial or incorrect data to support my claims or I could just listen to my conscience saying “find the truthful facts and don't spin them”. [Blog: *Honest Search for Truth* 2012]

In this example, the author expresses their negative orientation toward what they view as a callous attitude toward ending medical intervention and life-sustaining treatment. To do so, they present a hypothetical argument which they state as the opposite of what their conscience would advise. This particular use of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is similar to the function of *oh* outlined above, although other analyses of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue have analyzed the use of discourse marker *well* as a marker of insufficiency (Saxton 1992). I argue that in written

discourse on abortion, *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue does not index insufficiency or uncertainty, but, instead, serves an interactional stance-taking function where it acts as an alignment marker to denote identity potential. In the following sections, I show that writers use *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue to align themselves as sharing a group identity with other writers in the same discourse and to distance themselves from their previously held positions.

5.3 Discussion of data sources

Where my investigation of concessive repair in the previous chapter included a set of four discourse markers – *well*, *okay*, *I mean*, and *of course* – in this chapter, I take a closer look at the stance function of one specific discourse marker, *well*, in a specific discourse structure. A number of discourse markers have been found to be used in constructed dialogue; *well*, *oh*, *okay*, *look*, *y’know*, and *hey* can all occur in the left periphery position in direct quotations (Saxton 1992). Within my dataset, however, I found that when constructed dialogue is used in abortion discourse, the discourse marker that most commonly prefaces the quote is *well*, and, as a result, I chose to focus on the stance-taking function of this individual marker. For this analysis, I draw on data from all four of my corpora: editorials, blogs, Reddit, and Twitter. Unlike concessive repair, where the necessary three-part repair structure was not compatible with the character constraints imposed by Twitter, constructed dialogue does not have a specific structure or set length, and could be used by writers in almost any turn length or discourse context. As such, part of my analysis factors in what impact register and context have on the use of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue.

5.4 Stance-taking with *well* in constructed dialogue

5.4.1 Identifying constructed dialogue

The first step in locating instances of constructed dialogue in my dataset was to run a search of frequently used quotative verbs. The headword search function in the #LancsBox software allowed me to search for a headword, the uninflected citation form of a word, like *say* and find examples where constructed dialogue was introduced using additional lemma forms like *saying*, *said*, or *says* without having to perform multiple separate searches. This same process was repeated for other common quotative verbs such as *go* and the *be + like* construction, as well as for cognitive verbs like *think* or *wonder*, since constructed dialogue can also be used to express reported thought. Figure 5.1, below, shows the concordance lines for the headword *say* with *saying*, *says*, and *said* as the verb form in some of the lines.

Search {say]_/_V.* /i	Occurrences 132 (46.55)	Texts 1	Corpus dataset	Context 7	Display Text
Index	File	Left	Node	Right	
1	dataset.txt	part of a general practice residency, I'd	say	'tissue' is a far better descriptor than	
2	dataset.txt	my mind on doing this. @Rick Well	said	.@Francois Tremblay Well, I think 'we' refers	
3	dataset.txt	process, even if too early to clearly	say	an abortion was "killing a human being"	
4	dataset.txt	the abortionist. More indirectly I can see	saying	that a society "in which" everybody knows	
5	dataset.txt	go unpunished. If we are going to	say,	"If that means that such-and-such will go	
6	dataset.txt	pretty much exactly what the feminists are	saying	about rape. They are trying to get	
7	dataset.txt	acceptable based on one's own beliefs. I'm	saying	there is a lack of consensus in	
8	dataset.txt	for plan B as well. I don't	say	who is or isn't a christian, just	
9	dataset.txt	tha's my story anyway;-) Like the politician	said	if you're gonna tell an exaggeration it	
10	dataset.txt	beyond that. First they assert, as you	said,	that it's simply a matter of "convenience"	
11	dataset.txt	born thanks to abortion as well. Well	said,	This last week, I spent some time	
12	dataset.txt	not how morality works. And if you	say	life begins at conception, which it very	
13	dataset.txt	paradox, odds are you probably shouldn't be	saying	life begins at conception. An episode of	
14	dataset.txt	some of the feminists in the crowd	saying?	'Josh!!! You are a GUY- you can't	
15	dataset.txt	mode of conception is sexist, honestly. It's	saying,	"Well, you poor innocent woman, you shouldn't	
16	dataset.txt	an innocent human being. "Well," you might	say,	"women can at least get pregnant. Men	
17	dataset.txt	never get pregnant." Then would you also	say	that women who are incapable of becoming	
18	dataset.txt	have sex pay their due. I'm not	saying	this is a conscious, front-of-my-brain sort of	
19	dataset.txt	think of that. The only thing to	say	when a woman says she's rpegnant is	
20	dataset.txt	only thing to say when a woman	says	she's rpegnant is to tell her all	
21	dataset.txt	pro-life names. The doctor went on to	say,	"Well, you will have many other children."	
22	dataset.txt	Romney's flip-flop thusly: "Well, he had to	say	stuff like that to have a political	
23	dataset.txt	and if your basic premise is "he	said	what he had to in order to	
24	dataset.txt	in order to get elected," well, you've	said	a mouthful. I think that's because our	
25	dataset.txt	People will look at our life and	say	well look how great it all worked	
26	dataset.txt	on it). We would do well to	say	so. The fact that there are now	
27	dataset.txt	mean here is that biology can never	say	things are 'right' or 'wrong.' I am	
28	dataset.txt	up about the matter. But when I	say	that the punishment of the woman shouldn't	
29	dataset.txt	likes it. Would you post a comment	saying	"I don't like the idea of appendectomy"	
30	dataset.txt	outcome. Of course not, we generalize. I	said	cauterisation of course! Of course, there are	
31	dataset.txt	innocent victims, even though the original post	said	the contrary from the outset. Probably enforcement	

Figure 5.1: Concordance lines for headword *say*

Not every concordance line for *say*, or any other quotative verb, is an instance of constructed dialogue, but this step provided a narrowed down dataset from which I could work to pull relevant data where *well* followed the quotative verb and preceded the constructed dialogue.

Since a large part of my data comes from internet-based sources, where people do not always follow standardized punctuation conventions, it was difficult to find all of the examples of constructed dialogue in my dataset just by searching for constructions where a quotative verb is followed by quotation marks. For instance, in example (65) the Reddit commenter uses parenthesis to mark the dialogue in place of quotation marks.

(65) Well i [*sic*] came into this post thinking (**Well** you know what if you still haven't aborted by 20 weeks, than [*sic*] you should have to keep the baby you dumb indecisive idiot), but you really changed my mind. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2015]

Using the narrowed down dataset from the concordance lines, I manually searched for examples where quoted information was introduced using alternative punctuation conventions, as well as those instances where no punctuation was included at all. At this point, I conducted an additional search for *well* preceded by quotation marks to find any instances that did not contain overt quotative verbs and may have otherwise been overlooked.

The final step that I took to identify instances of constructed dialogue within my dataset was to remove examples where the quoted information was a verbatim reproduction rather than a true instance of constructed dialogue. In most cases where information is presented in the form of quoted material, the utterance contained within the quotation is constructed dialogue rather than verbatim reproduction (Tannen 1986). This is due in part to the high demand that remembering all conversations verbatim would place on the memory. In some instances, however, where people are responding in real time to quotes from recorded and televised interviews, or when reporters include quotes from specific individuals, the quoted information is in fact a verbatim reproduction of the original statement. In these instances, the use of the discourse marker *well* is not indicative of the writer's stance, as it is not their contribution to the quote, but rather reflects the original speaker's use of *well*. These examples included direct

quotes from editorials, where the author included a clear indication that the words in the quote had truly been spoken exactly as written through their attribution to a specific person, shown in example (66). They also included examples from Twitter, where people used the social media platform to respond in real time to ongoing political debates, seen in (67), or, as in (68), to respond to direct quotes from televised interviews with politicians.

(66) “**Well**, people in certain parts of the Republican party and conservative Republicans would say yes, they should be punished,” the candidate replied. [Editorial: *New York Times* 2016]

(67) Before legal abortion, women and girls’ lives were limited. “**Well**, Donald: Those days are over.” #ShesWithUs [Twitter: @Shakestweetz 2016]

(68) “Some women won’t be able to get abortions.”
“Well, they’ll have to go to another state.”
#NOGODNONONONO #60Minutes [Twitter, @jennbbb 2016]

In each of these examples, the quoted information is a verbatim reproduction of words spoken by a specific individual. Although the Twitter user in (68) adds their own commentary on the quote in the hashtags to contribute attitudinal information and context, the quote itself does not meet the criteria for constructed dialogue and was removed from the dataset under consideration. In total, after I removed the quotes that did not meet the definition, I was left with 40 instances of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue.

5.4.2 Constructed dialogue and alignment

In creating instances of constructed dialogue, writers sharing their opinion on the abortion debate engage in variation that is referred to as “double voiced discourse”. According to the theory of double voicing, constructed dialogue works to reveal both direct and indirect intentions on the part of the speaker (Bakhtin 1984; Baxter 2014). Direct intentions are revealed through the quoted or constructed dialogue, while indirect intentions on the writer’s part are revealed in how they position themselves with respect to the propositional contents of the

constructed dialogue. While many analyses of constructed dialogue maintain Bakhtin’s approach of examining it through the lens of double voicing, in my analysis, I look, instead, at how dialogue represented as thought (69) and dialogue represented as speech (70) differ, as well as showing how these are used to mark stance alignment.

(69) For some of those, thinking “**well** we can still have a child, just not the best time” is the case. [Reddit: */r/TwoXChromosomes* 2017]

(70) We were discussing abortion in class and one girl said ‘**well** it’s not like it’s a human being’ I just put my head down and prayed to God. [Twitter: *@GodsDaughter_* 2012]

To do so, I focus on how *well* works to not only display information by allowing the writer to shift into a different voice, but also to evaluate information. Similar to the evaluative function of *oh* outlined by Schiffrin (1987) and Trester (2009), *well* “makes accessible speaker/hearer [writer/reader] assumptions about each other’s subjective orientations toward information . . . [which allows it to] display speaker/hearer alignments toward each other” (Schiffrin 1987: 100). When writers use *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue to signal their awareness of different positions or perspectives on abortion, they simultaneously signal their evaluation of those positions and perspectives.

As indicated in Table 5.1, below, *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is most frequently used as a distancing technique, with only 4 of the 40 total instances indicating alignment with a constructed position. In contrast, the other 36 examples show the writers distancing themselves from the position in the dialogue. Dialogue is also more likely to be presented as speech, with 25 of the 40 instances involving reporting a stated position, as well as to represent the position taken by someone other than the writer. 33 of the 40 examples show constructed dialogue used to represent Other, while 7 examples show it used to represent Self. Constructed dialogue presented as thought is less frequent than that presented as speech, with only 7 occurrences.

Table 5.1: Stance alignment and reporting of constructed dialogue (CD)

	Aligning	Distancing
CD as thought	-	7
CD as speech	2	23
Unclear	2	6
CD as Self	-	7
CD as Other	4	29
Total	4	36

There are an additional 8 examples where it is unclear whether the constructed dialogue is intended to be presented as speech or as thought. These are generally the instances that lack any quotative verb that could be used to recover the writer’s intention, as in (71) and (72).

(71) It’s not fair to brush that off as, **well** some women just want a “simple solution.”
[Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2017]

(72) It’s their strategy with abortion: “**well** of course we’re not trying to eliminate the right to choose, we just need to keep clinics safe.” [Twitter: @SeanMcElwee 2017]

In both of these examples, it is equally plausible that the dialogue represents speech or thought; for example (71), the Reddit user could be saying that the constructed dialogue is a verbal dismissal, or they could be saying that mentally, others have preconceived ideas about why women get abortions that they do not consider further. Example (72) shows something similar, where it is unclear whether the writer is claiming that the strategy they express through the constructed dialogue is an idea that they have heard voiced by people they do not agree with, or if it is the thought process behind those people’s positions and actions.

Where *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is used to mark alignment between the writer and the constructed voice, the discourse marker indicates that the utterance over which it takes scope is dispreferred in some way. The four examples of constructed dialogue that marks alignment in my dataset come from medical or therapeutic settings, where people would have

reason to want to avoid directly talking about difficult topics and would seek to delay their response. For instance, in (73) the author of the blog uses *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue to recount an instance where she offered assistance in her capacity as a crisis counselor to another woman.

(73) This last week, I spent some time at the Pennsylvania Women’s Conference to help network and share the work we do here at AbortionChat. While in line to get professional portraits done, I met a woman. She was beautiful, dark haired, and an enigma of energy. I mentioned that I am a crisis counselor, and that I run AbortionChat. After making a joke about, “**Well**, I could certainly use your help,” we turned our backs to her friends and she told me a small part of her abortion story. [Blog: *AbortionChat* 2014]

In this example, where the speaker of the original statement seeks to establish a relationship with the author of the blog, I analyze the use of *well* as a dispreferred start rather than a stance marker. As a dispreferred start, *well* signals that the utterance that follows it does not follow normative interactional preferences (Lerner 1996; Tanaka 2008). In this specific case, it is the stepwise topic change (Jefferson 1984) that marks the utterance as a dispreferred response; by using a conversational pivot to turn the conversation to a related topic of her request for help, the woman seeking assistance is able to make a request to discuss a difficult topic without having to immediately divulge potentially sensitive information, given the established pattern of discourse markers preceding private or personal information that an individual may hesitate to share (Jucker 1993; Browning 2017).

The use of *well* as a dispreferred start carries over to other instances of what initially on the surface appears to be constructed dialogue where the writer seeks to signal a positional alignment. Example (74) illustrates another such instance, where the doctor uses mitigation to deliver bad news rather than giving the patient the information in a straightforward and simple form. In fact, the entirety of the constructed dialogue here appears to be a dispreferred start, since

in addition to the delaying discourse marker, the doctor's attempt at providing a positive spin on the situation is similar to the prefaces that generally factor into dispreferred starts (Levinson 1983; Pomerantz 1984). The doctor's opinion is worded more indirectly than a preferred response would be, and it delays having to explicitly voice their medical opinion in their conversational turn.

(74) The doctor went on to say, “**Well**, you will have many other children.” [Blog: *Save the I* 2017]

In both of the previous examples, *well* does not so much mark the stance of the writer as it does serve as an indication that the utterance that follows the discourse marker does not follow expected or preferred conversational norms.

Well is more frequently used as a distancing technique in written abortion discourse. Given the controversial nature of the topic, it is not surprising that writers would engage with linguistic strategies to distance themselves from positions that they disagree with, and to evaluatively construct their own identities. The use of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue as a distancing technique is demonstrated in Figure 5.2.



Figure 5.2: Tweet showing *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue

These are the kinds of constructions that I focus on in the remainder of this chapter, and, in particular, the differences that exist in the kinds of stances that are enacted through constructed dialogue with reported thought and reported speech.

5.4.2.1 Constructed dialogue as reported thought

Constructed dialogue is often used to express internal thought. Within written abortion discourse, it is notably used to signal a shift in the beliefs or understandings of the writer themselves rather than to indicate a positioning with respect to the thoughts of others, with *well* occurring in the left periphery of the quote. In this capacity, *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is a marker of negatively-evaluative stance because the writers use *well* to introduce their previous ways of thinking, and go on to explain why they no longer hold those same positions; they mark themselves as being in disalignment with the reported position. Consider the example in (75), where the writer contrasts their initial belief that the original author of a Reddit post's grandmother was irresponsible for her experience with abortion with their perspective after having read the post.

(75) Though I am pro choice not gonna lie: my first thought was ‘**well** that’s irresponsible’ and I didn’t expect to sympathize with your grandmother.
[Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2017]

The use of *well* in this example clearly differs from those examples where *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is used to mark alignment in that this *well* does not actually mark the beginning of the writer's conversational turn. Because the constructed dialogue represents thought rather than something that was uttered in a face-to-face conversation, and because the entire example is written to represent a consistent writer's voice, the conversational turn in (75) begins with *though I am pro choice*. As a result, the *well* that comes halfway through the turn cannot be interpreted as a hedge or delay that marks a dispreferred response. In contrast, the *well*

in examples (73) and (74) is intended to represent the way that an individual other than the writer of the example began their conversational turn.

The positional shift in thoughts is most noticeable in (76). The discourse marker *well* plays a similar role as the marker in (75), allowing the writer to distance themselves from their initial reaction. The writer starts out explaining what their initial thoughts were prior to reading the post; the constructed dialogue represents their preconceptions about abortions performed after 20 weeks gestation, namely that they have a prior negative evaluation of people who get abortions at that point.

(76) Well i [sic] came into this post thinking (**Well** you know what, if you still haven't aborted by 20 weeks, than [sic] you should have to keep the baby you dumb indecisive idiot), but you really changed my mind. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2016]

They go on to specifically note that having read the post changed their opinion, making the shift in stance overt by commenting to the author of the post that *you really changed my mind*. If we focus just on the semantic, or propositional, content of the constructed dialogue, there is nothing to indicate how the commenter feels about their previously held stance. The attitudinal information which creates distance between the writer and the content of the constructed dialogue comes from the addition of *well* as a sort of stance-marker within a larger stance-event. The constructed dialogue itself marks the writer's stance toward women who have abortions past a certain point, and *well* marks the same writer's stance-reversal and interest in illustrating that they have moved beyond that opinion. In each of the above instances, the writers use constructed dialogue with *well* to show the growth and progression of their personal ideas, and to signal their negative evaluation of their previous thoughts. They position themselves as having placed distance between their current voice and the voice that represents their earlier thought patterns and beliefs.

Well-prefaced constructed dialogue is also used to illustrate the conflict between two opposing directions of thought. It is worth noting that, although the choice to include *well* to mark the shift into constructed dialogue may seem frivolous or insignificant, example (77), repeated from (64) above, illustrates the choice to include the discourse marker does matter with respect to the writer's self-alignment. In the first instance of constructed dialogue in (77), where the writer distances themselves from the content of the constructed voice's message by stating *well he/she's not moving, can't respond to anything, useless...*, in a secondary instance of constructed dialogue within the same conversational turn, the writer forgoes the discourse marker, moving straight to the reported thought with *find the truthful facts*.

(77) Now, I could fight my conscience (God given moral compass) and think “**well** he/she's not moving, can't respond to anything, useless, cost a lot of money and heartache to the family...just unplug him/her. It's the “humane” way to go about my day” then do my best to justify my thinking or actions by collecting partial or incorrect data to support my claims or I could just listen to my conscience saying “find the truthful facts and don't spin them”. [Blog: *Honest Search for Truth* 2012]

This is an interesting and important contrast to note, because when the writer wants to position themselves as taking a stance that reflects their core beliefs, those in line with their conscience, they do not use a discourse marker. When that same speaker wants to create an understanding that their stance is not in line with the reported thought, however, they do preface the quote with *well*. A similar strategy is seen in (78); although the particular opinion expressed by the writer in the constructed dialogue is controversial, it is stated as a position that they recognize themselves as having taken and that they do not feel the need to distance themselves from. In fact, rather than seeking to create linguistic distance, the writer uses the plural *us* to extend the stance to others.

(78) I tell you this because I think many of us have a tendency to look at the woman who has three or four children all by different fathers and think “What's wrong with you? What part of this aren't you getting?” [Blog: *New Wave Feminist* 2012]

Since the writer makes no attempt to distance themselves from the thoughts represented in the constructed dialogue, there is no need to use *well* as a prefacing stance-marker. Next, we will look at how writers use *well* as a positioning strategy in reported speech.

5.4.2.2 Constructed dialogue as reported speech

Writers engaging in public discourse on abortion also make use of discourse marker *well* to distance themselves from the stated and assumed positions of others with whom they do not agree. Rather than using reported thought, as indicated by the use of a cognitive verb, writers who utilize constructed dialogue to distance themselves from others do so by reporting speech, indicated by the use of quotative verbs. One such function of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is to mark how absurd the writer finds the position espoused by the other side of the ideological divide. When writers seek to distance themselves from these positions, they do so by beginning the constructed dialogue with the discourse marker *well*. This is the case in (79); the Twitter user marks the beginning of the speech of a hypothetical abortion supporter, who the rest of their dialogue makes clear they do not agree with, with *well*. Their response to the hypothetical conversation, though, has no such discourse marker use.

(79) Abortion supporter: “**Well**, since you are so against abortion, I hope you have adopted kids.” Me: “I have.” [Twitter: @AbbyJohnson 2015]

This example, as well as those in the rest of this section, differs from the instances of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue that marks alignment. In those examples, I analyzed *well* as a dispreferred start rather than a stance marker. This analysis does not hold for the examples in (79) – (83), however, as they do not occur as part of an adjacency pair. They are produced in monologic discourse contexts where there is no interlocuter for the writer to respond to, and, as such, there are no normative expectations for preferred responses that the writer must either follow or delay giving a dispreferred response with a hedging discourse marker. Returning to a

discussion of (79) in particular, the writer's use of *well* to introduce a perspective they wish to position themselves in opposition to marks the hypothetical abortion supporter's words as condescending, while the writer of the tweet marks themselves as being in a higher moral position.

As reported speech, *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is also used to highlight what the writer views as the absurdity of the ideological positions that they, themselves, do not ascribe to. This is the case in example (80), where the Twitter user uses constructed dialogue to illustrate that they do not believe that abortion is related to healthcare.

(80) If health & abortion rights are synonymous, they can be used interchangeably. Tell grandma, “**Well**, at least you have your abortion rights.” [Twitter: @JonahNRO 2013]

From the beginning of the tweet – the assertion that *if health & abortion rights are synonymous, they can be used interchangeably* – it is not clear whether the writer of the tweet identifies with this position or believes it is something to be mocked. Similarly, the propositional content of the constructed dialogue, that a woman has the right to have an abortion, is not particularly clear with respect to the writer's position. Instead, it is the attitudinal stance information offered by the addition of *well* that makes it clear that the stated position is one that the writer finds absurd and worthy of ridicule.

Both of the previous examples showed how *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is used to distance oneself from broader ideological positions. It is also used, however, to create more subtle distinctions among individuals who share larger ideological beliefs. For instance, it is used by both pro-life and pro-choice individuals not to criticize the other side of the debate, but to point out and distance themselves from what they see as harmful rhetoric within their own groups. This is the case for the examples in (81) – (83). In (81), the Twitter user uses *well*-

prefaced constructed dialogue as a critique of perceived complacency among those who want to see abortion access be protected.

(81) They keep saying... “**well** the abortion ban has been in the platform for years, so Pfft. But guess what folks... they are implementing it. [Twitter: @jljacobsen 2012]

The underlying argument here seems to be that many who identify as pro-choice have accepted the fact that pro-life lawmakers have included abortion bans in their political platforms for years, but since those bans have not been enacted, many have viewed there as being little cause for concern. The author of the tweet, then, uses constructed dialogue to set up the idea that this is a sentiment they believe is held by other pro-choice individuals and that they could feasibly imagine someone saying. They further use *well* to frame the contents following the discourse marker as a position they do not align with and do not think others who identify as pro-choice should align with, either. Though they hold the same core ideological beliefs, the writer in (81) uses *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue as a stance-taking strategy to set themselves apart as belonging to a smaller sub-group of more aware or concerned individuals within the larger pro-choice identity.

Example (82) shows a similar pattern, but illustrates that *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is a linguistic strategy that is used by people who identify as pro-life as well. In the blog where this example originates, the author specifically addresses what they see as an area where the pro-life community's attempts to define in what circumstances abortion should be allowable come from inherent sexism. They use constructed dialogue to illustrate the perceived implication behind arguing for exemptions for method of conception in legislation limiting abortion access, and to show how the message comes across as condescending to women.

(82) But offering exceptions based on mode of conception is sexist, honestly. It's saying "Well, you poor innocent woman, you shouldn't have to be further victimized by carrying this baby because it wasn't your fault. But as for the rest of you sluts, you play, you play." [Blog: *Life in Every Limb* 2012]

The author of the blog uses overt stance-markers in making this statement, such as the adverb *honestly* to note their sincere belief that sexism is at issue, to directly articulate their negative orientation toward the condescending attitude. *Well* adds another layer to this stance event, with the explicit voicing of the underlying message behind telling women that abortion is acceptable but only under certain circumstances being prefaced with the discourse marker. In making this additional discursive move, the writer signals that this is not a position with which they wish to be aligned, even though it comes from people who share the same broader beliefs. They thus create a pro-life identity for themselves that marks them as distinct from the more mainstream pro-life ideology without fully distancing themselves as a wholly unrelated identity.

As (83) shows, this strategy is also used by pro-choice individuals to point out harmful arguments in the larger pro-choice rhetoric. In this case, however, the Twitter user does not draw a sharp distinction between themselves and other pro-choice individuals. Instead, by using the plural pronoun *we*, they include themselves in the criticism, while still making clear that the argument presented in (83) is one that they have a negative stance toward and do not want to be aligned with.

(83) 'Well *I* could never have an abortion, but I support a woman's right to choose.'
Can we not say this anymore, please? You don't know. [Twitter: @jonniker 2012]

The stance event here begins with the presentation of constructed dialogue, where the writer shifts into the voice of someone who is politically pro-choice but who wants to signal that they are someone who would not personally have an abortion. Immediately following the constructed quote is a request that this stop being a sentiment that pro-choice individuals express, explicitly

spelling out the writer's negatively evaluative stance and desire not to be associated with the quoted position that was previously signaled through their use of *well* to introduce the constructed dialogue. In the previous examples, I have focused broadly on constructed dialogue in reported speech and reported thought; these patterns are not monolithic, however, and as I show in the following sections, different patterns of stance-taking emerge between dialogic and monologic registers.

5.4.3 Proximal stance objects in adjacency pairs

While *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue is used as a stance-marker in both monologic and dialogic discourse contexts, the specific stance objects that are evaluated differ between the two registers. In dialogic contexts, such as the comments sections on Reddit and blog posts where digital communication is taking place between a number of different individuals, the stance object is proximal. That is, they represent something or someone that is directly salient to the speech situation in which the stance-taking event occurs. As a linguistic strategy, this focus on proximal stance objects serves to reinforce a positive-self, negative-other evaluative split. Writers in dialogic contexts use *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue in reply structures to signal their identification with the individual circumstances that lead specific, discourse salient women to seek abortions, while maintaining a degree of distance from people who have abortions as a larger group.

The examples in (84) and (85) show this focus on proximal stance objects in comments on Reddit. In both cases, the comment comes as a direct reply to the original post, allowing the writer of the comment to engage directly with the author of the post in the adjacency pair. At the start of (84), the immediate stance object is the title of the post itself, which the commenter reveals through their use of constructed dialogue. From there, in the constructed dialogue itself,

they move into evaluating the author of the post's grandmother, signaling their sympathetic view toward the woman.

(84) After I read the title, my first thought was “**Well**, that's probably because her grandmother lived without birth control (the Pill is only 55 years old) and the ability to refuse unprotected sex.” [Reddit: */r/TwoXChromosomes* 2017]

I analyze this example as being a stance-event focused on a proximal stance object because although the Reddit user's grandmother is not directly participating in the discourse herself as either the original poster or as a commenter, she is immediately “denoted in the proximal, here-and-now event of stancetaking” (Lempert 2009: 227); she is an intertextually discourse salient figure around whom the entire Reddit post and comments section are centered. By evaluating the original poster's grandmother as the object of their stance-act, the Reddit user who wrote the example in (84) signals their understanding of the external factors that might have led the grandmother to obtain multiple abortions. At the same time, they avoid commenting on how those same factors might affect larger groups of people. As stance objects, it is only the individual whose actions are evaluated rather than the entirety of people who have had abortions. In the case of (84), this means that while the commenter signals a sympathetic or understanding position toward the unique circumstances the original poster's grandmother faced, they do so without signaling their position on abortion as a whole or even on abortion in modern U.S. society.

In (85), the Reddit user comments on the same post as the writer of the comment in (84), although the writers of each example have different usernames and are not, ostensibly, the same person. This example again demonstrates a writer in a dialogic register engaging in evaluation of a proximal stance object, though the writer's end positive evaluation of the original poster's grandmother is more overt than the reported thought shown in (84).

(85) Thought I am pro choice, not gonna lie: my first thought was ‘**well** that’s irresponsible’ and I didn’t expect to sympathize with your grandmother.
[Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2017]

The Reddit user enacts a stance that expresses their sympathy toward the original poster’s grandmother, using *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue to signal their shift toward understanding. Once again there is no mention of outside groups that could serve as distal stance objects. The focus is on evaluating a figure that is immediately salient within the discourse. It can also be the case, as in (76), that in dialogic registers, the stance object is proximal enough to be another writer taking part in the same conversation. In contrast, in monologic contexts, where there is not another writer taking part in the same conversation, stance objects tend to be more distal.

5.4.4 Distal stance objects in monologic contexts

Where dialogic contexts feature evaluations of proximal stance objects, writers focus on evaluative positioning of distal stance objects in monologic discourse contexts. This data comes largely from Twitter, as other monologic registers such as my editorial corpus do not contain instances of constructed dialogue. Instead, when speech is reported in the data from the editorial corpus, it is done through verbatim reproduction. Returning to instances of constructed dialogue in monologic registers, however, the pattern of stance object evaluation shows two larger themes: the evaluation of the larger ongoing conversation around abortion and prior stances taken by others, and the evaluation of larger groups who are not immediately present in the discourse. The examples in (86) and (87) show this dual pattern; in both cases, the author of the tweet uses constructed dialogue to evaluate an intertextual stance object, positioning themselves with respect to the stances and attitudes they associate with the broader cultural debate about abortion. At the same time, they also evaluate the larger groups to which they attribute the constructed dialogue.

Example (86) highlights the contrast between the types of stance objects evaluated in monologic and dialogic registers. In the former, as evidenced in (84) and (85) in the previous section, writers focus on evaluating specific individuals who are directly linked to the immediate discourse context. In monologic registers, on the other hand, writers do not evaluate specific individual stance objects. This is seen in (86) with the focus on the referring expressions *people* and *women* as stand-ins for larger groups.

(86) People act like women just nonchalantly get late term abortions. “**Well**, I painted the nursery, but I’m kind of over it now.” [Twitter: @super_inane 2016]

In this statement, the writer focuses broadly on prior stances that they attribute to *people* at large. In doing so, they avoid evaluative commentary on any one individual whose stance they disagree with in particular. Beyond the immediate stance-marker of *people* as a referring expression, perhaps the more interesting aspect of the stance-event enacted by the writer in (86) is their evaluation of other stances rather than of groups or individuals. There is an intertextual nature to the stance object in (86) in that it refers to stances enacted throughout the conversation on abortion rather than just signaling the writer’s personal stance toward a single object. They use constructed dialogue as a mechanism with which they can push back against the perception that people who get abortions do so without thought and without understanding the weight of their choices, even though it is not a stance specifically ascribed to any one individual. This is similarly the case for the example in (87), where the stance object is the larger position that men do not have a right to comment on abortion rights.

(87) I am tired of men on my TL saying, ‘**well**, I don’t support abortion but I’m a man and do ‘t [*sic*] have a say.’ Yes. You do. @king_ruckus [Twitter: @PolitiBunny 2015]

5.5 Critical discourse framework

My analysis of constructed dialogue in abortion discourse reveals some of the same patterns of underlying ideological representations outlined in the previous chapter's discussion of concessive repair. The focus on specific types of stance objects is again relevant in highlighting the underlying belief systems that inform the linguistic choices that writers engaging in abortion discourse make; however, where concessive repair sequences were used to evaluate women as a larger social group, constructed dialogue is used for this same evaluative purpose as well as to evaluate specific individuals. In the latter capacity, the choice to focus on linguistically signaling understanding toward one individual or the specific circumstances that led them to have an abortion serves to reinforce aspects of a positive-self, negative-other evaluation. The individuals with whom writers identify are linguistically positioned closer to the writers themselves and are afforded a level of sympathy that is not extended to those groups that writers position farther away from themselves. This pattern follows a known tendency for people to be able to rationalize their own abortions, as well as those of individuals with whom they consider themselves to be close or with whom they identify, while still arguing against broader abortion access for all. While writers in abortion discourse do not explicitly state that the only moral abortions are the ones they can personally understand, they signal at this belief through their choice of stance objects in constructed dialogue.

5.6 Conclusion

The present chapter has sought to create a unified account of discourse marker *well* as a frame that also allows for its meaning as an interactional stance-taking strategy. In doing so, I examined and introduced novel data showing that *well* seems to serve as a negative-evaluative stance-marker in abortion discourse, indicating disagreement and an unwillingness to allow

oneself to be positioned next to a disagreeable evaluative position. This function of *well* adds a richer understanding of how discourse markers can contribute to interactional identity construction following the positionality and indexicality principles of identity construction (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). It further supports the idea that discourse markers and reported speech share complementary functions; building on the work that Trester (2009) conducted with respect to *oh*, I have demonstrated that *oh* does not represent a unique case where only a single discourse marker serves as a resource for identity construction and management in constructed dialogue as an evaluative process. Instead, this appears to potentially be a shared function among at least a small set of discourse markers; although it can occur in the presence of other, more overt stance-markers, the consistent use of *well* as a signal of negative evaluation across different written registers of abortion discourse over a five year time period and in both reported thought and reported speech constructions indicates that it is somewhat of a conventionalized strategy for marking group and identity alignment.

In this chapter, I also demonstrated the contrasting use of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue to represent thought and speech in mediated abortion discourse. As writers use constructed dialogue to represent thoughts they no longer agree with, they preface the reported information with discourse marker *well* to create distance between positions they previously held and their position at the time of writing. In this way, *well* is used as a strategic positioning resource used to demonstrate personal growth or a developed sense of understanding. Where *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue occurs in dialogic discourse contexts like comments on blogs and Reddit, it takes a proximal stance object and is used to signal a sympathetic evaluative position regarding specific women who are discourse salient, but does not evaluate broader groups related to reproductive rights. Reported speech functions a bit differently from reported

thought, and, rather than distancing the writer from their own earlier stances, it is used to position the writer as being disaligned with ideologies they find objectionable. Counter to my original expectations, I demonstrated that this linguistic strategy is used by individuals who identify as both pro-life and pro-choice, and allows them to distance themselves with respect to members of their own ideological camp that they feel do not represent their value systems, as well as to members of other groups. Unlike reported thought, reported speech is widely used in monologic discourse contexts and evaluates distal stance objects, with particular focus on evaluating the ongoing conversation regarding abortion and prior stances taken by others. These contrasts are summarized in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Stance objects in *well*-prefaced reported thought and speech

	Reported Thought	Reported Speech
Monologic registers	Proximal stance objects – previously held positions	Distal stance objects – intertextual evaluation of other stances
Dialogic registers	-	Proximal stance objects – evaluation of specific entities

In the following chapter, I continue to examine how discourse markers function as stance-markers, broadening my analysis to once again consider the use of *I mean*, *of course*, and *okay* in addition to *well*. There, I focus on how their use as interpersonal stance markers works to create and maintain a sense of shared group membership among readers and writers engaging in discourse on abortion.

CHAPTER 6

INTERPERSONAL DISCOURSE STANCE FUNCTIONS

While the previous two chapters were dedicated to specific stance structures and functions of discourse markers – concessive repair in Chapter 4 and constructed dialogue with *well* in Chapter 5 – this chapter provides a discussion of other stance functions that are observed within my corpora but that are less readily categorizable and relate to interpersonal stance-taking. In section 6.1, I provide some background discussion on the multi-functional nature of discourse markers as well as interpersonal stance-markers. In section 6.2, I introduce the idea of discourse markers as meta-stance markers that navigate conversational points of stance divergence, both with others (section 6.2.1) and with the self (section 6.2.2). Section 6.3 shifts to a discussion of clause-internal discourse markers, categorized by their syntactic location rather than by a specific discourse function, and how these discourse markers indicate a sense of group cohesion and shared background information. In section 6.4, I discuss some peripheral stance functions that do not seem to fit into the existing categories discussed throughout this dissertation, and in section 6.5 I talk about the remaining set of discourse markers in my data that do not serve a stance-taking function. Finally, section 6.6 summarizes and concludes the preceding sections of this chapter.

6.1 Background

Discourse markers are polysemous and multi-functional. This means that a word like *well* or *okay* that has forms that belong to traditional lexical categories such as nouns and verbs can also serve a number of different discourse-related functions under their discourse marker form. Discourse marker *okay*, for instance, is known to act as a backchannel, an acknowledgment

token, an indicator of topic change, and task management, with many of these functions occurring simultaneously (Gaines 2011). This multi-functionality means that, although I discussed specific stance-taking functions of the discourse markers *well*, *I mean*, *of course*, and *okay* in the previous chapters of this dissertation, it is not sufficient to say that concessive repair and constructed dialogue are the only stance-functions that these discourse markers have.

The analysis of concessive repair and constructed dialogue that I presented in the previous chapters focused on discourse markers as stance-markers that index personal opinion and that allow writers to position themselves with respect to larger social groups. In this chapter, I turn to a discussion of discourse markers as interpersonal stance-markers that negotiate the facilitation of ongoing discourse. Previous research on discourses of social class as represented in popular media found that the construction of shared group membership was prioritized over the need to express one's own opinion in instances where conversational participants disagreed with one another's evaluations (Paterston et al. 2016). When tensions arise between participants, they attempt to negotiate the construction of shared common ground before moving forward with their discussion. One particular strategy for interpersonal stance-taking involves negotiating opinions with hedged disagreements. This strategy is illustrated in (88).

(88) But **maybe** they couldn't pick up erm . . . from this as to whether they were supported or not. (Paterston et al. 2016: 204)

The particular topic of discussion here revolves around the relationship between parental responsibilities and reliance on social welfare services. The speaker of the example in (88) hedges their disagreement with other speakers in the discourse; while they begin their utterance with a contrastive move in the form of *but*, they immediately mitigate the force of their disagreement by walking it back with *maybe*. I propose that discourses of social class are not the only contentious issues where interpersonal stance-taking occurs, and further demonstrate

throughout the remainder of this chapter that discourse markers present an additional strategy for interpersonal stance-taking in abortion discourse.

6.2 Discourse markers as meta-stance markers

In her discussion of discourse marker *well* as a stance marker, Sakita (2013) notes the existence of what she names “meta-stance operators” (82), or stance markers that negotiate and manage how two disparate stances interact with one another rather than indexing a specific stance in and of themselves. This function of *well* indicates that, when it’s used, the sentence over which the discourse marker has scope contains a confrontation or disagreement with a previously stated position, and the discourse marker serves to mitigate or lessen the directness of the disagreement; the example in (89) shows this function of *well*.

- (89) Jamie: We’re gonna have babies crying. ... in the middle of the night.
Harold: **Well**, it’s no worse than her screaming at em, is it? (Sakita 2013: 93)

In this instance, Harold’s more optimistic stance that a noisy situation will not be made worse by the addition of another child contrasts with Jamie’s more pessimistic stance that the situation will likely become increasingly annoying. Rather than directly contradict Jamie, however, by prefacing his response with a word like *no* or *but*, Harold’s use of *well* softens his response and avoids the direct interpersonal conflict that could arise from expressing a competing stance. Before the competing stance is taken, the hearer – Jamie, in the case of (89) – knows that a point of stance divergence is coming up because of the discourse marker, which lessens the threat to the hearer’s face.

This stance function overlaps with the use of discourse marker *okay* as a floor releasing marker. In this capacity, *okay* serves as an acknowledgment that a new speaker is taking over the conversational floor and releasing their interlocuter from their turn, and is especially useful in discourse contexts where interpersonal power dynamics are at play, such as service encounters

(Merritt 1984) and therapist interviews (Kovarsky 1989), where saving face would be important. In addition to releasing an interlocuter from their turn, floor releasing markers also provide evaluative attitudinal information on the part of the speaker, and can work to signal their approval and agreement or disapproval and disagreement with some element of the previous utterance without the speaker having to overtly state their disagreement (Kovarsky 1989). This function is illustrated in example (90).

- (90) Adult: So how would you make it where the flaps would be longer than the body?
(*child folds the paper wings*)
Adult: (*leaning forward and looking at paper helicopter*)
Okay, does it make it where the flaps are longer?
(*child refolds the paper wings*)
Adult: There ya go. (*nodding head up and down*) (Kovarsky 1989: 140)

Here, the adult speaker uses *okay* to resume their hold of the conversational floor and to release the child from a turn expectation. Although the child did not say anything during their conversational turn, their complying with the adult's initial request acts to fulfill their turn-taking obligation. The adult also uses *okay* to signal at their dissatisfaction, so to speak, with the way that the child completed the request to fold the paper. The negative evaluation signaled through the adult speaker prefacing their second turn with *okay* can be more explicitly spelled out by replacing the discourse marker with *no*. Doing so results in a pragmatically felicitous utterance and does not change the underlying semantic meaning, but does make the negative evaluation inherent in the reply more overt and more confrontational. Using *okay* instead not only releases the child from their turn obligation, but also mitigates and softens the level of disagreement in the reply.

Thus far, *okay* and *well* seem to be the only discourse markers whose function as somewhat of a meta-stance marker have been examined and discussed in existing literature. By introducing evidence from my corpora, however, I demonstrate that this is a shared function

among a wider set of discourse markers, including *I mean* and *of course*. Within the larger context of mediated abortion discourse, meta-stance markers are used across registers and generally index a negative evaluation of the preceding conversational contribution. This finding differs from previous discussions of conversational contexts where one speaker is in a position of power over the other, as both Merritt (1984) and Kovarsky (1989) found that positive markers are used with greater frequency than negative markers. In the following sections, I provide a discussion of how meta-stance markers are used in abortion discourse and how they act as a signal of stance divergence.

6.2.1 Stance divergence with others

Because they occur at turn-change points, meta-stance markers at points of stance divergence with others are among the easier functions of discourse markers to identify. In order to isolate them from other discourse marker functions that share the same form and also appear in clause-initial positions, I first located all instances of each discourse marker in a sentence-initial position. From there, I searched the relevant text files where the original comment and reply threading structures were preserved to determine which instances of the discourse marker did, in fact, appear at a turn-change point. In examining the larger dataset of discourse markers, I also noticed that writers occasionally used a discourse marker following an instance of constructed dialogue to signal the switch back into their own voice as they took their turn from the constructed voice. I analyze this as a similar phenomenon to meta-stance markers at conversation turns that switch between speakers, and discuss it as such in section 6.2.1.2 below. These instances were more difficult to identify because they were contained within a single turn. However, by searching for each discourse marker following a quotation mark, I was able to locate instances of discourse markers relative to a quote, as shown in figure 6.1.

contains response to a lot of that."	Well, actually you didn't. You gave
in when you can't support it?"	WELL because someone else can and will
going to have a conversation about it."	Well, it depends. If we are trying
'm not ready to be a mom."	Well, obviously you were ready to have
common. >>> "wouldn't it qualify as murder?"	Well technically the fetus isn't a
bodies and what happens inside of us."	Well, we certainly have a psychological
a child, I call it a fetus."	Well, what then does a fetus become,
legal protections are necessary in the system,"	well, yeah, that's pretty much exactly
said "I don't believe in abortions."	WELL, YOU SHOULD, THEY ARE REAL." 8/10/13

Figure 6.1: *Well* after constructed dialogue

From there, I was able to sort through which of the concordance lines that came up in AntConc were instances of discourse marker-prefaced constructed dialogue, such as those discussed in Chapter 5, and which were discourse markers following constructed dialogue. Altogether, across the four corpora there were 98 instances of discourse markers used as meta-stance markers in turn-initial and voice-initial contexts. Table 6.1 shows the distribution of discourse markers as meta-stance markers

Table 6.1: Distribution of meta-stance markers in stance divergence with others

Discourse marker	Frequency
<i>I mean</i>	7 (7.1%)
<i>Of course</i>	8 (8.2%)
<i>Okay</i>	24 (24.5%)
<i>Well</i>	59 (60.2%)

Of the four discourse markers examined here as meta-stance markers for stance divergence with others, *well* is used most frequently. *Okay* is used with the second highest frequency, which makes sense given the overlap between meta-stance markers and the attested floor releasing function attributed to *okay*, while both *I mean* and *of course* are used in this manner relatively infrequently. In the next section, however, I demonstrate that, though they are not as widely used as other discourse markers for this function, *of course* and *I mean* do both act as meta-stance markers.

6.2.1.1 Discourse-initial and turn-change points

While the meta-stance taking functions of discourse marker *well* and *okay* are well-documented, the same function for *I mean* and *of course* has received less attention, as has the use of meta-stance markers in written discourse. Editorials do not involve a direct or specific interlocuter, and as a result, discourse markers that signal a writer's taking of the conversational floor in an editorial generally links the article back to a larger discourse. This is the case for the example in (91), where the discourse marker *well* occurs in a discourse-initial position rather than just a turn-initial position.

(91) **Well**, that was painful. [Editorial: *New York Times* 2016]

In this example, the author of the editorial uses *well* as the first word of the article to mark their introduction into the larger discussion taking place around the 2016 vice presidential debate. In doing so, they take over the conversational floor for the duration of the editorial, having marked their release of previous authors' turns. *Well* does more than simply marking the author's taking of the conversational floor, however. It also acts as a warning to readers of the editorial that the stance taken by the author may differ from others participating in the same wider discourse.

Meta-stance markers are also used in dialogic written discourse on abortion. In example (92), Reddit user B prefaces their reply to Reddit user A's post with the discourse marker *I mean*. In this case, the discourse marker prefaces a reply to an entire post and initiates the conversational turn-taking between the Reddit users.

(92) A: The Only Abortion Opinion That Matters Is Mine

Last year I got a medical abortion at 7 weeks. It wasn't at all painful – it was kind of like a really heavy period, but all my periods are heavy, anyway. I had no hesitation getting the abortion. No guilt, no shame, no regrets. Just pure relief. My experience with the actual abortion was very positive. What was not positive were the people in my life who thought they were entitled to an opinion on my abortion. I only told my boyfriend, my mother, and a couple of close friends. My boyfriend told his parents and soon I was bombarded with calls, texts, emails, all about how I was 'murderer' and how could I kill their grandchild blah blah blah. They were, as you can probably tell, very very religious and very very pro-life. I am neither. So I said something like 'you may think abortion is murder, but I don't. You may be Christian but I'm not.' Like, that's one thing I always see with pro-lifers- that their opinions are the only ones that matter. They're the one with those beliefs. They're not my beliefs. My belief is that abortion is a medical procedure and the 'baby' was a bundle of cells, no different to any other cells in my body. All this to say, the only abortion opinion that mattered was my own. I was the only one who could make this choice for me. Everyone else's religious beliefs and views on abortion are irrelevant.

B: **I mean**, the fathers opinion matters. He should get a say in abortions. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2017]

While the original poster, Reddit user A, cedes their hold of the floor when they submit their post, on another level they are left holding the floor until another user replies. The *I mean* that marks the beginning of Reddit user B's turn acknowledges this and signals that they are taking over the floor and releasing A's turn. There is also an element of negotiating the expression of a negative evaluation in the use of *I mean* as a meta-stance marker. Reddit user B's disagreement with A's overall argument is clear in their stating that the father's opinion matters. The use of *I mean* here sets up that the statement over which it has scope contradicts the previous poster's position, and helps to mitigate the disagreement. The negative evaluation and disagreement is further illustrated in example (93).

(93) a. I mean, the father's opinion matters. He should get a say in abortions.

b. No, the father's opinion matters. He should get a say in abortions.

In (93b), replacing the discourse marker *I mean* with *no* changes the mitigated disagreement to a more direct confrontation, but does not alter the underlying semantics. *I mean*, on the other hand,

signals as a sort of warning to Reddit user A that B is expressing a different viewpoint prior to stating said perspective.

Discourse markers as meta-stance markers also occur in reply threads within dialogic discourse registers. This is the case for the example in (94), where two different Reddit users are engaging in an ongoing conversation with each writer taking multiple turns.

(94) A: Why are you trying to change the traditional definition of Personhood to fit you political or religious agenda, based on denying traditional property rights? The only reason anyone gets a say is if there is an interest. What is your interest in a stranger's body or their creation? From where does your authority to regulate their behavior come?

B: to save an innocents life from murder

A: **Of course**, murder is a legal term that doesn't apply in this context, since until birth, there isn't a legal person to have been murdered. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2015]

Again, while Reddit user B arguably ceded their hold on the conversational floor when they posted their comment, the asynchronous aspect of online communication means that they could return to the post and continue their response to A at a later point. A's response beginning with *of course* marks their releasing B's hold on the floor and taking it back for themselves. It is also the case here that, although on the surface *of course* appears to be an agreement marker, the discourse marker in (94) is doing similar work to the discourse marker in (92). This can be seen through the examples in (95).

- (95) a. **Of course**, murder is a legal term that doesn't apply in this context, since until birth there isn't a legal person to have been murdered.
b. **No**, murder is a legal term that doesn't apply in this context, since until birth, there isn't a legal person to have been murdered.
c. **But**, murder is a legal term that doesn't apply in this context, since until birth, there isn't a legal person to have been murdered.
d. **#Yes**, murder is a legal term that doesn't apply in this context, since until birth, there isn't a legal person to have been murdered.

Replacing *of course* with an overt marker of disagreement such as *no* in (95b) or *but* in (95c) makes it clear that there is an inherent disagreement in A's response that *of course* works to

soften. Additionally, example (95d) provides evidence that *of course* in this instance is not marking Reddit user A's agreement with B, as replacing the discourse marker with *yes* results in a pragmatically infelicitous utterance. This felicity pattern could be attributed to the fact that *of course* often works as a signal that the speaker or writer wants to bring their interlocuter over to their perspective and does so in a way that, on the surface, may appear to concede that both conversational participants share the same opinions or background knowledge and beliefs. From the previous examples, it is clear that meta-stance marking is a function that is held by a wider class of discourse markers than simply *well* and *okay*. In the next section, I further the discussion of the broader category of meta-stance marking in stance divergence with others by showing that they are not only used to mark stance divergence at a new speaker's turn. Instead, they can also be used to mark a new voice within a single turn by a single speaker or writer.

6.2.1.2 Voice-change points

In the previous chapter, I discussed the use of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue in written mediated abortion discourse. When constructed dialogue is used, it rarely constitutes an entire conversational turn on its own. Instead, the quoted information is accompanied by a statement of the writer's own thoughts and positions in which they respond to the constructed position. In order to mark a separation between the stance taken by the constructed voice and that of the writer's own voice, then, writers use meta-stance markers in a voice-initial position. This is illustrated in (96) and (97) below.

(96) "Why bring life in when you can't support it?" **WELL** because someone else can and will support it!! Adoption>>>Abortion! #thateasy #prolife [Twitter: @ProLifeYouth 2014]

(97) 'Abortion is wrong.' **OK**, so is bringing a child into this world that you can't afford and expecting tax payers to foot the bill. [Twitter: @SionLdn 2012]

In both of these examples, the discourse marker comes at the very beginning of the writer's switch back into their own voice, creating a separation between the constructed dialogue and the writer's own words. While this is not a turn in the traditional sense, the discourse marker still acts as a floor releasing marker as it marks the end of the constructed voice's hold on the floor, as well as the beginning of the writer's voice having taken the floor. It should be noted that the fact that this pattern of discourse marker use is seen across different Twitter accounts at different points in time indicates that this is a fairly widely used linguistic strategy. The prevalence of this stance-taking strategy on Twitter is also interesting to note because Twitter is largely a monologic register where individual tweets are not necessarily connected to an ongoing conversation and where there is not necessarily an interlocuter.

Although there is no direct interlocuter in these examples when stance diverges between two voices used by the same writer, the same kind of negotiation of competing stances that occurred between interlocuters in examples (92) and (94) occurs between voices in examples (96) and (97). When the stance that the writer takes in their own voice contradicts that of the constructed voice they presented, prefacing their own commentary with a discourse marker allows the writer to soften or mitigate the discrepancy between the two stances.

- (98) a. 'Abortion is wrong.' **OK**, so is bringing a child into this world that you can't afford and expecting tax payers to foot the bill.
b. 'Abortion is wrong.' **But**, so is bringing a child into this world that you can't afford and expecting tax payers to foot the bill.

As (98) illustrates, although the writer of the tweet has no real need to negotiate their personal expression of stance to avoid direct confrontation, as they themselves wrote the stances taken by both voices, rather than beginning the utterance written in their own voice with an overt marker of confrontation such as *but*, they instead choose to mitigate the difference between the two stances. Since readers may identify with the stance expressed within the constructed dialogue,

stating their disagreement so overtly might result in the writer alienating their audience; by prefacing their stance with a discourse marker to mitigate potential disagreement, writers avoid confrontation and maintain a degree of alignment between themselves and their readers. The idea of mitigating discrepancies in stances within a single writer’s turn goes beyond the use of meta-stance markers at voice-change points, however. In the next section, I turn to a discussion of how meta-stance marking discourse markers are used at points of stance divergence with the self rather than with others.

6.2.2 Stance divergence with self

Meta-stance marking discourse markers can also occur at points where a writer’s stance diverges from previous stances that they’ve taken. Since these competing stances are taken within a single turn, they are more difficult to identify than cases where discourse markers indicate stance divergence with others. In order to locate these markers, I first used AntConc to search for all instances of each discourse marker in a sentence-initial position. From there, I looked at the larger context for each sentence-initial discourse marker to isolate the examples that were turn-internal and exclude those that came at turn-change and voice-change points (such as those discussed in section 6.2.1). I further examined the context to specifically focus on those instances where two different stances were indicated on either side of the discourse marker. This left me with 119 instances of discourse markers at points of stance divergence with the self.

Table 6.2: Distribution of meta-stance markers in stance divergence with self

Discourse marker	Frequency
<i>I mean</i>	25 (21.0%)
<i>Of course</i>	66 (55.5%)
<i>Okay</i>	5 (4.2%)
<i>Well</i>	23 (19.3%)

Unlike the pattern of meta-stance markers in stance divergence with others, where *of course* was used relatively infrequently, *of course* actually makes up the majority of meta-stance markers in stance divergence with the self. *Okay*, on the other hand, which comprised a quarter of the meta-stance markers in section 6.2.2, is found in only 5 of the 119 total instances of stance divergence by a single writer.

6.2.2.1 Stance-shift points

Stance-shift within an individual writer's conversational turn functions similarly to stance divergence between writers or between voices. The main difference arises from the fact that the two competing stances are expressed by the same writer rather than two different writers participating in a conversation. The example in (99) illustrates one such instance. Here, the writer starts out discussing what they understand the term *pro-choice* to mean. The stance they take in the beginning of this utterance evaluates who should be involved in the choice to have an abortion or to continue a pregnancy, with the writer aligning themselves with the position that only the pregnant individual has a say in the decision.

(99) Pro-choice doesn't mean everyone has an abortion, it's just that we want the woman to have a choice. She needs to decide; not me, not her family, and certainly not some fat, old, rich white guy who's never worked a day in his life. **Of course**, the best choice of two bad options is not actually having to choose. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2017]

The shift in their stance is indicated by the use of *of course* to introduce the final sentence of their utterance. In this final sentence, the writer's stance shifts to the evaluation that such a choice should not need to exist in the first place. These two separate positions are fairly contradictory; it is difficult to say that the choice to have an abortion should reside solely with the pregnant person and simultaneously express the opinion that there are no good options involved in the decision. The discourse marker *of course* helps to bridge this apparent

contradiction by softening the disagreement between the stances. Example (100) shows the pragmatic difference between *of course* as a meta-stance marker and *but* as a marker of disagreement.

- (100) a. She needs to decide; not me, not her family, and certainly not some fat, old, rich white guy who's never worked a day in his life. **Of course**, the best choice of two bad options is not actually having to choose.
- b. She needs to decide; not me, not her family, and certainly not some fat, old, rich white guy who's never worked a day in his life. **But**, the best choice of two bad options is not actually having to choose.

Both *of course* and *but* are pragmatically felicitous beginnings to the second stance-taking event. Replacing *of course* with *but*, however, results in a more direct and overt statement of disagreement between the competing stances. In (100a), on the other hand, *of course* signals at the upcoming stance shift to the reader, allowing them to adjust their alignment with the writer's shifting assessment even when they are not, themselves, commenting in the discourse. This same general pattern holds true for discourse marker *well*, *I mean*, and *okay*, although as I discuss in the following section, discourse marker *well* has slightly different implications than the other three markers.

6.2.3 Differences between *well* and other markers

As the previous examples in sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 have shown, meta-stance markers are used in written discourse on abortion when there is disalignment between two competing stances. This is usually a complete disalignment, with writers using *of course*, *I mean*, and *okay* to introduce a new stance that directly contradicts a previous expression of stance. *Well* differs slightly from this pattern, however, and as a meta-stance marker it indicates a simultaneous partial alignment of stances and partial disalignment. In other words, writers use meta-stance marker *well* to signal that they agree with some aspect of a previous stance but disagree with other aspects. The example in (101) shows meta-stance marker *well* in use at a turn-change point.

(101) A: I dont [*sic*] consider pregnancy a reasonable fear of death, but I am a guy so I cant [*sic*] really put myself in that position and feel that fear. I agree that in cases where the mother's life is in danger an abortion is necessary, but otherwise that seems to go against our self defense laws and my moral law. I'm curious to know your reasoning for the women being seriously at risk, though, because I feel as though that could change the problem if they were always in Serious danger.

B: **Well**, many births do result in injury. Well over half of new mothers need stitches due to tearing, and the majority experience some degree of incontinence and sexual difficulties after birth. [Reddit: /r/Abortion 2014]

Reddit user B's evaluation that childbirth poses inherent risks diverges from Reddit user A's assertion that pregnancy does not present serious danger to a pregnant individual. This divergence is not complete, however, as Reddit user B seems to agree with A that there is not a *reasonable fear of death*, in A's words, but disagrees that there is no serious danger. The difference in their stances is a matter of degree of danger. The partial stance alignment between the writers is further demonstrated in (102).

- (102) a. **Well**, many births do result in injury.
b. **Yet**, many births do result in injury.
c. **Yes**, many births do result in injury.
d. **#No**, many births do result in injury.

Agreement markers like *yet* (102b) and *yes* (102c) are felicitous prefaces to the response *many births do result in injury* because they signal at the partial alignment between two different stances. An explicit negative like *no*, however, is infelicitous as a preface to Reddit user B's stance-act because it signals a complete disalignment between the stances that overlooks the points of agreement.

The pattern of *well* as a partial alignment meta-stance marker continues when there is a single writer but different voices expressing different stances. The example in (103) is interesting to note because it includes two instances of discourse marker *well*, each in a different voice, where two different stance-taking functions are served. The first instance of *well* in the example

is *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue as discussed in Chapter 5, and the discourse marker here acts as a disalignment marker. The second *well*, however, in the writer's own voice, negotiates the distance between the writer's stance and that of the constructed voice.

(103) "Well I don't like abortion" **Well** then don't have one. Making safe legal abortion harder to access won't stop abortions. [Twitter: @Karnythia 2016]

Again, there is a degree of alignment between the two stances that is indicated by the felicity patterns in (104).

- (104) a. **Well** then don't have one.
b. **Yes**, then don't have one.
c. **#No**, then don't have one.
d. **#But**, then don't have one.

Replacing *well* with an agreement marker like *yes* results in a sentence that is pragmatically felicitous because of the partial alignment between stances. Overt markers of disagreement, however, such as *no* or *but*, result in infelicitous and pragmatically odd responses.

Unlike *well*, the other discourse markers *of course*, *I mean*, and *okay* do not indicate a partial alignment between two competing stances. The following example, repeated from (99) above, has two stances separated by the discourse marker *of course* that are in complete disalignment; there is no element of shared positioning between the writer's stances.

(105) Pro-choice doesn't mean everyone has an abortion, it's just that we want the woman to have a choice. She needs to decide; not me, not her family, and certainly not some fat, old, rich white guy who's never worked a day in his life. **Of course**, the best choice of two bad options is not actually having to choose. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2017]

- (106) a. **Of course**, the best choice of two bad options is not actually having to choose.
b. **But**, the best choice of two bad options is not actually having to choose.
c. **#Yes**, the best choice of two bad options is not actually having to choose.

As a result, as the pattern in (106) illustrates, a marker of complete disalignment such as *but* is a felicitous replacement for *of course*, but an agreement marker like *yes* results in a felicitous

utterance; although *well* and *of course* both act as meta-stance markers, there are key differences between their distribution, namely that *well* indicates a partial alignment between different stances while *of course*, *I mean*, and *okay* signal a complete stance divergence. Having established the stance distribution of these discourse markers, in the next section I discuss the types of stance objects that meta-stance markers are used to evaluate.

6.2.4 Interpersonally proximal stance objects

The types of stance objects evaluated using meta-stance markers differ significantly from the stance objects discussed in relation to concessive repair in chapter 4 and constructed dialogue in chapter 5. Where the discourse markers in those structures were indicative of the writers evaluation of and positioning with respect to larger social groups and abortion rights, privileging the expression of the writers' personal opinions, meta-stance discourse markers allow writers to position themselves with respect to their interlocuters in the discourse as well as with their readers. The stances whose relationship to one another the meta-stance markers negotiate take stance objects similar to those in Chapters 4 and 5, but because the meta-stance discourse markers do not index stance on their own, they are oriented toward the reader and other writers; they are interpersonally proximal, allowing the writer to express their personal opinion while simultaneously avoiding alienating the reader. Similar to the pattern of results that Paterson et al. (2016) found for discourses of social class, where participants focused on creating shared common ground and avoiding alienating other participants, meta-stance discourse markers in discourse on abortion work to mitigate potential sources of conflict that could otherwise disrupt the conversation and the shared common ground constructed between reader and writer. These are not the only interpersonal stance-markers that writers in mediated abortion discourse utilize, however. Clause-internal discourse markers, discussed in the following section, also work to

create a sense of a shared discourse community between readers and writers that facilitates ongoing conversation.

6.3 Clause-internal discourse markers

Discourse markers commonly occur in clause-initial positions. In fact, this is one of the diagnostic criteria that I set for identifying discourse markers in Chapter 3 based on Brinton (1996) and Hölker's (1981) previous research. This is not to say, however, that discourse markers are exclusively restricted to clause-initial positions; within my dataset, there are 84 instances of the discourse markers *well* and *of course* occurring in a clause-internal position. 67 of these are instances of *of course*, with the remaining 17 being instances of *well*. These discourse markers are still optional and do not contribute to the semantics or overall grammaticality of the sentence in which they are embedded, but do appear within the syntax of the sentence rather than in a pre-subject position, though they are not a part of the syntactic structure itself. They maintain somewhat of an appositive distribution where they interrupt the tree structure. Examples (107) and (108) illustrate the difference between clause-internal and clause-initial discourse marker placement.

- (107) a. **Well** how do you determine if a being is sentient?? [Reddit: */r/Abortion*, 2016]
b. I think that's because our discussions on this issue have been emotionally charged and filled with hyperbole, exaggeration, inaccuracies and, **well**, drama. [Blog: *Telling Secrets* 2014]
c. But I had three abortions between age 28-30, after decades, the pill failed... **well** partly I failed, because I was not taking it consistently enough. [Blog: *Francois Tremblay* 2012]
- (108) a. **Of course** at that point, since you can't even agree on terms, there's not much left to that discussion. [Reddit: */r/ProLife* 2016]
b. Pro-choice supporters are not, **of course**, giving up. [Editorial: *Philadelphia Daily News* 2014]
c. Does this mean they support school choice, or the choice by some gun enthusiasts to buy assault rifles, or the Catholic Church's choice about providing birth-control coverage? **Of course** not. [Editorial: *Richmond Times Dispatch* 2012]

In (107a) and (108a), the discourse markers *well* and *of course*, respectively, appear in a clause-initial position. They are found at the left periphery of the sentence before the subject NP, and are clearly not part of the larger syntactic structure. Examples (107b) and (108b), in contrast, show the discourse markers in a clause-internal position; in (107b), *well* is found within a PP argument to the VP. The example in (108b) shows a clause-internal discourse marker in a different position. *Of course* here appears between the negated copula and the phrasal verb *giving up*, placing it within the syntax of the sentence. In order to determine whether a discourse marker was in a clause-initial or clause-internal position, I relied on syntactic structure rather than writer or conversational turn information because discourse markers can occur in the middle of what, orthographically, appears to be a single sentence while still being located at the beginning of a clause. This is the case for example (107c), where although it is in a sentence-internal position, *well* occurs in a pre-subject NP clause-initial position. The example in (108c) also shows a clause-initial discourse marker inside of a larger conversational turn. Although it is part of a larger stretch of writing by a single author, *of course* still occurs in the left-periphery of a new clause. For the purpose of the remainder of this section, I focus on discourse markers such as those in (107b) and (108b) that occur inside a larger clause with particular emphasis on their pragmatic and stance-taking functions.

6.3.1 Focuser discourse markers

Studies on clause-internal discourse markers have often discussed them in relation to their function as focusers, particularly in the case of discourse marker *like*. Focuser discourse markers such as *like* are hearer- and reader-oriented markers that precede new information and act to bring attention to or focus the discourse contribution of such information (Underhill 1988). Example (109) is an instance of focuser *like*, where the discourse marker precedes new

information regarding the specific weather conditions that provides necessary context for the rest of the speaker's story.

(109) But then the first day of our skiing. You know we're getting all excited to go skiing the first day it's **like** snowing . . . blizzard snowing. (Underhill 1988: 235)

This is the framework that I adopt to discuss clause-internal *well* and *of course* in the following sections, though I argue that while *well* seems to follow a similar pattern to focuser *like*, clause-internal *of course* has more of a stance function that indicates shared background knowledge and discourse community membership.

6.3.1.1 Collocates and modifiers

Underhill (1988) and Daily-O'Cain (2000) identify six different syntactic positions in which focuser *like* can occur: preceding a noun phrase; preceding a predicate adjective or adjective phrase; preceding an adverb, adverb phrase, or prepositional phrase functioning adverbially; preceding a verb phrase; preceding a subordinate clause; and preceding an entire sentence (Daily-O'Cain 2000). Of these positions, all but the last are clause-internal. These are the same syntactic position in which clause-internal *well* and *of course* are found, as illustrated in (110) – (114). Both clause-internal *well* and *of course* can come before a noun phrase (110), an adjective (111), an adverb or adverb phrase (112), a verb phrase (113), or an embedded clause (114).

- (110) a. I think that's because our discussions on this issue have been emotionally charged and filled with hyperbole, exaggeration, inaccuracies and, **well**, drama. [Blog: *Telling Secrets* 2014]
b. This requirement is, **of course**, a barrier to protection; rape victims often suffer at the hands of relatives and bear a tremendous emotional burden, deterring them from ever reporting the case. [Editorial: *Wellesley News* 2015]
- (111) a. Human characteristics are knowable at ever-earlier stages of fetal development, rendering the decision to terminate more, **well**, personal. [Editorial: *The Forward* 2013]
b. This is, **of course**, bullshit. [Blog: *Francois Tremblay* 2012]

- (112) a. No one thinks abortions are, **well**, “just great.” [Blog: *Faith Isn’t What You Think* 2014]
 b. States do, **of course**, often regulate the conditions under which abortions go forward, but under current law they cannot effectively say no to any abortion at any stage. [Editorial: *Washington Post* 2013]
- (113) a. Our representatives should, **well**, represent us. [Editorial: *The Philadelphia Inquirer* 2017]
 b. death penalty arguments aside—I am **of course** assuming you are against it. [Reddit: */r/Abortion* 2014]
- (114) a. If I chose it out of convenience, **well**, I’m REALLY underqualified to be a scientist. [Blog: *Shameless Popery* 2013]
 b. The overly obvious example being, **of course**, that the US doesn’t recognize sharia law. [Reddit: */r/TwoXChromosomes* 2016]

In all of the above examples, the discourse markers either are, or could be, set off by commas, which indicates the syntactically interruptive nature of their distribution. For both discourse markers, subordinate clauses are the most frequent collocates in my corpora, although proportionally, they comprise a larger percentage of collocates for *well* than for *of course*, at 64.6% compared to 41.8%. Clause-internal *of course* also frequently appears before a verb or verb phrase, with 23 of the 67 instances of *of course*, or 34.3%, preceding a verb. In contrast, only one instance of *well* occurred in a pre-verbal position. Preceding noun phrases, adjective phrases, and adverb phrases are all relatively rare syntactic positions for clause-internal *well* and *of course* in my corpora. The distribution of the syntactic positions of *well* and *of course* is illustrated in table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3: Syntactic position of clause-internal DM *well* and *of course*

	<i>Of course</i>	<i>Well</i>
Before noun phrase	8 (11.9%)	2 (11.8%)
Before adjective phrase	5 (7.5%)	1 (5.9%)
Before adverb phrase	3 (4.5%)	2 (11.8%)
Before verb phrase	23 (34.3%)	1 (5.9%)
Before subordinate clause	28 (41.8%)	11 (64.6%)

Both clause-internal *well* and *of course* have similar syntactic distributions to focuser *like*.

However, as the following section illustrates, syntactic position and collocation information are not sufficient to categorize the function of discourse markers.

6.3.1.2 Discourse old and discourse new information

The primary function of focuser discourse markers such as *like* is to increase the prominence of discourse new information as a strategy for information organization. As such, focusers do not precede given information that the hearer or reader already has access to, such as the reference of definite NPs, referents previously mentioned in the current discourse, and speaker/addressee information and, instead, present information that is new or unfamiliar to the hearer or reader (Underhill 1988; Daily-O’Cain 2000). In the specific case of *like*, the discourse marker frequently precedes new information regarding measurable or quantifiable units (Andersen 2000). This also appears to be the case for clause-internal *well* within mediated abortion discourse, but while clause-internal *of course* has an overlapping syntactic distribution with focuser *like* and *well*, it does not serve the same information organization strategy.

When discourse marker *well* is used in a clause-internal position, it acts as an introduction for discourse new information. This information often comes in the form of a qualification of some sort to the previous utterance. For instance, in (115), *just about everyone who isn’t one of the Men Who Run Things* provides clarifying information regarding the broad group of people that the author of the editorial believes Gingrich hates.

(115) And yet, Gingrich remains on the air, continuing to promote his special brand of hatred for, **well**, just about everyone who isn’t one of the Men Who Run Things.
[Editorial: *The Eagle* 2012]

The newness of this information is highlighted by the writer’s use of focuser *well*, helping the reader to understand that this information is not given nor is it expected that the reader should

already be able to identify the group in question. This is a pragmatic function rather than a stance function, since the use of the discourse marker relates to information organization as opposed to revealing something about the writer's attitudinal information; while the writer's negative evaluation of Gingrich is clearly expressed in (115), the stance information comes from overt expressions of stance such as the noun phrases *his special brand of hatred* and *everyone who isn't one of the Men Who Run Things* rather than from the discourse marker *well*.

Examples (116) and (117) offer additional instances of clause-internal *well* acting as a focuser. In both of these examples, *well* precedes new information that issues some kind of qualification or clarification of the previous information. The mention of *indoctrination* in (116) provides clarification as to the writer's skepticism that pro-life individuals truly choose to be pro-life.

(116) I get that people have a right to their beliefs, opinions, and “choose” their lifestyles (in quotes because, **well**, indoctrination likely takes away this choice). [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2017]

Though the writer hints at their skepticism through their use of scare quotes around *choose*, the specific clarification that indoctrination is what makes the writer doubt the validity of the choice in belief only comes after the discourse marker *well*, which focuses the new information. The example in (117) is similar, though the writer reflects on their own beliefs here rather than on an opposing belief system.

(117) Don't get me wrong, by the way. It wasn't as if I thought abortion was great, back then. Let's be honest. No one thinks abortions are, **well**, “just great.” [Blog: *Faith Isn't What You Think* 2014]

Once again, the information following the discourse marker, *just great*, qualifies both the writer's individual opinion on abortion as well as the opinion that they attribute to others; a few sentences prior to the use of the discourse marker, the writer states that they did not think

abortion was great, but the degree to which they disagree with abortion was not made clear or expected to be known by the reader.

Of course, on the other hand, does not introduce or focus discourse new information. Instead, the information that follows discourse marker *of course* is intended to be interpreted as shared background information. While it may not necessarily be discourse old in the sense of having been brought up earlier in the discourse, there is still an element of givenness to the information after the discourse marker. The sentence in (118) shows one such example of given information following *of course*.

(118) The intention is to stop the mom from bleeding and **of course** hope that the fetus will somehow survive. [Blog: *ProLife Wife* 2016]

Unlike the examples with clause-internal *well*, this sentence comes from a larger discussion of a medical procedure which has complications that can lead to fetal demise. At several points in the blog post prior to the sentence in (118), the author of the blog brings up steps that doctors take to mitigate harm to the fetus in performing the procedure and discusses the idea that everyone involved hopes that the fetus survives. As such, *of course* here is not acting as a focuser to impart pragmatic information. Instead, as I show in the following sections, clause-internal *of course* acts as a stance-marker that creates a coerced perception of shared background knowledge.

6.3.2 *Of course* and coerced background knowledge

As the example in (118) showed, clause-internal *of course* does not act as a focuser discourse marker because it does not introduce discourse new information. Instead, while the information that follows *of course* may not actually be discourse old or background knowledge that the reader possesses, using *of course* to introduce the information creates a sense that it is, indeed, existing background knowledge shared by the reader and writer. In (119), the statement that follows the discourse marker, the *undeniably alive and biologically human nature* of a fetus

is an ideological position that is so widely debated in abortion discourse that it cannot possibly be known to be shared background knowledge among an unknown audience of readers.

(119) In 1973, the court bizarrely called the fetus “potential life”; it is, **of course**, undeniably alive and biologically human. [Editorial: *Washington Post* 2017]

By prefacing the statement with *of course*, however, the writer of the editorial is able to create the sense that this is given information that the reader knows to be true. This is not an ideology-specific discourse strategy; as the example in (120) shows, the same use of clause-internal *of course* can create the sense that everyone has the same position on consent, even when this specific information has not been previously brought up elsewhere in the discourse.

(120) But consent goes both ways and **of course** should be taught to all people regardless of gender. [Reddit: */r/TwoXChromosomes* 2017]

Coerced background knowledge as introduced by *of course* is used across discourse registers; while Reddit users in dialogic contexts, as in the case of example (120), can use *of course* to create a sense of shared background knowledge directly with other Reddit users participating in the same discourse, as example (121) shows, editorial writers can use *of course* to create a sense of shared background knowledge for a broad audience that does not have the ability to dispute the givenness of the information.

(121) But 35 percent includes contraception services, which, **of course**, prevent unplanned pregnancies that sometimes lead to abortion. [Editorial: *The Eagle* 2012]

In the next section, I discuss how this strategy of coercing background knowledge creates a sense of shared stance and shared community membership between reader and writer.

6.3.3 Coercing shared stance

As a discourse strategy, clause-internal *of course* moves stance beyond the level of the writer as stance-taker, projecting a sense of shared stance among multiple individuals. The

original stance taken in (122) is that of the author and is expressed overtly through a series of stance adverbs. The author of the editorial begins their evaluation of the Roe v. Wade decision as a stance object by characterizing the court as having ruled *bizarrely*, making it clear that the writer does not wish to align themselves with the court's position.

(122) In 1973, the court bizarrely called the fetus “potential life”; it is, **of course**, undeniably alive and biologically human. [Editorial: *Washington Post* 2017]

Further, the writer quickly shifts the stance object under evaluation away from the court decision and onto the question of whether or not a fetus is a life. They again make their position clear through the stance adverb *undeniably*, indicating their further disalignment with the court's position. The stances taken through the adverbs, however, are those of the writer, and if one were to overlook the use of *of course*, it would seem that the writer is simply expressing their own evaluation through the editorial. When *of course* is taken into consideration, though, it adds an additional layer of stance-taking in that it projects the writer's stance onto the reader, taking for granted that the reader wishes to align themselves with the writer's position.

6.3.3.1 Interpersonal positioning

Similar to meta-stance markers, which operate on an interpersonal level to position the reader and writer as being in alignment with one another, clause-internal *of course* similarly constructs an ideological group in which the reader and writer are both positioned as having membership in. As a result, there is a direct alignment between the reader and the writer even without the reader actively participating in the discourse. As Adams & Quintana-Toledo (2013) point out, in order for there to be some level of shared background knowledge or expectations between the writer and the reader, both individuals must, on some level, have mutual affiliation with the same discourse community. This shared community membership again emphasizes ongoing communication and discourse on the topic of abortion and works to avoid issues of

disagreement or confrontation between multiple writers as well as between the writer and their audience of readers.

6.4 Stance in peripheral cases

In addition to the stance functions outlined above and in the previous chapters, there are a few remaining points in my dataset that do not fit into these existing categories. Among these points are instances of other discourse marker-prefaced constructed dialogue. Compared to the pattern of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue discussed in Chapter 5, constructed dialogue with other discourse markers is relatively rare – indeed, the following three examples are the only instances of *of course*- and *okay*-prefaced constructed dialogue in the dataset – and does not hold the same stance-taking function. For instance, in (123), the discourse marker *of course* indicates the stance of the constructed voice rather than that of the individual who wrote the tweet.

(123) “**of course** no one advocates abortion?” I DAMN WELL DO-when it’s the right choice for a pregnant person, according to that person. #hb2 #rrr [Twitter: @ClinicEscort 2013]

This example contrasts with the data in Chapter 5, where *well* indicated the writer’s stance toward the quoted information, because while the writer of the tweet clearly disagrees with the quoted position, as indicated by their stating *I damn well do* after the quote, this disagreement is signaled more overtly; the *of course* that prefaces the quote is in a different voice altogether.

Examples (124) and (125), on the other hand, show that *okay* can also be used in constructed dialogue.

(124) You can try to tell me all you want why I’m angry, but that doesn’t change the reason for my anger which is that you are ignoring everything I said, even when I did the whole “**okay**, fine, even if it is sentient” thing. [Reddit: /r/Abortion 2016]

(125) So we say **ok**, heliocentrism is true. [Blog: *Shameless Popery* 2013]

Again, though, the discourse marker in these examples serves a different stance-taking function than *well*. Rather than signaling the writer's disagreement or desire to distance themselves from a stated position, *okay* indicates a point of concession for the writer. In both examples, the writer uses *okay* to indicate that their stance is coming into alignment with another commenter in the discourse, even if only to humor a hypothetical scenario to make a larger point.

There are additional cases of discourse marker use that do not entirely fall in line with the meta-stance marker analysis proposed in section 6.2. In these cases, although the discourse marker occurs at what could be considered a discourse-initial position marking stance divergence from others, the fact that these examples are largely found on Twitter means that, unlike discourse-initial meta-stance markers in editorials, these discourse markers are not anchored back to any specific discourse that could be easily traced. This distribution makes it difficult to decipher whether they truly mark points of stance-divergence from others. Further, the examples in (126) – (128) seem to differ from those discussed in section 6.2 in that rather than hedging points of stance divergence, these discourse markers seem to present a dismissive stance that is more confrontational in nature.

(126) **Okay** Obama, you cry for the children in the shooting but not for the helpless babies that are saluted [*sic*] each day through abortions? #Nobama [Twitter: @Southrnsarcasm 2012]

(127) **I mean**, it's cool if you're pro-life, but abortion isn't genocide. Use a dictionary. [Twitter: @JoshuaMcJohnson 2012]

(128) **Of course** liberals would support abortion. They're all about ME ME ME, why the hell would they give a crap about anyone else? [Twitter: @keder 2012]

One possible interpretation for this divergence is that these tweets are intended to stand alone and that the stance divergence that they represent is not one of two competing stances in discourse on abortion but two competing stances on the reader's Twitter timeline. For instance, if

the tweet in (126) were to show up on a reader’s timeline without any other context, there would likely be a marked change between the stances taken by the other tweets on their timeline and this example. In other words, the stance divergence could be one between two entirely unrelated topics. Without the ability to recreate a discourse context for any of these tweets, however, it remains difficult to determine the full function of the discourse marker.

6.5 Non-stance discourse markers

It should also be noted that although all of the instances of discourse marker *well*, *of course*, *I mean*, and *okay* as stance markers came from the same dataset, not every example of each discourse marker within the dataset is a stance marker. Discourse markers are known to serve a number of discourse functions that do not involve stance, including structuring discourse and signaling a lower conversational register. In addition to the 17 instances of focuser *well* discussed in section 6.3, there are an additional 230 instances of discourse markers contained within my dataset that do not act as stance-markers. Instead, they primarily serve to structure the discourse and to provide signals as to how utterances contained within the discourse are intended to be understood. The specific distribution of these non-stance discourse markers within my corpora is illustrated in table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Distribution of non-stance discourse markers

Discourse marker	Frequency
<i>I mean</i>	14 (6.1%)
<i>Of course</i>	36 (15.6%)
<i>Okay</i>	54 (23.5%)
<i>Well</i>	126 (54.8%)

Among the non-stance functions that discourse markers serve in mediated abortion discourse is a presentational narrative function where they contribute to structuring the discourse. The example in (129), below, illustrates this function of *well*. By starting a new sentence with the discourse

marker, the writer signals that the larger narrative to their story is ongoing, but that there is some kind of shift in the narrative structure. In this particular example, the writer uses the discourse marker to note a temporal shift in the narrative from past events to an event structure closer to the present.

(129) We went our separate ways, she called me between 10 and 30 times depending on the say [*sic*] claiming she was having panic attacks and that she needed me. **Well** after a couple months of that I found a new wonderful woman at college, we are engaged right now and have been together for 6 years (living together for 5), and started dating her and getting serious with her. [Reddit: */r/TwoXChromosomes* 2015]

On the surface, this function of *well* appears similar to the meta-stance marker function discussed in section 6.2.2. In both cases, *well* appears in a sentence-initial position within a larger conversational turn by a single writer. The difference, however, comes from the fact that there is no stance taken in (129), so *well* does not mark a point of stance divergence – this is clear because if the *well* in (129) is replaced with *no*, *but*, or *yet* as a diagnostic for meta-stance marking, it results in a pragmatically odd utterance. Instead, the *well* in this example functions to indicate an upcoming shift in the narrative structure to the reader.

Discourse markers can also help to structure discourse by issuing a clarification without marking the writer's stance. This is the case in (130) and (131) with discourse marker *okay* and *I mean*, respectively. *Okay* in (130) signals to the reader that there is a departure from the main narrative thread. More specifically, it is an indicator of a conversational aside, similar to what one would expect to find in spoken conversations.

(130) Because I was having a surgical abortion, I hadn't had anything to eat (**okay**, let's be honest, I snuck some candy on the drive up) in several hours, and I was only allowed to have clear liquids. [Blog: *Abortion Chat* 2014]

The use of the discourse marker helps to make the transition from main narrative thread to aside less jarring to the reader by noting the hypotactic relation between two discourse adjacent

sentences that share only a loose relationship (Fraser 1999). This allows the reader to avoid having to work to attempt to construct a relationship between the discourse units because the discourse marker tells them ahead of time that there is not a strong link. The example in (131) is slightly different, but related in that it is still a type of clarification.

(131) I wasn't considering that elected b/c I suppose you could consider all abortions 'elected'. **I mean**, when neither life is in danger. [Reddit: /r/TwoXChromosomes 2015]

In this case, *I mean* prefaces an offer of additional information to help ensure that the reader has the specific discourse context in mind that the writer intends. Without this information, it would be easy for the reader to misconstrue the larger point the writer is making in labeling all abortions elective.

Some discourse markers like *okay* can also function as indicators of task management. In this capacity, they contribute to the discourse structure by indicating that a speaker or writer has finished covering their intended discussion of one point and is ready to move on to the next point (Kovarsky 1989; Gaines 2011). The example in (132) shows one such use of *okay*.

(132) Because the outcome might just possibly have been different if some sweet, motherly family member had taken my 23 year-old hand and said, "Sweetie, I know you didn't mean for this to be happening. I know you are terrified and that your plans are in jeopardy. Look, let me help you make an appointment, and we'll get this taken care of, **okay**? Then you can finish the degree you deserve..." [Blog: *tlcatholic* 2013]

There is no attitudinal information expressed here with the use of *okay*, only an acknowledgment of what the hypothetical first step in helping the writer obtain an abortion would be before the writer moves into discussing what the benefits of having been able to obtain an abortion would have been. It is clear that the writer believes that having a family member's support their decision to have an abortion would have benefited them, but the discourse marker *okay* does not impart stance information itself. The previous examples do not represent every instance of non-

stance discourse markers, but are intended to provide insight into the types of functions that the remaining discourse markers in my dataset serve.

6.6 Conclusion

Although abortion rights are a highly contentious and divisive issue in American politics, this chapter has shown that not all of the linguistic strategies for stance-taking involved in written abortion debate reflect such a division. Across formality levels and in both monologic and dialogic discourse registers, writers are sensitive to the thoughts and opinions of readers and potential interlocuters. As a result, they use stance-taking strategies that operate on the level of interpersonal stance, working to avoid direct conflict and confrontation and to create a sense of shared community membership between reader and writer. Clause-initial discourse markers can act to mitigate points of stance divergence between different writers at turn-change points as well as to mitigate divergent stances between different voices used by the same writer. Rather than index a specific stance in and of themselves, these meta-discourse markers negotiate competing stances in a way that encourages conversation to continue without getting shut down by disagreement.

This chapter also showed that clause-internal discourse markers like *of course* provide a useful resource for group membership construction. In contrast to focuser discourse markers such as *like* and *well* that preface discourse new information, *of course* allows for the presentation of information with the constructed appearance of givenness. Whether this information is truly given is largely irrelevant, as the discourse marker coerces the assumption of shared background knowledge that implies the reader is already on the same page and part of the same discourse or ideological community as the writer. As a stance-marker, clause-internal *of course* is similarly interpersonally oriented to meta-stance markers; rather than positioning

themselves with respect to larger ideological beliefs, writers use *of course* to position themselves with respect to their readers and other writers in the same discourse. These patterns of stance-taking are particularly unexpected findings both because of the divisive nature of the topic of discourse and because digital communication is generally thought of as being filled with animosity.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Having provided a discussion of two specific stance-taking functions of discourse markers in chapters 4 and 5, as well as a broader discussion of discourse markers as interpersonal stance markers in chapter 6, in the present chapter I aim to tie together the various individual patterns into a larger cohesive conclusion. In section 7.1, I revisit the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 in order to provide a summary of my findings from the previous chapters. From there, I further discuss various aspects of these findings, including a reflection on how stance-taking varies across ideological positions (7.1.1), a comparative distribution of discourse markers as stance markers (7.1.2), and a discussion of the implications of the mediated and temporal nature of my corpora (7.1.3). In section 7.2, I discuss ways that the findings of this research could be applied in other real-world circumstances. Finally, in section 7.3 I discuss some potential areas for future study such as additional stance markers in mediated discourse on abortion (7.2.1) and patterns of stance-taking in discourses of other contentious issues (7.2.2).

7.1 Summary of findings

Language is a powerful resource for ideological positioning, and stance theory provides a framework through which we can come to understand how linguistic expressions of speaker and writer attitudes, values, and judgments work to position social actors. While the existing body of literature on discourses of abortion has discussed linguistic framing from the perspective of lexically contentful and grammatically meaningful constructions, the present dissertation has sought to determine how discourse markers act as a resource for positioning and identity management as stance markers with a specific focus on the following research questions:

- (i) How do discourse markers act as a resource for positioning and identity management in written abortion discourse according to stance theory? How do individuals use discourse markers to construct their own stances and how do they attribute stance to others?

Ultimately, among the most significant findings of this dissertation is that discourse markers do, in fact, act as a resource for positioning and identity management. These words that are thought of as being superfluous and unnecessary to the point that they are edited out of transcripts and that students are taught to avoid using them in speeches or in writing matter. They provide a valuable linguistic resource by which people can subtly express their attitudes and opinions toward conversationally relevant topics. These findings are significant because they add to the understanding of how discourse markers work and what kinds of pragmatic functions they serve. In addition, they contribute new evidence to the current conception of stance theory by showing that some discourse markers can serve a number of different stance-taking functions.

Discourse markers in concessive repair and constructed dialogue present a resource for identity construction that are largely used to establish a positive-self, negative-other dichotomy. Both of these strategies are resources that allow writers in mediated abortion discourse to signal their own stances, providing them with a way to subtly linguistically point to their disagreement and disalignment with evaluated positions and entities without overtly needing to state their negative evaluation with attitudinal adjectives and adverbs. The movement up or down a conversationally relevant scale – the weakening or strengthening of a specific statement – signaled by the discourse marker in concessive repair allows the writer to linguistically position themselves as not being aligned with the ideas presented in the overstatement; the ideas presented in the overstatement are usually viewed negatively by the writer, and, as a result, concessive repair allows the writer to move away from these ideas while simultaneously attributing the negatively evaluated stance to some ‘othered’ group. *Well*-prefaced constructed dialogue

similarly presents a linguistic resource for constructing one's own stance while also attributing stance to others. Like concessive repair, the stances taken using *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue signal the writer's negative evaluation and allows the writer to position themselves away from the constructed position held within the constructed dialogue. Neither strategy is used to take a positive attitudinal stance that would create a sense of shared community membership or shared identity between either the reader and writer or between multiple writers within the same discourse. Instead, these negatively-evaluated stances are attributed to 'others,' both within-group and out-group, in the case of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue.

Clause-internal *of course*, on the other hand, almost exclusively works as a resource for attributing stance to others. While both concessive repair and constructed dialogue are used by writers primarily to signal their own stances, clause-internal *of course* is used to suggest that information is discourse old, or is background knowledge that is by all participants in the discourse without necessarily having been stated before. As a result, it suggests knowledge on the part of the reader that may not actually exist, but that works to create a sense that both reader and writer are on the same page and are operating under the same assumptions. The writer's stance toward the topic of discussion is not signaled in their use of clause-internal *of course* so much as their stance is constructed as being shared by everyone in the discourse. It should be noted here that the writer's personal stance is generally more overtly signaled when combined with clause-internal *of course*, particularly through the use of evaluative adjectives and adverbs, but the discourse marker itself only works to extend the attribution of said stance to others.

(ii) How is the use of discourse markers as stance markers influenced by register variation?

With respect to research question (ii), register variation, or genre, is an important consideration in written abortion discourse. While all of the discourse markers whose stance-functions I

studied in this dissertation are found across all four registers – editorials, Reddit posts, Twitter, and blog posts – the distribution of the specific stance-functions changes depending on the register being considered. For instance, due to the unique character constraints on Twitter – that a tweet written prior to the end of 2017 could only have up to 140 characters – stance-taking strategies like concessive repair that require multiple conversational moves – an overstatement, a concession, and a revision of the original statement – are not found in this register. In contrast, concessive repair is most frequently found in editorials, where although the writer of an editorial has no true conversation partner that they need to initiate repair with, the use of discourse markers as stance markers helps to create a conversational tone for the reader.

Well-prefaced constructed dialogue is used in all registers except editorials. This is likely due to journalistic standards that favor verbatim reproduction over constructed dialogue, while blogs, Reddit, and Twitter more closely reflect the pattern of constructed dialogue use for spoken conversation outlined by Tannen (1989) in that when people report on what others have said or thought, it is usually done through constructed dialogue rather than verbatim reproduction. One area where register did not appear to have an effect on the use of discourse markers as stance markers was in the distribution of interpersonal discourse stance markers such as meta-stance markers and the use of *of course* to coerce a sense of shared background knowledge. These interpersonal stance markers were used in all four corpora with a relatively similar distribution; although I have referred to these strategies as interpersonal markers, it is not altogether surprising that they are used in registers where there is no direct conversational partner. Meta-stance markers, for instance, can be used to navigate cases where a single writer's stance deviates from one they have previously taken as well as points where multiple writers have differing stances. Further, the widespread use of *of course* to coerce background knowledge in

monologic registers like editorials makes sense when one considers that editorials aim to persuade their readership, and inducing a sense of a shared background position and shared group membership might make the reader more likely to be influenced by the argument presented in the editorial.

The main area of register variation that affects the kind of stance-taking strategies that discourse markers are used for comes from the monologic or dialogic nature of the texts. That is, whether a text contains an ongoing conversation with multiple writers or whether it is a standalone statement by one writer affects the way that discourse markers are used as stance markers. In particular, it affects the type of stance objects that writers evaluate. For concessive repair in monologic contexts, distal stance objects are evaluated, meaning that the stance event that occurs in the use of concessive repair is focused on evaluating an object outside of the immediate discourse. The contrast between types of stance objects in monologic and dialogic contexts is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the analysis of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue discussed in Chapter 5, however. With this specific stance function of discourse marker *well*, when writers are engaged in a monologic context, the stance objects they evaluate are proximal for reported thought, reflecting on the writer's own previously held beliefs, and distal for reported speech, evaluating other stances rather than a specific discourse relevant entity. In dialogic contexts, *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue as reported thought is not used, while reported speech focuses on proximal stance objects, and more specifically individuals that are either participating in the conversation themselves or that have been previously mentioned.

- (iii) How do these findings on stance-taking in abortion discourse reflect larger societal ideologies and power structures? How do these ideologies ultimately shape the ways in which stance-taking strategies are expressed and understood?

The specific patterns of use of concessive repair and *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue evidenced in written abortion discourse both indicate an element of positive-self, negative-other evaluation. Writers use both of these linguistic strategies to position themselves in the best light while simultaneously ‘othering’ those with whom they do not agree, creating an out-group that is viewed negatively. This split between self and other indicates that, with respect to the subject of abortion, among other topics, there is a sense of exclusion that is particularly seen in the use of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue. As discussed in Chapter 5, this linguistic strategy is sometimes used to criticize members of the same ideological group, creating a sense of a sub-community of individuals who are more ideologically pure which excludes those that are not viewed as sharing the same set of ideological beliefs.

With respect to the specific stance objects evaluated in written abortion discourse, the focus on evaluating people who have abortions ultimately reflects broader social ideologies. In concessive repair, the focus on women as a social group rather than evaluating any one individual is used to further the idea that women are reactionary and over-emotional, unreliable narrators of their own experiences. Concessive repair as a stance-taking strategy, then, helps to perpetuate harmful negative stereotypes about women. In contrast, concessive repair is also used to set up the perception of the writer, themselves, as being somewhat of a moral authority or an individual who gets to be the expert on abortion. This furthers the positive-self, negative-other evaluation discussed in the previous paragraph, but also acts to exclude women from the position of moral or intellectual authorities on abortion. The use of *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue also reflects ideological and power structures in that writers use it to perpetuate the idea of abortion as only being acceptable when it is personal; in dialogic contexts like Reddit and blog comments, where writers engage in direct conversation with one another, the focus on evaluating

objects that are immediately involved in the conversation indicates that writers identify with the individual circumstances that can drive one person to want to obtain an abortion without applying that understanding to people who have abortions as a larger group. They do not appear to generalize, and, instead, focus only on evaluating and extending understanding to specific individuals. In the next sections, I discuss how the findings of this study can be further understood in light of a few specific perspectives.

7.1.1 Stance-taking and ideology

In Chapter 1, I discussed linguistic differences between people who identify as pro-life and those who consider themselves pro-choice. Many of these differences manifest in lexical choices of how the procedure is framed – *abortion* vs. *termination*, for example – and have contributed to broader social shifts in how people think about abortion. Given that discourse markers carry the same stance positioning ability as lexically contentful expressions of stance, as demonstrated in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I originally expected there to be a difference in stance-taking with discourse markers across different ideological positionings. Since the corpora that I used for this study were designed with the intent to capture discourse from both pro-life and pro-choice positions, with editorials being collected from major national newspapers that tend to lean toward pro-choice positions as well as smaller local and university news outlets that express a pro-choice ideology and Reddit threads coming from both explicitly pro-life and pro-choice subreddits, discourse marker as stance marker usage can be compared across ideologies. Contrary to my original expectations, however, the stance strategies that I identified and discussed throughout this dissertation were used by individuals expressing pro-life positions and those expressing pro-choice positions. This is an interesting and notable finding because it indicates that the same positioning strategies are used on both sides of the issue for roughly the

same rhetorical purpose, and the only significant difference comes from the propositional content of the repair sequence or the constructed dialogue. The claim that the language used to discuss abortion has shifted to a framework of increasing division post-Roe v. Wade (Vecera 2011) does not hold up when more nuanced pragmatic and discursive strategies are examined. Instead, as it turns out, there are a number of similarities. The differences within my dataset come from the discourse markers themselves and which stance-taking functions they are most frequently used for, as discussed in the following section.

7.1.2 Comparative distribution of discourse markers

The four discourse markers that I examined throughout this dissertation – *well*, *of course*, *I mean*, and *okay* – are all found across the different registers of data that made up my corpora. Their main area of difference is the distribution of the type of stance-taking function that each discourse marker serves, which is illustrated in Table 7.1. While each discourse marker serves both stance and non-stance functions within the corpora, they differ with respect to which specific stance functions they are most frequently used for as well as with respect to the stance to non-stance ratio.

Table 7.1: Comparative distribution of stance-functions of discourse markers

	Concessive Repair	Constructed Dialogue	Meta-stance Markers	Coerced Background Knowledge	Peripheral Stance	Non-stance Markers
<i>I mean</i>	6	-	25	-	6	14
<i>Of course</i>	19	-	66	67	14	36
<i>Okay</i>	8	-	5	-	10	54
<i>Well</i>	7	40	23	-	5	143

The discourse marker *I mean* is used most frequently as a meta-stance marker. In this capacity, it is used to mitigate points where stance diverges between two writers in the discourse, or where a

writer's stance diverges from ones they had previously taken. That is, it softens those points of disagreement between two individuals or between two competing ideas held by the same individual, helping to avoid potential arguments and to keep the conversation going. Discourse marker *of course* is similarly used most frequently for interpersonal stance-taking, with its meta-stance marker function and its coerced background knowledge function being used with almost the same frequency. This suggests that, in its discourse marker form, *of course* is most often used to navigate potential points of argument and to facilitate the creation of a sense of shared community membership that helps to build affinity between writers in spite of the contentious nature of the topic of debate. These findings complement Paterson et al.'s (2016) findings that speakers often feel a pull to work collaboratively and create a sense of community that is stronger than their desire to assert their own judgments and opinions.

In contrast, the discourse markers *okay* and *well* are most frequently used in their non-stance marking capacities. This is not altogether surprising, considering discourse markers are known to be multifunctional and are frequently used to structure discourse and signal upcoming conversational changes, such as how new information relates to previously stated information, to the hearer or reader. It is interesting to note, however, that while *okay* is relatively rarely used for stance-taking of any kind, the most frequent stance-taking function of *well* is its negative evaluative function in constructed dialogue. In other words, when writers use *well* to subtly indicate how they feel about something or someone, and to position themselves with respect to that idea or person, it is usually to show their disagreement and disalignment. The distribution of discourse marker use outlined in Table 7.1, above, is additionally interesting because it is indicative of the ways in which the average person uses discourse markers to indicate their

positive or negative evaluations in abortion discourse, rather than just those in positions of social authority, a distinction which is discussed in more detail in the following section.

7.1.3 Mediated discourse

While traditional approaches to discourse analysis have relied on mainstream media as sources of data, in this dissertation I expanded my sources of data to include the social media platforms Reddit and Twitter, as well as blogs. Traditional media sources such as newspapers are often included in discourse analytic approaches because they are known to both shape and reflect broader social attitudes. This is an important perspective to consider, and it influenced my decision to include a corpus of editorial writing in this dissertation, because the voices that make up traditional media sources come from a position of social authority (Baker & McEnery 2015). Social media, on the other hand, is accessible to almost anyone and does not require a specific educational background but is no less capable of shaping how people think about issues. By including texts from both traditional and new media sources in this dissertation, I showed that the pattern of discourse marker as stance marker use established in the preceding chapters is not a result of education level or exposure to specific writing conventions, but is, instead, generalizable to how the average person uses discourse markers to indicate stance in written discourse. These findings do not exist in a vacuum, however, and have potential applications beyond the scope of the present study. Some ways of doing so are suggested in the following sections.

7.2 Applications

The idea that words that are usually dismissed as simply fillers or thought of as unimportant and unnecessary play an important role in signaling speaker or writer attitude has applications for activists and individuals interested in conflict mediation as well as for teachers

working in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. For abortion activists, whose work often relies on their ability to make persuasive arguments without alienating people, a better understanding of how discourse markers can be used to establish a shared common ground and how they can be perceived as setting up a point of disagreement could help them achieve these goals. Knowing that *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue signals a negative evaluation and creates distance between the speaker and the position they are evaluating could help keep activists from using constructed dialogue and unintentionally distancing themselves from the people they are trying to reach. Conversely, knowing that prefacing points of stance divergence with a discourse marker helps to mitigate disagreement could allow them to avoid potential arguments and to create a shared common ground. This could help the person they are attempting to reach feel more open to listening to what they are saying without feeling attacked or feeling the need to be on the defensive.

This work offers similar applications for individuals who are interested in conflict mediation. While one of my research questions asked how stance is linguistically attributed to others in abortion discourse, having an answer to this question allows us to consider additional, more positive ways that individuals can attribute stance to others. In her discussion of argument culture, or agonism, Tannen (2013) notes that the perception that everything is an argument and that every argument has two equivalent sides leads to an erosion of the sense of common good; individuals feel isolated and vulnerable, and thus further feed back into the agonism that created their vulnerability in the first place. This cycle makes it difficult for conflicts to be resolved. She further notes that the kinds of stance-taking strategies that lead to a sense of community, such as the meta-stance markers and coerced background knowledge discussed in Chapter 6, may help to do away with argument culture. On one level, this dissertation has presented specific strategies

for stance-taking that build toward a sense of shared community or group membership. This knowledge in and of itself is beneficial for addressing the harmful effects of agonism. On another level, there are immediate practical applications for these strategies. Individuals who work in conflict mediation can use the linguistic strategies outlined in this dissertation to construct stances that help people on either side of the conflict move closer to one another in establishing compromise or a shared solution.

In addition, this research can be used by ESL teachers and those interested in helping English learners achieve more native-like proficiency. The United States is a multilingual and multicultural society that exhibits a rising demand for ESL programs; within these programs, lesson plans are designed to build vocabulary and to help students gain proficiency with different grammatical forms in English, but parts of speech like discourse markers are often not explicitly taught (Hellermann & Vergun 2007). This leaves English learners without an understanding of how to use discourse markers in a manner that is similar to how native English speakers use them. Using the information from this dissertation regarding how discourse markers can be used to express personal attitudes and to mitigate potential points of conflict, ESL instructors of advanced level classes could create lesson plans structured around discourse marker usage. Doing so would allow English learners to not only sound more native-like in their English usage, since infelicitous or unnatural use of discourse markers can reveal that someone is a non-native speaker even when they have otherwise mastered English grammatical structures, but also to have a better understanding of how arguments or points of disagreement can be subtly signaled. In addition to the possible applications mentioned above, this dissertation also presents avenues for future research by linguistics scholars, which I discuss in the following section.

7.3 Future directions

In conducting the research that went into this dissertation, I gained perspective on methodological considerations that benefited the project as well as those that I would ultimately change if I were to do this research over again. With respect to the latter category, one of the biggest changes that I would make would be to consider a broader range of search terms in collecting data. In scraping data from Twitter, I used a variety of search terms to try to capture the various ways that people talk about abortion; with the data from Reddit, editorials, and blogs, however, I focused on *abortion* as a search term, which could have potentially overlooked different ways that individuals in different circumstances talk about abortion. For instance, posters in subreddits such as */r/ttcafterloss*, */r/pregnancyafterloss*, and */r/babyloss*, all of which center around discussing losses of wanted pregnancies, tend to avoid using the word *abortion* in favor of censoring it in some way (ex. *abor!on* in */r/ttcafterloss*) or using different words altogether to avoid potentially triggering other posters. By not using a broader range of search terms in my original data collection methodology, the discourse contributions of a group of individuals who have had abortions as a result of health considerations, both on the part of the pregnant individual and the fetus, were not featured as prominently in the corpora.

Another area that I would approach differently if I were to start this research over with the hindsight that I have now is the technological approach I took to data scraping. While I ultimately ended up using Python to collect Twitter data, I initially tried to find a way to make RStudio scripts work for my data collection needs but found that it was not powerful enough. Since Python scripts can be more readily customized and are ultimately more powerful than RStudio scripts, starting with working with Python for both the Twitter and Reddit data from the beginning would have saved me time and afforded me more flexibility in working with the data.

Those considerations in mind, the findings presented in this dissertation offer the potential for future research in a few key areas, some of which draw on the corpora data that I have already collected, and some of which involve expanding my data in new directions using the insights I gained from this dissertation. In the following sections, I outline some of these potential areas for future study.

7.3.1 Other stance markers in abortion discourse

Although I restricted the scope of this dissertation to examine only discourse markers as stance markers, I acknowledge that there are a number of additional stance markers that were present in written discourse on abortion that I did not investigate here. It is possible, and indeed likely, that very different patterns of stance-taking would emerge in studying a different set of stance markers. This study could build off of the existing corpora that I have collected, or could be enhanced by the collection of further data incorporating the considerations discussed above. Based on some of my earlier research (Fleckenstein 2017), some of the additional markers that I believe could provide interesting information on the construction of group identity and membership in discourse on abortion include specific referring strategies and the use of modals and semi-modals, which are discussed in greater individual detail in the following sections.

7.3.1.1 Referring strategies

The specific NPs that an individual uses to refer to groups around them can reveal a great deal about how that individual views members of those groups and how they feel they are positioned with respect to one another. Given that my concessive repair and constructed dialogue data indicated that women are often the stance object in abortion discourse, I believe that studying the deictic positioning information that comes from demonstrative NPs, particularly those instances where the nouns that follow the demonstrative determiners are *woman* or *women*,

would allow for greater understanding of how women are positioned as stance objects. For instance, the demonstrative determiner *those* indicates a degree of distance between the writer and the stance object, which would indicate that in (133), although the writer expresses sympathy for women who had no choice but to seek out unsafe abortions, they still characterize them as being ‘other.’

(133) Dr. Gunter, thank you for sharing this but more importantly, for being there for **those women**. I often despair at the depths that amoral people will go to feed their need for power. [Blog: *Dr. Jen Gunter* 2016]

In contrast, *these* as a demonstrative determiner indicates that the writer is positioning themselves closer to the stance object. This appears to be the case in (134), as the writer of the editorial seems to use the proximal *these* to create a sub-group of women who have had abortions with which they can personally empathize; this is similar to the pattern found for *well*-prefaced constructed dialogue, where writers used proximal stance objects to indicate their understanding of specific, discourse-salient women but not people who have had abortions as a larger group. It can be inferred from (134) that the rest of the members of the larger group of women who have had an abortion are not individuals with whom the writer aligns themselves.

(134) Sadly, my friend is one among many. Abortion is not good for women’s mental health. With abortion statistics alarmingly high in the United States, we live in a culture with an increasing number of post-abortive women struggling from the profound emotional and psychological consequences of abortion. Many of **these women** gravely regret their abortions. [Editorial: *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* 2012]

The data discussed here comes from a fairly cursory search, however, and a more nuanced and developed analysis of referring strategies as stance-markers in abortion discourse would contribute to a broader understanding of stance as a strategy for identity positioning.

7.3.1.2 Modals

Based on the prevalence of discourse markers as interpersonal stance markers that mitigate potential sources of conflict that I discussed in Chapter 6, I anticipate that similar interpersonal stances will also be taken using more overt expressions of stance. Modals are one of the most widely studied stance markers (Gales 2010) because they can vary so widely in function, with weak modals of necessity and obligation such as *should* primarily serving to mitigate face-threatening acts. In doing so, weaker modals help to signal a sense of shared group membership between writers within the discourse. Examining the distribution of weak modals of necessity and obligation, such as those in (135), as compared to strong modals of necessity and obligation, like *must* in (136), would provide further insight into how group membership is linguistically constructed in discourses of abortion.

(135) I'm not for Abortions if you have sex. You **should** be ready to take care of that child not get rid of it. [Twitter: @Merchandise2012 2012]

(136) Without delving into the legitimacy or construction of this statistic, you **must** acknowledge that the action of chalking it in a public space is an example of how the rhetoric used to promote the anti-abortion agenda relies heavily on imagery that is, on its surface, composed of universal moral truths. [Editorial: *The Georgetown Voice* 2015]

If weaker modals are more frequently used in abortion discourse, this may suggest that there is a focus on creating a cohesive discourse community. Expanding our understanding of different types of interpersonal stance markers in abortion discourse would provide a better sense of how people engage in and navigate conversations on a contentious and charged issue. However, abortion rights are not the only topic of widespread political debate in the United States, which raises yet another potential area for future research, which I discuss in the next section.

7.3.2 Stance-taking patterns in discourse of other contentious issues

While I have identified a number of stance-taking functions of discourse markers that are widely used in abortion discourse, as well as potential additional stance markers that necessitate further inquiry, it is not yet clear whether these are widely used discursive strategies for dealing with contentious social issues or whether they are specific to abortion debate. Since the corpora that I constructed for this dissertation were constructed with aboutness in mind, new data would need to be gathered in order to address different discourse topics, although the same collection methods could be broadly applied. Currently, there is not a broad-reaching study that has taken on the task of examining stance in discourses of contentious social issues, and the creation of a single corpus containing language data from multiple different topics or multiple smaller corpora each focused on a single topic would provide a tool for useful insight into general patterns of stance-taking across topics and genres. Given that mitigating stance markers appeared in written abortion discourse and in spoken discourse on poverty (Paterson et al. 2016), I anticipate that linguistic markers of stance mitigation are likely to be found in any register of contentious discussion that exhibits features of conversational language. If, however, less conversational registers such as news reporting were used, I would expect fewer mitigating stance markers to be used, as well as fewer discourse markers in general. In addition, such a study would allow us to know what kinds of stance functions of discourse markers are unique to abortion discourse and which are a more widely used resource.

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