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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

‘¿Estás Triste?’:
Coauthoring Empathy and Emotion in Interaction

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Satisfaction of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Whitney L. Duncan

Committee in Charge:

Professor John B. Haviland, Chair
Professor Thomas J. Csordas
Professor Janis H. Jenkins

2008

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The Thesis of Whitney L. Duncan is approved:

Chair

University of California, San Diego
2008

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TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Data transcribed according to modified version of Goodwin & Goodwin's system (2000), as adapted from Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974:731-733).

Cut offs: An m-dash (—) indicates a sudden cutoff of the current sound or utterance.

Underline: Underline indicates some form of emphasis.

Overlap Bracket: A left bracket ([) makes the point at which the current talk or sound is overlapped by other talk or sounds.

Lengthening: Colons (::) indicate that the sound immediately preceding has been noticeably lengthened.

Intonation: Punctuation symbols are used to mark intonation changes: A period (.) indicates a falling contour. A question mark (?) indicates a rising contour. An extremely marked falling contour is indicated by forward slashes (/). An extremely marked rising contour is marked by back slashes (\).

Inbreath: An h preceded by an asterisk (*h) marks an inbreath, as in crying or laughing.

Silence: Number in parentheses (0.3) mark silences in seconds and tenths of seconds.

Increased volume: Capitals (CAPS) indicate increased volume.

Comments: Single brackets [] enclose material that is not part of the talk being transcribed.

Problematic Hearing: Ellipses in double parenthesis ((...)) indicates an utterance the transcriber was unsure about.

Italics: *Italics* are used to distinguish English translations.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

‘¿Estás Triste?’:
Coauthoring Empathy and Emotion in Interaction

by

Whitney L. Duncan

Master of Arts

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor John B. Haviland, Chair

It is often assumed within the fields of psychology and psychiatry that emotions are internal, individual, and biological experiences. While there are aspects of emotion that are ‘personal’ (i.e. subjectively experienced, individual, and biological), following theoretical and methodological strands from linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and conversation analysis I will examine how they are also co-produced, co-understood, and thus coauthored in interaction with others. In my analysis of transcripts from emotional health educational support sessions I attended with Mexican migrant women living near the Mexico-US border in San Diego, I show how the women collaboratively produce and jointly

interpret emotional experience, particularly through the display of empathy. I argue that empathic interactions take place within extended *assessment activities* that illustrate particular learned reasoning strategies we use to attribute subjective (often metaphorically called ‘inner’ or ‘internal’) states to ourselves and others. These attributions, which I argue are visible in moment-to-moment microanalyses of interaction, are ubiquitous in social life and fundamental to its coordination. In this instance, I show how participants creatively maintain intersubjectivity and a therapeutic space in which to navigate their own self-understanding, stances, and identities.

Part I. Coauthoring Emotion

Early on a February morning in Imperial Beach, San Diego, I was sitting in a small room around a table with nine other women as the group leader gave us instructions for an exercise: “Entonces ahora quiero que se imaginen que se van a ir de viaje. Okay? Cierren los ojos y piensen en un lugar donde ustedes quieren ir.” (*Now I want you to imagine that you are going on a trip. Okay? Close your eyes and think of a place where you want to go.*) We are silent for a few moments as we close our eyes and imagine that place. Ana Celia, the leader—or *promotora*, as her title puts it—continues: “Ahora en este viaje, se van a llevar una maleta. Y van a dejar un baúl. Entonces en esta maleta, quiero que se lleven cosas que les van a ser útil. En su viaje. Pero, son características que tenemos. No dinero, no este, ropa, no fotos, no mi familia, nada de eso, sino que cosas que yo tengo dentro de mí. Que me voy a llevar. Si?” (*Now on this trip, you are going to bring a suitcase. And you are going to leave a trunk. Then in this suitcase, I want you to bring things that are going to be useful to you. On your trip. But they are characteristics that we have. Not money, not clothes, not my family, none of this, but things that I have inside of me. That I am going to bring. Yes?*) She explains a bit more about the suitcase, and then: “...en el baúl, van a dejar las características que no les van a ayudar.” (*In the trunk, you are going to leave the characteristics that are not going to help you.*)

We were told to write down those “inner” characteristics—“las cosas que yo tengo dentro de mi” (*or the things that I have inside of me*)—next to an image of a suitcase, after which we listed the characteristics we would choose to leave behind next to an image of a closed trunk. The room was quiet save for the sounds of our pencils as we all wrote, and then one by one we shared the contents of our metaphorical suitcases and trunks.

“Yo me llevaría todo lo positivo, y todos mis cosméticos, para sentirme mejor...” (*I would bring everything positive, and all my cosmetics, so I’d feel better about myself...*), a woman named Marialuisa said. The group laughed briefly before she continued: “La relajación, y alegría. Y dejaría el estrés, lo negativo, los cargos familiares, y las responsabilidades” (*Relaxation, and joy. And I would leave stress, the negative, family obligations, and responsibilities*).

“Me gusta mucho lo que dijiste de los cargos” (*I really like what you said about the obligations*), Ana Celia responds. A few women say “Yes,” in agreement, then chat and laugh a bit more before Ana Celia gently moves us along: “Alguien más?” (*Anyone else?*)

This was characteristic of the exercises we did in the emotional health education and support workshops offered by Community Health, a non-profit institution devoted to promoting health in the San Diego US-Mexico border region. In hopes of becoming acquainted with the San Diego Mexican migrant community, I began volunteering there doing first data entry and research, and then helping to compile what the organization called ‘anecdotal data’ on how the workshop was affecting participants. Community Health (a pseudonym, as all

proper names in this paper will be) was reapplying for funding and thought that an outsider's account of the workshops would help put their quantitative, survey-based data in context. My job, then, was to keep records of what happened in each of the eight sessions.¹ Community Health representatives were also interested in my impressions of the workshops and participants' reactions to them. How were the women changing and learning over time? From which aspects of the sessions did they seem to glean the most benefit? And on the other hand, which aspects could be improved?

In addition to getting to know the San Diego migrant community, I was drawn to Community Health by my interest in emotional experience, migration, and mental health. A group setting in which migrant women would be sharing their emotional experience seemed the ideal place to get an idea of what types of emotional challenges migrant women face, how they deal with and express those challenges, and how they interpret their emotional experience vis-à-vis mental health or illness. I suspected that recordings might be invaluable for both my report to Community Health and for my own work; they would allow me to go back and trace the group experience more precisely, not to mention allow me to replay bits of interaction that I missed because of my non-native Spanish.

Therefore, at the second session I shyly asked the group if they would mind me recording the sessions with a digital audio recorder. Although they hardly knew

¹ The organization has various ongoing workshops (*talleres*), some of which are held once (like an educational workshop on breast cancer or financial management), and some of which are held over the course of several weeks, like these support/educational sessions on emotional health. There are typically several of the latter type going on at once, led by different *promotoras* in different locations around the city.

me or each other, they were quite open to the idea and welcomed me to do so. The interactions captured on that digital recorder—as well as my memory of the sessions—compose the data around which this paper revolves.

We met once a week, early Friday mornings, and Ana Celia would have ready a series of readings, activities, and conversation-starters, all centered around the organization’s goal of providing “culturally appropriate” mental health education, care, and support. To that end, the workshops are meant to help participants understand themselves, how cultural factors and gender roles have shaped them, what their problems are and have been, and how to make positive changes in their lives and thinking to resolve these problems, empower themselves, and live a life they enjoy. Thematically, then, the conversations center around self-awareness, self-esteem, strength and balance, communication, health, gender, culture, and empowerment. These themes come through in the images printed on the textbook we used in the workshops (called *¿Es Difícil Ser Mujer?*, by María Asunción Lara):



Figure 1: Reproduction of illustration from *¿Es Difícil Ser Mujer?* by María Asunción Lara, 1995. From http://sepiensa.org.mx/contenidos/2005/f_dificilmujer/dificil_1.htm



Figure 2: Illustration from *¿Es Difícil Ser Mujer?* by María Asunción Lara, 1995. From http://sepiensa.org.mx/contenidos/2005/f_dificilmujer/dificil_1.htm

The first image shows a woman managing a job (as indicated by the suit and the time-card she is stamping on the left) and a home (as indicated by the apron and the toaster she is operating on the right), looking frazzled and bewildered. We get the sense that she has a hectic life in which it is difficult to know how to take care of everything and everyone, perhaps especially herself. She is split between two worlds, the domestic and the professional, and fulfilling the obligations inherent to both is overwhelming. In the next, these difficulties take on biblical proportions, as the woman's image of herself bears the burden of womanhood (like a cross).

Thus we have images of the modern working woman, earning wages professionally, presumably caring for a family, and responsible for a good deal of the home's upkeep. She comes across as simultaneously capable and overly self-sacrificing, spending all her time on others and little on herself. She must bear the burden of being a woman and all that entails, a fact that the participants of the Community Health sessions bemoaned particularly in relation to what they

perceived as Latino culture putting women in a submissive position. The answer to the title's question—Is it difficult to be a woman?—is clearly 'yes, very' and the book (as well as the activities we did in the workshops) is centered around understanding why it was difficult and how participants could take positive steps toward making it less difficult for themselves.

Some of the participants were recruited to these sessions at a health clinic in south San Diego, where Community Health requested practitioners to give all Latina patients mental health questionnaires translated to Spanish from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual's* (DSM) mental health evaluation materials (Patient Health Questionnaires (PHQs) whose purpose is to determine their level of depression and anxiety. If the patient scores above a certain number—meant to index mental/emotional illness or vulnerability to it—the clinic representative refers her to either a mental health practitioner or to Community Health support workshops (often referred women attend neither). Participants also found out about the program through flyers, social networks, familial networks, and schools. All of the women are originally from Mexico (though states and towns of origin varied); all speak Spanish as a first language (though all but two spoke some English, as well); and all live in south San Diego. However, the number of years each has been in the United States varies considerably, from a year to over 20 years. Several of the women work, several are in school, and several are stay-at-home mothers; all but two (who are separated) are currently married; and all have at least one child (see chart on page 40).

After Marialuisa, Inéz spoke: “Yo me llevaría la confianza, el positivismo, alegría, paciencia, esperanza, fe, felicidad, y sonrisas. Yyy...Dejaría en el baúl presión, tristeza, depresión, enojo, frustración, soledad, llanto, y enfermedad” (*I would bring trust, positivity, joy, patience, hope, faith, happiness, and smiles. Aaand...In the trunk I would leave pressure, sadness, depression, anger, frustration, solitude, weeping, and sickness*).

The latter aspects of Inéz’ list, the pressure, sadness, depression, anger, frustration, solitude, weeping, and sickness, were powerful themes in the sessions, themes that the women explored and expressed their experiences of—both as they had come up every week between meetings and as they had been experienced throughout each woman’s life. Clearly, beyond the educational aspects and the more institutional support group structure, one of the main purposes of the workshops is to give women a comfortable space in which to express and/or unburden themselves emotionally, tell their stories, and give and receive empathy around their painful experiences. The piece of interaction I have been quoting is from the third week, but I was struck from the first how the majority of the women seemed eager to talk about their own experiences and listen to and reflect upon others’ experiences. They displayed an impressive ability to articulate difficulties they faced and to comfort those who expressed those difficulties and the often forceful emotions they inspired. On numerous occasions—even several months after the sessions had ended—different group members told me that they were extremely grateful to have had a supportive setting in which to share frustrations and the stories around them. Together they crafted ways to reflect upon, interpret,

navigate, and refigure their own and each other's experiences to improve their relationships and in their lives more generally.

After Inéz finished reading her list and the group was busy responding—"Mmhmm," someone says. "Todo eso, sí" (*Mmhmm. All of that, yes*)—a participant named Lucía addressed another, named Marta:

1. [Lucia] Marta. (1.0) ¿Estás triste?
 Marta. (1.0) *Are you sad?*

Lucía's question, simple and straightforward as it seems, is the catalyst for an extended empathic interaction between several participants—an interaction that will serve throughout this paper as an illustration of how emotional experience can be *coauthored*. Given that participants consistently expressed how much Community Health sessions were helping them—and given that *all* of them improved by at least several points on their depression self-assessment questionnaire (PHQ) by the end of the sessions—I approached this analysis by asking a simple question: What was it that made these workshops therapeutic for the women involved? The answers are many, but as I listened to my recordings and reflected upon each session, it became clear that the receipt and expression of empathy was an extremely significant aspect of the intersubjective space and the emotional interactions within it. This is not a surprise, given that it is a support group and part of supporting others often involves relating to and empathizing with them. However, it seems quite worthwhile to investigate in detail what spurs and characterizes these empathic interactions, what effects they have on an emergent social group, and what they can tell us about the social nature of

emotions.

In so doing, I will argue that in addition to their subjective and biological dimensions, emotions are co-produced, co-understood, and thus coauthored in interaction with others. Focusing on emotion talk in situated practice can move us beyond the question of whether what people say is directly reflective of a given subjective state to how actors identify and deal with their own and others' emotional experience, how affect plays out in interaction, and how emotional expressions and discourses figure into social relationships, identities, and actions. I argue that theories which locate emotional experience within an individual's psychology, biology, and/or cognition *without* considering its interactional dimensions cannot sufficiently account for the complex ways participants collaboratively interpret, evaluate, and negotiate such experience—nor how social experience informs, constrains, and inspires emotional experience. This collaboration is characteristic of all social interaction, and leads to one of the most profound questions of social analysis: how is it that actors routinely seem to have knowledge of others' "internal" experience, including not only emotion but also intentions, beliefs, desires, and motives, among others? The ways in which we attribute certain experiences to others is particularly striking in an affect-laden setting where the confirmation and display of *intersubjectivity*—the coproduction "of an increment of interactional and social reality" (Schegloff 1992:1299)—is central to its therapeutic value.

I derive my microanalytic approach and its attendant theories primarily from linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, including but not limited to

conversation analysis. While linguistic anthropology and linguistics boast a considerable amount of literature on the ways in which affect is encoded in the linguistic structure of various languages (see Besnier 1990 and Lutz & White 1986, for reviews), there is much less literature examining how emotion plays out in interaction. There are exceptions, but as we well see, emotion is a slippery subject that tends to fall into the province of psychology, psychological anthropology, and biology because it is so often assumed to be an inaccessible internal experience not amenable to social analysis. I will examine that assumption a bit later in the paper, but, as a beginning point of orientation, I will characterize this study as one that falls at the theoretical intersection of linguistic and psychological anthropology in the field of what Ochs (2007) calls “linguistic psychological anthropology.”

As Goodwin & Goodwin put it, “emotion is a **social** phenomenon. It is organized and made visible as a consequential event through systematic practices which are lodged within the processes of situated interaction, used by participants to build in concert with each other the events that make up their lifeworld” (Goodwin & Goodwin 2000: 24). With empathy as my case example, I will approach emotion as an integral part of how actors negotiate meanings and identities through talk in ‘situated interaction’ using ‘systematic practices’ composed of particular participation frameworks, assessments, stances, and stories.

I have provided such an extensive description of the sessions’ content and the organization’s goals to put the transcripts I will be analyzing into a basic

ethnographic framework. All of this contextual background, though perhaps not made relevant on the particular transcript I will be analyzing, is essential to understand what *is* on the tape and in the transcript. In examining emotion and particularly empathy, I believe, it is important to understand how these women relate based on shared past and present experiences as well as on a shared orientation toward betterment—an orientation that is provided both by Community Health and by the women’s interaction as it unfolded over the weeks. Such an approach, combined with insights about emotion and culture from psychological anthropology, deepens and enriches our understanding of not only the interactive aspects of emotion, but also the therapeutic setting, intersubjectivity, and social relations more generally.



The one turn I have included—¿*Marta. Estás triste?*—is already indicative of some important aspects of emotion in interaction generally, and empathic interaction specifically. First, Marta does not verbally select herself to take the floor, become a speaker, and disclose her emotional experience; thus she does not necessarily self-select as one who desires an empathic interaction. It seems likely that Marta was showing or had previously shown some signs of sadness in order to inspire Lucía’s concern, but having been in the room observing I can attest to the fact that Marta was not overtly displaying distress. When Lucía halted an organized activity in order to ask Marta if she was sad, though, it rerouted the entire room’s interaction and caused us to focus on and have concern for Marta. Her alleged sadness would be seen by many as internal, a manifestation of

cognitive, biological processes, but it is “through the spontaneous playing out of the *sequentially contingent* and *co-constructed* external flow of interactional events” that she is *invited* to bring “these conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious internal constructs and potentialities to bear on the constitution, management, and negotiating of social reality and social relationships” (Jacoby & Ochs 1995:175, italics mine).

The co-construction—co-interpretation, co-understanding, and coauthoring—of emotional meaning is thus evident in a single turn in which one participant can attribute a subjective experience to another participant and set up the framework for her to express that experience. Additionally, co-construction is dependent upon and evidence of intersubjectivity. First, Lucía’s question indicates that she believes herself to be *aware of Marta’s emotion* and that she has made an initial *assessment* about it, namely that Marta is sad, and so presumably suffering. Assessments “make visible an agent evaluating an event in his or her phenomenal world, [and] they display that agent’s experience of the event, including his or her affective involvement in the referent being assessed...Public structures such as this which display the experience of one participant provide resources for the interactive organization of co-experience...” (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:155). By assessing Marta’s state and attributing a particular experience to her, Lucía displays her ‘co-experience’ with Marta, as well as her ‘affective involvement’—both aspects of intersubjectivity, which is crucial for therapeutic interaction and interaction more generally. This is not enough, though; Marta, too must acknowledge and respond to Lucía’s assessment in order to confirm

intersubjectivity and accept the invitation to take the floor, express emotion, and receive empathy.

Before going deeper into the ways emotional experience is coauthored and participants interact empathically, however, it will be useful to define the terms at issue more precisely and to situate them theoretically.

Part II. Theoretical Foundations

II.a. Conceptualizing Emotion

Theorizing emotion necessarily seems to put one on uncertain ground. It is difficult—if not impossible—to answer seemingly basic questions such as *What are emotions? Where are they? Are they universal? Are they empirically identifiable? What are the effects of culture upon them? How can we ever know what another person is feeling?* Posing such queries raises perennial philosophical issues around the nature of “inner” or “private” life and its relationship with “outer” or “public” life. In his philosophical inquiry into anthropological knowledge, Needham disputed “the reality of a distinct interior state” of “belief,” which he claimed was a vague and ultimately unhelpful ethnographic illusion (Needham 1972:15). Wittgenstein, too, was skeptical about making claims regarding inner life, belief or otherwise, arguing that “An inner process stands in need of an outward criterion” (Wittgenstein 1958:180). An exhaustive account of the philosophical literature is beyond the scope of this paper; however, arguing that emotional experience is coauthored does require some explanation of how I conceive of emotion and the interplay between what is often considered (in both everyday usage and much academic literature) to be internal, personal, and private—and that which is external, social, and public.

Very broadly speaking, social scientific literature on emotion takes one of three basic stances: a psychobiological stance, a cultural constructionist stance, or—most commonly—a compromise between the two in which the

psychobiological and the sociocultural dialectically inform each other. The psychobiological (which I am using interchangeably with the physiological and biological approaches for the sake of simplicity) position holds that emotions are universal, physiologically-based pan-human experiences that are only superficially influenced by culture. The relativist, cultural constructionist position, on the other hand, argues for emotion as “a thoroughly cultural object of study” (White 1993) and emphasizes the “*primary* importance of cultural meaning systems in emotional experience” (Lutz & White 1986: 417; italics in original).

The two opposing sides of the dichotomy—psychobiological vs. cultural constructionist—often correspond to several other generally unhelpful (and often invoked) dichotomies like universalism/relativism, nature/nurture, materialism/idealism, positivism/interpretivism, individual/social, body/mind, structure/agency, and internal/external, all of which the more dialectical approach critiques and aims to bridge (Lutz & White 1986; White 1993; Lyon 1995; Hinton 1999; McNeal 1999). Many anthropological approaches emphasize that these “implicit schematas” (White 1993:31) are not necessarily universal but are based in old Cartesian dualisms pervasive in Western theories of experiences, both folk and academic. Thus, they are cannot be taken as *a priori* givens in analysis.

Non-dialectical approaches are not difficult to critique and are less common in contemporary theories (though many of the old binary distinctions surreptitiously find their way into purportedly non-dichotomous analyses). Of the universalist, psychobiological position one can argue that it is essentialist; that it downplays or ignores how different cultures describe and express emotion in

fundamentally different ways and consider different stimuli to be deserving of emotional response; and that it cannot then verify that emotion is “felt” the same way across individuals or settings.

Further, a biological view assumes that language is no more than an unproblematic or “transparent medium for the communication of inner thoughts or experience” (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 13) and that universalists privilege a set of Euroamerican emotions as the standard into which they assume all other emotional concepts can be translated. This can lead to the view that “underneath a culture’s nets of problematic and distinctive rituals, rules, and myths, we find our homely, but in some sense universal, next-door neighbors...in ferreting out the ‘hidden’ sense of odd expressions, they often come upon a set of terms themselves familiar, terms that fit too neatly the assumptions of the analyst’s common sense” (Rosaldo 1980: 22).²

The idea that emotions are the province of psychology because they are the “*sine qua non* of the individual” can be seen as “a Western folk ideology that conceives of persons primarily as autonomous individuals rather than as actors whose subjectivity is continually formed in and through interactions with others...because such constructions generally presume that actions and motivations spring ultimately from physiological processes of the brain, both

² Put another way: “The difficulty...is that in viewing lexical items either as crude tools for ‘cutting up’ the perceived world into a set of discrete classes, or alternatively, as exotic ‘symbols’ that disguise a more familiar psychological or pragmatic sense, anthropologists have failed to capture the sorts of things we need to know in order to understand the comments, texts, and even the explanatory accounts of our informants. Separating the symbolic from the everyday, anthropologists quickly come upon such ‘universal’ facts as correspond to their assumptions, and fail to see that common discourse as well as the more spectacular feats of poets and religious men requires an interpretive account” (Rosaldo 1980: 23).

academic and popular theories of emotion tend to privilege inner, psychobiological variables over social, semiotic ones” (White 1993:29).

The hard cultural constructionist position can be critiqued, as well, though. One can point out the ways in which “culture is seen as located simultaneously within individual minds and within cultural phenomena as a whole (Lyon 1995: 251) and how it downplays and sometimes ignores outright the embodied feeling of emotion for individuals, or its “guts” in lived experience (Lyon 1995: 253). Alternatively, one can invoke Ekman’s 1970s studies on emotive facial expressions and claim that, given such evidence, basic emotions are universal and culture only affects a “second-order” emotion, as opposed to the “natural, bodily, precultural emotion” (Lutz & White 1986). The cultural constructionist position, critiques maintain, precludes the possibility of making any comparison between cultural groups and—if taken further—could preclude the possibility of generalizing about *any* human experience, inter- or intra-culturally.

Both approaches, of course, run the risk of reductionism particularly since they tend to emphasize disembodied, abstract concepts of emotions or—on the other hand—that which people “really” feel and whether it is the same across cultures and contexts. Further, how can we know if any given emotional expression is sincere or not? And if it is ironic, or a performance, how can we use it to say anything about emotion or emotional expression in general?

Irvine addresses the problem of “reliability/sincerity” and argues that it is “a member’s problem as much as an outsider’s problem” (1982:34), meaning that in any given situation, everyone must essentially guess at the intentions and

affective states of others. And how do we do that? We use our interactive skills, which are culturally informed. I agree with Irvine: “It must be borne in mind that, depending on the nature of the acts involved, it does not always matter whether the speaker (or actor) really has the feeling attributed to him. Sometimes what is much more important is simply the public expression of some feeling—so that the public social order can continue, despite what anyone may privately believe” (Irvine 1982:35).

Therefore, I would agree with Lutz & White when they write that the “question of whether a somehow decontextualized emotional experience is ‘the same’ or ‘different’ across cultures”—and across individuals, I would add—is less illuminating than “how people make sense of life’s events” in real time, with others in interaction (Lutz & White 1986:428). Rather than getting mired in the analytical quandary of how to analyze affective output without knowing the extent to which that output is representative of a particular inner state, I take the position that “the relationship between ‘real’ emotions and affective displays is a cultural construct; as long as members of a culture ‘agree’ to match particular emotion labels to particular displays, and as long as this agreement remains tacit, the display is sincere” (Besnier 1990:430, referencing Urban 1988). Therefore, my analytical emphasis is not where emotion resides or who feels it to what extent, but how actors, in relation with others who may or may not share cultural backgrounds, attribute emotional experience to themselves and to others and how they make sense of and express that emotional experience in affective situations.

Emphasizing the social and semiotic variables of emotion moves us toward

a relational (rather than individual) view of emotions which, in my estimation, is a more useful theoretical approach. Viewing emotions this way, we can begin to see how they are “a function of social relations” (Lyon 1999:184), and how they themselves are “relational process[es]” (Lyon & Barbalet 1994:57). This does not imply that individuals do not experience emotions subjectively and individually; rather, it emphasizes that people are always positioned socially, in relation to other people, and thus speaks to the fact that social life and “personal” experience are not easily delineated and are ever-informing each other.

I acknowledge that there may well be universal physiological processes which are part of the experiences we call emotions; however, in order to bracket a “domain of analysis” (Hinton 1999:11), I focus on how social life, culture, and the power relations that inhere in both can shape our expression of (and by extension, our interpretation and possibly our experience of) affect and emotion. Our private, individual, subjective lives are informed by and inseparable from our public, social, intersubjective lives, which are necessarily interactively and culturally situated. We are not born with cultural knowledge or social skills, just as we are not born with particular identities (though aspects of our identities are often influenced by the social situations and families into which we are born). Similarly, although we may be born with the physiological capacity to experience various emotions, we must learn what those emotions are, which situations warrant them, how to identify and label them, how to express them, and how to detect them in others. As Kleinman & Fitz-Henry put it:

...we need a heightened recognition of the openness of the self to social experience—not its inner essence but its relations. When we delineate more clearly the porousness of the self, we shift away from notions of universal essences toward more contextual framings of moral experience, affect, and our deepest subjective processes. To talk about subjectivity, then, we must build our conversation around the fact, already amply documented by anthropological research, that the subjective is always social and the social, subjective. This dialectic of intersubjectivity, not just the dialectics internal to the self, needs to be taking up in subsequent framings of experience (Kleinman & Fitz-Henry 2007: 64).

The questions that come along with this stance, unlike those that seek to define and locate emotion, become ones like the following: When do we make emotional attributions to others, what characterizes them, and how do they play out in interaction? How is emotional experience identified and dealt with by social interlocutors? How do emotional expressions figure into social relationships, identities, and actions? What emotional discourses are available to utilize in a given setting, and how are they put into play? To answer any of the above, we must understand the ethnographic nuances of the setting that might affect the emotions we experience and that we attribute to others: "...[T]he communication of feeling is not merely a property of the individual, or a function of transient irrational impulses, or an unruly force operating outside the realm of linguistic form. Instead, it is socially, culturally, and linguistically structured, and we cannot adequately interpret individuals' behavior as emotional expression until we understand some of that framework" (Irvine 1990: 128).

Understanding context and examining interaction in microanalysis provides the opportunity to examine how it is that actors in relation with their

social worlds express subjective experience and maintain intersubjectivity.

Alternatively, it allows us to examine how it is that various factors like incorrectly ascribing emotions to others might lead to ruptures in intersubjectivity—or the opportunity to repair those ruptures and elaborate interpersonal understandings.

In sum, emotion, like identity, can be approached analytically “as a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories” (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 585-586)

II.b. What is empathy?

It may be that empathy is one of the most basic “ingredient[s] of humanity” (Nussbaum 2001:334) in that the attempt to imagine another’s experience—an important feature of empathy—is central to our acknowledgement and understanding of others’ humanness. Martha Nussbaum argues that though empathy “is itself both fallible and morally neutral” (2001:333), a person without empathy has no “basic human respect” and manifests a “type of especially terrible evil” (2001:334). In her philosophical discussion Nussbaum distinguishes between empathy and compassion, and argues that though empathy is a “prominent route to compassion,” one can be empathic without being compassionate. By this she means that empathy, “which involves an imaginative reconstruction of the experience of the sufferer” (or experiencer) does not require that the empathizer have emotion toward the experiencer, or that the empathizer necessarily judges the experience to be bad or undeserved. In her view, one can imagine another’s

experience (i.e. have empathy) whether that experience is positive, neutral, or negative—a torturer, she points out, can have empathy for the victim but refuse the victim compassion. Compassion, on the other hand, requires that one *assess* the experiencer as seriously suffering, that one make a judgment about that suffering, and that one considers the sufferer to be significant (2001:321; italics mine).

In this paper my position on empathy will be a composite of Nussbaum’s empathy and compassion. Drawing from psychological anthropologist Claudia Strauss’ definition of the term, I will use it to mean “a sympathetic affective response, based on awareness or imaginative reconstruction of another’s feeling” (Strauss 2004:434). An imaginative reconstruction or projection is indicated when the “speaker seem[s] to be imagining what it would be like to be in the position of” the experiencer, and/or when it seems “as if they were looking at the issue from the perspective of such a person” (Strauss 2004:440).³ A ‘sympathetic affective response’ is “a feeling that is in concordance with another’s feelings without necessarily duplicating them, one that is compassionate regarding others’ misfortune but not restricted to pity because one can sympathetically share in another’s pleasure as well as pain, and pity could be taken as condescension if the other does not wish to be pitied” (Strauss 2004:434; c.f. Koehn 1998:57). In fact, when I was speaking with workshop participants about this essay I used the word

³ The ambiguity of ‘seems to be’ and ‘a feeling in concordance with another’s feelings’ (in the next sentence) presents a problem for analysis, related to the issues of attribution raised in the ‘Theorizing Emotion’ section. This is why I add ‘*display* of affective assessment’ as an integral aspect of empathy.

compasión rather than *empatía* (I wasn't sure how common the words *empatizar* or *empatía* were in Spanish), and they corrected me, saying that *compasión* implies a more or less patronizing type of pity. They identified their own experience of each other to be much more along the lines of *empatía* or *comprensión*, an attempt to understand another's experience and a 'sympathetic affective response' that is 'in concordance with that person's feelings.'⁴

Thus defined, empathy has three main aspects: "*imaginative projection, awareness of the other's emotions, and concern*" (Strauss 2004:440). I'd like to add two more dimensions. The first is "*identification,*" which in her article Strauss mentions she would add if she were to conduct her research again (2004:443). I take 'identification' to be a recognition of one's own experience in someone else, a feeling of affinity often expressed through "concordance stories" that demonstrate the point of affinity, the similarity of experience, and/or the empathizer's imaginative reconstruction of the empathee's experience. Indeed, and unsurprisingly given Community Health's objective to provide "culturally appropriate" support and education sessions, shared sense of identity—and its accompanying potential for identification—was a central theme in the sessions and in empathic interaction.

The second is simply that the four preceding aspects are *displayed* in an *affective assessment* of the person's experience. By 'displayed affective

⁴ This is not meant to be an exhaustive account of the potential forms of empathy, nor an argument about the cross-cultural validity of empathy thus defined. My aim in defining it is to bracket a social phenomenon that I witnessed in the support groups in order to analyze it in (and its effects upon) these particular interactions.

assessment’ I mean that in being aware of another’s emotion, feeling concern, and trying to put her/himself in the experiencer’s place, the empathizer expresses or displays an emotional judgment about it in interaction. This does not mean that the judgment necessarily leads one to pity or that the empathizer has to believe that the experiencer is ‘seriously suffering’ (indeed, the experiencer might not believe that s/he is seriously suffering in order to deserve empathy). However, it necessarily involves more than a passive, internal reconstruction of another’s experience—a criterion that is important not only for the definition of empathy, but also for the more general concept of emotion (outlined above) with which I am working. The question for the purposes of my analysis is not if an actor actually feels empathy and its attendant emotions, but how it is that empathic interaction—with its complicated assortment of assessments, attributions, and claims to understanding—plays out in a specific context.

When Lucía asks Marta, *¿Estás triste?*, Lucía is already showing her ‘awareness of the other’s emotion’ and ‘concern’ via a ‘displayed affective assessment.’ As I continue to analyze the empathic interaction, I will show how she also displays imaginative projection and identification. First, though, let me situate the analysis a bit more within the framework of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics.

II.c. Creativity in Interaction

Given the unique nature of these workshops, the regularity with which we met, the emphasis on talk and interaction in the sessions, and the distinctiveness of the type of talk and interaction that was accomplished, it is useful to characterize

the group as a “speech community”: “any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction over a significant span of time and set off from other such aggregates by differences in the frequency of interaction” (Gumperz 1964[1995]:283). Although speech communities typically develop over longer periods of time than the Community Health therapy group did and are composed of more people, I was struck throughout the sessions with the ways the group elaborated shared language practices by interweaving idiosyncratic and institutionally influenced talk. In other words, their “verbal repertoire”—“the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially significant interaction”—was varied and inventive and yet clearly informed and limited by the setting in which it was communicated (Gumperz 1964[1995]:283).

Using what I’ll call the ‘language of empowerment’—including discourses on putting up *barreras* (personal barriers or boundaries); finding and maintaining *balance* (balance) and *equilibrio* (equilibrium); managing *estrés* (stress); cutting *cordones* (cords); knowing one’s *límites* (limits); and preventing or recognizing *depresión* (depression), among others—was central in the women’s reports of their own personal improvement and understanding of themselves and each other. It is explicitly part of the discursive practice that Community Health utilizes in order to educate its clients and to provide them with tools of change and self-betterment, which in turn is part of a larger, more or less ubiquitous, discourse on emotions in general as experiences that can and should be managed in various ways (see below).

Foucault’s concept of ‘discursive practices’ is helpful here, and fits well

with Gumperz' conception of speech communities as not only characterized by shared speaking patterns, but also by shared ideas about speech and its norms. For Foucault, discursive practices are "characterized by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus, each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choice" (1977:199).

The discursive practices and discourses to which I am referring consist both of the particular lexical items listed above (*barreras*, *cordones*, etc.) and of particular ideas, perspectives, and theories about how participants should appropriately manage their emotions. Discourse, therefore, "refers not simply to linguistic form, as in the distinction between formalized and everyday speech acts...[but] a set of statements, verbal and nonverbal, bound by rules and characterized by regularities, that both constructs and is patterned by social and personal reality" (Abu-Lughod 1986:186). As Deborah Cameron (2000) puts it, "emotional literacy programs' involve the codification and systematic teaching of techniques for being self-reflexive, for understanding one's own feelings and behavior through introspection, disclosing feelings verbally to others and responding to others' disclosure of what they feel" (139). Emotional "literacy" is an apt metaphor in the sense that people learn to "read" both their own and others' emotional states, and such reading requires an understanding of the language of emotions and the way in which they are displayed in different interactive settings. This language can vary from speech community to speech community, social

context to social context, and culture to culture.

Though the Community Health sessions encompass more than Cameron's definition describes, it is certainly an 'emotional literacy program', a huge part of which is centered on disclosing feelings and responding to others' disclosures often using a codified vocabulary and expressive style. In addition to the aspects of emotional literacy programs that Cameron mentions, Community Health emphasizes recognizing emotions that serve us and those that hurt us, managing emotions (*manejar*), monitoring emotions (*monitoriar*, as Ana Celia put it one day), and balancing (*tener un balance*) emotions with thoughts. Emotions in this formulation, then, are adversaries of thoughts, and—though they should be indulged and expressed to some extent—should not be permitted to take over completely.

For example, when in one session the women were discussing their often impulsive outbursts of frustration and anger, Ana Celia delivered an elaborate lesson on the ways in which strong emotions are opposed to and negate thought. She drew a diagram on the board with emotions on the top and thoughts on the bottom, and explained that the more emotional we are, the less we tend to think. It is therefore necessary, she claimed, to pause and think when we are feeling emotional, so as to prevent ourselves from acting irrationally and perhaps unreasonably towards those around us. This division of thoughts and emotions—akin to a division of mind and body—is part of a more or less everyday noninstitutional discourse that Community Health explicitly codifies, elaborates,

and teaches.⁵ In subsequent sessions, several of the women expressed that learning how to stop and think before reacting emotionally was one of the best lessons the sessions had offered. Other women subsequently described experiences in which they allowed their emotions to win out over their thoughts, and both the *promotora* and other members of the group re-articulated the lesson.

Gumperz' discussion in the paper from which I have drawn his definition of speech communities focuses on the structural and normative aspects of 'verbal repertoires' and thus abstracts individuals and their interactions into typified categories of people and their speech events.⁶ While such an exercise would be possible in the context of Community Health, and though I am quite interested in the ways in which participants utilized codified discourses in their talk and self-understandings, for the purposes of this paper I focus on a more action-driven view of participants. I see the women at these Community Health sessions as creative interactants involved in a number of collaborative social activities, exemplifying the "capacity of human beings to dynamically reshape the context that provides organization for their actions within the interaction itself" (Goodwin & Duranti 1992:5). Thus, I will not attempt to sketch out a structural grammar of lexical terms and patterned practices that my co-participants exhibited. More

⁵ Lutz (1986) writes about this opposition between emotion and thought as a taken-for-granted Euroamerican construction (289).

⁶ "Every society has a finite number of [social] relationships. They are abstracted from everyday behavior in somewhat the same way that linguistic forms are derived from language texts...All such types of interaction are carried on by individuals, but in analyzing social relationships we think of participants not as persons but as occupants of statuses defined in terms of rights and obligations. An individual occupies a number of such statuses...Each is associated with fairly well-defined norms of behavior. Any one social relationship focuses on one of these while others remain suspended" (Gumperz 1964 [1995]:285).

compelling (and telling), I think, is to see speakers and hearers as verbal and non-verbal collaborators doing important verbal and non-verbal *work* in order to confirm intersubjectivity, display affective stances, elaborate social identities, and build social relationships. This is consistent with Gumperz' earlier definitions of 'speech community', which "avoided norms and expectations and concentrated on social context" (Duranti 1997:81).⁷ In this view, it is essential to attend to the ways in which "speakers and hearers are joined together in a common course of *action* (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:14; italics mine).

Thus, while I will look at what is actually said by speakers, I will also look at what is *done* by speakers and hearers in the course of their empathic interactions. In doing so, I will take the line that "those present are engaged in a local, situated analysis not only of the talk in progress but also of their participation in it" and that "the multiple products of such analysis provide for the differentiated but coordinated actions that are constitutive of the story"—and the empathic interaction, I'll add—"as a multi-party social activity..." (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:19). Speakers and interactants are not passive receptacles of culture and meaning that consequently shapes their talk and interaction; rather,

⁷ The Gumperz quotation Duranti provides is as follows: "[a linguistic community is] a social group which may be either monolingual or multilingual, held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication. Linguistic communities may consist of small groups bound together by face-to-face contact or may cover large regions, depending on the level of abstraction we wish to achieve' ([1962:29] 1968:463)" (Duranti 1997:81). I prefer Duranti's own definition of speech community: "*the product of the communicative activities engaged in by a given group of people...*" which "recognizes the constitutive nature of speaking as a human activity that not only assumes but builds 'community.'" According to this definition, to engage in linguistic anthropological research means, first of all, to look at a group of people's daily dealings with one another from the point of view of the communication they exchange and the communicative resources they employ" (Duranti 1997:82; italics in original).

culture, meaning, and social interactants exist in a dialectical, mutually constituting relationship. In order to bring off coordinated, mutually-understood social interaction, people must jointly interpret, make decisions on the move, assess, and attribute—often all in the course of unfolding conversation and non-verbal communication.

How are these attributions brought off? How is it that participants “dynamically” shape and reshape the contexts in which they interact, and in so doing accomplish elaborate social work (and what kinds of social work do they do)? In the context of my data, how do participants use emotion and empathy in interactions, and how are those interactions therapeutic? In order to answer those questions sufficiently, I believe, it is necessary to weave together theoretical and methodological strands from a number of approaches, particularly sociolinguistics and conversation analysis as they have been adopted by linguistic anthropology.

Since Searle’s 1969 speech act theory (built upon J.L. Austin’s early 1960s writing), analysts and philosophers of language, interaction, and culture have been trying to move beyond a static model of the self in which one holds meaning internally and brings that meaning to bear on an external world, where others hold similar commonsense knowledge and so are able to be joined intersubjectively. Speech act theory seems to have taken the brunt of the critique within language-oriented studies; although it does view speakers as actors doing social work, it has been frequently criticized within linguistic anthropology as problematically lodging phenomena like meanings and intentions “within the mental life of an isolated individual speaker” (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:1), putting “emphasis on

an elaborate coding processes from the speaker's intentions, to his meanings, to his words, back to understood meanings, and finally his illocutionary...effects on his addressee(s)" as the basis of communicative achievement (Haviland 1986:252). Duranti, referring to Michelle Rosaldo's 1982 critique, says

the emphasis on intentions and their recognition by the addressee places too much emphasis on individual actions and individual achievement. It implies that any form of action is mostly (or simply) 'the achievement of autonomous selves, whose deeds are not significantly constrained by the relationships and expectations that defined their local world' [Rosaldo 1982:204] (Duranti 1997:231).

Speech act theory does not sufficiently account for sociocultural selves, nor does it account for interactive selves, "multiple parties build[ing] action together while both attending to, and helping to construct, relevant action and context" (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:35).

Emanuel Schegloff (1992), too, criticizes models of interaction and intersubjectivity in which individuals are said to 'hold' 'shared knowledge' in order to come together in 'common culture'. Instead, he suggests (working from Garfinkel) taking the "conduct" of social actors as,

together with interpretive procedures, co-shaping an appreciated grasp of the world. Such a view would allow for the intervention by the accountable authors of conduct in what would come to be stabilized as the effective understanding of that conduct. Intersubjectivity would not, then, be merely convergence between multiple interpreters of the world...but potentially convergence between the 'doers' of an action or a bit of conduct and its recipients, as coproducers of an increment of interactional and social reality (Schegloff 1992:1299).

Schegloff's insistence upon procedural practices by which actors display mutual understanding and orientation is one basis of conversation analysis (CA), which

he developed along with Harvey Sacks and Gail Jefferson in the 1970s. CA provides “a thoroughly social rather than individual perspective on language” (Goodwin & Goodwin 2000:3), taking as its starting point the specific procedures by which speakers make themselves intelligible, orderly, and meaningful. It typically extracts segments of talk—conceived of as conversational units—out of context and analyzes it as empirical evidence of particular forms of social interaction, characterized by precise sequences and turn-taking procedures.

CA is an important theoretical and methodological approach within linguistic anthropology because it is predicated on the idea that people more or less *create* (rather than solely reproduce) the social structure through interaction. Schegloff emphasizes the importance of showing “*from the details of the talk or other conduct in the materials*”... “*how the parties are embodying for one another the relevancies of the interaction and are thereby producing the social structure*” (Schegloff 1991:113; italics in original). Later in the same chapter he writes that to elucidate and understand social life, we should not invoke it from the outset via preconceived, *a priori* categories and speaker intentions, for that could “systematically distract from, even blind us to” important details regarding the organization of conduct, thus “failing to explicate how social structure is accomplished *in the conduct*” (Schegloff 1991:117; italics in original). We can consider “emotional experience” as a type of preconceived notion, an *a priori* category to which Schegloff is referring in the list above, and in doing so begin to explicate how it is ‘accomplished *in the conduct*’ rather than assume that emotions

are inaccessible, internal, affective experiences which simply *manifest* in interaction.

Zimmerman and Boden (1991) echo Schegloff's view and point out that sociology and sociolinguistics have conventionally held the view that social structure conditions or 'causes' social conduct: "In such a framework, talk and, indeed, all interaction of social actors in social situations is seen as a *product* of those social forces" (Zimmerman & Boden 1991:5; italics in original).

Ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts, however, see social structure not as "something 'out there' independent of members' activities" (Zimmerman & Boden 1991:19). Instead, they are the practical and pragmatic *accomplishments* of societal members who "can and must make their actions available and reasonable to each other and, in so doing, the everyday organization of experience *produces* and *reproduces* the patterned and patterning qualities we have come to call social structure" (Zimmerman & Boden 1991:19; italics in original). Talk-in-interaction, therefore, is a worthwhile aspect of social life to study in itself because it cannot help but reveal important aspects of the broader social structure.

Looking at the ways in which social structure can be created through interaction would seem to be a relatively anthropological project given anthropology's interest in the intersection between individuals and their sociocultural contexts. What tends to make anthropologists uncomfortable, however, is that though Schegloff might strongly believe that interactants can create social structures and social identities, he is not necessarily concerned with what those structures and identities are. Instead, he and other conversation

analysts limit themselves to examining what interactants actually *do* and *say* in order to communicate; they in turn create a kind of typology of these mechanisms which—at least to them—is valuable in itself. So, although conversation analysts might operate according to baseline assumptions similar to those of anthropologists (that people are not simply automatons living out culturally proscribed behaviors), they engage in a different project and address problems using a different—and perhaps ultimately more limiting—methodology.

Over the last four decades, linguistic anthropologists and sociologists (perhaps most notably Goffman, C. Goodwin, M.H. Goodwin, Haviland, Duranti, Ochs, Capps, Philips, Hanks, and Keating; see Goodwin & Goodwin 2004 for helpful review) have taken up these strands and integrated them with more contextually and interactively based approaches in order to account for crucial aspects of face-to-face interaction theoretically and analytically. Many of these build from Goffman's notions of participation frameworks and footing, which themselves were a strong move away from speech act theory. Briefly, Goffman (1981) eschews analysis that focuses on "isolated utterances", choosing instead to explore "the forms of talk sustained within structured Social Encounters" (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:2). He views interactants as active participators and moves beyond the rather crude analytical view of interactants as simply speakers or hearers; rather, participants are able to play many roles simultaneously, whether or not they ever utter a word. Thus emerges a Goffmanian model of the "laminated speaker, one who can be decomposed into a range of structurally different kind of entities" (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:3); similarly, a hearer can

be a bystander, an eavesdropper, an addressed hearer, an unaddressed hearer, ratified or unratified, and so on (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:2).

Though Goodwin & Goodwin certainly utilize Goffman's complex model of "the interaction order," as he calls it, they move beyond it in a number of ways in their model of "*participation frameworks*." According to them, analysts require a more dynamic approach which accounts for collaboration, the dynamism of "interactively organized practices," the complex role of the hearer, and that does not stop with a "categorical elaboration of different possible kinds of participants" (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:7). In analyzing participant frameworks, then, they focus on "the practices through which different kinds of parties build action together by **participating** in structured ways in the events that constitute a state of talk" (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:7, boldface in original). Speakers are not the privileged makers of meaning, tellers of story, or orchestrators of interaction; rather, both speakers and hearers (which can be characterized in a number of different ways) are *actors* doing *collaborative* work in order to coordinate interaction and create mutually intelligible communication.

The Goodwins thus open up the definition of "participant" to encompass those who participate in ways that might be lost in conventional analysis. For example, they effectively show how a linguistically impaired aphasic man is a skilled interactant:

...when utterances are analyzed as participation frameworks which invoke a domain of temporally unfolding embodied action through which multiple participants build in concert with each other the events that constitute their lifeworld, then Rob [the aphasic] emerges as a competent actor capable of finely

coordinated participation in the activities that make up a state of talk (Goodwin & Goodwin 2000:26; 2004:37).

Using gaze, intonation, gesture, and “embodied assessment” (2000, 2004), Rob (also called Chil in later papers) shows that he is involved in “co-experience” with his family in the sense of being similarly oriented toward various activities and assessments—of a calendar (2000:17; 2004:9), of a cheese Danish (2000:20-21), and of a family member’s boyfriend (2000:21-24). He makes judgments about these objects, people and activities, aligns himself with speakers, and shows himself to be an emotionally and interactively acute individual even with only the words *yes*, *no*, and *and* in his vocabulary.

In order to take a participant like Chil into account analytically, it is essential to look at *sequence* as an essential aspect of “the architecture for the accomplishment...of intersubjectivity” (Goodwin 2004:162)—for Chil’s family and in interaction more generally. If we were to look only at what is said by interactants—which in Chil’s case would be arguably very little—it would be impossible to account for the ways in which he is able to co-construct stories by taking turns, displaying stances and assessments, indicating that his interactive collaborators must do “inferential work” and interpret what he is attempting to get across (Goodwin 2004:162). Thus, depending on the analytical framework, Chil can come across as a severely impaired person incapable of language or as an extremely competent interactant with whom interlocutors co-construct and collaborate to produce meaning and joint understanding. To reiterate my point from above, then, and the point that runs throughout this paper, an individual’s

psychology or presumed internal state does not sufficiently explain how it is that interactants maintain intersubjectivity.

Perhaps put most simply, "...a single participant's display of emotion must be analyzed by embedding it within a larger sequence of action" (Goodwin & Goodwin 2000:6). So when we take into account participation frameworks, it is possible to distribute interpretation and responsibility for interactive coordination across a range of differently oriented participants—some speakers, some listeners, some in the space between the two—rather than the result of one or the other's intentions and actions. As Besnier (1990) puts it, "...attributing ownership of meaning to the individual has proved considerably less useful in the analysis of the anthropological material than a 'dialogic' position...in which it is constructed in interactional processes" (420).

The dialogic view of meaning-in-interaction derives from Bakhtin's 1981 *The Dialogic Imagination*, which has proven itself to be an extremely fruitful theoretical foundation within anthropology and the social sciences more generally. It points out what Haviland (2005) calls the "inescapably interactive history of every utterance," which resonates "with multiple pasts and futures" and serves as "a compelling model for all discursive phenomena, from culture itself...to the notion of the person" (Haviland 2005:81). In this view, selves are "conversational," "intertextual," and "heteroglossic," composed of multilayered textual and interactional fragments. "Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions" (Bakhtin 1981:293). Therefore, "Language is not a neutral medium

that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process" (Bakhtin 1981:294).

Indeed, the model of individual psychology and intention becomes more problematic the more we consider the nature of language itself and the ways in which social actors use it in interaction with others. The

‘coauthored’ intertextual ‘self’ implies an evolving set of texts derived from chains of narratives, through processes of inscription, revision, and editing involving many voices, in addition to those of the ‘person’ whose ‘self’ is thus assembled, articulated, polished, as well as contested. Like any other discursive object, this ‘self’ incorporates participant frames and voices, as well as allegiances, footings, and stances; it has its allusions and its chronology, looking both to the past and to the future (Haviland 2005:82).

And if we approach selves as at least partly coauthored and interactively constituted, it makes sense that emotions, too, would be at least partly coauthored and interactively constituted. As we will see, Community Health interactants are both actively negotiating selves and emotions in interaction, figuring out as they go along how best to interpret their emotional experience and, in so doing, how to transcend its negative aspects and internalize the workshop lessons.

II. d. Assessment Activities

The ‘allegiances, footings, and stances’ that Haviland writes about with regard to selves are also important parts of the process by which emotional experience is coauthored in interaction. I will refer to them as a part of *assessment*

activities, which are—as I pointed out above—essential to (and compose the heart of) empathic interactions and the maintenance of intersubjectivity more generally. What is an assessment, and how is it brought off in interaction? Again I will turn to Goodwin & Goodwin for a useful definition of terms. For them, an assessment means “affectively evaluating some relevant current event, available either in the local scene or through a report in the talk of the moment”, through which people often build “powerful emotional statements” using sequential position, resources in the setting, and “artful orchestration of a range of embodied actions” (Goodwin & Goodwin 2000:14). Assessments are thus displayed in ways that other participant actions are displayed, but they play particular roles in maintaining and confirming intersubjectivity, then provide cues as well about the breakdown of intersubjectivity.

The Goodwins define several different aspects of assessments; for example, *assessment segments* are specific segmental units in the stream of speech and, can be “treated as a place for heightened mutual orientation and action” (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:154). *Assessment signals*, on the other hand, are “a display showing a party’s involvement in an assessment” and are a subset of assessment segments (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:155). Finally, *assessment action* is a speech act “performed by an actor” which “can occur in the midst of an utterance”: “A crucial feature of assessment actions is the way in which they involve an actor taking up a position toward the phenomena being assessed” (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:155). It is important to note that while an individual speaker can display an assessment, like other communicative activities

assessments can also be collaborative and public. In this case, assessment “makes possible an interactive organization of co-experience” (Goodwin & Goodwin 2000:25) in which case interactants are engaging in *assessment activities* (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:155).

Not only is collaboration often central to assessments (and particularly the aspects of assessments that I will be looking at in my analysis of empathic interaction), but so too is affect:

...insofar as assessments make visible an agent evaluating an event in his or her phenomenal world, they display that agent’s experience of the event, including his or her *affective involvement* in the referent being assessed. *Affect displays* are not only pervasive in the organization of assessments, but also quite central to their organization. Public structures such as this which display the experience of one participant provide resources for the interactive organization of co-experience, a process that can be accomplished and negotiated in fine detail within assessments (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:155, italics mine).

Assessment activities are thus loaded with interactive possibilities (including affective involvement) and rich communicative layers (including affect displays). They can provide for and “encompass a range of different types of participation” (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:169), allowing participants to orient themselves and each other toward different activities and messages. Using assessments, whether in casual conversations about good “asparagus pies” (in one of the Goodwins’ famous examples) or in affectively loaded situations about deep sadness and isolation, participants display feelings, ideas, and opinions. Thus, they bridge the phenomenal, subjective world with the communicative, social world in which they elaborate and co-interpret such experiences.

Part III. Empathic Interactions

Now that we are situated contextually and theoretically, let us return to Community Health.

Name	Age	Marital Status	# children	# years in US	English	Work
Lucía [L]	34	Married	2	10	Some	Part-time
Marta [M]	34	Married	2	5	No	Hogar
Clara [C]	35	Separated	2	1	No	Part-time
Inéz [I]	34	Married	2	5	Some	Full-time
AnaCelia [AC] (promotora)	24	Single	0	24	Yes	Full-time
Marialuisa [ML] ⁸		Married	yes			Student,
Julia	47	Married	1	12	Some	Hogar
Vera	37	Married	3	20	Some	Hogar
Soledad	33	Separated	2	23	Some	Full-time

Figure III. Participant demographic information

I have already argued that in asking Marta *¿Estás triste?*, Lucía creates a sequentially contingent participation framework in which emotion can be spontaneously co-constructed in the ‘flow of interactional events’ (Jacoby & Ochs 1995:175). I have also argued that Lucía’s question makes evident her orientation toward Marta’s emotional state and her assessment that that emotional state is unpleasant, thus deserving of empathy. Lucía is showing ‘affective involvement’ in Marta’s ‘phenomenal world’ (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:155), thus confirming—even asserting—intersubjectivity. She does so producing part of

⁸ Marialuisa was working with the organization, training to be a promotora. Therefore, her demographic information was not collected. She was considerably older than anyone else in the group, lived in Tijuana, had at least one child, and was married.

what is known in CA as an “adjacency pair,” which consist “of sequences which properly have the following features: (1) two utterance length, (2) adjacent positioning of component utterances, (3) different speakers producing each utterance” (Schegloff & Sacks 1973:295).

Explaining the *work* that speakers do by setting up adjacency pairs, Duranti points out that “[w]hen speakers produce the first pair part...they create an interpretive frame within which what happens next is bound to be not only an ‘answer’ or ‘second move’ but also a display of how the recipient has interpreted the first pair part” (Duranti 1997:255). Adjacency pairs are, Duranti argues, an important and quintessential way in which participants indicate and activate “**intersubjectivity**, that is, mutual understanding and coordination around a common activity” (Duranti 1997:255, boldface in original). By asking a simple question, participants accomplish quite a bit—here, Lucía provides the impetus for a joint authoring of emotional experience within empathic interaction.

However, it is important to note that when Lucía asks Marta if she is sad, Marta has several options, not all of which entail confirming Lucía’s attempt to establish or reaffirm intersubjectivity. Marta could defer the attention by shaking her head and re-directing attention to Inéz, who was sharing the contents of her metaphorical suitcase and trunk; Marta could laugh and say she just has something in her eye or that she is tired; she could say no, and tell Lucía to mind her own business; or she could say yes, and then either unburden herself of the sadness or simply move on (though of course the group would encourage her to talk about it

rather than move on, since self-disclosure and expression of sadness are central to the group's interactions). In short, she can say yes, no, or make an excuse. She does the latter, thus making an initial move to deny that Lucía is onto something, at least with regard to Marta's subjective affective experience. Here is the two-turn sequence:

1. [Lucia] Marta. (1.0) ¿Estás triste?
 Marta. (1.0) *Are you sad?*
2. Marta: [breathes in] Fíjate que te:ngo algo. [laughs] No sé si se nota.
 Look, I have something. [laughs] I don't know if it's noticeable.

Here, Marta acknowledges that something is wrong (she doesn't say no), but passes it off of 'having something'. In doing so she indicates that she might give up the opportunity to take the floor that Lucía has offered her; if she 'has something,' like a cold, empathy might be in order but probably wouldn't occupy the group's attention for too long, given the focus on emotional experience and narrative. Lucía is not satisfied with this response, though; she has made her assessment and—as was her habit throughout the sessions—stands by it, almost as though by asking Marta if she is sad she is actually *telling* Marta she is sad. In doing so she takes up a particular stance, which enables her to elaborate her identity in the context of this emergent social group. I will come back to the issue of stance and identity; first, though, I will examine assessments in more detail and show how they are an integral part of coauthoring emotion in empathic interactions. Here is a larger excerpt of the sequence:

- [Ex. I]
1. [Lucía] Marta. (1.0) ¿Estás triste?

- Marta. (1.0) Are you sad?*
2. Marta: [breathes in] Fíjate que te:ngo algo. [laughs] [No sé si se nota.
Listen, I have something. [laughs] I don't know if it's noticeable.
3. L: [No, sí se nota desde
4. hace—
5. Mira no puedo estar a gusto te estoy viendo\ y digo ¿qué tien:es?
No, yes, it's been noticeable for awhile—I can't be comfortable I'm looking at you and saying, what's wrong?
- 6: M: [crying hard] *hh hh es que
It's that—
- 7.ML: [Si=hoy no ha—
Today she hasn't—
8. ML: [hoy no ha hablado hoy no ha hablado sí
[Today she hasn't talked, today she hasn't talked
9. M: [*hh hh crying (2.0) [silence otherwise]
10. L: que te desahogues que te miro, no puedo estar a gusto porque como
11. que la noto ((bien triste))
let it out, it's that I see you, I can't be comfortable because I notice her ((so sad))
12. M: [crying]*hhh hh es que ¿saben que? Que mi ((esposo)) se fue de
13. viaje\
It's that you [all] know what? My husband went away on a trip
14. L: O:h ¿te sientes sola?
Oh, you feel alone?
- 15: M: Sies meses ((trabaja para la navy)) se va a seis meses [sobbing]
Six months, he works for the Navy, he goes for six months [sobbing]
- 16: L: Mmmm [1.0]
- 17: M: [sobbing] *hh hh
- 18: L: Awww.
- 19: M: Se va en abril pero [1.0] ahorita por ejemplo la casa es ((...)) Por
20. nueve dí:as. *hh h [breath in, out] El martes se va él y regresa el
21. dos, tres de febrero *hh hh [crying, 1.6]
He goes in April, but, now for example the house is ((...)) For nine days. Tuesday he leaves and he comes back the second, third of February [crying]
- 22: L: [mmhmm
23. M: y de marzo para *hh hh [breath in, out] y va a estar mucho tiempo
24. afuera y ((...)) se me va a doler mucho.
And of March for [crying] and he's going to be away for a long time and ((...)) it's going to hurt me very much.
25. L: porque te sientes solita pues tú, con toda la responsabilidad
because you feel alone, you, with all the responsibility
- 26: M: Sí ((comprenden es mucha))—

- 27: Clara también no tengo familia aquí
 28: Estoy sola, no tenemos para—
 29: supuestamente arreglar documentos que estamos en trabe...
Well you [all] understand it's a lot—Clara I also don't have family here, I'm alone, we don't have—supposedly we're getting documents but we're delayed...

Lucía continues to express concern after her initial question is answered, and by the time she explains that she was asking herself what could be wrong with Marta—“¿Que tie::nes?—Marta has dissolved into sobs, having accepted the invitation to take the floor, take on the role of crisis sufferer, and unburden herself to the group. Lucía then more explicitly encourages Marta to express herself and let out her emotion—*desahogar*, literally to ‘undrown’ oneself—which she continues to do for the next ten minutes.

This short sequence begins to show how “speakers and hearers are joined together in a common course of action” and how they are “engaged in a local, situated analysis not only of the talk in process but also of their participation in it” (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004:14). The participation framework is set up one way—with each woman taking turns at sharing the contents of her suitcase and trunk at the request of Ana Celia—until Lucía dynamically and spontaneously reshapes it. In doing so, she creates new roles for herself, Marta, and the rest of the group. The turn-taking system makes clear that although there are ten people in the room, all intently focused listeners of Marta and her emotional expression—she was sobbing forcefully—Lucía has taken on the role of primary empathizer and Marta has taken on the role of empathee. In the ten-minute excerpt of the interaction I have chosen to analyze, Lucía takes 28 turns while Marta takes only 26;

Marialuisa takes a distant third with seven turns. Importantly, though, in only a third of Lucía's turns does she actually take the floor for more than a few seconds (see Ex. V below).

The participation framework in this example is striking in that Lucía is not the *promotora*; in other words, it is not her job to facilitate the group or to serve as the group's default therapist. However, even Ana Celia (the actual *promotora*) remains quiet for the majority of this sequence and allows Lucía to take on the role of what I will call the 'primary empathizer' for the next seven minutes—a sort of teacher/leader position which is only occasionally intruded upon by Marialuisa. Aside from her, the other seven women (including myself) remain verbally unresponsive, though we were physically oriented toward Marta and though in line 12 Marta addresses us: “es que ¿saben que? Que mi ((esposo)) se fue...” (*It's that you [all] know what? My husband left*). Marta's use of the third person plural of 'saber' indicates that she is explaining to all members of the group what has happened. Again in line 26 she says “comprenden es mucha” (*you [all] understand it's a lot*) and then directly addresses another participant, Clara, who in a previous session had told the group about how alone she is and how vulnerable she is as an undocumented migrant.

However, only Lucía chooses to respond to Marta, and when she does, she addresses her response to Marta and not to the group at large. In the course of the entire ten-minute exchange, in fact, Lucía addresses other members of the group only three times:

[Ex. II]

10. L: que te desahogues que te miro, no puedo estar a gusto porque como
 11. que la noto ((bien triste))
let it out, it's that I see you, I can't be comfortable because I notice her ((so sad))

[Ex. III]

35. L: Por lo pronto el veinte cuatro de febrero tienes una fiesta
Soon, the 24th of February you have a party.
 36. M: *hh-hh [sobbing]
 37. L: tienen una fiesta todas en el eh Peter Piper?
You all have a party in the, eh, Peter Piper?

And a bit later:

[Ex. IV]

45. Y también me siento—
 46. yo creo que varios tenemos el mismo,
—and I also feel—I think that some of us have the same [situation]

In the first instance Lucía seems to be telling the group why she has made the attribution she has—she cannot be comfortable seeing Marta so sad. She switches within one sentence between addressing Marta in the informal tú form of the verb *desahogarse* to referring to Marta in the third person *la noto*, or ‘I notice her’, thus indicating that in this segment she is actually not speaking to Marta herself. In the second instance Lucía is attempting to cheer Marta up by assuring her that she is not alone and that she—as well as the rest of the group—have a social gathering to which they can look forward. In the second, which I will analyze in more depth a bit later, Lucía is pointing out a possible point of connection in various group members’ experiences of being alone and lonely. Both of these references to others are met with more sobbing from Marta—a fact which may inspire Lucía to change tacks and direct all of her attention and comments to Marta (see below, Ex.

VII). In neither of these instances does Lucía actually offer the floor to any of the group members to elaborate on our own experiences. Marialuisa interrupts twice and gives the rest of us the opportunity to participate more actively: after she says “Y después vas a querer que se vaya cada, cada seis meses” (*And afterwards you’re going to want him to go every, every six months*), the group laughs and a few others make jokes about wanting husbands to be out of the picture (see example X below). Marialuisa’s interjections aside, though, the one-on-one dynamic remains more or less constant for the first seven minutes of the interaction.

Lucía’s focus on Marta seems natural given how the participant framework has already been set up—as one in which Lucía and Marta are the verbal participators and the rest of us are the non-verbal participators or observers. But it is interesting and notable, given a focus on participant frameworks, that their interaction is both intimate in a one-on-one way and in a collective sense, at least partly as a result of their divergent ways of addressing the group.

At the beginning of the interaction, then, Marta displays forceful emotion and Lucía visibly (in the transcript) orients herself to Marta’s display, herself displaying awareness of Marta’s emotions by taking turns without taking the floor, and by making affective assessments after each of Marta’s turns. This changes a bit later in the interaction when Lucía begins empathizing by actually taking the floor, but without even looking at Marta’s emotional expressions we can see how Lucía begins by orienting herself toward Marta and positioning herself as an attentive and active empathizer:

- [Ex. V]
16. Lucía: Mmmm.
17. Marta
18. L: Awww.
- 19-21. M
22. L: mmhmm
- 23-24. M
25. L: Porque te sientes solita pues tú, con toda la responsabilidad
because you feel alone, you, with all the responsibility
- 26-32. M
33. L: No pero no estás sola
No but you're not alone

While the rest of the group remains quiet, Lucía co-participates by evaluatively loading Marta's talk, matching "the affect display contained in" Marta's own assessment of her experience—as extremely painful—"with a reciprocal affect display" (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:157). Goodwin & Goodwin's examples of assessments often come in a similar form; for example:

[Ex. VI]

- Eileen: *hh An this beautiful, (0.2) Irish Setter.
→Debbie: Ah:::,
Eileen: Came tearin up on ta the first **gree(h)n** an tried ta steal
Pau(h)l's go(h)lf ball. *hh
(Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:157)

Here Eileen provides her own assessment of the Irish Setter, and in so doing "secures an immediate subsequent assessment from a recipient" (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:157). Debbie responds by saying "Ah:::", indicating not only that she is oriented toward Eileen but that she is assessing the subject of Eileen's story—the Irish Setter—in a similar way. She "co-participates in the **evaluative loading** of Eileen's talk, and indeed matches the affect display contained in Eileen's

assessment” using an elongated “Ah:::” even before Eileen has finished her turn (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:157).

However, while Eileen and Debbie’s assessments in the form of affect display—as well as Lucía’s in Example V—are evidence for mutual orientation and perhaps intersubjectivity, they does not show how, in interactions and specifically empathic interactions, emotion is coauthored. In order to see that, I will provide some examples of affective assessments that go beyond those provided by the Goodwins and that compose what I will call *co-options*. Co-options are assessment activities but are fundamentally different from the assessments normally represented in the Goodwins’ work on assessments, primarily because they entail a participant claiming the floor for a full turn or more in order to provide the assessment. They do so using *imaginative projection*, *identification*, and *concordance stories*.

[Ex. VII]

43. M: [*hh hhh [sobs] ((...))
 44. L: Yo sé como te sientes porque yo tampoco tengo mi familia aquí—
 45. Y también me siento—
 46. yo creo que varios tenemos el mismo,
I know how you feel because I don’t have family here either—and I also feel—I think that some of us have the same [situation]
 47. M: [*hh hhh [sobs]
 48. L: pero, yo sé digo, no—
 49. es más no sé como te sientes, porque yo sé que se va tu esposo y, y
 50. nunca lo he vivido verdad ha de ser muy triste.
But I know, I’m saying, no—it’s more I don’t know how you feel because I know that your husband is leaving and I’ve never lived that, truly it has to be very sad.
 51. M: [es ((horrible))
It’s ((horrible))
 52. L: [Pero eres bien—
 53. eres, te va a conferir mucha

but you're okay, you are, it's going to confer a lot to you

In this segment Lucía shows that she is aware of Marta's emotion, that she is actively assessing it, and that she is concerned about it. She does so by identifying with Marta's experience (lines 44-46) and by imaginatively projecting (49-50) when she takes the floor, thus aligning herself with Marta, filling a gap which Marta seems unable to fill, and, as a consequence, co-opting Marta's emotion. In fact, all but one of Lucía's statements in this sequence refer to how she feels (or has felt), and how Marta is feeling: "**Yo sé como te sientes porque yo tampoco tengo mi familia aquí**" (*I know how you feel because I don't have family here either*); "**me siento**" (*I feel*); "**creo que varios tenemos el mismo**" (*I think some of us have the same [situation]*)(and this is the exception, where she refers to all of us (see below); "**yo sé digo**" (*I know, I'm saying*); "**es más no sé como te sientes porque yo sé que se va tu esposo**" (*it's more I don't know how you feel because I know that your husband is leaving*); "**nunca lo he vivido**" (*I've never lived like that*); "**ha de ser muy triste**" (*it has to be very sad*); "**eres bien**" (*you're okay*); "**te va a conferir mucha**" (*It's going to confer a lot to you*).

However, none of this assuages Marta's display of suffering, given that she continues to sob. When it is clear that Marta is not being comforted (line 47) Lucía switches tacks in her attempt to empathize by self-repairing and saying "es más no sé como te sientes porque yo sé que se va tu esposo y, y nunca lo he vivido verdad ha de ser muy triste" (*"It's more I don't know how you feel and, and I've never lived like that, truly it has to be sad"*) (lines 49-50)." She contradicts herself

and modifies her empathic stance from one involving both identification and imaginative projection to one involving only imaginative projection. This allows Lucía to emphasize that she is aware of the extreme pain Marta must be feeling and not attempting to downplay it by asserting her own and others' experience of the same problems; rather, she is trying to imagine it and showing that she has assessed it to be worthy of her own and the group's concern. In doing so, Lucía is actively navigating and reconfiguring the interaction so as to maintain an intersubjective space with Marta.

The next example of a co-option comes a few minutes later and again shows Lucía attempting to imaginatively reconstruct Marta's experience. Marta is talking about the upsetting fact that her kids have changed their behavior toward their father as a result of his absences.

[Ex. VIII]

96. M: Saben que lo tienen pero bueno, no cuenta con él, esto a mi es más
 97. difícil por los niños más que nada [sniffles]. ((Estoy)) escuchando,
 98. y escucho otras uh, situacionitas de personas descontentas ((y eso))
 99. me da lágrimas ((...)) [sobs again *hh hh]
They know that they have him but ok, they don't tell him anything, and this to me is harder for the kids more than anything [sniffles]. ((...)) I'm listening, I listen to other unhappy people whose situations make me cry [sobs again].
100. L: pero sabes que Marta a mi tu problema ahorita es que ((...)) a mi sí
 101. sé es más grave. O sea no sé ((...)) porque si yo me quedara sin esposo
 102. como te quedas tú, es duro porque no sabes si de verdad estás
 103. acompañada o estás sola. Sea no sabes si, digo es duro\\!
But you know what Marta to me your problem now is ((...)) to me I know that it's more serious. Or I don't know ((...)) because if I stayed without my husband like you are, it's hard because you don't know if you are really accompanied or if you are alone. You don't know if—I'm saying it's hard!

This segment begins with Marta displaying a change in her own assessment of the situation when she mentions that other people experience hard situations, as well, and so are also discontented. This serves as a type of disclaimer or apology for unburdening herself in such a dramatic way, but Lucía has assessed Marta's situation to be worthy of concern and empathic attention. Arguably she could respond by saying 'You're right, others have it worse than you,' and be done with it. However, Lucía is clearly committed to providing empathy and to working through these emotions with Marta. She shows her attempt to imagine Marta's situation by emphasizing what she knows, what she doesn't know, and what one in Marta's can't know: using various forms of the verb "saber"—to know—she says "**sabes** que Marta a mi tu problema ahorita" (*you know what Marta, your problem to me now...*); "**sé** es más grave" (*I know it's more serious*); "o sea no **sé**" (*or I don't know*); "no **sabes** si de verdad estás sola" (*You don't know if you are really alone*); "no **sabes** si, digo, es duro!" (*You don't know if, I'm saying, it's hard!*). Focusing on knowing and not knowing, Lucía simultaneously establishes herself as an authority—as one who understands the ambiguities that such a situation creates for a woman like Marta—and establishes that she cannot truly understand, because she has not actually experienced it to the extent Marta is.

Lucía elaborates this position and deepens her affective evaluation by telling a concordance story:

[Ex. IX]

104. Yo me he ido de vacaciones con mis papás, y eso que he estado allá
 105. con ellos, con mi familia, y aún así, al v—a mi lo que me quiebra
 106. por eso digo que—tus hijos—porque al ver a mis hijas que ya

Essentially Lucía has taken up—or co-opted—Marta’s emotion in order to identify with her, imaginatively project herself into such an emotional state, assess it, and in so doing display empathy in a way that seems to resonate more forcefully with Marta. To accomplish all of this, however, she takes the floor from Marta, which would seem to indicate a type of insensitivity or desire to move away from talking about Marta’s emotions. Inéz, too, in lines 108 and 111, starts to display affective assessments toward Lucía’s story, thus arguably shifting attention away from the real sufferer—Marta—and orienting instead towards Lucía. But in these empathic interactions it is the opposite: by taking the floor, Lucía maintains herself as an active co-participant in Marta’s emotional experience and coauthor of its evaluation. All of this is couched within extended assessment activity, in which the women are co-opting emotions and negotiating how to feel.

Here is another example of a co-option assessment that makes use of a concordance story but which has a different aim:

[Ex. X]

- 54: ML: [es duro pero te vas a acostumbrar. Y después vas a querer que se
 55. vaya cada, cada seis meses
*It's hard but you're going to get accustomed to it. And afterwards
 you're going to want him to go every, every six months*
- 56: group: Laughter
57. ML: Sí tengo una amiga que también su esposo se va a los barcos?
 58. Y se va también por seis, por nueve meses, y al principio se sentía
 59. mal, pero ahora luego dice ay, dice

ordinary sequential organization of conversation...provides for displays of mutual understanding and problems therein—one running basis for the cultivation and grounding of intersubjectivity” (Schegloff 1992:1301). Repair, in Schegloff’s view, is a systematic way in which interactants can indicate intersubjectivity or its breakdown.

- Yes I have a friend whose husband also goes on the boats? And he also goes for six, for nine months, and at the beginning she felt badly, but now later she says ay, she says*
60. [¿?]: [Mmhmm (*talking behind her*)
61. ML: No dice, ahora yo quiero que se vaya dice
No she says, now I want him to go, she says

Here Marialuisa tries to offer perspective and make light of Marta's experience through humor rather than dwell on it. Marialuisa is displaying that she, too, is aware of Marta's emotion and can identify with it because she has a friend who experienced something similar. But whereas in her turns Lucía actively avoids downplaying Marta's distress, Marialuisa tells a story to do just that. In her assessment she seems to have come to the conclusion that not only will things be fine, but Marta will actually begin to enjoy that which is now causing her so much pain. It may be too soon for Marta to appreciate such perspective, though—or for her to appreciate the potential humor in her situation. Whereas several other women laugh, Marta responds by correcting Marialuisa:

- [Ex. XI]
62. M: Pero es uno que—
But it's one that—
63. L: mmhmm
64. M: o sea me siento que a cada mujer—
65. que ya estoy viendo más cosas de la mujer ((...))
Or I feel like every woman—that now I'm seeing more women's things ((...))
66. L: [No pero para ti es un problema que de verdad te afecta para ti=pa' tu persona
No but for you it's a problem that really affects you, for you, for your self
67. M: Pero no es primera vez que se va!! Yo no sé=es la tercera vez que
68. se va a ir, este, pero lo que pasa es que yo estaba en Tijuana y
69. teníamos carro...
But this isn't the first time that he's gone! I don't know—it's the third time he's going to go, but what happens is that I was in Tijuana and we had a car...

Not only does Marta repair Marialuisa's faulty assessment (and thus empathic stance); so does Lucía. She immediately responds to Marta's objection with an affectively evaluative assessment ('mmhmm'), and then when Marta again tries to disclaim the pain the situation is causing her by pointing out that others suffer more, Lucía again reasserts the validity of Marta's pain with an even stronger assessment: this is a problem that affects Marta's self. Goodwin & Goodwin's argument about speakers' and hearers' multi-layered roles—building from Goffman's notion of 'lamination'—seems particularly apt to describe this interaction, in which Marta and Lucía (and later several other women) fluidly move between participant roles to collaboratively 'build in concert with each other' an intense emotional experience. Therefore, Marta is negotiating her assessment of her emotional experience in interaction. As she does so, she and her co-participants become co-authors of the emotion who maintain and even deepen their intersubjective connection within this therapeutic setting.

To look at the interaction from a slightly different angle, Marta, Lucia, and Marialuisa actively take up particular *stances* toward Marta's pain and toward the situation more generally. By 'stance' I mean "a display of a socially recognized point of view or attitude," particularly (in this case) a display of an *affective* attitude (as opposed to "epistemic attitudes, such as how certain or uncertain a speaker is about some proposition" (Ochs 1993:79)), "such as intensity of emotion or kind of emotion about some referent or proposition" (Ochs 1993:79). As John Du Bois puts it, stance is a type of social action in which "I evaluate something,

and thereby position myself, and align [or disalign] with you” (Du Bois 2002, quoted in Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 595). Lucía’s stance is, as I have discussed, one of concern and alignment with Marta, and sets the stage for her to adopt a social identity as an emotional authority and guide. She is one who notices when people are upset, believes that painful affect ought to be talked about, and so makes sure that others share and unburden their emotions. When they do, she empathically supports them and creates a particular group dynamic in which she has a considerable amount of power by virtue of her interactive skills.

Lucía elaborated this social identity throughout the sessions, though her empathic stances shifted according the assessments she visibly made towards others’ affective experience in interaction. These shifts seem to be essential in order to be an effective empathizer and co-participant in emotional experience. As I pointed out above, when Lucía takes up the attitude of one who can relate to Marta because she, too, is without family nearby (line 44), Marta reacts by continuing to cry. When Lucía repairs that statement, though, and says she actually doesn’t understand but imagines that it must be very sad (line 49), Marta begins to unburden herself more freely. As the conversation unfolds, Lucía shows herself to be aware moment-to-moment of the types of contributions that are most therapeutic—or at least most comforting—to her co-participants.

Marta’s stance, too, shifts visibly in the course of this empathic interaction. She initially displays an assessment of her situation as one not quite deserving of floor time in which to unburden, and so her displayed attitude (stance) is affectively removed and casual (‘Siento que yo te:ngo algo.’). As Lucía continues

to ask her about it, though, Marta takes up a stance of self-concern and self-pity, which she moves in and out of throughout the course of this ten-minute interaction where she is the primary holder of the floor. Marta hedges her emotional expressions and assessments now and again by pointing out that others have it worse, but when she does so Lucía is there to re-affirm that the experience is, indeed, worthy of attention. Example VIII from above (glossed here) is a good illustration of this dynamic:

- M: They know that they have him but ok, they don't tell him anything, and this to me is harder for the kids more than anything [sniffles]. ((...)) I'm listening, I listen to other unhappy people whose situations make me cry [sobs again].*
- L: But you know what Marta to me your problem now is ((...)) to me I know that it's more serious. Or I don't know ((...)) because if I stayed without my husband like you are, it's hard because you don't know if you are really accompanied or if you are alone. You don't know if—I'm saying it's hard!*

And before this, Marta more explicitly questioned her right to feel or express suffering; first in Example XI from above (glossed here):

- M: But it's one that—*
- L: mmhmm*
- M: Or I feel like every woman—that now I'm seeing more women's things ((...))*
- L: No but for you it's a problem that really affects you, for you, for your self*
- M: But this isn't the first time that he's gone! I don't know—it's the third time he's going to go, but what happens is that I was in Tijuana and we had a car...*

And again a few turns later:

[Ex. XII]

83. *M: Pero a mi es muy duro, escucho situaciones de otras personas que tantas*

84. ((...)) que realmente si son graves. Porque esto no es tan grave yo
 85. ((voy a)) salir adelante sé lo he hecho sé que puedo hacerlo, yo voy
 86. a volver a hacer, eso no me da miedo!
*Because this isn't so serious, and I'll move on, I know that I've
 done it and I know that I can do it, this doesn't scare me!*
87. L: [es claro, ((...))
of course
88. M: eso es la única cosa que me da miedo. Sé que—
This is the only thing that scares me. I know that—
90. L: y ahorita tus hijos sufren [por ese razón, pues
And now your children suffer for this reason
91. M: [el niño exactamente. [*hh (crying)
 92: mi niño de repente es ((...)) un correo a tu papá. Ah no mami es
 93: que hablas tú por mí. Sea yo no—
 94: también es esa la idea que su papá ya no está.
*The little boy, exactly. My son is suddenly ((...)) a letter to your
 father. Ah no mami you talk to him for me. I don't—it's also this
 idea that his father is already gone.*
95. L: [mmhmm

In this latter instance, Marta both explicitly voices her own doubt about the severity of her situation and elaborates another reason for its severity: her children, one of whom (she tells us a minute before this exchange) cannot sleep. Lucía confirms their mutual orientation—or intersubjectivity—by referring to Marta's children even before Marta does so (line 90), which seems to trigger a new bout of sobbing on Marta's part, but which then provides her the space in which to express the familial problems her husband's consistent absence creates.



In analyzing this sequence, I hope to have shown how both women are negotiating their stances and assessments; and as they do so, how they are jointly authoring emotional experience and expression. We can see here how “the co-authoring of activities”—in this case emotional and empathic expression—“helps to maintain

and transform the social identities of the participants” (Jacoby & Ochs 1995:175).

Whether those identities

take hold in a social interaction depends minimally on (a) whether the speaker and other interlocutors share cultural and linguistic conventions for constructing particular acts and stance; (b) whether the speaker and other interlocutors share economic, political, or other social histories and conventions that associate those acts and stances with the particular social identity a speaker is trying to project; and (c) whether other interlocutors are able and willing or are otherwise constrained to ratify the speaker’s claim to that identity (Ochs 1993:80).

It is clear that besides myself, the interlocutors in the room ‘share cultural and linguistic conventions’; as well as ‘economic, political, or other social histories’, since (at least with regard to the economic and social histories) their shared background as Latinas, Mexican migrants living in the border area, mothers, and wives is a large part of what brought them together at Community Health in the first place.

From the beginning of the interaction Marta has several decisions—whether to affirm intersubjectivity, whether to take up a stance of self-concern, whether to actively negotiate her own identity as a group member and sufferer, and whether to ratify the stance and accompanying identity that Lucía is projecting (see (c) in the preceding quotation). Although she initially resists, once Marta displays affect it is clear that she has done all four, and it is in the frame of these social actions—which of course take place in a split second, spontaneously, as part of the flow of interaction—that the sequence continues.

As co-authors in this context, Lucía and Marta—and later others—are producing, negotiating, and maintaining not only aspects of their own social

identities, but also the social identities of “the institutions in which these activities are embedded, and the ideologies that inform and legitimize their ongoingness” (Jacoby & Ochs 1995:175, see above). One of Community Health’s goals is to effect a shift in participants’ affective stance and identity. Ideally, each woman learns how to express her emotions and feel comfortable doing so in that setting, while at the same time firming up her own self-image and sense of empowerment. Lucía seems to have taken this institutional goal into her own hands and integrated it (if it wasn’t already) into her own identity in the course of the interaction. It has ‘taken hold,’ as Jacoby & Ochs put it (see above quotation). She is involved in the project of becoming self-sufficient, emotionally intelligent, and empowered, and is clearly invested in helping her fellow group members to do the same. By engaging in the interaction I’ve detailed, she and Marta are actively affirming Community Health’s institutional identity and ideology while also jointly—and creatively, I might add—co-authoring their own emotional appraisals and experiences.

Part IV. Conclusions and Implications

What is the significance of these findings—and this approach in general—for anthropology? If we agree with Goodwin & Duranti (1992) that “face-to-face interaction provides the primordial locus for the production of talk,” and that “face-to-face interaction is accomplished through the collaborative work of separate individuals,” it follows that such face-to-face interaction is “an elementary example of human social organization. Talk spoken there is thus inescapably a form of social action. Moreover, the way in which talk-in-interaction is designed for, and shaped by, the social properties of its interactive environment sheds light on the basic organization of language itself” (22). They go on:

...within interaction participants are faced with the task of accomplishing understanding and, as part of this process, displaying to each other their understanding of the events in progress at a particular moment...Accomplishing such shared agreement about the events that members of a society encounter in their phenomenal world is central...to what anthropologists have traditionally analyzed as culture...Face-to-face interaction thus provides an opportunity to analyze language, culture, and social organization as integrated components of a single system of action, and moreover deal with such processes as dynamic, intrinsically time-bound phenomena (Goodwin & Duranti 1992:22-23).

I quote so extensively because this passage pinpoints the theoretical and analytical importance of face-to-face interaction for anthropology and social analysis in general. ‘Shared agreement’ and mutual orientation—in other words, displaying and acting upon ‘understanding of the events in progress at a particular moment’—are the basis for coordinated social activity and relationships. Social

life and subjective life exist in a mutually constituting relationship put into play in interaction, where we attribute certain “inner” experiences—emotions, thoughts, desires, motivations—to ourselves and others. These attributions are part of socially situated learned reasoning strategies that provide the opportunity to elaborate our stances, identities, and relationships.

Reading anthropological and sociological accounts of emotion and emotional/mental distress, it is striking to find so few analyses of how those experiences are dealt with in interaction between experiencers and their peers and families. The discourse between patients and doctors/therapists has been relatively well studied (see Labov & Fanshel 1977; Mishler 1985; Mattingly 1998; Good & Good 1980; Wowk 1989, Cicourel 1992 for examples), as have the ways in which different languages and culturally informed discourses encode and express emotion (see Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990 for a collection). However, *microanalyses* of more casual face-to-face interaction and the ways in which emotion and emotional distress are dealt with in those interactions has been understudied (some notable exceptions are Capps & Ochs 1995 and some of W.O. Beeman’s sociolinguistics work (1995, 2001).

In looking in detail both at what is said and what is done by participants in affective interaction, I believe we can gain insight into the fundamentally interactive and intersubjective nature of all experience, and in the case of this essay emotional experience particularly. Microanalyses can fault on the side of dwelling too extensively in the nuances of talk and not-extensively enough on the implications of those nuances for a broader understanding of actors and their

social life. As Haviland (1986) puts it, “subtractive” approaches are common in linguistic analyses, but in ethnography it becomes clear “that words, in the places we meet them, typically resist subtractive molesting... Words do their work between people: speakers and hearers whose medium is verbal, who trade places, and come and go, but who typically do more than talk” (251). The goal of microanalysis in the context of ethnography, then, is to reveal and analyze the ‘micro’ interactions through which actors live their lives, feel their emotions, tell their stories, and interpret their experiences in collaboration with others, their co-authors. Further, microanalysis opens up emotion to the realm of empirical analysis by looking at how it functions in interaction—and what consequences affective interactions have for individuals and groups.

It is well-accepted in the anthropological literature on mental illness that the ways in which close family members and peers of mentally ill persons interact with them—the ways in which they express emotion and take up emotional stances toward them—has strong correlations with the outcome of the mental illness and the chance of relapse (see Jenkins 1988, 1991, and Jenkins & Barrett 2004). As Jenkins points out, though there is work (she cites Lutz 1982) on the ways in which “the locus of emotions may be primarily in situations rather than in the psyche, little cross-cultural work has concerned the emotional atmospheres that characterize such situations” (Jenkins 1991:390). The support sessions at Community Health convinced me that ‘emotional atmospheres,’ defined as the “interpersonal space of related selves” in which affective experience takes place (Jenkins 1991: 389, cf. Sullivan 1962), are, indeed, essential to individuals’

emotional experiences—and the interpretations of those experiences that they integrate into their own self-understandings and self-narratives. Not only does more cross-cultural work need to be done in order to investigate how such atmospheres and their discourses vary; we also need deeper understandings of how, in the course of actual interactions, such atmospheres are actively produced by participants.

In doing so, we can better understand what types of atmospheres and interactions are most therapeutic and, on the other hand, emotionally perilous—for individuals and communities. Capps & Ochs (1995) provide microanalyses of one woman's narrative practices to examine "how stories are shaped by their tellers and, at the same time, how stories shape the way tellers see and experience themselves in their worlds" (13). Their book effectively shows how actors can verbally produce emotional distress for themselves using particular narrative devices; Meg, their book's protagonist, keeps agoraphobia alive and spirals into it in her stories using "repeated psychological reconstructions of panic" (21). They also point out the ways in which therapists and clients are co-authors: "therapy is a dialogic process in which client and therapist collaboratively construct an emergent story...Life stories are not delivered *to* the therapist. Rather they evolve out of the client's and therapist's interpenetrating contributions" (176).

I hope that by examining in detail some face-to-face interaction, particularly empathic interaction and the assessment activities within it, I have made a case that emotional experience is interactively constituted, interpreted, and authored. I agree with the Goodwins when they write that

...the activity of performing assessments constitutes one of the key places where participants negotiate and display to each other a congruent view of the events that they encounter in their phenomenal world. It is thus a central locus for the study of the 'shared understandings' that lie at the heart of anthropological analysis of culture (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992:182).

How actors shape and are shaped by social encounters and how they produce, confirm, and maintain intersubjectivity is of crucial importance in anthropology—whether linguistic or psychological—as well as in therapeutic settings. Empathic interactions, characterized as they are by assessment activities, stances, and narratives, provide a productive example of the active ways in which participants work together to co-construct their emotional understandings and, in doing so, their lifeworlds.

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