

7 Territories of knowledge, territories of experience: empathic moments in interaction

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...if I tell you something that you come to think is so, you are entitled to have it. And you take it that the stock of knowledge that you have is something that you can get wherever you get it, and it is yours to keep. But the stock of experiences is an altogether differently constructed thing. As I say, in order to see that that is so, we can just, for example, differentiate how we deal with a piece of knowledge and how we deal with someone else's experience, and then come to see that experiences then get isolated, rather than that they are themselves as productive as are pieces of knowledge.

(Sacks 1984: 425)

Introduction

The relationship between knowing something and having experienced it is deeply entrenched in interactional practices associated with assessment and evaluation. In the following sequence, for example, both parties have recently attended the same bridge party:

- (1)
1 NOR: → I think evryone enjoyed jus' sjtting aroun'
2 ta::lk [ing.]
3 BEA: → [h h] I do too:.,
4 (0.3)
5 NOR: Yjhknow e-I think it's too bad we don't do that once'n
6 awhile insteada playing bri:dge er .hh

Here Bea agrees with Norma's assertion in a straightforward fashion, uninhibited by the need to manage differential access to the event in question.

In 2, by contrast, Eve has only second-hand knowledge of the movie *Midnight Cowboy* (lines 4–6), whereas Jon and Lyn have been to the movie. When Eve reports an account of the movie as 'depressing,' Jon and Lyn agree, indexing their direct and independent access to the movie with *oh*-prefaced assessments (lines 7 and 8):

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- (2)
- 1 JON: We saw Midnight Cowboy yesterday -or [suh- Friday.
2 EVE: [Oh?
3 LYN: Didju s- you saw that, [it's really good.
4 EVE: [No I haven't seen it
5 Jo saw it 'n she said she f- depressed her
6 EVE: ter[r]ibly
7 JON: → [Oh it's [terribly depressing
8 LYN: → [Oh it's depressing.
9 EVE: Ve[r]y
10 LYN: → [But it's a fantastic [film.
11 JON: → [It's a beautiful movie.

Later, both Jon and Lyn leverage this superior epistemic access into a subsequent evaluation of the movie which departs from a view of it as merely "depressing" (Heritage 1998, 2002a).

Still more problematic are cases in which one party evaluates some state of affairs to which the other has no access at all. In the following sequence, Emma's sister Lottie has returned from an apparently exhilarating trip to visit friends in Palm Springs. Her method of representing the house she stayed at centers on its inaccessibility to her sister:

- (3)
- 1 LOT: h h Jeeziz Chris' you sh'd see that house E(h)m^a yih'av
2 [no idea.h[hmhh
3 EMM: [I bet it's a drea:m.

Patently lacking the resources to enter into a direct appreciation of the house by the very terms of Lottie's assessment, Emma aligns with Lottie's evaluation by means of a subjunctive expression of her likely evaluation, thereby achieving a simulacrum of agreement (Heritage and Raymond 2005).

There are, then, events, activities and sensations which a person is entitled to evaluate by virtue of having experienced them, and in which shared evaluation is possible and legitimate by virtue of shared experience. However, there are others to which the experiencer has primary, sole and definitive epistemic access. Because persons conceive experience as 'owned' by a subject-actor, and as owned in a singular way, a 'problem of experience' arises. In particular, when persons report first-hand experiences of any great intensity (involving, for example, pleasure, pain, joy or sorrow), they obligate others to join with them in their evaluation, to affirm the nature of the experience and its meaning, and to affiliate with the stance of the experiencer toward them. These obligations are moral obligations that, if fulfilled, will create moments of empathic communion. As Durkheim (1915) observed, such moments are fundamental to the creation of social

relationships, to social solidarity, and to an enduring sociocultural and moral order. However, recipients of reports of first-hand experiences can encounter these empathic moments as a dilemma in which they are required to affiliate with the experiences reported, even as they lack the experiences, epistemic rights, and sometimes even the subjective resources from which emotionally congruent stances can be constructed.

Under these circumstances, the recipient's capacity for empathic response – "an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and that is similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel" (Eisenberg and Fabes 1990; see also Baron-Cohen 2003 and Rogers 1959) – and the communication of that response may undergo significant challenge. This chapter describes some of the resources that are available to recipients under these circumstances, and considers ways in which tellers can facilitate moments of empathic communion notwithstanding the difficulties involved. It does so by drawing on several large corpora of interactions in British and American English. No attempt is made to develop distributional evidence for the chapter's claims. Rather, the chapter aims at conceptualizing affinities between the affordances of particular methods of describing experience, and the responses those descriptions can invite.

Empathic moments

The most basic way that a teller can facilitate a moment of empathic communion is by projecting its emergence in advance, and by constructing its development step by step. Conversational practices geared to these ends have been well described in accounts of news delivery (Maynard 2003; Terasaki 2004) and story telling (Goodwin 1984; Jefferson 1978; Sacks 1974; Stivers 2008). In particular, pre-announcements and story prefaces project the type of action to come and, most importantly, its valence to the teller. In the following case from Terasaki, A's pre-announcement (lines 1–2) projects two pieces of positive news. Each of these attracts a strongly affiliative response from his interlocutor (lines 7 and 11):

- (4) (Terasaki 2004: 176)
- 1 A: I fergot t'tell y'the two best things that happen'tuh
2 me t'day.
3 B: Oh super.=What were they
4 A: I gotta B plus on my math test,
5 B: On yer final?
6 A: Un huh?
7 B: → Oh that's wonderful
8 A: And I got athletic award.

- 9 B: REALLY?
 10 A: Uh huh. From Sports Club.
 11 B: → Oh that's terrific Ronald.

By contrast, as Terasaki (2004: 174) also notes, news that has potential for empathic response can be presented in a fashion that subordinates its relevance to some other interactional goal. Thus in 5, as Maynard (2003: 90) points out, information about a death in a family (line 6) known to Lottie is presented as background to the announcement that a golf game can go forward as planned.

(5) (Maynard 2003: 93)

- 1 Emm: =Bud's gon' play go:lf now up Riverside he's js leavin'
 2 (0.2)
 3 Lot: Oh:
 4 (0.5)
 5 Emm: So: Kathern' Harry were s'poze tuh come down las'night
 6 → but there wz a death'n the fam'ly so they couldn' come
 7 so Bud's as'd Bill tuh play with the comp'ny deal so I
 8 guess he c'n play with im so
 9 Lot: → Oh:: goo::d.

In 5 it is the news about the golf game (and not the death in the family) that is registered with Lottie's "Oh:: goo::d." (line 9). Thus as Maynard (2003: 90) notes, "interactional organization and structure supersede utterance content in achieving and displaying the talk as news."

In some circumstances, competing dimensions of a news announcement may hamper the emergence of an empathic response. In 6 Andi informs her friend Betty that she is pregnant. Since Betty is a sufficiently close friend to know that Andi's partner Bob has had a vasectomy, Andi's announcement will clearly be both surprising (and puzzling) and, eventually, something to affiliate with.

Betty's initial response to the announcement ("Oh my good^ness!" line 8) conveys surprise rather than empathic affiliation. And her continuation ("hhow- (1.0) did you have a reversal-") continues this focus with an attempt to understand how this surprising event came about:

(6) (Maynard 2003: 93/109)

- 1 And: .hhh well; speaking of bo^ttoms are you sitting down?
 2 Bet: Ye^ah.
 3 And: Well we have some news for you.
 4 Bet: What?
 5 And: .hhh that may come as a bit of a surprise eh!
 6 Bet: I see- what are you telling me?
 7 And: hhhh! Bob and I are going to have a baby.
 8 Bet: → Oh my good^ness! hhow- (1.0) did you have a reversal-

- 9 he have a reversal?
 10 And: Yea:h.
 11 (1.0)
 12 And: .hhh [:::]:
 13 Bet: [Whe::^n
 14 And: tch eYup. Last March.
 15 (0.4)
 16 And: .mhhh ((sniff))
 17 Bet: → OH [MY GOO:D^NESS:
 18 And: [And (huh)
 19 And: it was [very successful [very quickly hh::h .hhh
 20 Bet: → [OH I'M SO [^HAPPY.

It is only after it has become completely clear that Bob is the father of the baby and that the pregnancy is intentional that Betty responds with an enthusiastic and empathic response "OH I'M SO ^HAPPY."

In the absence of prefatory work, empathic moments can slip by unacknowledged. For example, in the following, Edward has called his associate Richard because he has learned that Richard's wife has slipped a disk. After offering Richard assistance with everyday chores, the conversation turns to how the episode occurred. After hearing the trivial cause of the problem ('just' bending over [line 2]), Edward acknowledges the information sympathetically (line 4). Whereupon Richard elaborates by saying that "It hasn't happened fuh ten ye:rs." (line 8):

(7)

- 1 EDW: W'l what a frightf'l thing How did it happen.
 2 RIC: She jus' bent o:ver as we w'r getting ready tih go out h
 3 on Christmas [morning.]
 4 EDW: [O h: :] my God.
 5 (0.2)
 6 RIC: .h Yhes i [t hent-]
 7 EDW: [uhh hu:] hh, hu [h ho:
 8 RIC: [It hasn't happened fuh ten ye:rs.=
 9 EDW: =ukhh huukhh ukh >Oh she's had it before.<
 10 RIC: Oh yes=
 11 RIC: =b't not fih te(h)n y(h)ea(h) [a(h)s.]
 12 EDW: [O h: :]: Lord.
 13 RIC: Yes there we are,
 14 EDW: The:re we are.
 15 ((Topic shift into a closing sequence))

Here Richard's elaboration juxtaposes the back injury's occurrence on "Christmas morning." with all the attendant alterations in holiday plans, with the infrequency of its onset ('not for ten years'). The import of this juxtaposition is to convey what an unusual and unlucky occurrence it was.

None of this is taken up by Edward (line 9) who, after a noisy throat clear, offers only the pedestrian understanding that Richard's wife has "had it before." Richard's *oh*-prefaced response treats this understanding as self-evident (Heritage 1998), and continues (line 11) by reintroducing the additional information, now interspersed with troubles resistant laugh particles (Jefferson 1984b) that make light of the situation: "b't not fih te(h)n y(h) ea(h)a(h)s." Here Edward is offered a second opportunity at empathic appreciation of the unluckiness of Edward's wife's (and family's) situation, to which he responds with a perfunctorily intoned and thus pro forma "Oh::: Lord." At this point, Richard abandons his pursuit of an empathic response with the summative and closings relevant "Yes there we are.". Edward's reciprocation of this sets the scene for the conversation to enter its closing phase. In this case, Edward simply fails to recognize that what is being presented to him is an occasion for empathic response, even when it is presented twice.

In sum, the construction of empathic moments is subject to the same kinds of constraints that attend most sequences in which large and other-attentive responses are aimed at. In these sequences, there is a telling "that both takes a stance toward what is being reported and makes the taking of a [complementary] stance by the recipient relevant" (Stivers 2008: 32). Pre-announcements and story tellings are the primary vehicles through which stances are enacted and empathic moments are created.

Resources for responding to accounts of personal experiences

In this section, I look at a range of resources that recipients have available to address emerging empathic moments, including resources with which to avoid or decline them. I will begin with the latter.

Ancillary questioning

At the least empathic end of the spectrum are actions that decline affiliative engagement with the experience reported by a teller. The most coercive of these are ancillary questions (Jefferson 1984a) or "refocusing" (Maynard 1980) in which, at the point where an empathic response to the telling would otherwise be due, the recipient raises a somewhat related question about the matter. In addition to declining affiliative engagement with the experience described by the teller, ancillary questions also require that the teller address the agenda raised in the questioner's question. That agenda can involve a considerable departure from the matter on which the teller was previously focused.

For example, in the following piece of narrative (from a conversation between two sisters extensively analyzed in Jefferson *et al.* 1987), Lottie has made previous attempts to introduce a report of nude swimming into the conversation. In the immediate aftermath of Lottie's nude swimming announcement (lines 1–2/4), and in overlap with her enthusiastic assessment of the experience, Emma responds in overlap with a general evaluation of Lottie's swimming partner (line 7), and then with a more disparaging question about her drinking habits (line 8) which could be heard to insinuate a context for the nude swimming itself:

- (8)
- 1 LOT:so I:sabel'n I e-en (h)w(h)e swam in
 2 th(h)et p(h)ool until two uh'cl(h)u [ck in the] morning.=
 3 EMM: [O h::: ,]
 4 LOT: =i(h)i [n the n] u:de.
 5 EMM: [#Go::d#]
 6 LOT: .hh u [h o h o : G]od ih wz:] fun.=
 7 EMM: → [°I:sn't° she] cu:::te]
 8 EMM: → =.hh She still drinkin' er liddle dri:nks?
 9 (0.6)
 10 LOT: Ye:ah'n the [:_n]
 11 EMM: [°Yea]h,°
 12 LOT: we swam (.) ^a:ll day dihdaz I d-I never: (.) well I got out
 13 abaht e'ry (.) five minutes er so e [n then]'n] take] a]
 14 EMM: → [°Oh I°]bet]cher]ta:]nned.
 15 (0.2)
 16 LOT: .hh ^YA:H. Kin'a #yea:h.#=
 17 EMM: =Mm hm:,
 18 LOT: .hhh En the:n: (.) ah lef'there e(.t) uh:: (0.7) ts-
 19 exa:c'ly et threge o'clo:ck.
 20 EMM: .pt.hhhh
 21 LOT: En I didn'git inna any traffic e'all'n then ...

Here it seems clear that Emma is declining the opportunity of empathic affiliation with her sister's recent experiences, indeed competitively declining it. Subsequently, at line 14, Emma moves away from the account of swimming by topicalizing a likely consequence ("°Oh I° betcher ta:nned.") and thereafter Lottie abandons the topic (though she returns to it later [Jefferson *et al.* 1987]).

Of course, questions can be used to move the conversation toward an ancillary topic without the studied lack of affiliation to be found in 8 (Jefferson 1984b). In 9 Nancy is complaining to her friend Hyla about a visit to the dermatologist. The sequence is opened with Nancy's announcement "My f:face hurts," and culminates first with "It (js) hu:rt so bad Hyla I wz cry:::ing,":

- (9)
- 1 NAN: → My f:face hurts,=
 2 HYL: =°W't-°
 3 (.)
 4 HYL: Oh what'd'e do tih you.
 5 (.)
 6 NAN: -GOD'e dis (.) prac'ly killed my dumb fa:ce,=
 7 HYL: =Why: Ho[-ow.]
 8 NAN: [(With,)]
 9 (.)
 10 NAN: With this ting I don'ee I wzn'even looking I don't kno::w,((8 lines of description omitted))
 19 NAN: → It (js) hu:rt so bad Hyla I wz cry::ing,=
 20 HYL: =Yhher khhiddi:ng.]
 21 NAN: [nNo:]:.He really hurt me he goes I'm sorry,
 22 .hh wehh .hh I khho th(h)at dznt make i(h)t a(h)n(h)y better
 23 → yihknow he wz jst (0.4) so, e-he didn't mean to be but he wz
 24 → really hurting m[e.
 25 HYL: → [t #w Does it- look all marked u:p?=
 26 NAN: =nNo:, it's awr- it's a'right, jist'nna couple places b't I
 27 c'n cover it u:p,=
 28 HYL: =Yea:h,
 29 NAN: But he goes, (.) he;- he goes yih 'av a rilly mild case he goes

Prompted to continue with “Yhher khhiddi:ng.”, Nancy renews her complaint at lines 23–24 but, rather than empathic affiliation with the pain report, Hyla moves to an ancillary topic, “Does it- look all marked u:p?”, which initiates a shift from Nancy’s pain experience to the possible consequences of the treatment (lines 29 and beyond). The question is not devoid of self-interest: Hyla and Nancy are scheduled to spend an evening at the theatre later in the day.

And in a third case, sorority member Tara tells her housemates a somewhat self-dramatizing story about an incident the previous evening in which a boy took her home in a taxi. The story is framed with an announcement about ‘crying in the cab’ (line 1) and explicated with an account of how a boy went out of his way to help her in a ‘down’ situation. It is concluded with a repeat of the ‘crying in the cab’ reference (line 46):

- (10)
- 1 TAR: I still can't believe I cried_ in thuh cab.
 2 (.)
 3 PEN: You cri:e::d?, Wh[::y?
 4 ALE: [It's okay.
 5 PEN: [(Did)-]
 6 KEN: Why'd you cry in the ca:b.
 7 (0.2)

- 8 TAR: Cuz I'm a do:rk_
 9 (0.8)
 10 KEN: Oka:y,
 11 ALE: She's not a do:rk.
 12 TAR: I am a do:rk.
 13 ALE: → She prob'ly (had)/(got) dust in her eye.=
 ((Story))
 39 TAR: .h an' (so) he's like “Here! let's take uh cab
 40 home.” an' I'm like “No it's okay. (.)
 41 I'm gonna walk.” .h and then he's like
 42 “No let's take a cab home.” and I was like
 43 “No I'm gonna walk.” an' I was being rea:lly stubborn,
 44 .hh Finally he's like there's a cab right there_
 45 and he grabs my arm_ .hh We take the cab_ (An')
 46 he's like what's wrong. I start crying to him in the ca:b.
 47 (.)
 48 PEN: → Mm::,
 49 TAR: I'm gonna find his phone [number (an') call him.
 50 KEN: → [(So were) you drunk or were you
 51 sober.
 52 (.)
 53 ALE: → You guys have a good day.

The story start is unpromising. Kendra (line 10) does not resist Tara’s self-deprecating claim to be a “dork” (Pomerantz 1978), and Alex heckles the story’s initiation with a quite undramatic explanation (line 13) of Tara’s tearful state. At the end of the story, two of Tara’s recipients respond in ways that are scarcely aligned to the story’s completion, let alone offering affiliation with the experience and sentiments that she reports (lines 48, 50–51 and 53). At line 48, Penny offers a continuer treating the story as incomplete, and Tara adds a further coda to the story (line 49). At line 53 Alex, who had taken a discouraging stance to the story early on (line 13), simply leaves the room without appreciating the story at all. And at lines 50–51, Kendra asks a question which, while registering the story’s completion, does not address its emotional import and moves the topic in an ancillary direction. Moreover, in its intimation of intoxication as the underlying cause of the emotions described, the question incipiently undermines the basis on which the story was told.

The motivations for these non-empathic responses are of course various: an account of a risqué event that the recipient does not want to further topicalize (Extract 8), of a visit to the dermatologist that encountered competing relevancies (9), and a self-regarding story (10) that went “too far” (Drew and Walker 2008) and made too great a demand for on-the-spot empathic affiliation from its already reluctant recipients (Jefferson 1984b). Regardless of these motivations, the practice of ancillary questioning is

a resource for declining empathic affiliation with the position taken by the teller, while simultaneously enforcing a shift in conversational topic. Both the declination and the escape from further obligation to respond are managed in a single decisive move.

Parallel assessments

With parallel assessments, respondents can focus on focal elements of the experience described by the teller, by describing a similar, but de-particularized, experience or preference. These assessments are “my side” assessments that support or ‘second’ a first speaker’s description but without attempting to enter directly into the experience that is reported. In the following case, described in detail in Goodwin and Goodwin (1987), a brief description of an asparagus pie attracts an immediate, but generic, affiliative response from the interlocutor (line 3):

(11) (Goodwin and Goodwin 1987: 24)

- 1 Dia: Jeff made en asparagus pie
 2 it was s::so [: goo:d.
 3 Cla: → [I love it. °Yeah I love [tha:t.
 4 Dia: [He pu:t uhm,

Here, as also noted by the Goodwins (1987), the shift in tense in Clacia’s response and the repair from “it” to “that:” in her repetition of the assessment, makes it clear that this is a parallel assessment of a type of dish that she also likes, rather than something she directly experienced (Goodwin and Goodwin 1987: 27).

A similar parallel assessment is the following. Considerably later in the call about her trip to Palm Springs, Lottie reintroduces the topic of nude swimming. This time Emma responds with a report of a parallel experience (lines 5–12):

(12)

- 1 LOT: =So then when Claude le(h)f’ we(h)e took those suits off(h)
 2 en fs:wa:m aroun’t[h[e nu:de eh HUH-u ’n took a su:nba:th in=
 3 (E): [(°Awh°)
 4 LOT: =the nu:de ’n e’rything.=.hhh [hhh
 5 EMM: [W’l you know Abby ’n ^I use’
 6 tih do that on the ^rivers if the feller’d go down get
 7 gas’leen for their bqa:ts,h .hhhh She’d say dih you mi:nd
 8 we’d be inna co:ve, but we’d take it ou:t (.) under the
 9 wa(h)ter. Yjhknow bec’z: uh: (.) e we’re out’n the QPEN. Yjh
 10 know. hh Buh we’d j’s’ slip our bathing sui:t au: en g-en
 11 °swim around in that° r:IVer that:=-uh Coloraduh River
 12 → til: .hhh Ghho:d >what=uh< thr#i:ll.#

- 13 (0.2)
 14 EMM: → I always have liked=tih swim in the °nu:de°.
 15 LOT: [ME: TOO: yih
 16 know eh wi-.hh En then .hh ri:ght #eh:
 17 theh-# (.) there’s two places where thuh ho:t water
 18 comes in ’n you c’n git ri:ght up close to ’m |’n i’
 19 (y) Efeels like=yer takin’ a dou:che,=f

Emma’s parallel account culminates in an assessment (“Ghho:d >what=uh< thr#i:ll.#” line 12) which focuses on her experience of nude swimming in the Colorado river and does not find an immediate response. However, her subsequent generalization from this experience (line 14) closely supports the sentiments expressed earlier by her sister across a number of passages in this extended telephone call, and attracts an immediate affirmative response together with an escalation (lines 16–19) in the intimacy and granularity of the experiences described (see Jefferson *et al.* 1987: 184–191).

These two cases suggest an emergent dilemma for those who would affiliate with others in empathic moments. On the one hand, the recipient has not had direct first-hand experience of the event reported, and a parallel “my side” response risks being heard as flat, pallid or pro forma. On the other hand, a parallel assessment that is too florid, extended or enriched in detail – as in (12) – risks being heard as competitive with the very report that it is designed to affiliate with. Thus it is Emma’s retreat to the generic “I always have liked=tih swim in the °nu:de°.”, and not the details of her activities in the Colorado river, that attracts enthusiastic support from her sister (line 15), who then proceeds to further details of her own experience.

Subjunctive assessments

Closely related to parallel assessments are their subjunctive counterparts. With the term *subjunctive assessments*, I mean to introduce efforts at empathic affiliation which suggest that if the recipient were to experience the things described they would feel the same way. For example, in an extension of (11) above, Dianne goes on to describe several special features of the asparagus pie that Jeff made (lines 4–11):

(13)

- 1 Dia: Jeff made en asparagus pie
 2 it was s::so [: goo:d.
 3 Cla: [I love it. °Yeah I love [tha:t.
 4 Dia: [He pu:t uhm,
 5 (0.7)
 6 Dia: Tch! put crabmeat on th’bo::dum.
 7 Cla: Oh:::

- 8 Dia: [(Y'know)/(Made it) with chee::se,=
 9 Cla: =[°Yeah. Right.
 10 Dia: =[En then jus' (cut up)/(covered it with) the broc-ɹ the
 11 asparagus coming out in spokes.=
 12 Dia: → =°It wz so good.
 13 Cla: °Right.
 14 Cla: → °°(Oh: Go:d that'd be fantastic.)

In the immediate aftermath of this description, Dianne goes on to evaluate the pie (line 12). Although she does not immediately concur with a second assessment, Clacia responds at line 14 with an upgraded evaluation presented in the conditional (Goodwin and Goodwin 1987: 27). Here Clacia's lack of any direct experiential access to the pie, or a pie like it, mandates a subjunctive second assessment.

Another kind of subjunctive assessment involves epistemic downgrading of access to the assessable. In the following case, Hyla has been to see the movie *Dark at the Top of the Stairs* and has bought herself and Nancy tickets for a stage production of the show. Following a request from Nancy, she recounts the main plot lines:

- (14)
 1 NAN: Kinyih tell me what it's abou:t?=
 ((27 lines of description deleted))
 29 HYL: =.hh En she's fixed up, (0.4) en she meets this gu:y, .hh a:n'
 30 yihknow en he's (.) rilly gorgeous'n eez rilly nice en
 31 evrythi [:ng bud li]ke=
 32 NAN: [Uh h u :h,]
 33 HYL: =.hh He's ah .hh Hollywood (0.3) s:sta:r's son yihknow who wz
 34 a mista:[ke en they [put im in'n [Academy, school,
 35 NAN → [O o this [s o u n d s [so goo:::d?
 36 HYL: .hh buh waj:t.=n then, .hhm (0.2) .tch en the: (w)- the
 37 mother's .hh sister is a real bigot.

Here, as the Goodwins (1987) note in a discussion of a closely related passage, the epistemic downgrade accompanying Nancy's strongly affirmative assessment (line 35) indexes that it is the account of the plot, rather than direct experience of the plot itself, that is the object of the assessment.

The significance of subjunctive assessments is straightforward. Respondents can find themselves in circumstances where affiliation is required but direct or even parallel experience is plainly lacking. Clacia cannot have encountered an asparagus pie of the type that Dianne describes. The very premise of Hyla's account of *Dark at the Top of the Stairs* is that Nancy has not seen it. And Lottie's account of her trip to Palm Springs (Extract 3 above) builds Emma's lack of access into the

very evaluation of the house she visited. In cases of this type, subjunctive assessments are a primary resource for affiliative response.

Observer responses

By "observer responses," I mean to indicate responses in which recipients claim imaginary access to the events and experiences described, but position themselves as observers, or would-be observers, to the event. Sometimes such responses can be relatively pro forma, as in the following case, which continues Lottie and Emma's conversation about nude swimming from 12 above:

- (15)
 14 EMM: I always have liked=tih swjm in the °nu: [de°.
 15 LOT: [ME: TOO: yih
 16 know eh wi- .hh En then .hh ri:ght #eh:
 17 theh-# (.) there's two places where thuh ho:t water
 18 comes in 'n you c'n git ri:ght up close to'm |'n i'
 19 (y) ffeels like=yer [ta |kin'ja |dou]:che,]f=
 20 EMM: [eh]u h [uh] u h] a h]=
 21 EMM: =ahh[ahh] a h] .hhh]HUH-HA]HA-AHh]a h h]ah]agh]u h]
 22 LOT: [hhhHHU:H]HHUH]HHU:H]HA:h ha]e-u-e]ah]: ah]: e]
 h,=
 23 EMM: =.hhuhhh=
 24 LOT: =E[n we:]
 25 EMM: → [#I# C]'N ^SEE YOU ^TWO KI:D[S () [.hh
 26 LOT: [E:N ^SHE wz o[n ONE
 27 END,='N=] wz o'uh=other en' with ur legs up,yihknow,'n=
 28 EMM: =[°Oh::::::::::: G o : : d isn't she cu:::te?°]
 29 LOT: =[G(h)ee(h)z it f(h)elt (s(h)o) g(h)ood,=hna:h ha:h]hu[uh hu]
 30 EMM: [°Oh:°]
 31 shg's #a cut#ey,=
 32 LOT: =O[h:<]
 33 EMM: [G o]:d she's uninh:ibitid=eh,

Here Emma, having affiliated with the project of nude swimming (line 14) and, through laughter at lines 20–21 (Jefferson *et al.* 1987), with the more risqué suggestions of lines 16–19, affiliates with Lottie by positioning herself as an imaginary voyeur of the scene. Notably, however, as Lottie escalates her account into a still more granular description of the pool activities, Emma begins to de-escalate her involvement through evaluative assessments of the co-participant of the kind seen in 8 above.

In accounts of agonistic experiences, observers' responses can be enhanced by siding with the teller in the situation, as in the following case in which Nicole, engaged in hairdressing in a salon, is describing an encounter with her ex-boyfriend to a co-worker sitting in the salon:

- (16)
 1 NIC: O(h)h: guess who ah seen on uh- (1.3) Thursday?
 2 (0.5) >no.< (0.8) Monday er Tuesday.=I don't know.
 3 (0.5)
 4 SHA: "Who."
 5 .hh
 6 NIC: Mister M_i:les.
 7 (0.7)
 8 NIC: Thet- the k_i:ds wuz at the- (0.9) at the pa:rk, registerin'
 9 fer f_{oo}tball; ri:ght,
 10 (.)
 11 SHA: Uh huh,
 12 NIC: <I didn e'en really- > D'Shaun didn e'en<- tol' me
 13 at the la:st minute_
 14 NIC: .hh (so he's et the plunge), "(Ah)/(Hey) Mom
 15 e'rybody's registerin', I need=tuh take Raymond down,"
 16 I'm like alright well go 'hea:d, I'll meet=you d'ere.
 17 (0.8)
 18 NIC: .h I already knew I wuz gonna run into 'im.
 19 (1.7)
 20 NIC: So I: was drivin' Steve's truck.
 21 (1.2)
 22 NIC: "n I Uhm" (0.4) got there, got out,
 23 (1.2)
 24 NIC: An' uh: (2.0) y'know I spoke to 'im, he gave me a hu:g,
 25 (1.2) So that's i^:t. >I'm like me 'n you really ain't
 26 got nuthin t'talk about.<
 27 (0.2)
 28 SHA: Mm hm:; =
 29 NIC: ="Hi:_" ((waving))
 30 NIC: Y'know (we)/(it) was rea:l cordial, (0.8) *thet wuz it.*
 31 (1.0)
 32 NIC: So then he says uhm: >somethin' bout when am I gon' let
 33 him< te:st dri:ve mah car, I said "I don't see thet-" uh:m
 34 "concernin' you," (0.5) "You (no)/(don') test drivi nothin'."
 35 (0.9)
 36 NIC: I said an' (uhm)/(en) (.) ^NO I said "I'm not even
 37 in my car. Where'd you get ^that fro:m;" (0.3) He w's like
 38 "Well who' truck you drivin;" ('n) I said "My boyfriend's,"
 39 SHA: → (smile) Eheh! .hh (1.4) God I wish I coulda see' his fa:ce.

In the main body of the story, the antagonist is introduced as "Mister M_i:les.", a form of marked recognitional reference designed to establish distance from him (Stivers 2007a). The encounter is portrayed as somewhat fraught ("I already knew I wuz gonna run into 'im." line 18, and ">I'm like me 'n you really ain't got nuthin t'talk about.<" lines 25–26), and its dénouement (line 38) is prepared for at line 20 ("So I: was drivin'

Steve's truck."). Nicole prepares for the punch-line of the story by raising its granularity (Schegloff 2000a) from general glosses of the casual quality of their interchanges ("rea:l cordial," line 30), into indirect reported speech (lines 32–33), and then into direct reported speech (lines 33–39). This culminates in her report of the ex-boyfriend's question about the ownership of her truck (lines 37–38), and the exquisite put-down with which, by answering his question, she was able to display that she was "over" him. As she delivers "I said 'My boyfriend's,'" (line 38), Nicole turns from her customer and looks directly at Shauna, who responds with a subjunctive "into-the-moment" response: "God I wish I coulda see' his fa:ce." This response, which places Shauna as a wished-for observer of the scene, unambiguously supports Nicole's position in the interchange. For what Shauna portrays herself as wishing to have observed is the (ideally) disconcerting effect of Nicole's statement on the ex-boyfriend. Moreover, in its (likely) over-estimate of the effect of Nicole's words, it empathizes with, and simultaneously inflates, the extent of her victory.

Observer responses, then, are responses in which recipients place themselves as imaginary witnesses to the scenes of experiences described by tellers. These are, of course, particularly appropriate for vicarious empathic response to scenes of action, and tend to be quite inapposite in the context of reports of feelings or emotions. However, they are intrinsically vicarious and subjunctive in character, offering simulacra of empathic response from a standpoint that is "external" and observational. They are "in the moment" with the teller, yet remain outside of it, close yet detached.

Response cries

With non-lexical response cries – "signs meant to be taken to index directly the state of the transmitter" (Goffman 1981: 116) – recipients more closely approach empathic connection with the reported experiences of their interlocutors. Almost all response cries are amenable to sound stretches which can carry sustained and elaborate prosodic details.¹ While Couper-Kuhlen (in press) has suggested that hopes of one-to-one matches between prosody and semantic aspects of affective or emotional displays are likely

¹ As noted by Freese and Maynard (1998: 213):

Recipients' turns in news deliveries tend to employ more dramatic prosody than deliverers'. This difference may be attributed partially to differences in the shapes of the turns; deliverers' turns are constructed as sentential units that evaluate the news as it is reported, while recipients' turns are compact phrases (or even single words) that are more exclusively dedicated to the task of evaluating the news. Because deliverers are producing information-as-news, they have more complex turn-organizational tasks, whereas recipient turns can attend more narrowly to emotive displays.

to be disappointed, she has also pointed to the ways in which sequential context elaborates prosodic detail in ways that invite specific emotional readings. It is in this context that we can consider response cries as vehicles for empathic alignments between speakers and hearers.

For example, in the following case, Jenny's son David took a message asking her to call her friend Vera as soon as possible (see lines 3–4). However, as it turns out, Vera's objective in contacting Jenny – having Jenny spend time with Vera's son and daughter-in-law before they went away – is no longer viable (lines 6–8):

- (17)
- 1 VER: Hello,
 2 JEN: Hello Vera[?]
 3 VER: [He:llo Jenny ev yih jus got [back
 4 JEN: [I jus got in: en
 5 [David] said thet chu'd called.]
 6 VER: [A h:] I thought ah'd a'caught] yuh ah thought you coulda
 7 called up fuh coffee.
 8 JEN: Oh::: Have they'av yih visitiz g[one then,]
 9 VER: [They'v |gə:|ne. Yes,
 10 JEN: → #Oh[:ah.#]
 11 VER: [E::n]:- theh'v gun tuh Jea:n's mothuh's no: [w yihkno:w,
 12 JEN: [Y e: s::]:.
 13 JEN: Mm?
 14 VER: Eh:m: ah don't think theh'll get up again ei:thuh.

The news conveys a double disappointment – Jenny has missed a social opportunity, but more consequentially Vera's son and daughter-in-law have unexpectedly curtailed their visit (as it transpires, to visit the wife's parents [Raymond and Heritage 2006]). Jenny initially registers the import of Vera's news at line 8 and, on its confirmation, produces a stretched “#Oh:ah.#” with some vocal creak (line 10). The effect is to convey sorrow or disappointment (Couper-Kuhlen in press). While this conveys her own disappointment at a missed opportunity, it also closely affiliates with the tone of Vera's announcement (lines 6–7) conveyed by its “Ah:” preface, and its news that the son and daughter-in-law have left unexpectedly early. Here then Jenny registers a basic level of empathic affiliation while, by not elaborating her response, she does not articulate its precise object, leaving her feelings equivocal between her own (slight) disappointment and empathy at Vera's greater distress (see also Goodwin and Goodwin 1987).

It is a significant feature of empathic response cries that, by not distinguishing between the report of the event and the event itself as the target of response, they can attain a closer degree of empathy with the reported experience than might otherwise be the case. The following is an elaborated

instance of this. Pat, whose house burned down the previous night, is recounting what happened:

- (18)
- 1 Pat: =cz ih wz j st like en hou:r one weh- .hhhhh Oh:: hh!
 2 We coulda been, if we were sleepi:ng, (0.2) we would not
 3 be here.=
 4 Pat: =or one of us.would probly not be here becuz .hhhh w-our
 5 whole bedroom would'v caved in.the whole house is jist
 6 three feet of ashes. hh[hhhh
 7 Pen: → [Oh:: whho:[w
 8 Pat: [It happened within minutes.
 9 .hh Within a half hour the house wz go:ne I guess,=
 10 Pen: → =Ohhh go:(d),
 11 Pat: So it's jist l[i:ke, we wouldn', we just would'na been
 12 Pen: [hhh
 13 here. hh yihkno:w,
 14 Pen: → [Ohhh ba:by.
 15 Pat: [There's no way ih wz ih wz jus:, we're jist lucky I guess:,
 16 Pen: → .hhhh Okay waidaminnit I don't know if yer cryi-in b't I
 17 → hhh(h)a[hhhm uh hu:h] .hhh=
 18 Pat: [(hhhh No.)
 19 Pat: =.hh I wz guh- I- middle a'the night la-ast night I
 20 wannhhhdhhhtihh c(h)all (h)y(h)ou .mhhh! I [said] oh: I
 21 Pen: [uh hh-]=
 22 Pat: wish I wz at [lunch so I c'go talk tuh Penn(h)y
 23 hh[hh .hhh
 24 Pen: → [Yehh(h)ehh .h[hhh
 25 Pat: [(Cz) that's wd I wz rea:lly, [(But-)
 26 Pen: → [Oh:::,
 27 Pat: N-I don't know.I really do feel better now. .hh[hhh
 28 Pen: [Yih d-okay.
 29 Pat: =I really really do so don't hh don't be upset for
 30 me hhh hnh .hh

Across the details of Pat's report, Penny acknowledges successive revelations with a series of breathy response cries (lines 7, 10, 14) that convey a strong sense of empathic affiliation.² These culminate with a declaration (lines 16–17) that explicitly claims empathic communion with Pat contemporaneous with its current retelling. Significantly, Pat initially denies the feelings that Penny attributes to her (line 18), but she is prompted to report her feelings of the previous night in a strongly affiliative sequence (lines 19–20, 22–23, 25–26), before concluding with an optimistic projection (Jefferson 1988).

² On “breathiness” or aspiration as a component of emotional display, see Hepburn (2004) and Whalen and Zimmerman (1998).

Response cries, then, express empathic sentiments primarily through prosody. By responding to reports of events non-propositionally, they advance closer to the lived reality of the feelings the reported events have (or may have) aroused in others. By not discriminating between feelings that the teller associated with the event, and the sentiments the telling is arousing in the respondent, response cries evoke and claim a degree of empathic union and affiliation between teller and recipient. These positive advantages notwithstanding, response cries normally pave the way for more propositional and substantive forms of understanding and affiliation. While building an emotional platform from which this affiliation can be launched, the propositional content of later acts of affiliation will ideally be attentive to, and congruent with, the telling. In 18 above, Penny's act of substantive affiliation (lines 16–17) misfires, and in 20 below we will see similar difficulties in the management of propositional alignment that, as in 18, cause temporary slippage in the empathic affiliation achieved by the parties. In the end, then, response cries frequently issue an emotional IOU that must subsequently be cashed in propositional terms.

The affordances of experience descriptions and their demands

By now we have got far enough to register the considerable diversity of responses to reports of experience, ranging from ancillary questions that, as often as not, fully decline empathic response, through “my side” or parallel assessments that, while affiliative, decline to enter into the experience of the other, to “subjunctive assessments” that enter, as it were, provisionally into the other's experience. Only with the response cries and the “into-the-moment” responses do recipients undertake to engage fully with the experiences reported by the experienter.

However, we can also note that these reports themselves vary widely in terms of their affordances for empathic response. A report of eating a delicious asparagus pie can be empathically addressed by one who has eaten such a thing (Extract 11), as can a story of nude swimming by one who has done it (Extract 12). Eating asparagus pie with crab meat on the bottom is an altogether more specific experience, however, and one for which, unless she is a chef or a gourmet, a person may have difficulty in managing a convincing display of empathic appreciation. We can thus suggest a certain paradox about empathic moments. Relatively typical experiences are more readily shared, but may not be treated as requiring empathic displays, or at least as requiring less intense displays. More specific experiences, for example a movement-by-movement report of a symphonic concert, or a course-by-course description of a gourmet meal, are less readily shared.

Yet, paradoxically, the more detailed and granular the description, the more obligation may be imposed on a recipient to exhibit empathic union with the describer. These descriptions may obligate empathic responses that require expertise or imagination or both.

It is against this background that we can see the decisive advantages of narrative in general, and of direct reported speech in particular, as a resource for eliciting empathic alignment. For narratives take recipients “into the moment” and supply the resources for empathic response. The enhanced granularity of direct reported speech, which is a frequent climax of narrative accounts (Coulmas 1986; Labov 1972; Polanyi 1982; Tannen 1989), can take a recipient to the very brink of the action and the experiences that it engenders, offering exceptional affordances for empathic alignment (see Extract 16).

In the remainder of this chapter, we will explore these affordances in more detail by reference to a single story.

The sale at the vicarage

In the following story, Lesley tells her friend Joyce about an incident in which she was insulted at a charity sale. The story begins with a preface (lines 2–3) projecting the type of story to come (Jefferson 1978; Sacks 1974). The details of the story are presented with some care. The “sale at the vicarage” is presented as a “known event” to Joyce with the demonstrative “that” (line 5), and the main protagonist is introduced with a marked (and ironical) recognitional reference (Stivers 2007a) as “Your friend 'n mi:ne” (line 10). When this reference is not recognized, Lesley attempts a second marked reference form “mMister: R;,” (line 13), this time successfully:

(19)

- 1 JOY: 'JYe:-s I'm alright,
 2 LES: 'Oh:." hh Yi-m- You [know I-I- I'm boiling about
 3 something hhhheh[hgeh hhhh
 4 JOY: [Wha:t.
 5 LES: Well that sa|:le. (0.2) at- at (.) the vicarage.
 6 (0.6)
 7 JOY: Oh |ye|:s,
 8 LES: [t
 9 (0.6)
 10 LES: u (.) ihYour friend 'n mi:ne wz the:re
 11 (0.2)
 12 (): (h[h hh)
 13 LES: [mMister: R;
 14 JOY: (Oh ye:s hheh)
 15 (0.4)

- 16 LES: And em: p ^we (.) ^really didn't have a lot'v cha:nge
 17 |that (.) day becu:z we'd b:en to |Bath 'n we'd b:en:
 18 Christmas shoppin:g, (0.5) but we thought we'd better
 19 go along t'th'sale 'n d: what we could, (0.2) we had^n't
 20 got a lot (.) of s:e- ready cash t'^spe:nd.
 21 (0.3)
 22 LES: t|hh
 23 JOY: [Mh.=
 24 LES: =In ^any |case we thought th'things were v:ery
 25 ex^pen|sive.
 26 JOY: Oh d:|d you.
 27 (0.9)
 28 LES: AND uh ^we were looking rou-nd the |sta:lls 'n poking
 29 about 'n h: came up t'me 'n he said Oh: hhello Lesley,
 30 (.) ^still trying to buy something fuh nothing,

The sale at the vicarage will predominantly have featured relatively inexpensive items, all of which would be sold for charity. These details are accommodated in Lesley's account of not having a lot of "ready cash to ^spe:nd" (line 20), after Christmas shopping in Bath (lines 16–18). She is also careful to index the charitable obligations that took her to the sale nonetheless – "but we thought we'd better go along t'th'sale 'n d: what we could," (lines 18–19) – and to note that the things were "very ex^pen|sive." By the time of the reported incident (at lines 28–30), it appears that Lesley has not bought anything at the sale. However, her interlocutor's attack is presented as unprovoked and unjustified. The lack of provocation is portrayed in her account of the circumstances of the remarks, i.e., (i) immediately following their meeting ("h: came up t'me 'n he said"), and (ii) as the first action after a greeting ("he said Oh: hhello Lesley, (.) ^still trying to buy something fuh nothing,").³ The raw injustice of the attack is provided for in Lesley's earlier account of her charitable motivations for attending the sale (lines 18–19).

The reaction sequence is complex and nuanced. It begins with a strongly "into-the-moment" empathic response: Joyce enacts a sharp intake of breath, mirroring the kind of response a recipient would have had as the victim of an unprovoked surprise attack, especially given its evident injustice. After nearly a second, Joyce enacts a second response ("Oo::: Les ley") which is also compatible with surprise (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2006), now accompanied by an address term which also expresses empathic affiliation (cf. Clayman 2010). Immediately after the

³ The incorporation of the word "still" into the voicing of this direct reported speech may suggest that, though it is not described in her account, this may not have been Lesley's first meeting with her interlocutor at the sale or, alternatively, that the interlocutor is invoking a previous encounter.

onset of this new response, Lesley mirrors it (Extract 20, line 35) before breaking into troubles-resistant laughter (Jefferson 1984b). At this point Lesley and her friend have precisely matched responses to the reported incident, and Joyce has taken up a strongly empathic position through the use of response cries.

- (20)
 28 LES: AND uh ^we were looking rou-nd the |sta:lls 'n poking
 29 about 'n h: came up t'me 'n he said Oh: hhello Lesley,
 30 (.) ^still trying to buy something fuh nothing,
 31 () tch!
 32 JOY: .hhahhhhhh!
 33 (0.8)
 34 JOY: Oo[: ::]: Lesley]
 35 LES: [^Oo:]ehh heh ^heh]
 36 (0.2)
 37 JOY: |I:s[n 't] |the
 38 LES: [^What]do ^y[ou ^sa:y.
 39 (0.3)
 40 JOY: |Oh isn't h: |drea:dful.
 41 LES: °eYe-:-s:
 42 (0.6)
 43 () tch
 44 JOY: What'n aw::f' | ma::[: ::n
 45 LES: [ehh heh-heh-^heh
 46 JOY: Oh:: honestly, |I cannot stand the man it's just
 47 (no[:)
 48 LES: [|I t'bought well I'm gon' tell Joyce that, eh[h]heh=
 49 JOY: [:]=
 50 LES: =[heh-heh he-e] uh: ^e[h eh^ hhhh
 51 JOY: =[O h:: : :] I [d: think he's drea:dful
 52 LES: tch Oh: dea-r
 53 JOY: Oh: he r[eally i]:s,
 54 LES: [^He dra-]ih-he (.) took the win' out'v my sails
 55 c'mpletel(h)y
 56 (.)
 57 JOY: I know The awk:ward thing is you've never got a ready
 58 a:n[swer h:ave |you. |that's r]i:ght,]
 59 LES: [No: I thought'v] lots'v]ready a]nswers
 60 a:fterward[s,
 61 JOY: [Yes that's ri::gh[t.
 62 LES: [Yes
 63 (.)
 64 JOY: But you c'n never think of them at the ti:|me
 65 LES: [No:,
 66 LES: [No:.
 67 JOY: [A:fterwards I always think (.) °oh I should've said°

- 68 [that. or I]should]’ve said thi]s.
 69 LES: [Oh y e s j e h-]r i: g h t.]
 70 (0.7)
 71 JOY: B[ut I d o: ’n t think a ’t h ’m at the t i: m e
 72 LES: [°M m: .
 73 (): (t e (h) ([t c h)
 74 LES: [e h h h u [h h u h
 75 (0.8)
 76 JOY: Oh:: g-Oh ’n I think Carol is going, t’the
 77 [m e e [t i n g t ’ n] i g h t,]
 78 LES: [h h [Y E : S] t h a t ’ s r j i: g h t. i- u h

After line 35, however, Lesley and Joyce start to take divergent positions about the incident. Perhaps in congruence with Lesley’s marked person reference introducing the story, Joyce starts to evaluate the man she knows rather than the behaviors described. She initiates a turn at line 37, abandons it, and then renews it at line 40: “|Oh isn’t he |drea:dful.” Both the *oh*-prefacing and the negative interrogative aspects of this turn point to its production as a strongly independent position about the man and his character (Heritage 2002a, b). And Joyce sustains this stance further at lines 44 and 46, 51 and 53. At the same time (line 38), Lesley initiates an assessment of the incident in terms of its shock and the difficulty of fabricating a response: “^What do ^you ^sa:y.”, a stance which she does not pursue, until she renews it at line 54.

Once Joyce has exhausted her initial outrage against the perpetrator (indexed by the recycling of her assessment of him as “dreadful” [lines 51 and 53]), Lesley renews her focus on specifics of the incident and the difficulty of response: “^He dra- ih- h e (.) took the win’ out’v my sails c’mp^letel(h)y” (lines 54–55). This time Joyce affiliates with her in a flurry of “my side” parallel assessments (lines 57–58, 64, 67–68, 71), finally leading to sequence closure and a new topic start (line 76).

Here, then, a sequence that was begun with remarkable empathic affiliation and synchrony slipped into less than full agreement as the parties began to diverge in what they were prepared to treat as the primary assessable aspect of the event. Agreement was restored, though at some twenty lines of distance from the story climax, as both women settled for the difficulties of response to the unexpected insult as the thing to be reviewed. From thence, agreement crystallized into sequence closure.

The sequence is instructive in that, after her initial response to the story climax, Joyce focused on characteristics of the protagonist that she knew *independently of the story* as the basis for empathy, even though that line of response attracted support from Lesley that was lukewarm at best (lines 41, 45, 48, 50, 52). It may be that independently accessible aspects of a

scene are often preferred by an empathizer, who wishes empathic affiliation to transcend the particulars of a report, and to escape into independent agreement that is not merely responsive to the report’s details alone.

Discussion

The empathic moments discussed in this chapter evidence several knotty dilemmas, both for those who would furnish opportunities for empathic engagement, and for those who are obligated to respond to them. These dilemmas revolve around the moral obligations to respond that arise through tellers’ initiatives, and the affordances of the tellings for recipient response.

From a teller’s perspective, a key decision concerns the level of granularity with which an experience is to be reported. As previously noted, a relatively generalized account can invite, and legitimately receive, a less committed and more pro forma response. With each increase in detail, a teller increases pressure on the motivation and ability of the recipient to respond empathetically. In this context, the affordances of the telling become ever more critical for, without favorable affordances, the recipient may simply be unable to rise to the challenge. It is perhaps these considerations which motivate the selection of narrative as a primary means with which to express experiences that are both intensely emotional and intensely particular. For the affordances of narrative in general, and the specific value of concluding a narrative with direct reported speech, permit the coincidence of exact detail and the possibility of precisely calibrated emotional response.

For the recipient with the obligation to respond, a first concern is with the affordances for response. Accounts of music that the recipient has never heard, or dishes never tasted, can place stern demands on even the most motivated and dedicated recipient. Yet, paradoxically, even greater difficulties can emerge when recipients have independent access to the persons and places described. For here decisions must be taken as to whether the response is to be made in terms of the account just given, or whether it is to be augmented with the independent personal judgements of the recipient. In the event that the latter choice is made, while there may be a strengthening of the endorsement of the teller’s position and emotions, it may be achieved – as in 20 above – at the cost of disattending the specifics of the telling. This can result in a substitution of the recipient’s experience for the teller’s as the basis for the response, in a process through which the recipient supplants the teller as the “experiencer of record.”

Thus, as in other domains of social knowledge, these data suggest a distance–involvement dilemma involved in constructing intimate self–other relations (Raymond and Heritage 2006). In acts of affiliation, Raymond

and Heritage (2006: 701) note: "persons must manage the twin risks of appearing disengaged from the affairs of the other, or over-involved and even appropriating of them." It is striking that the management of these risks can become demanding when the parties are close friends or relatives with intimate knowledge of one another's lives and activities, and when the matter to be addressed is emotionally loaded.⁴

Conclusion

Ever since Durkheim's (1915: 415–447) identification of the limits of society with the limits of its collective representations, sociologists and anthropologists have maintained an interest in territories of knowledge and their maintenance, now conceived in contemporary research as socio-cultural extensions of basic referential faculties determined by Tomasello *et al.* (2005) and others as unique to the human species. In recent years, beginning with the work of Alfred Schütz (1962), there has been extensive work on how shared sociocognitive constructs are sustained through practices of interaction (Clark 1992, 1996; Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984b; Jefferson 2004; Pollner 1987; Schegloff 1992; Schegloff *et al.* 1977).

At the same time, social scientists have also examined knowledge that is treated as "owned" by virtue of membership in a collectivity (Sharrock 1974). The ownership of knowledge, whether religious, professional, technical or personal, is associated with methods of talking that encode specific rights and responsibilities in the representation of events (Kamio 1997; Kuno 1987). Thus journalists distinguish between first-hand and derivative access to breaking news as relevant for the rights to describe it (Raymond 2000; Roth 2002); callers to emergency services report matters differently depending on whether they are bystanders to an incident or victims (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990); and patients offer medical diagnoses to physicians only under relatively particular circumstances (Gill 1998; Gill and Maynard 2006; Heritage and Robinson 2006). In each of these cases, the distribution of rights and responsibilities regarding what participants can accountably know, how they know it, whether they have rights to describe it and in what terms, is directly implicated in organized practices of speaking. These differential rights extend into the realm of everyday events and their representations, where issues of priority and epistemic territory are the objects of near-relentless interactional calibration (Heritage

⁴ Issues of a different character emerge when physicians and social workers depart from their customary "neutral" or "service supply" stance (Jefferson 1988; Jefferson and Lee 1992 [1981]) to empathize with patients or clients (Beach and Dixon 2001; Hepburn and Potter 2007; Ruusuvuori 2005), for here professionals depart from a normatively sanctioned stance of "affective neutrality" (Parsons 1951).

and Raymond 2005; Raymond and Heritage 2006; Schegloff 1996a; Stivers 2005a).

In contrast with territories of knowledge, with their teeming range of practices and actions to litigate rights and priorities, territories of experience present a more sequestered aspect. If difficulties with the social organization of knowledge concern the management of ownership and priority in relation to mutually accessible goods, difficulties in the social organization of experience concern the construction of resources by which an interlocutor can reach toward moments of genuine singularity. In empathic moments, two great moral systems grind into one another. The first, concerned with respect for the personal experiential preserves of the individual on which coherent personhood itself ultimately depends, collides with a second that mandates human affiliation within a community of persons and a common social, moral and cultural heritage. Under such circumstances, the practical achievement of an empathic moment concerns, to adapt Garfinkel's (1952: 114) marvelous phrasing, how persons "isolated, yet simultaneously in an odd communion, go about the business of constructing an order together."

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The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation

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