" *Whereas a worker would joke about an angry applicant and remark about their 'gall,' silence often follows an interview with a crying applicant, after which a worker speaks of their 'feelings'.* "

"YOU'RE NOT A STONE"
Emotional Sensitivity in a
Bureaucratic Setting

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Although the emotion management perspective dominates the micro-sociological study of emotions, a phenomenological approach provides access to phenomena that are inaccessible through emotion management. While the former shows the strategic management of one's emotions to conform to norms, the latter reveals the myriad ways in which emotions move us. Indeed, if not for the poignant resonance of emotions in social life, emotions would hardly be worth "managing." This article will employ a phenomenological perspective on emotions as they were expressed by applicants and workers in a Section 8 housing office throughout the course of eligibility interviews. I will show that despite giving off an impression of detachment and neutrality, workers are unavoidably sensitive to the emotional displays of applicants. Hence, a research agenda focusing on interpersonal emotional sensitivity is proposed as a complement to the conceptualization of emotions as managed.

Keywords: *phenomenology; emotion management; human service work; housing; anger; crying; office culture*

"Thus the great movements of enthusiasm, indignation, and pity in a crowd do not originate in any one of the particular individual consciousnesses. They come to each one of us from without and can carry us away in spite of ourselves. . . . *We are then victims of the illusion of having ourselves created that which actually forced itself from without*."

—Emile Durkheim (1938, 5;
emphasis added)

"Why would not the synergy exist among different organisms, if it is possible within each? Their landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly: this is possible as soon as we no longer make belongingness to one same 'consciousness' the primordial definition of sensibility, and as soon as we rather understand it as the return of the visible upon itself, a carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient."

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968, 142)

T he sensations one experiences in the presence of one who becomes angry or cries are a routine part of many work settings. Poignant, lasting, and imminently sociological, these sensations are

actively anticipated and enduringly remembered by those who engage in customer service work (such as airline attendants, cashiers, and bill collectors) and in human service work (such as nurses, social workers and teachers). Yet they are left as a residual category by the most often-cited theoretical framework for understanding emotions in the workplace. Hochschild's (1979, 1983, 1990, 1998) seminal work on emotion management and the studies it has inspired (Smith and Kleinman 1989; Stenross and Kleinman 1989; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989; Sutton 1991; Leidner 1993; Tolich 1993; Wharton and Erickson 1995; Thoits 1996; Wharton 1999; Francis 1997; Copp 1998; Chin 2000; Lively 2000, to cite a few) look at the discrepancy between these feelings and the feelings workers are supposed to feel as dictated by management. However, by focusing on this discrepancy, the situated interactional dynamics of the original emotional episode is left unexamined. Furthermore, as studies influenced by and falling under the rubric of symbolic interactionism, they emphasize the "'doing' of emotional behavior, glossing over, at times seemingly denying the possibility of researching the quality of 'being done' by external forces that distinguishes emotional experience" (Katz 1995, 20). This article examines how those "external forces" might be another's emotional expression, by examining how housing eligibility workers respond to the anger and tears of homeless applicants who are denied a subsidy.

Through her model of emotion management, Hochschild shows how individuals attune themselves through "surface acting" and "deep acting" to the rules and ideologies of private and public life. In the former, which is derived from Goffman (1959, 1961; see Hochschild 1983, 216-7), one changes the surface appearance of an emotion without changing the emotion. Hochschild's *cri du coeur*, however, is raised against the commodification of deep acting, in which one changes their inner feeling to change their emotional expression. For while emotional "work" is an everyday phenomenon, emotional "labor" that is compelled by an employer can bring about "emotive dissonance" (Hochschild 1983, 90), which Hochschild argues has the frightening consequence of alienating service workers from their own feelings.

Although Hochschild expands on Goffman by introducing actors with an awareness and a sensitivity to their inner feelings, like Goffman, she neglects to show how these actors are attuned to the feelings of others. Hence, Heath's (1988, 155) mild correction of Goffman—that when "the analytic model conceals the actual conduct of the participants, . . .

the actual interaction itself is lost"—equally applies to Hochschild. His paper, which is based on an assiduous analysis of video data of patients undergoing physical medical examinations, shows how embarrassment, far from destroying the possibility of face-to-face interaction, as Goffman (1956) claims, is actually finely attuned to the nuances of the exchange. For instance, the actions of a patient gesturing rapidly, passing her hand over her chest as she blinks and shakes her head, is "*fired*" (Heath, 1988, 142) by the doctor's ambiguous glance. Such actions are difficult to conceptualize as "acting" or as issues of "self" or "identity" but rather are "systematically organized with respect to the local environment of action" (p. 146).

While Heath and his tradition of ethnomethodological conversation analysis retrieves the "nip and tuck" of interaction, he still does not capture "the quality of 'being done' by external forces that distinguishes emotional experience." What this requires can be rather daunting, as it usurps the subject/object dualism inherited from Descartes ([1640] 1960), which is foundational to the presuppositions of Western (but not Eastern) academic thinking. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) made brave inroads in this terrain by providing the philosophical basis to posit that "we can never disengage ourselves from the 'hold the world has on us'" (quoted in Ostrow 1990, 26). Ostrow uses the example of writing to demonstrate the point: "I do not typically grasp my pen as an object of awareness; rather, it is part of the context of a specific form of awareness: theoretical reflection. . . . My contact with the pen is preobjective in the sense that it is part of the texture of consciousness that posits particular objects of attention" (see also Sudnow 1978, 1979; Harper 1987). Or, to borrow a repeated motif from Katz (1999, 316; see Franks 1987)—who has borrowed from James ([1890] 1950)— "I see the charging bear with my running feet."

Emotional experience exemplifies this "preobjective realm of experience," or "flesh" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 135). Emotions are preobjective in the ways they "do us," as when an image of heroism moves one to tears, or one finds oneself screaming at a bad driver. When one is "done" by the emotions of others, it is often termed "emotional contagion" (Thoits 1996), as if emotions were a virus passed from one person to another rather than an interpersonal, intersubjective phenomenon that constitutes our social space.

The literature of human service work is replete with indications of the emotional weightiness of "flesh" among those providing service and those being served (Oleson and Bone 1998). Professional canons of ethics, schools of training, politicians, and administrators regularly advocate a model of human interaction that emphasizes "caring and responsibility," yet as Lipsky (1980, 73) notes, this "myth of altruism" is "incompatible with their need to judge and control clients for bureaucratic purposes." Or as Hochschild (1983, 150) claims, "Psychiatrists, social workers, and ministers, for example, are expected to feel concern, to empathize, and yet to avoid 'too much' liking or disliking." Nevertheless, in those occasions of human service work that determine the prospective identity of the client, the worker is necessarily implicated in the client's emotional response to their decision. Hence, many institutions handle such situations with a minimum of interaction, such as when schools or hospitals offer anonymous rather than interpersonal evaluation procedures. However, in some circumstances, such as those discussed in this article, or when a physician is "bearing bad news," workers must handle a client's emotional response to the workers' pronouncement of their transformation in identity.

Such "handling" is both interpersonal and intrapersonal, for in such a face-to-face situation, the intersubjectivity of talk (Heritage 1984) implies the intercorporeality of emotions (Katz 1999). This article will show how, even in a bureaucratic structure in which workers seem to operate "without hate and therefore without love" (Weber 1946, 333-4), workers and clients share an emotional synergy (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 142). Because workers know this, they struggle in numerous ways to resist it. Yet, even when clients are "cut off" from the program, workers often have great difficulty cutting themselves off from clients' emotions. Using resources from the three traditions of symbolic interactionism, conversation analysis, and phenomenology, this article examines the resources workers draw on to remain "detached" despite clients' emotional displays. After describing the setting and methods, I will examine how resistance is accomplished through the affective neutrality of the physical setting and workers' demeanor, workers' interactional ways of cooling out the mark, the ways workers deal with clients' anger and tears, and workers' long-term strategies for grappling with clients' emotions.

SETTING AND METHODS[1]

The Housing and Urban Development Section 8 program is the largest housing program in the United States, subsidizing the rent for approximately 5 percent of rental units in most metropolitan areas, for a total of more than 2.5 million units nationwide at an annual cost of more than $10.5 billion (U.S. Department of Commerce 1993). Created in response to the perceived failures of the Section 235 home ownership program and the Section 236 rental program, which provided interest subsidies on loans, the Section 8 program provides direct subsidies to landlords who rent to Section 8 tenants within a locally determined ceiling on rents, called the fair market rent. Despite the fact that "use value goals like racial integration, energy conservation, or environmental amenity cannot be shaped by a national housing policy in which government passively writes checks to be spent in the marketplace" (Logan and Molotch 1987, 170), the program has endured for the past thirty years.

Wayside City is a well-established community of about 100,000, contiguous with a large metropolitan area. The city is ethnically and racially diverse, with both a substantial affluent population and a large number of homeless. The caseworkers are Maria, a Latina; Joe, an African American; and Lou, a Caucasian. Four other officers staff the office full-time besides the caseworkers: the manager, Frank, a Caucasian; the supervisor, Anna, an African American; the waiting list coordinator, Susan, an African American; and an administrative assistant, Tom, a Caucasian.[2]

This article arose out of a six-month period of participant observation in 1993, from a setting where I had worked as a temporary receptionist the prior year. I did not begin fieldwork to study emotions in interaction, and my initial analyses of this data were not focused on this topic (see Garot, 2004). On further coding, however, I was struck by the emotionally charged nature of many staff-client exchanges and began to focus on these episodes and the ways staff members accounted for them.

While participation and observation are never mutually exclusive, certain times were marked more by one action than the other. I participated in the setting by assisting eligibility workers with preinterview and postinterview paperwork, substituting for the receptionist on four occasions when he was out of the office, and assisting workers on an ad hoc basis. I observed forty-three closed-door intake interviews, which I

was not allowed to tape record or videotape due to the manager's concern for client anonymity. Section 8 interviewers were informed that their applicant had arrived via a call from the receptionist, and I would accompany the interviewer to meet the client. The interviewer introduced me as a student, and asked the applicant if they minded if I observed (none did). During the interview, I sat to one side of the staff member, scribbling nearly every word of the interview by hand and transcribing it later that evening (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995).

Immediately following the eligibility interview, I tape recorded open-ended follow-up interviews with the eligibility interviewer, exploring the interviewers' accounts of their practices and opinions of the preceding session. I was thus able to observe directly and take note of workers' interactions with clients as they occurred, and subsequently, to record workers' immediate response to and account of such events. These interviews were informal. Often following eligibility interviews, staff members critically judged their performance, wondered aloud about technical details of the case, provided justifications for their decisions, or asked if I understood what had happened. After confronting highly emotional applicants, however, staffers' usual orientation to the details of the interview was overshadowed by an emotional release of the feelings they had suppressed. As a former colleague, I felt comfortable with the workers in sharing their emotional responses, and their level of comfort with me was reflected in my unfettered access to their setting, their openness in our interviews, and their participation during a presentation of the paper in a university seminar.

AFFECTIVE NEUTRALITY

Human service workers' decisions may determine if one is going to jail, if a family may keep their child, or if one is eligible for assistance to cover basic expenses like food and medical care, or in the case that informs the findings of this article, a housing subsidy. If such a decision is negative, a client often cannot help but become emotional, and the worker "cannot help but feel guilt and concern over the predicament" (Goffman 1952, 462). Weber neglected not only how bureaucracies provide the appearance of officialdom (see Jacobs 1969) but also how this appearance is necessitated by the emotional consequences of bureaucratic decision making. Such appearances are the first line of

resistance to client pressure in the attempt to ease the burden of bearing bad news.

For a client entering the Wayside Section 8 office, such appearances connote an air of affective neutrality (Parsons 1951, Smith and Kleinman 1989). Outside, the building is a nondescript beige stucco, marked only with a number. On the other side of the front door sits an intimidating security guard, watching over a maze of hallways. Once in the office, a waiting area separates workers from clients with a plate of thick, unbreakable glass. When the client meets the worker, they find that in accord with the decor, workers dress and act formally, wearing clothes that clients are often unable to afford and using technical terms that have not been defined. In effect, the worker, who has resources, says in many ways to the applicant, who claims to lack necessary resources, "I am not you." With an upright posture, stiff movements and formal diction, they employ the bodily metaphor[3] of being like a computer. This is especially palpable to the applicant in the purposeful, routinized way the worker matches the applicant's evidence to data provided in the application. These enacted, embodied metaphors of distance and being a computer provide the prereflective, unspoken sense that the worker will be unmoved by any emotional plea. This alone must mitigate against many applicants attempting to press their cases.

Students of medical practitioners have long noted a similar tendency among doctors (Parsons 1951; Smith and Kleinman 1989). Becker and Geer (1961) and then Good and Good (1989) have shown how such a stance derives from the experience of medical school and the need to maintain a psychological distance from clients as a professional (Haas and Shaffir 1984). Also termed "detached concern" (Lief and Fox 1963), it is symbol of their professional stature (Haas and Shaffir 1982) and aids them in maintaining control over the medical encounter (Emerson 1970; Light 1979; Blum and Rosenberg 1968). Such insights from symbolic interactionism provide a way of understanding bureaucrats as well as doctors, showing how subjects are tacitly responding to transcendent implications of the moment (Katz 1995).

COOLING OUT THE MARK

To understand how the shield of affective neutrality may be pierced by bureaucrats' sensitivity to clients' emotional displays, we must look

to the structure of bureaucrats' routine interactions with clients in eligibility interviews. Such interactions are guided by the bureaucrats' questions (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) to determine if an applicants' responses fit the human service program's organizationally embedded (Bittner 1965; Zimmerman 1966; Gubrium and Holstein 1993) notion of qualification. Such questions limit applicants' explanations of their life circumstances, as they depend on getting the "right question" to give a "full account" (Molotch and Boden 1985, 276). Molotch and Boden note (drawing from Atkinson and Drew 1979) that such demands for "just the facts," the simple answers, the forced-choice response, precludes the "whole story" that contains another's truth. Such questioning practices embody the bureaucrat's routine exercise of power, yet Section 8 applicants have artful ways of introducing their personal experience into eligibility interviews, as we will see below.

Douglas Maynard (1991a) analyzes such "bad news delivery" by examining how doctors inform parents that their child is mentally retarded. First, they often invite the parent to share their perspective, and after their response, they deliver "the news" (Maynard 1992), thereby structuring the informing to preserve visible solidarity (Maynard 1991b), which is more "effective" than other strategies, such as stalling or being blunt (Maynard 1996). These findings are helpful in guiding physicians in a very difficult task, and they reveal "the kind of responses that the bad news recipient provides." Yet they do not show how the clinician responds to the patient's receipt of the news, stating only that "deliverers themselves are not immune to emotional reactivity" (Maynard 1991a, 148) (this also alluded to, but not examined, by Rubin and Rubin [1980], and Solomons and Menolascino [1968]).

In "saying 'no'" to applicants, housing subsidy workers carefully avoid saying the word "no" or anything else negative to applicants whom they reject. They also present the rejection as temporary and contingent rather than final and conclusive. Third, they portray the rejection as an objective fact, citing formal eligibility requirements that the applicant does not meet (see Spencer and McKinney 1997). They are also careful not to tell the applicant how to make themselves qualified. As one worker states, "Without telling them what to do, I explain to them the regulations." Finally, the worker portrays the rejection in a positive way, using shoring practices (McClenahen and Lofland 1976), such as referring to the program as a "safety net" in case their "situation changes" (Katz 1982). As Goffman (1952, 452) discusses, consolation

is an artful practice in which the "cooler" "define(s) the situation for the mark in a way that makes it easy for him to accept the inevitable and quietly go home." The following excerpt from a housing eligibility officer demonstrates the use of such strategies in an instance of worker rhetoric that I heard with such regularity that the workers seemed to have it memorized (see Miller 1991).

> You don't have a preference at this time. To have a preference, you must either be paying 50% of your income towards your rent, live in substandard housing, or have been evicted for a reason other than the nonpayment of rent. If not, we'll keep you on the waiting list, so that if your situation changes we can call you back in.

Despite the workers' rhetorical efforts to ease the applicant from hope to rejection, most applicants remain in the office to provide additional reasons to be accepted onto the program, telling of dire consequences if they are unable to receive a housing subsidy (Hughes 1971, 346-7). The following excerpt highlights these difficulties of "cooling the mark out." The staff member, Anna, an African American with five years of experience doing eligibility interviews, has determined that the applicant is ineligible for a subsidy because his papers show he is not paying 50% or more of his income towards rent. After the worker makes what could well be the final statement of the interview, the applicant, Manuel, a Latino who came to the interview with his wife and child, raises the prospect that he could become homeless since his landlord prefers government subsidized tenants.[4]

> Anna: So we'll keep you on the waiting list, and if your income decreases or your rent is higher, review it with us.
> Manuel: Right now, this apartment is not really ours. The owner doesn't wanna rent to us. Where'm I gonna go?
> Anna [*quietly*]: I don't know.
> Manuel: He prefers Section 8. I'm gonna be out of a place. That's why I'm applying for this.
> Anna: I suggest you try to find a place here that's not too expensive. [*Manuel and his family get up and leave the office.*]

Following the worker's mitigated denial of the applicant, the applicant calls on the worker to acknowledge his experiential circumstances and the ensuing crisis in his life wrought by the denial of a subsidy:

"Where'm I gonna go?" The worker offers him no assistance, although she does respond in the first person, not in terms of "the program." The interview is now in a liminal (Durkheim [1912] 1965; Turner 1977) stage, outside the worker's usual script of questions. This is typically the place in the interview where applicants become "emotional" and press their claims for further consideration of their case. When the applicant rephrases his complaint, elaborating on potential problems, the worker responds with a bit of cursory advice, without deviating from her detached, impersonal stance.

Applicants' responses to being denied a subsidy range along a continuum from accepting, to stunned, to anger and tears. Of the applicants observed, only one, an elderly woman whose income was over the eligibility limit, responded unemotionally when she was rejected from the program. She stated, "Oh well, I guess there are other people worse off," and smiled as she left the office. Most applicants, however, remain in the office, often providing an additional reason to be accepted into the program and speaking of dire consequences if they are unable to receive a housing subsidy. In examining some of the clearest, most dramatic episodes of clients' anger and tears, we will see how housing subsidy workers are able to maintain their affective neutrality with angry clients, yet face more difficulty when confronted with an applicant's tears, which may actually influence a worker's eligibility decision.

Following the confrontations with emotional applicants, we will see how staff members engage in an emotional release. After interviewing applicants who become angry, workers often joke about them, enacting delayed, reciprocal anger from the eligibility session. Following interviews with applicants who cry, however, workers often speak in terms of their feelings. Such data reveal the transcendent relevance of emotional experience (Katz 1999) by showing how workers are sensitive to applicants' emotions even after the applicant has left the scene.

DEALING WITH ANGER

Some applicants become angry when they realize they are being rejected. To analyze such rage, I will borrow two embodied metaphors discussed by Jack Katz (1999) in his analysis of road rage. The first is a metaphor of being "cut off." A common expression referring to the interference of another driver in one's anticipated course, Katz finds in

this the sensual experience of *amputating* one's embodied presence in the car, throwing one out of one's "car-body." Similarly, denied housing subsidy applicants are "cut off," thwarted from receiving the benefits they had anticipated and perhaps envisioned. The second metaphor is "domino games" in which one who has been "cut-off," reciprocates in kind to the offending driver. In effect, they match the "tiles" of the offender and provide them a new challenge, achieving victory if the challenge is not met and humiliation if tiles are unspent. The angry scenes that ensue when some applicants are denied a subsidy may come to resemble such disasters of highway courtesy.

Below, Lidia, a Latina who has been rejected for having an annual income over double the income eligibility limit (a salary close to the worker's), becomes angry with the worker (Anna). The applicant's eligibility was determined within the first ten turns in the interview (about 30 seconds), and the following exchange comes at the end after numerous attempts by Anna to cool out the applicant. It is a deep incursion into the liminal zone, which the applicant in the prior excerpt had only begun to breach.

> Lidia: I pay $500 rent, $200 for my son's school. I barely make it.
> Anna: On this program, you'd have to pay $1200 a month for rent to qualify as a single person. What you've got is the middle-class blues.
> Lidia: You're better off not working, not paying taxes.
> Anna [*staunchly*]: I don't agree.
> Lidia: I've accomplished a lot. I've been separated three years. I couldn't afford it until now.
> Anna [*earnestly*]: You've done very well. You should feel proud.
> Lidia: [*with a bitter, punctuated tone*]: We get the short end of the stick. The people who don't work get the advantages. [*Anna looks down and writes, ignoring her. The woman leaves*.]

To Anna, this woman is a rare applicant, whose income far exceeds the program's limits. Having conducted hundreds of eligibility interviews over more than five years, Anna has ongoing contact with those who meet federal eligibility guidelines: the disabled, elderly people, and large families. This is not one of those applicants, and Anna can easily cite the program's guidelines as a rationale for excluding her. Lidia, who dresses and acts like Anna in a professional manner, protests Anna's decision by stating how much she pays for rent and her son's private school. As their interaction proceeds, they play a domino game

in which one's responses match those of the opponent in kind, as well as provide an attack.

First, Lidia implies that her expenses for her son's private schooling are substantial enough to warrant her entry into the program. Anna responds to Lidia's numbers with her own numbers and refers to her as "middle class." Lidia responds to the invocation of class by pointing out the irony of a system that rewards those who do not work. Anna then abandons the domino game by disagreeing with Lidia without providing further characterization of her circumstances. Lidia then implies that she deserves Section 8 as a reward and that she might have been eligible for a subsidy if she did not have to wait years for an interview. Anna uses this in an attempt to congratulate the applicant, but Lidia returns to chastise the nonworking poor. Finally, only by ignoring her does Anna prompt an end to the interview. Thus, Anna manages to maintain her stance of affective neutrality in the face of the applicant's anger.

After Lidia storms out of Anna's office, Anna finally reciprocates in the domino game, with the field worker as a proxy for the righteous applicant. She explodes with, "The gall of that woman, coming in here, taking up our time and money. What a bitch! We ought to charge her for coming in here like that." Although no regulations require her to "manage" her emotions, such an expression could be right out of Hochschild (1983). According to such an analysis, Anna suppresses the anger that the applicant elicits, waiting to express herself until the applicant leaves the office. Subsequent materials from our interview apparently confirm that Anna was "surface acting," (Hochschild 1983, 33) whereby "we deceive others about what we really feel, but we do not deceive ourselves."

> Anna: I couldn't hardly take that from her could you tell?
> Author: No I couldn't tell.
> Anna: No?
> Author: You seemed pretty, you know . . .
> Anna: Nice?
> Author: Nice.
> Anna: Oh good! Maybe it's just inside. Inside it's like, get outta here. Get outta here! Get your—You know how Susan said I should take, I shoulda took her by the collar. [*She demonstrates reaching out for the client, and we laugh.*]

Phenomenology allows us to grapple with this interview as data, not only for understanding Anna's feelings but also for understanding how she accounts for those feelings. Here, she posits a vocabulary of her motives (Mills 1940) as "inside." While this is taken as unproblematic in emotion management, phenomenology posits that distinctions between inside and outside arise from our accounting practices (Ostrow 1990). Yet prior to those practices, she felt a pure rage toward a woman who embodied all the notions of middle-class entitlement and snobbery that she loathes. Metaphorically, she did manage to strangle the woman during the interview by looking down and writing and ignoring her. By managing her emotions, she expresses them much more effectively than any overt, outward display would have done. Such an expression is not lost on the applicant, who must leave after failing to arouse the ire of the worker. Perhaps this is also why joking is so common after encounters with angry applicants; making a mockery of an angry applicant provides a catharsis for emotional expression and facilitates the emotion management this bureaucratic environment is seen to require.

How could anger in one person bring laughter to another? Sacks (1995, 12-20) asked an apparently similar question in wondering "what kind of relationship was there between the statement, 'I'm going to kill myself,' and laughter." He posited that it was similar to the ceremonialized relationship of the statements, "How are you doing?" and "Fine": if one laughs, he or she can then end the interchange having heard only a "joke" rather than "a cry for help."

Such a relationship between anger and joking is found in a number of studies of human service work. Sutton (1991), for instance, notes that bill collectors displace the tension of experiencing a clients' anger by either acting angrily with coworkers or by joking. Such joking may help alleviate the boredom of the routine work of the office (Roy 1959), integrate the staff members as a group (Handelman 1976), and maintain workers' morale (Goffman 1959) as they emotionally distance themselves from their clients' troubles. Pogrebin and Poole (1988, 197-201) note that joking allows police officers "to perform their jobs regardless of the situation." Similarly, Dilorio and Nusbaumer (1993) describe how abortion escorts engage in "crazy talk and jokes" about the street counselors who continually confront and enrage them. The authors tell how the escorts justify such practices as "sanity saving strategies," while Sutton (1991, 263) calls such practices "coping mechanisms."

While eligibility interviewers take pains to maintain a detached stance when confronted with an applicant's anger, Tom, the receptionist, takes pride in his witty remarks to the public and repeats them to coworkers later. He tells another worker of a morally degrading rejoinder to a complaining client: Tom says to Joe, "A woman told me, 'My taxes pay for your job,' and I told her, 'No they don't, you don't work!'" They laugh.

Often, past difficult interactions with clients become part of an ongoing repertoire of inside stories to which workers would obliquely refer (Sacks 1984). Below, first the incident is presented and then the references to it that followed. I overhear a woman (Sue) in the front complaining to Tom that they should do something to prevent her neighbors, who are Section 8 tenants, from practicing witchcraft. She says that they have sprinkled crematory ashes on her.

> Sue: I told the management and they didn't do anything.
> Tom: They may not feel it's a problem.
> Sue: Well you may not live under the same laws as . . .
> Tom: We all live under the same laws. They signed a lease. Witchcraft is not on there as a reason for eviction.
> Sue: But if you read the contract . . .
> Tom [*as she continues talking*): Yea, I don't think so. Yea, I don't think so. Yea, I don't think so.
> Sue [*her voice rising, her face reddening*]: It's against my constitutional rights!
> Tom: Why doncha read the constitution again. [*Sue storms from the office.*]

Throughout the rest of the day Tom walks around singing, "Call it witchcraft." Later that afternoon, he talks to Maria and tells her that a lady said it was her constitutional right to have her neighbors move if they practiced witchcraft. "Where's it say that in the constitution?" Maria says. "You shoulda said, 'Is Maria over there again?'" They laugh.

Aside from the receptionist, no other Section 8 workers would laugh in a client's face, for this would violate the effort to evince the impersonal, professional facade discussed above. Rather, they take pains to close the interaction as soon as possible so that the applicant might leave the office. Then, following the interview or at a staff meeting, a worker might share the "joke" with a colleague. While such work surely alleviates boredom, integrates staff members, and provides emo-

tional distance from clients, it also mitigates any attempt to understand the subjectivity of the applicant, similar to the ceremonials Sacks (1984) discusses.

DEALING WITH TEARS

Unlike the many treatments of anger and joking, literature on tears, and especially sensitivity to the tears shed by another, is remarkably lacking; this is surprising since most academics have been subjected to the discomfort of witnessing a student cry. As Katz (1999, 177) states, "Research generally neglects that crying is a distinctive way of eliciting responses from self and others." Nevertheless, such experiences have been alluded to. In all such instances, it is important to note that tears alone are not necessarily poignant for an observer. Rather, it is the implication of the interaction for the identities of the interactants that elicits emotional responses for both parties. Goffman (1961) discusses a range of ways participants may respond when one "floods out," by contagiously joining them, treating the incident as if it had not occurred, or redefining the situation so that the participant becomes a focus of attention. When Thoits (1996) speaks of "emotional contagion," three of her five data show how watchers in a psychodrama-based encounter group were visibly moved by a performer's tears (the other two show the contagiousness of anger and joy).

A classic analysis is Sudnow's (1967) ethnographic study of how hospitals manage dying patients and their relatives; he discusses how physicians grant "the bereaved's right to temporary 'awayness'" by "maintaining as passive a stance as the fact of his [sic] presence will allow," looking away, saying nothing, or even turning his back to the crying relative without engaging in any side involvements like smoking or looking through papers (pp. 140-152). Sudnow found that although doctors did not touch the bereaved or engage in gestures of sympathy, neither did they leave the scene altogether. The physician and relative then engage in a bit of talk, as the physician briefly discusses the cause of death, informs the relative that the bereaved experienced little pain, and tells the bereaved they did "everything they could."

Some studies show that rather than feeling for one who cries, workers in agencies ostensibly set up to assist or to regulate and control clients may respond to tears with anything but sympathy. For instance, in

Miller's (1991, 77) discussion of how staff members in a work incentive program "rhetorically cast themselves and clients as acting from different interests and motives," one staff member tells of an instance when a "whining" client said, "I'm going to cry," to which the staffer reports responding, "Go ahead. . . . crying is just the beginning of what may happen today. You think that your life is stressful now on $400 a month [her AFDC grant], wait 'til I cut you off your grant and you have to live on $337." In a similar vein, McClenahen and Lofland (1976, 268) report a Deputy U.S. Marshal responding with disgust to a crying prisoner: "Hey! Jesus Christ, man—pull yourself together. Come on now, be a man." Such data show how, in agencies with more coercive agendas than Section 8 where workers may interpret clients' tears as attempts to resist such coercion, workers may respond to tears with hostility rather than empathy. Such hostility reveals the marked efforts one must extend to deny tears' force.

Katz's (1999) detailed examination of two police officers eliciting a confession from a murder suspect is remarkable in showing how the interrogators practically choreograph the suspect's tears, playing a version of good cop/bad cop, revealing what they know strategically, and even pantomiming shooting the suspect as they tell him, "We got the gun in there" (p. 279). Like the workers in a housing subsidy office, these officers provide news that brings a suspect to tears, yet unlike housing officers or the physicians discussed below, their response to such tears is anything but empathetic. Hence, it is not tears in and of themselves that are powerful but tears within the context of a social relationship and the ways in which the tears bear on the identities of the participants that can make them problematic or revelatory. In bearing bad news, both parties' identities and the metamorphoses of these identities are implicated in the bad news delivery.

The following three cases were selected to suggest the range of ways workers may respond to applicants' tears. Each case presents a different officer with a different level of experience, and all the applicants are African American women claiming to be homeless. We will see how in the liminal space after a rejection-implicative statement, the applicant cries and offers additional arguments for her case to be reconsidered and how the worker responds by citing programmatic requirements. Eligibility interviewers' immediate backstage responses to crying applicants dramatically differ from their responses to angry ones, for inasmuch as angry applicants evoke a sense of comedy, crying ones elicit

tragedy. While the sorrows expressed in families or among lovers may be subdued by laughter and music, the tears of an applicant never provide the sort of fodder for laughter that anger does. To speak metaphorically, the interactional weight exerted by an angry applicant could be "made light of," while an applicant's tears stay with the worker, bothering them, depressing them. Thus, the eligibility interviewer's typical bodily response after an interview with an angry applicant is explosive and directed outward, while the response after meeting with a crying applicant is implosive and directed inward. Whereas a worker would joke about an angry applicant and remark about their "gall," silence often follows an interview with a crying applicant, after which a worker speaks of their "feelings."

Below, Susan shows how one might leave an applicant's presence when they begin to sob. The applicant (Wanda, an African American woman) received a housing subsidy in 1989 but lost the subsidy since she was not able to find an apartment in the 120 days new tenants are provided. She then applied again when the waiting list reopened and finally received another eligibility interview four years after her initial subsidy. In the excerpt below, she has a letter from a local homeless shelter to verify her eligibility for a federal preference, but Susan doubts the adequacy of the letter. After Susan has asked many of the questions from the interview questionnaire—requesting routine information such as an applicant's address and family members—the applicant mentions her previous appointment.

> Wanda: In my last appointment, I got a certificate right away, but I just couldn't find a place. I've been pillar to post for four to five years.
> Susan: The problem now is that to show you're a resident of this city, we have to show you're living here, you're homeless, or you work here, and we have to *document* it. If you're homeless, you need to bring in a letter from a social service agency showing you're homeless.
> Wanda [*sobbing, with a pleading tone*]: I brought a letter. You know where I get my mail. I take my showers there. I need a government place. I have a child.
> Susan: Excuse me. [*We leave office.*]

I follow Susan to the coffee room. "Sometimes I just can't think in front of them," she says. She covers her face with her hands, appearing distressed and uneasy. "What do you think?" she asks.

Susan begins her first turn in this excerpt with the rejection-implicative words, "The problem now," and reiterates the program's requirements for demonstrating local residency. Through her tears, the applicant states that she met those requirements by bringing a letter and refers to the type of evidence that staff members routinely ask for: the place where she receives mail and takes her showers. She finally mentions her child, who is both part of the data to be considered in her case and a factor that could elicit sympathy from the staff member. Torn between her skepticism about Wanda's documentation on one hand and Wanda's evidence and her pleas for assistance on the other, Susan leaves the room and consults the field worker. Here, I found myself in a profound methodological and emotional dilemma in which I would have much preferred to scream, "Give her a subsidy!" Instead, I merely shrugged, hoping not to interfere with her decision making. Eventually, Susan returns and schedules a follow-up interview with the applicant to be held after she has discussed the case with other workers.

In our subsequent recorded interview, Susan notes how she had been moved by this applicant. "You know," she states, "I felt bad saying to that lady that was here with that homeless letter, 'Well I have to discuss it with the committee.' Even though I wasn't actually saying 'no' to her, I felt for her." To "feel for" an applicant is not part of an eligibility worker's formal job, yet it may be unavoidable when an applicant cries. Later, Susan discusses this case in a staff meeting, where they decide to accept the applicant's letter and provide her a housing subsidy. Had the applicant not begun to cry, Susan would have never brought the letter to the meeting.

With the looming prospect of homelessness, crying may not be a motivated act by the applicant, yet it has a power to be highly persuasive. While the staff member above leaves the applicant's presence, the firmness of the staff member's tone in the excerpt below reveals some of the work necessary to resist the moral force of tears when the staff member stays in the office with the applicant. In the following, the applicant, Toni, is ineligible because she is living with friends and does not have a letter to verify that she is homeless. The staff member, Anna, begins telling the applicant "no" by "explaining how the program works," which is made clear as a rejection with the words, "I can't help you."

Anna: I'm going to explain to you how the program works. In order to get assistance, you need to pay your rent to an owner. If you're homeless,

then you need to bring in verification of that from an agency. I can't help you unless you have proof.

Toni [*starts to cry*]: Are you sayin' they'll certify me now if I stay on the streets?

Anna [*a bit more forceful*]: Let me just explain to you how the program works. [*Toni cries. Anna continues with a soft and firm tone*): If your situation changes, come in anytime, and we'll reexamine your case.

Toni [*crying*]: I need to get a new place.

Anna: You need a new place, yeah. Everything you do, you need documentation for it. If you don't have that, you can't do it. You're still on the list. It's up to you to make any changes.

Toni responds to Anna's rejection-implicative statement with a question alluding to the irony that a program designed to provide housing forces applicants who are living with friends to become homeless before they are eligible for assistance.[5] In the interview, however, the staff member, who is well aware of this irony in the program's policy, sidesteps the applicant's question by repeating the phrase that had prefaced her prior explanation/rejection. Anna, who has five more years of experience than Susan, has less difficulty countering the applicant's lamentations by providing the applicant with accounts of the program's bureaucratic requirements, and implying the applicant has personal responsibility for whether her "situation" becomes better or worse (see Miller 1991).

Unlike Susan, Anna does not leave the interview when her applicant cries, as the receptionist notes is typical of Anna. Nevertheless, the moments after the applicant leaves the office are marked by silence. In Anna's first comment, she speaks of her feelings, countering, in her defensive rhetoric (Miller 1991), the feelings she implies she would be expected to have in facing one who cries, especially if that person is homeless.

Anna and I heave a collective sigh of relief. She looks at me with her eyebrows raised and then shakes her head. "I don't really feel bad for her. Why didn't she save her money when she lived with her mom rent free? Uh uh," she shakes her head, "These people. I have no sympathy for someone who's not helping themselves. Look, some of these people are in this situation because they want to be." I nod. "Why isn't she looking for a job, why isn't she working? Should I tell her that? I want to"—she walks by me and puts a folder away—"but I won't."

Anna, whom the receptionist refers to as the only worker who stays with applicants when they cry, articulates the sorts of practices in this excerpt that make that possible. Here, she uses rhetorical questions and a categorization of the applicant as one of "these people" in assessing her moral character (see Miller 1991). The boundary-transcending act of crying is thereby countered with the boundary-sustaining stance of creating a moral gulf between herself and the applicant, which mitigates the difficulty of confronting and rejecting the crying applicant. As Lipsky (1980, 109) obliquely states, "One of the most well-grounded generalizations that can be made concerning client processing" is that "street-level bureaucrats respond to general orientations towards clients' worthiness or unworthiness that permeate society and to whose proliferation they regularly contribute." In this case and many others, the worker uses such an "orientation" toward the class of the applicant to create a moral distance between them to resist the applicant's emotional pressure. Although Anna is not swayed by her feelings, the applicant's act of crying has brought Anna to consider her feelings in a context in which workers usually try to avoid them.

Human service workers are not always able to sidestep the interactional power of tears, however. Indeed, one response to emotional displays, albeit a rare one, is to accede. In the following interview with the manager of the housing office, the applicant, who comes with her infant son in a cradle, does not have a letter from a homeless agency like the above applicant, yet her tears and her account of her circumstances have a dramatic affect on the manager, compelling him to offer her a subsidy. This case is also unique in that the manager, with less experience interviewing applicants, does not follow a tight script as the other workers had done. Hence, he does not control the latitude of the applicants' responses (Molotch and Boden 1985) and could even be seen as allowing the applicant to "control the interview."[6]

The applicant begins with her life history and is crying throughout. She tells how she lived with an older man who died two or three years ago, and how she then met another man, but they broke up, leaving her on her own again. She says she is currently living with his mother, but she doesn't know how much longer she can stay there. She speaks of spending nights in shelters, which are cold because they don't close the doors. She mentions big cockroaches on the floors of the shelter and how she was surrounded by alcoholics and drug addicts. As she tells her

story and cries, Frank looks down and flips through her papers. Frank leaves the room to make copies and then returns to tell her she is eligible. She cries harder, smiling, and reaching out to squeeze his hand sitting on his desk. The applicant in this interview, like the prior applicants, is an African American woman living with friends who cannot provide documentation of her homelessness, yet she is found to be eligible by the manager.

Frank's following account of his decision to feel sympathy for his applicant highlights how workers normatively orient themselves to an affectively neutral stance toward clients. First, he acknowledges that he might "get burned for it later" (see Katz 1982, 59-62). Then, he explains how his response deviates from how a "real bureaucrat" is "supposed to" respond to clients. Third, he tells of how his staff sometimes calls attention to how his responses to applicants based on "gut feeling" differ from their own.

> As long as I'm dealing face-to-face with people, I step out of my bureaucratic role. I might get burned for it later, but I step out of it. I would think with a real bureaucrat, your feelings aren't supposed to be involved. It's supposed to be 'yes,' 'no,' and sometimes I don't function that way, which may be a detriment. My staff has told me that at times, I make decisions they wouldn't make because I just get a gut feeling. But that's just my prerogative, you know. I coulda put her through more hoops; it just didn't seem necessary.

Nevertheless, as manager of the office, Frank reaps many of the rewards in his job from his license to make decisions based on his feelings. While staff members are averse to how crying applicants elicit their sympathy and thus make them feel "helpless," the manager feels gratified when he gives in to such an applicant and the sympathetic feelings they stir in him, as he states below.

> Frank: That little session was kind of originally why I went into this business.
> Author: The one with this woman here?
> Frank: Yeah. It was, yeah. You know, you're not a stone. I was touched by her.

While customer service managers enforce emotional norms for workers to follow (Leidner 1993; Sutton 1991; Van Maanen and Kunda

1989; Hochschild 1983), human service managers may deviate from the norms their workers have derived from their practical experiences (see Lipsky 1980, 18-23, Handler 1979, 4). Whereas customer service managers hire and fire workers on the basis of their adherence to emotional norms, human service workers have little recourse when their manager commits a similar breech. In fact, after Susan discovers that Frank has provided this applicant a subsidy, she gives him a look of wide-eyed disapproval, but says nothing.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

All of the strategies discussed so far—affective neutrality, techniques for saying "no," and ways of responding to an applicant's anger and tears both during and after an interview—reveal workers' pragmatic ways of resisting applicants' emotions and have been developed through years of personal experience understood in the context of office culture. In this section, I will discuss a number of field note excerpts in which workers shed light on how these orientations develop. We will see that the most common way of resisting applicants' emotions is by avoiding those interactions in which clients are most likely to become emotional—namely, eligibility interviews.

Of all the tasks of a housing subsidy worker, including apartment inspections, recertification sessions, staff meetings, and paperwork, eligibility interviews are the most emotionally burdensome. As Anna states, "They hate it."

> Author: How come they hate it?
> Anna: Because they can't handle it emotionally.
> Author: Oh.
> Anna: It really bothers Frank when someone starts to cry, and it bothers Joe; he feels helpless. We've talked about it before. They don't like it.

Below, the office receptionist discusses his knowledge of how various staff members respond when applicants cry.

> Everyone responds to that differently. Maria throws 'em out. She can see it coming and says, "try again next year." Anna's the only one that stays with them when they cry. Joe walks out on them. Lou sends them to the waiting room.

Anna, "the only one who stays with them when they cry," has managed to develop certain techniques to avoid the emotional and physical drain of feeling for them. She discusses these in the interview excerpt below.

> Anna: I went through a period a few years ago where I was so stressed out, and I was having these horrible migraine headaches. I didn't realize at the time it was because I was having a hard time dealing with saying "no" all the time. [*anguished tone*] You know, seeing people come in here, and they're like, on the border, where you know, OK they can't qualify by the numbers, but you knew that they were in desperate need. So you couldn't help them. You have to sit there and look at them and say "no." [*Anna pauses and looks at me, apparently burdened. Then with a sigh she shrugs off such drama and continues in a more lighthearted spirit.*] It took me a while to be able to be able to deal with that, and realize, OK, so I didn't help them, but there's someone else who did qualify who needed it more than they did, but, you know, had the numbers and stuff. It took me a while, but I did.
> Author: I guess that's pretty upsetting.
> Anna: Yeah.
> Author: For me to see it is upsetting, just sitting in there, it's hard sometimes, because you kind of want to sympathize with them but you can't.
> Anna: Right, and not doing your job, you can't.

The shift to a lighthearted quality in Anna's voice marks an important transformation in how she accounts for her work. In the interview, her tone thus far has been one of angst at seeing someone in desperate need and knowing she has the power to help them but not being able to help because the need they are experiencing does not match "need" as defined by the program, or because the applicant could not provide the documentation to verify their need. When she empathizes with applicants, her work is hindered by the physical pain of migraine headaches. When her tone changes, it connotes a routine, everyday quality, overcoming the debilitating bodily fatigue of having to routinely face the plight of applicants with the justification that "there's someone else who did qualify." As Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) propose, when Anna "fakes in bad faith," telling clients "no" but still empathizing with them, she feels far more stress than when she "fakes in good faith." Similarly, Wharton (1993) finds that when banking and hospital workers "psychologically distance themselves from their jobs, or take their jobs less seriously, they are better able than others to avoid the negative psy-

chological costs of emotional labor" (also see Hochschild 1983, 188). "Doing your job" for Anna involves distancing herself from clients, but this is not a sign of burnout (Maslach 1978). Anna, in fact, is a favorite of long-term Section 8 tenants, who often bring her greens and other garden vegetables and talk with her about their struggles. A single mother who has not received a bachelor's degree, she started as the office receptionist five years before and worked her way into managing the office after Frank left. She also manages the Section 8 self-sufficiency program, taking pride in helping tenants find jobs and lose the necessity for a housing subsidy. Hence, she distances not because she does not care, but because she finds she has cared too much.

Other workers, however, are unable to make such an adaptation, especially when they share a key aspect of their identity with an applicant. Consider the following story in which Anna tells why Joe refuses to do eligibility interviews.

> Anna: Joe had a veteran come in who had two teenaged kids and had just lost his job. He didn't have a preference because he was getting unemployment or something, but he still didn't get any income. For some reason, he wasn't eligible, and Joe had to tell him that, and the guy started crying. Joe's a veteran, you know, and this guy was really upset. He left, he hit my window, and Joe got up, went outside, and they talked for a long time. Joe said *that* ruined his whole weekend because this guy was in such a horrible situation, and we couldn't help him.
> Author: Yeah.
> Anna: You know.
> Author: Wow! Hmm.
> Anna: Wish you were here for that one huh [*laughs*].

CONCLUSION

In examining the phenomenology of bearing bad news, we have seen some of what is missing in Goffman's metaphors of "cooling out" and "flooding out." His inquiries open fertile ground for research, and in their generalities, they ring true. Yet much more is to be said, not only in terms of interactional specifics (Heath 1988) but in terms of subjectivities. For Goffman, one who "cools out" is often then faced with one who "floods out," yet we have seen how the specifics of cooling out vary greatly in response to the ways in which the flooding out is done.

Applicants' anger typically only raises a worker's defenses. Then backstage, just as Sacks noted recipients' laughter after hearing of one's intention to kill oneself, Section 8 workers joke after witnessing an applicant's anger. In both situations, humor literally "makes light," redefining a "heavy" matter as a laughing matter. By joking, the significance of an argument, a complaint, or a threat diminishes, blown away with each punctuated exhalation of air, remembered only for its subsequent contribution to a jocular office culture. Hence, anger is rarely effective at applying "pressure," unless such rage was to inspire fear. It's more likely to do the opposite. Applicants tacitly recognize this as only those who are far from qualifying, with nothing to lose, become enraged.

Applicants who cry, on the other hand, are always on the border of receiving a subsidy. Rather than inspiring the worker into an extroverted mode in which they might redefine the situation with coworkers, tears, occurring precisely with the awareness that a worker is saying "no," often bring the worker to look inward and reconsider their decision. For applicants to feel compelled to resort to such drastic, potentially humiliating emotions—to be an adult crying in front of strangers in a government office—reveals the lengths to which the poor must go at times simply to be heard. The crying applicants make good points: Wanda mentions her documentation and that she takes her showers and receives her mail at a homeless shelter; Toni addresses the irony that a program designed to provide housing forces people to abandon what shelter they have—with friends or family—to receive it. Tears provide the liminal, interactional space in the interview to make such points as well as the emotional force to compel workers to consider them.

What is the source of this "emotional force"? Tears alone do not necessarily elicit sympathy much less a desire to help. The interactional pressure of tears is directly related to the relative statuses of those involved in the interaction. Specifically, the "bearer" of bad news must not only be the deliverer of the news, but the arbiter as well. If an arbiter cannot present bad news through depersonalized means, such as a letter in the mail or a list on the door, they may choose to present it through an underling who has no influence on the decision. Such is the job of the "flak catcher," "there to catch the flak for the No. 1 man like the professional mourners you can hire in Chinatown" (Wolfe 1970, 132). Similarly, if a decision has been rendered elsewhere and the bearer of bad news is there only to enforce the decision, much like when deputy mar-

shals take a prisoner, tears are ineffectual (McClenahen and Lofland 1976). Or if a judgment has been rendered through objective procedures, as tests to determine mental retardation are designed to be, the recipient of the news may strongly protest, but Maynard (1996) has yet to report an instance in which such protest, full of so many emotions, may change a doctor's mind concerning a diagnostic decision. Detectives eliciting a confession may be seen as both arbiters and bearers of bad news, but, their interactional techniques encourage the opposite— that is, for a suspect to become a self-judge and to report the news to the interrogators. Following such reverse logic, the suspect's "breakdown," far from encouraging the inquisitors to reconsider their decision, actually congeals it (Katz 1999).

The social circumstance which seems most analogous to a Section 8 interview would be one in which a professor grades a student's work in a private office in front of the student and then decides their final grade. One can well imagine how, if such a grade is an F, anger and/or tears may well result. One can also imagine how, if such tears are in response to a "subjective" evaluation, the professor may be inclined to change the grade; results on a scantron would mitigate against this.

In human service work, such evaluative circumstances may be more common than one would think. Surely, any judge, police officer, social worker, or teacher may find an instance in which a client's tears, at just the right moment and combined with certain reasons, may have swayed a discretionary decision. Yet experienced workers like Anna, who are confident of both their evaluative skills and their ability to present this to applicants, are able to resist such displays. By creating a moral gulf between herself and crying applicants (a sense of "awayness," Sudnow 1967), and thinking that "there's someone out there who does qualify" ("faking in good faith," Rafaeli and Sutton 1987), she is the only worker in this office able to stay with applicants when they cry.

Such resources—affective neutrality, cooling out the mark, joking in response to anger, and creating a justified moral barrier in response to tears—are tacit local practices developed by workers to resist the emotional consequences of bearing bad news. Although such techniques are not provided a priori (indeed, Section 8 workers are provided with no formal advice for dealing with clients' emotions), even in organizations with highly structured guidelines for emotion management, workers are not the dupes of management that some studies make them out to be. Seminars and supervisors may encourage flight attendants,

for instance, to monitor their feelings as representatives of the corporation, but once the plane is aloft, a condescending smile, icy silence, and muffled laughter in backstage areas betray that they are not as oppressed as they might otherwise seem. Such are the subtle interactional nuances that studies of emotions must capture if we are to accurately analyze the ways emotions move our social worlds.

NOTES

1. This description applies to the Section 8 program at the time of the fieldwork; the program has undergone substantial legislative changes since this time.

2. Two part-time workers, who do not appear in this report, also staff the office: a part-time accountant (twenty hours per week) and a part-time staff assistant (eight hours per week). All names referring to the members of this setting are pseudonyms in which the gender of the worker is held constant. Although the gender and ethnicity of the workers and applicants in this setting are not vital for this analysis, they are presented here for others who have analytic concerns that bear on such issues.

3. In working to understand the sensual embodiment of concerted action, this analysis will also borrow from Katz (1999, 10) the methodological commitment to "take subjects' metaphors seriously as providing elements of explanation." His caveat, that "the metaphors I choose are, of course, not inevitably right; the reader will have a free hand to substitute his/her own," also applies here.

4. This was widely acknowledged in this community at the time of field work since the federally established fair market rent (FMR) exceeded local rent control limits, allowing landlords to charge hundreds of dollars more per month than they could otherwise receive. Landlords also preferred Section 8 tenants since they were assured that the portion of the rent paid by the government was paid on time. In areas without rent control, however, Section 8 tenants had more difficulty finding an apartment, since the FMR was typically conservative in relation to the going rate.

5. In regional meetings of Section 8 managers, this self-defeating quality of federal preferences is an enduring theme. As one manager tells me, "Say there's a girl who has a baby. If she moves out of the house and lives in the streets, she can get on the program, but she doesn't want to do that, so she lives with mom and dad. In order for her to be on the program, she'd have to be destitute. So much for family values. The program basically encourages people to be homeless." As is often the case, such intractable problems often become the subject of insider jokes. When one of the managers enters this meeting late and apologizes, another manager calls out in jest, "You're next on the agenda. You're gonna handle preferences." Everyone laughs (see Hatch [1993] for a rigorous depiction of the uses of irony in a management team). The managers told me they had repeatedly lobbied to change this preference criterion but to no avail. In a separate analysis (Garot in press), I examine these ironies of verifying homelessness in greater detail.

6. This eligibility interview is not presented in transcription style, as this was the one instance in which I did not take notes concurrently with the interview.

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