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WHEN GENDER IS NOT ENOUGH: *Women Interviewing Women*

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This article examines two contrasting interviews—with an Anglo and a Puerto Rican woman—and concludes that gender congruence does not help an Anglo interviewer make sense of the working-class, Hispanic woman's account of her marital separation. Both in form and content, her discourse contrasts sharply with an Anglo woman's account. The two women use different narrative genres or forms of telling to communicate their culturally distinctive experiences with marriage. In the case of the Puerto Rican woman, these differences result in major misunderstandings by the interviewer. Applying narrative methods to these interviews shows how closer attention to the voice of the subject can enrich qualitative research.

Narrative analysis is an approach to qualitative interviews (Mishler 1986) that can be applied to women's life stories. As a universal human form for reconstructing and interpreting the past, narratives link our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience, or make meaning of it. In the words of Hayden White (1981, p. 1), it is through narratives that we "translate knowing into telling." Narrating personal experience can be done in many ways, but the listener may not "hear" what is important to the narrator. The structures of children's stories vary with their cultural background, so that white classroom teachers have difficulty "hearing" narratives of

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black children (Michaels 1981; Michaels and Cazden 1986). In the research interview, too, it is likely that "lack of shared cultural norms for telling a story, making a point, giving an explanation and so forth can create barriers to understanding" (Michaels 1985, p. 51). For women interviewing women about their lives, such barriers to understanding are particularly consequential, for they reproduce within the scientific enterprise class and cultural divisions between women that feminists have tried so hard to diminish.

This article shows how two women interviewees—one Anglo and one Hispanic—used different narrative genres to make meaning of the same event—marital separation. The Anglo woman organized her narrative temporally, and the Puerto Rican woman organized hers episodically. Although both were highly competent narrators, only the Anglo woman was fully understood by the white, middle-class interviewer. She was able to collaborate with this narrator and help her tell her story. In the case of the working-class, Hispanic woman, gender was apparently not enough to create the shared understandings necessary for a successful interview. The lack of shared norms about how a narrative should be organized, coupled with unfamiliar cultural themes in the content of the narrative itself, created barriers to understanding between the Anglo interviewer and the Puerto Rican narrator. As a result, the interview fell short. There was also an added tension in this interview between the interviewer's allegiance to "scientific" interviewing practice—with its norms of distance and objectivity—and her allegiance to women's culture—with its norms of empathy and subjectivity. These multiple strains led to a breakdown in the discourse.

The two interviews were part of a study of the experience of separation and divorce. In all, 104 women and men who had been separated up to three years were interviewed, using a structured interview schedule. The interviews, conducted in the respondents' homes, were taped and transcribed. The interviewer asked each interviewee "to state in your own words the main causes of your separation." This question and subsequent probes provided the "scaffolding" (Cazden 1983) for the telling of the marital history. Two-thirds of the cases were located through probate court records of the divorced in two counties of a northeastern state; one-third came from interviewee and informant referrals. Comparisons between court cases and referred respondents indicate few differences.

The middle-class woman's response is typical of the form of temporal organization that most interviewees used, working-class

and middle-class alike. The working-class Puerto Rican woman's narrative was selected for analysis because it was different, and its meaning was not grasped during the interview. Although other Hispanics also used the episodic form, we cannot generalize as to its typicality because of the small number of Hispanics in our sample, nor can we separate the effects of social class and ethnicity in shaping narrative style. Despite uncertainty about which subpopulations the two interviews represent, there is evidence that these two styles of narrating are used by contrasting groups in other settings (Michaels 1981), and thus illustrate alternative forms for storytelling more generally.

AN UNPROBLEMATIC INTERVIEW

Susan is a 36-year-old, college-educated, white divorced woman who lives with her three children (ages 10, 8, and 5). She has been living apart from her husband for almost three years. Currently unemployed and looking for a job, she receives regular support payments from her ex-husband and still lives in the house, in a middle-class neighborhood, that her mother helped them buy. Nevertheless, she experiences considerable financial strain, for her income is barely half what it was when she was married and the costs of raising her growing children have increased. Typical of many women in her situation, divorce was a financial catastrophe (Weitzman 1985); yet by the usual sociological indicators of years of education and type of neighborhood, Susan would be considered middle-class.

Susan's narrative about the history of her marriage is deeply gendered (see Appendix A). In fact, it is an archetypal account of the oppression traditional marriage brings to women, with the accompanying feelings of powerlessness, passivity, and victimization that many women report. Susan tells us that she married her husband because she got pregnant; in fact, she mentions this fact three times between lines 9-15, perhaps to excuse her responsibility for the marriage and therefore its failure (Scott and Lyman 1968). She describes the gender-based division of labor that characterized the marriage and the burden she felt caring for three children with little help from her husband, who occupied himself with his job (lines 20-25 and 46-51). She describes how they did not talk about their problems (lines 38-41 and 126-128), how she "buried" her needs (lines 66-68). Their emotional estrangement led to sexual disengagement,

with separate beds and then separate bedrooms (lines 75-124). Finally, the anger "surfaced," and they realized the marriage was over (lines 145-148). It is a familiar story, one that the feminist interviewer understands very well.

Not only is the content of Susan's narrative familiar; so, too, is the form in which it is told. The narrator has a strong sense of place and she guides the listener through the various settings, locating the changes in the sleeping arrangements within the context of the family moves; they lived in Providence in 1974 (where they changed from a double to single beds); they moved to her mother's house in 1975, then into their own house the following year (where her husband slept on the third floor), and, finally, to the residence in which the interview takes place (where he had lived in an attic apartment).

The narrative is also organized by time; it begins with the decision to marry, recounts the birth of the children, progresses through the years of the marriage, and ends with the separation. This temporal ordering of events into a narrative is a classic form in which individuals remember and recapitulate past experience (Labov 1982; Mandler and Johnson 1977). Although by no means the only one, such narrative sequencing is generally available as a storytelling form in our culture. In Susan's use of time as the organizing principle for her narrative, nothing is out of order (see Table 1). She is very clear about the order in which things happened, and she guides the listener through the five-year period recapitulated in the narrative, relating the decline in intimacy to changes in the marital residence and associated sleeping arrangements over time. Through the use of time and place as organizing devices, Susan brings order to her memories of her marriage as she brings order to the interview.

Yet there is an incongruity in the narrative; the events described first (notably having children) and the events described later (not sleeping together and not having sex) are contemporaneous. Thus the events as narrated may not be as "real" or "objective" as the form suggests (Mishler 1986, appendix). The interviewer responds not to the incongruities but to the centrality of time in Susan's narrative, and has no difficulty following the sequence of events. Both interviewer and respondent, as middle-class white women, share the cultural norm that events should be recounted temporally in storytelling (Michaels 1981). The interviewer does not interrupt the flow of the discourse, either to clarify what happened when or to suggest another organizing framework. She collaborates by letting the

TABLE 1

<i>Line Number</i>	<i>Utterance</i>
08	I was 25 when I was married
20-21	I had the children from day one
26	The years went by
43-44	We stopped talking early on in our marriage
53	We continued to have children
58-59	We had more children / that took up a lot of time
73	There was no sex
75-76	We slept in separate bedrooms / that started out really early in our marriage
78-80	When we lived in Providence / right after Nancy was born / she was born in 1974
98-99	So then I suggested single beds . . . which is what we did
100	And then the <i>following</i> year in 1975
121-122	Then when we moved here/ <i>first thing we did was to</i> <i>redo the attic</i>
124	And then he moved up there as soon as that was done

narrative unfold. By remaining silent at key points, she allows the narrator "to control the pace and developing content" of the interview (Paget 1983, p. 77)

The interviewer is not passive. Her nonlexical expressions communicate understanding and encourage the narrator to say more, and she asks for clarification at several points, building upon what the narrator said immediately before and further prompting another temporally ordered sequence. Her probes and encouragement make possible the recounting of this marital history. The smooth interaction provides evidence that the interviewer intuitively understands the genre—a temporally ordered narrative—in which the interviewee is retelling her experience.

Besides using time to order and thereby structure her narrative, Susan employs time in still another way. Although stories typically are told in the simple past tense (Labov 1982), Susan often uses the habitual past in constructing her narrative (Gee 1985) saying, for example, "He'd come home and then I would say." She conveys the feeling of blurred time by this dexterous use of verb tense, adeptly conveying the repetitious nature of her husband's unavailability. Near the end of her narrative, Susan returns to her perception of blurred time during the marriage, again making artistic use of verb tense as well as repetition to communicate the experience of "just existing" through time. Here she also changes pronouns from the

personal “we,” “I,” and “he” that she used earlier in the narrative to the general “you” and then back to “we” at the end. These shifts, and especially the use of the impersonal “you” to describe a distinctly personal perception, communicate her alienation at the time of the marriage from her self as she knows it now. The use of the impersonal voice also expresses her sense of passivity or inability to bring about any change over the many years of her marriage and, perhaps, her growing identification with women in similar situations.

The interviewer hears the narrator’s experience of blurred time and, further, participates in the construction of Susan’s explanation for the marital separation. For example, after Susan’s coda to the first section of her narrative (“We really had a bad marriage”), the interviewer comments: “and you gradually just realized that.” Later, she checks out her sense of the *gradual* unfolding of awareness about how bad the marriage was with her question, “So it just gradually dawned on both of you that you should get separated or?” Through her repetition of the word “gradually” she helps Susan develop her theme.

Susan’s narrative is a deeply woman-centered account of the costs of a gender-based division of labor in marriage, and the interviewer hears it as such. About midway through Susan’s narrative, there is an open display of the bond that is developing between interviewer and interviewee as women when Susan says, “You know men snore,” and they both laugh. This is a moment of solidarity between women. Elsewhere, the interviewer’s attentive listening and nonlexical cues indicate that she appreciates how oppressive marriage was for Susan. She does not interrupt or in other ways indicate that she is having difficulty with the interpretive framework that Susan uses.

In fact, Susan graphically describes her growing awareness of what Friedan (1963) has termed the “problem with no name.” She grew resentful that she “carried 99 percent of the brunt of everything that had to be done (in the home)”; she expected that marriage would involve more than a relationship between “roommates”; and, finally, she became conscious of the fact that she was “just existing,” implicitly contrasting this mode of being with her ideal. She alternately invokes images of life, on the one hand, and deadness, on the other, to contrast her expectations about what a marriage should be with the reality of her experience. She twice uses the phrase “give and take” to describe her expectations about marriage. Not only does she expect help with child care, she also expects emotional reciprocity. Living fully, for her, involves talking about emotions and problems.

Instead, she finds herself married to a man who "didn't give a lot" and whose "idea of having an argument was not to discuss it at all." Instead of life—as defined by emotional sharing and reciprocity—Susan experienced a deadness in her marriage; and by invoking images of death in her repeated use of the image of burial, Susan visually depicts the idea that her true self was submerged in the marriage. Finally, it "surfaced" in the anger that was the proximate cause of the separation.

In sum, Susan tells the life history of her marriage using linguistic forms that, at the same time as they communicate the uniqueness of her situation, also are "unproblematic" in a more general sense for middle-class listeners. Both the organization and the content of the narrative resonate with the woman interviewer. The interviewer seems to comprehend the relationship between the structural features of traditional marriage, as described by the narrator, and their psychological effects (buried anger, feelings of powerlessness, and demoralization).

Susan's interview lasted more than three hours. Its impact on the interviewer is conveyed in her written comments after it was over. She commented that financial distress was a major theme, even though the interviewee "had more money than many people we interviewed," suggesting that as a social scientist, the interviewer understood Susan's relative deprivation. The interviewer describes a particular interaction during the interview:

When she looked over her list of names¹ she said, "Oh, my God, they are all women." She was *not* pleased with that discovery, even though she had earlier commented that she gets along with women better. After discovering her displeasure (or as if to emphasize it) she said "Will you be my therapist?" A joke, but meant to express serious anxiety.

As this excerpt reveals, gender is a haunting presence in this interview, constituting both a spoken and unspoken bond between the interviewer and the interviewee, enabling certain things not only to be said and understood but also to be joked about. As a consequence, the interviewer was able to collaborate with Susan and help her tell her life story.

A PROBLEMATIC INTERVIEW

Marta is a 24-year-old, dark-skinned, Puerto Rican woman who lives with her two children (ages 6 and 3) in a small apartment on a

lively but shabby street. Separated from her husband for two years, she is unemployed and lives on public assistance, supplemented by child support payments from her ex-husband. Currently attending a community college, Marta anticipates that her financial situation will improve in the near future, after she gets her degree and a job. She hopes to be a parole officer some day. By the usual sociological indicators Marta would be considered working-class.

Marta's interview lasted more than four hours. It had several lengthy interruptions, as described in the interviewer's notes:

After about one hour, some friends came over to M's house and she had to stop. I went to a corner store for lunch and called back (as she had suggested I do). She said that she now had an emergency on her hands and I would have to come back another day. During second try, we had to stop in the middle to go pick up her two children from a day-care center that was located about five minutes away by car. She had no car. So I drove. . . . While I was at her house people constantly came over and called. Very peopled life.

As in the interview with Susan, a woman-to-woman bond starts to develop as the interviewer steps outside the traditional professional role of interviewer and enters Marta's world. She clearly likes and admires Marta for her richly peopled life, and her final postinterview comment is that Marta is "enormously outgoing and warm and friendly."

Yet gender empathy is not enough in this interview. As the full transcript reveals (see Appendix B), the interviewer has trouble following Marta's narrative about the history of her marriage. It is important to note that the difficulty in understanding what Marta is saying is not linguistic (at least in a narrow sense), for she speaks English well. Nor is the problem one of inhibition, for, as the transcript shows, the interviewer's probes result in a very lengthy narrative (a much longer one than Susan's, in fact). But the point of the narrative is not immediately clear.

Marta's narrative is not organized temporally.² Unlike Susan, she does not start at the beginning and recount the events of the marriage in chronological order. Time as well as place changes repeatedly throughout the narrative, starting with Marta's opening statement. The opening foreshadows the issue of conflict over gender roles—a theme both Susan and Marta share, but here the interviewer is confused and tries to regain control by steering the narrator back to the interview question—the causes of separation.

Over and over, the interviewer demonstrates confusion about time and tries to get Marta to construct a chronically ordered narrative. As a white, middle-class woman, the interviewer is accustomed to hearing narratives in a particular format—events encoded in a series of temporally ordered narrative clauses (Labov 1982; Michaels 1981)—such as Susan used. Through repeated use of the phrase “and then,” the interviewer tries to control the interview, which has clearly gotten away from her. She is asking Marta to order the seemingly jumbled events into a form that *she* can understand. When Marta obliges, the interviewer expresses relief: “OK, gotcha (laugh). I didn’t have the order of it.” The chronology of the events may be clearer but their meaning for the narrator, and how, cumulatively, they led to the demise of the marriage is not. To understand the causes of Marta’s separation, time cannot be used as an organizing principle.

Marta uses an episodic frame to structure her account of marital separation. Unlike Susan, who tells a linear and temporally ordered narrative, Marta’s account displays the complex development of a theme through a series of related episodes. Each incident restates the theme in a different way. In this genre, time, place, and characters shift across the major episode boundaries, with an important overall theme developed by seemingly distinct episodes. The connections between the individual episodes must be inferred by the listener. This narrative structure is not unique to Marta; it has been observed, in a less developed form, in the stories minority children tell in classroom situations (Michaels 1981, 1985; Michaels and Cazden, 1986).

A structural analysis of the narrative shows that Marta’s narrative is about cultural conflict. Each episode provides an instance of such conflict, which was discovered only after repeated listening to the tape and repeated readings of the transcript. Only a close analysis of the narrative’s form revealed its meaning. The points at which the interviewer became confused were particularly instructive. These examples of breakdown in the discourse illuminated “the interactional work that usually goes unnoticed in smooth exchanges” (Michaels 1985, p. 37).

Marta introduces the theme of her narrative quite early when she says: “He had more growing up to do than I did. I was too advanced for him in a lot of ways.” While she tells us here that she and her husband were different on the dimension of “growing” and “advancement,” the precise meaning of these phrases does not become clear until later in the narrative. Like an abstract (Labov

1982), the two lines hint at and summarize but do not fully explicate. The interviewer does not hear that a major theme has been introduced with the phrases "growing" and "advancement," and thus her probe focuses on a statement about "irresponsibility" that Marta had made earlier. This interruption does not stop the narrator, who goes on to develop her theme in the first of five related episodes. (To aid the reader, episodes are marked on the transcript in Appendix B.)

The first episode—superficially about going out and staying home—approaches the theme of cultural conflict in the marriage in an oblique way. Marta tells us that she and her husband had different ideas about how to spend their leisure time together. She wanted to "go out" to a restaurant or movie and "be sociable," whereas he wanted either to go out with his friends alone or to stay at home with the immediate family. At one level, Marta is decrying the gender-segregated leisure patterns characteristic of working-class marriages (Halle, 1984; Rubin 1976). This episode takes on additional meanings, because the marital partners are not only working-class but also migrants from Puerto Rico. In this context, we begin to sense that "going out" versus "staying home" may be a metaphor for something broader—acculturation, perhaps. She wants to participate in the public world, whereas he wants her to remain in the private. As Marta sums up the point of this episode, "I guess it was outgoing versus not outgoing." This statement can be read in several ways. The interviewer's probe suggests she reads it as a personality characterization of Marta's husband (he wasn't an outgoing person and therefore didn't like to go to restaurants, "because there'd be people there"). Marta rejects this interpretation and proceeds to develop what she means by "outgoing" in a second episode.

The theme of cultural difference is given its second rendering in the topic of doing things "as a family" (episode 2). The issue is not merely going out or staying home, as the first episode suggests, but the kinds of things that count as shared leisure. We find out that Marta's husband was not entirely a homebody, as she portrayed him in the first episode. He was active in a weekend softball game. Although she says she "enjoyed watching the games" and admits that "we all had a great time," this type of outing is not what Marta defines as doing "things as a family." She concludes this episode with a return to the topic of "going out."

Upon closer inspection, we begin to sense that "his" and "her" leisure activities, as portrayed in Marta's account, are not only

gender- and class-based but also culturally based. Softball games are a major arena for male socializing in Puerto Rico and this tradition has continued with migration, even in urban neighborhoods in the United States. Although women and children are encouraged to watch and to socialize with their friends at these events, playing the game is a distinctly male activity. It continues the socializing patterns of the island, as going out with male friends and being with family do. In contrast, going out to restaurants and to movies is a more Americanized leisure pursuit.

The narrator develops the theme of differences in degree of acculturation in the third episode of her narrative, also on the topic of socializing. For Marta, "going out" also means doing things without her husband, such as dining out with friends and relatives. She tells us that "he didn't like that very much" and in fact, felt "threatened by it." Especially in working-class Puerto Rican families, married women are expected to remain in the home when they are not at their jobs (Nash and Safa 1980). Certainly, socializing in public places without the company of the husband is not approved behavior for married women.

The scene of conflict shifts in the fourth episode of the narrative. After a long pause, Marta introduces the topic of employment. She intimates that it was not the fact that she was employed that bothered her husband. Historically, a large percentage of Puerto Rican women have worked to supplement the family income (Garcia-Preto 1982). Rather, it is the type of job that Marta had and her psychological investment in it that threatened him. She worked in the fire department, with men. As she states, "I guess the friendship of *those strange men* didn't appeal to him very much." Her employment might have been acceptable if it had been women's work. Instead, she had entered the male world of power and authority. Marta aspired to a career in corrections, and, earlier in the narrative, she stressed how she liked to work and contrasted this with her husband's lack of commitment to his job.

Marta is completing college, surpassing her husband in education as well. Her ambition had led her to "go out" into the world to better her situation. We now understand why her husband "felt threatened" and why he may have placed such an emphasis on staying home. Achievement-oriented and acculturated, Marta has stepped outside the traditional role for women in Puerto Rican culture. Her husband, her narrative says, resists Americanization and clings to island ways,

including some of the negative aspects of machismo (De La Cancela 1981). His marginality may also be due to harsh socioeconomic conditions (Bonilla and Campos 1981).

As a woman, the interviewer hears the struggle over gender roles in Marta's marriage, for she suggests in a probe question that Marta's husband wanted her to quit her job at the fire department. In the coda to this fourth episode in the narrative, Marta explicitly states the conflict: her husband's allegiance to traditional beliefs about women's proper role in Puerto Rican culture and her growing involvement in the new American culture of women's self-actualization. Speaking in the voice of her husband she says,

Yes, definitely yes.
Just quit in general and just stay home
take care of the children
take care of my house
and him
and never mind what my, my wants, desires were.

Although the interviewer is sensitive to the issue of gender roles, she does not appreciate the particular conflicts that gender roles create for a Puerto Rican woman, their significance to Marta, or the relationship between gender roles and culture conflict. She understands each episode, but has not grasped the theme that ties them together, because the "point" of the narrative must be inferred. In a summarizing statement after the fourth episode, she makes no reference to the related themes of culture conflict and gender roles. The voice of science speaks as she enumerates the "causes" of Marta's separation: "So the major things you see as causing it [the separation] are, one, his irresponsibility and, two, his going, not wanting to do things with the family." She has not understood the major causes at all. The lack of shared experience between the middle-class, white interviewer and the working-class, Puerto Rican interviewee has created barriers to understanding. In this case, gender congruity is not enough to create shared meanings.

The lack of rhythmicity between narrator and interviewer about meaning is evident at numerous points in the text. Marta rephrases what she is saying over and over in order to try to make the interviewer understand. She uses "pop sociology" (in phrases such as "antisociable" and "communication"). She says over and over again, in

different ways, what the point of her narrative is. It might be argued that her use of an episodic structure is both a cause and a consequence of the lack of rhythmicity between the women. Marta needs to use so many episodes with the same underlying theme of acculturation because this theme is not being heard. Paradoxically, her use of an episodic structure contributes further to misunderstanding.

The misunderstanding is nowhere more evident than in the fifth episode of the narrative, in which Marta most explicitly articulates the theme of culture conflict. Marta introduces this last episode by harking back to the topic of family, to her the family of origin and not the conjugal family. She introduces the episode with an abstract of the content that will follow—"his family and my family are two different people"—suggesting that the families are from two different cultures. She begins to specify the ways in which they are different, saying his family is "island-type oriented" and hers is "city oriented."

The interviewer is totally lost; she interrupts and hesitates. She does not see the relevance of this material on the two families to the question she asked about the causes of the separation, even though she had no difficulty when Susan brought her husband's Irish mother into her account. With Marta, the relevance of the differences between the two Puerto Rican families is not understood, even though she provides background knowledge (Agar 1980), telling the interviewer that her family and her husband's family were different on a variety of dimensions and presenting a series of contrasts that depict the two families as polar opposites (see Table 2). The descriptors she uses suggest that a core element differentiating the families is cultural. In her family, the children were American-born and thus spent their formative years in the United States before they returned to Puerto Rico, placing her family further along on the continuum of acculturation than his family, who migrated when the children were grown (Mizio 1974). Pace of living and family values follow from these differences. Marta's earlier comments about her husband's orientation to "staying home" and her desire to "go out" take on added meaning in light of these family differences.

Contradictions lie at the core of this episode, as well as at the core of Marta's account in general. Both the form and the content of the discourse reveal the complexities and paradoxes in Marta's perceptions of the irreconcilable cultural differences between the two families. Marta describes her family as having "a more easygoing fast

TABLE 2

<i>His Family</i>	<i>Her Family</i>
Island-oriented (108)	City-oriented (107)
Children born in Puerto Rico** (112)	Children born in U.S. (112)
Slow (114)	Fast (113)
Old-fashioned (115)	Modern** (124-131)
Immoral (143-150)	—
Dead marriage (151-152)	Active marriage (153)
Loud and intoxicated (174-175)	Loud but cooperative (180-181)
Accusatory and rejecting (182-185)	Accepting (182-185)
No feeling of togetherness (188)	Always stuck together (187)
Light-skinned** (202-203)	Dark-skinned (203)

*Line number in Appendix B.

**Implicit in text.

type living.” She describes his family as “very old-fashioned,” but she disparages his mother’s sexual freedom. She describes her father as “very passive” and yet “the strength” of the family. Nonetheless, the marriage failed, she suggests, because of a clash in cultures—a clash that resonates within her, as well as between her and her ex-husband, and between the families.

The cultural opposition between the two families is manifested in their contrasting attitudes toward women’s work outside the home. Marta’s parents, like many urban, middle-class Puerto Ricans, have greater sympathy for female autonomy whereas her ex-husband’s parents, like the rural agricultural class from the island, have more traditional views. For this latter group, the roles of husband and wife are clearly defined, with the husband having the authority to control his wife and children (Garcia-Preto 1982). In her narrative, Marta communicates the opposition of the two views about women’s autonomy by adopting the voice of each set of parents. Through role playing, she conveys to the listener the contrasting families’ prescriptions about how she, as a married woman, should lead her life:

“Well, why can’t she stay home more often.”

“She should take more care of the house.”

“Children come first

so does husband those are first priorities.” [ahh]

My mother says yes or my father

“Yes children have to be taken care of

and yes a home has to be looked after

but the wife also has things that she needs to do for herself
we're only human beings."

We now understand the meaning of Marta's comment in the first episode of her narrative. By progressive standards, she *was* more "advanced" than her husband, and his family as well. He (and they) have "more growing up to do."

As an emancipated woman herself, the interviewer hears the significance of Marta's struggle for independence, but she misses the importance of kin and culture in the marital history. Her nonlexical expression ("ahh") indicates she seems to share Marta's assessment about the oppressive nature of traditional attitudes about women's proper place, but throughout the fifth episode, her probe questions relentlessly return to the marital dyad. From the middle-class, white interviewer's perspective, marriage is first and foremost a relationship between two people. Marta's husband's parents are relevant only insofar as they "put pressure" on Marta to give up her aspirations. This incomplete perspective is insensitive to class and cultural differences. In Puerto Rican culture, marriage is not a dyadic relationship but much more explicitly a union of two families (Fitzpatrick 1981). From Marta's perspective, the marriage failed because the two families' values, and subsequent pressures, could not be reconciled. As a consequence, she answers the question about the causes of the separation by telling the *family* history, within which the *marital* history is embedded. The interviewer, in her struggle to make sense of what she is hearing, misses this crucial point.

Both the lack of cultural understanding and the lack of temporal form contribute to the interviewer's inability to follow the narrative. In the interchange about the girl from Puerto Rico that Marta's husband's family had picked out for him, Marta moves back in time to the period of her courtship. She changes place as well, for the events and conversations she reports took place in Puerto Rico. The interviewer's confusion about when and where these events happened is repeated and blatant. The interviewer had assumed that the girl from Puerto Rico was directly implicated in the breakup of the marriage, but Marta is retelling the story of what happened when she was 16 years old and courting—events that happened eight years previously. In Marta's symbolic framework, these events are central to the causes of the separation.

The heart of the final episode is contained in the emotional retelling about the girl her husband was supposed to have married—

This was the girl that that that that
caused a lot of heartaches (p) and a lot of
(p) bitterness I guess on my part.

The narrator's pauses, repetitions, and choice of language all flag the significance of this passage. As another woman, the interviewer hears these signs of affect and momentarily abandons her focus on the marital dyad and the recent past to inquire about this relationship, which predated the marriage. Marta responds by telling of the continuing psychological presence of this other woman. Her thoughts return again to her husband's family and she says poignantly:

I never knew what it was they saw in her. [mhm]
Not that I was Miss Perfect
I do have my faults but
I don't know (p)

Marta tells us that, in preferring the girl from Puerto Rico to her, her husband's family rejected her. Given the significance of family in Puerto Rican culture, this may well have been the death blow to the marriage. For at the same time as Marta disparaged the lack of acculturation of her husband's family, she also wanted to be accepted by them. Divorce from the family was the price Marta paid for being "too advanced." She tells us of the pain of things that cannot be changed—her skin color, his family's rejection of her—at the same time as she celebrates her change and growth.

Again we see the contradictions at the core of the narrative. In a variety of ways, Marta suggests that an intracultural tension exists not only in the two families, but within herself as well. For example, she stresses over and over the similarities between the families ("both of our parents came from the same place" and "we're both being Spanish"). At the same time, she emphasizes the differences in traditions and values. Her hurt about the girl from Puerto Rico suggests she wants to be accepted by her husband's family, and yet she ridicules their backwardness. The birth of two children outside of marriage when she was quite young belies Marta's identification with the new American woman. Consensual unions are common among *less* acculturated Puerto Ricans (Fitzpatrick 1981); yet Marta implies her family was *more* acculturated than his. Finally, Marta displays ambivalent feelings about the patriarchal Puerto Rican family. Marta blames her husband for not being responsible and not providing for

his family, but she later deprecates his "male-chauvinistic-type attitude" toward her college aspirations. Marta no longer sees machismo as a desirable characteristic, as traditional Puerto Rican culture does; instead, she explicitly states her ambivalence by criticizing it (line 262).

At many levels, the clash of cultures within Puerto Rican culture is the theme of Marta's narrative. The complex development of this theme is achieved by a narrator who constructs her "point" by using a series of interconnected episodes, each of which bears on the essential conflict. The genre Marta used to tell her story—an episodically structured narrative—is exquisitely appropriate to the theme she tries to convey. It is both dramatic and persuasive precisely because she gives us this scene and that scene, this instance and that instance, present time and past time, thereby underscoring the deep nature of the conflict. Although narrative analysts have tended to treat time as critical (thereby displaying the preoccupation in Western culture with forward sequencing), Marta vividly shows how other deep structures besides time organize experience. Further, the episodic form of the discourse is reflective of Marta's life, which, rather than linear and progressive as Susan's was, has been a mosaic of seemingly disjointed events: birth and youth in the United States, adolescence on the island, return migration to the mainland for early adulthood. Typical of many Puerto Ricans, this back and forth migration is associated with a pattern of dismantling and reconstruction of familial and community ties (Garcia-Preto 1982). Just as the trajectory of Marta's life has been different, so too is the style of her discourse.

Sadly, the clash in cultures is reproduced in the interview process itself. Gender congruity is not enough in this interview to overcome the ethnic incongruity. The bond between the woman interviewer and woman interviewee is insufficient to create the shared meanings that could transcend the divisions between them. As a consequence of their differences, the narrator and the interviewer do not develop a shared discourse. Confusion and misunderstanding ensue. The interviewer's misunderstanding appears to come from both the form of the narrative (its episodic rather than temporal ordering) and its content (marriage as a relationship between families rather than between husband and wife). As Marta's husband failed to collaborate with her to create a shared life due to cultural disjunctures between them, so too did Marta and the interviewer fail to collaborate in the development of an account due to a different set of cultural disjunctures.

THE RESEARCH INTERVIEW AS A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

There are a number of methodological issues for feminist scholars doing life-history interviews. At the most basic level, the analytic process requires qualitative open-ended interviews. Yet, as our analysis has shown, social science interviewing practice—even from the qualitative tradition—may cut off narrative flow. At the next level, we need access to detailed transcriptions to do the analytic work. Speech that has been “cleaned up” to be more readable loses important information. For example, our analysis of the rhythmicity in the interview with Susan, and the absence of it in the interview with Marta, was made possible by close attention to features of language that might well have been deleted from a traditional transcript. Relatedly, the analysis of life history interviews requires attention to narrative form. As we have suggested, Susan and Marta each conveyed the meanings that events had for her through the use of particular narrative genres. Yet traditional qualitative analysis would have fragmented their long answers, not respecting the ways in which each organized her account of marital failure. Lastly, life histories can contribute to sociological analysis of gender, but only if the data include contrasting cases that explicate the diversity of women’s experiences (Riessman forthcoming) and the variety of narrative forms used by different cultures.

Oakley (1981, p. 58) reminds us that giving the subjective situation of women greater visibility in sociology requires rethinking many taken-for-granted assumptions about the proper roles of interviewer and respondent:

The mythology of “hygienic” research with its accompanying mystification of the researcher and the researched as objective instruments of data production [must] be replaced by the recognition that personal involvement is more than dangerous bias—it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives.

However, gender and personal involvement may not be enough for full “knowing.” Oakley (1981), quite correctly, identifies the sources of bias contained in interviewing procedures that objectify both the subject of study and the interviewer by “controlling” the conditions of their interaction. In the interview with Marta, the woman interviewer brought the culture of science into the interview—for example, by creating a numbered listing of the causes of separation

out of Marta's narrative—thereby misinterpreting the meaning of the events that the narrator was trying to convey. The interviewer and the narrator struggled over who would control the topic and what constituted an adequate answer to the items on the schedule. The interviewer tried to impose white, middle-class standards about how a narrative should be organized on Marta's episodically structured account, producing not coherence but confusion.

Interviewing as a scientific method of data collection and analysis is a social practice, "a gutsy, human enterprise, not the work of robots programmed to collect pure information" (Gould 1981, p. 21). The development of a life history can be a collaborative process among the women who interview women and the women who analyze and interpret the interview material. In Susan's case, the interviewer was exquisitely sensitive to the subtle cues provided by the narrator, thereby helping Susan develop a coherent account of her marital failure. The interviewer was not passive, did not merely listen to the material and record it, but helped produce the unfolding account (Bell 1985; Fisher and Groce 1986; Paget 1983). This collaborative process was aided by gender, class, and cultural congruity, which produced the unspoken but shared assumptive world of the two women. They implicitly agreed about how a narrative should be organized and about the content that was relevant to an account of marital separation. In Marta's case, despite gender congruity, the joint construction of an account of marital failure was hindered by the lack of shared cultural and class assumptions. The interviewer held onto the white, middle-class model of temporal organization and thus could not make sense of the episodic form that Marta used—the dramatic unfolding of a series of topics that were stitched together by theme rather than by time. The narrator did not understand the interviewer's implicit expectations about discourse form, and the interviewer did not understand the narrator's allusion to meaningful themes of kin and cultural conflict. As a result, they were unable to collaborate.

Both Susan's and Marta's discourse styles were equally effective, but they made different interpretive demands on the listener (Collins 1985). In both cases, "expansion" (Labov and Fanshel 1977) was needed to make sense of them and the analysis of the structure of each narrative illuminated meanings embedded in the texts. Through the analytic work, the point that tied Marta's narrative together was recovered, even though it had been missed by the interviewer. This

second chance to collaborate with a narrator by unearthing the meanings of her apparently disjointed replies is not available if collaboration on the first level of interviewing has failed entirely. Although the interviewer had trouble interviewing Marta, it was not a total failure; Marta's voice was not totally dominated by the white, middle-class cultural voice of science.

This article raises a number of issues about interviewer-interpreter-interviewee congruity. As Merton (1972) suggests, there are costs and benefits to being an "insider" or "outsider" to an experience by virtue of one's group membership. Perfect congruity is rarely possible in interviewing and begs the question of which of the many social characteristics at issue are the most important to a particular situation (Satow and Lorber 1976). Marta's interview might have been smoother if conducted by a Puerto Rican man, but the gender nuances might have been missed. The ideal interviewer might have been a Puerto Rican woman; but more generally, good life history interviewing requires attending to the voice of the lifeworld (Mishler 1984), and a corresponding muting of the voice of science. It is necessary to listen with a minimum of interruptions and to take cues from those we study, if we are going to help them recall and report experiences in their own voices. In the analysis of their narratives, we can attend to their forms and meanings, letting our subjects' voices speak for themselves. Perfect congruence between interviewer, interviewee, and interpreter is probably not possible, not even always desirable. As social scientists, we do not relive experiences but interpret and generalize. However, if a sensitive collaboration has not occurred in the interview and the analysis, we may have "heard" nothing.

APPENDIX A

- (1) I: Would you state in your own words what were the main causes of your separation.
- (2) N: Ahhh (p)³ lack of communication um
- (3) (p) um (p) we started to resent each other (p) um (p)
- (4) I: Say more about the communication and the resentment
- (5) N: Well (p) um (p) I don't know where to begin
- (6) Do you want me just sort of go up just explain about about our marriage and go into all that
- (7) I: Yea, and what led to the separation

- (8) N: Mm, let's see (p) I was twenty-five when I was married
 (9) and I was pregnant
 (10) and there wasn't um (p)
 (11) didn't really have my head on very well I guess I
 (12) I kind of decided I should get married
 (13) I was pregnant
 (14) I didn't really give it that much thought
 (15) I don't think I would have married Bill if I had not been pregnant
 (16) I think we would eventually would have gone off our own ways.
 (17) He was an Irishman from Boston, whose mother had
 (18) um done a lot, done *everything*⁴ for him, you know
 (19) and he went into a marriage without realizing there's a lot of give
 and take.
 (20) And basically I had the children um
 (21) from day one (can't hear)
 (22) uhm he did not help out
 (23) it was not a give and take
 (24) I really carried 99% of the brunt of everything that had to be done
 (25) and I resented it [uhm]⁵
 (26) you know the years went by
 (27) and I built up this resentment [uhm]
 (28) and (p) uh we didn't know each other very well and
 (29) a lot of things about his personality
 (30) uh things that I had found sort of complex and interesting
 (31) which I really was, I didn't really know what these things were
 but
 (32) I grew to (p) kind of
 (33) there was a lot of selfishness in him [uh hum] and
 (34) he wasn't he didn't give a lot
 (35) you know besides not helping he some-
 (36) a real loner
 (37) hard to communicate with
 (38) his idea of having an argument
 (39) was not to discuss it at all
 (40) it was just to go into another room
 (41) and not communicate, kind of thing.
 (42) And so (p) uh I just built up a lot of hostilities
 (43) and we stopped talking
 (44) early on in our marriage really
 (45) um and he spent more and more time at work.
 (46) He didn't want to come home
 (47) he'd come home and
 (48) and then I would say
 (49) "I'd like you to spend a little time with the kids" and he

- (50) he'd just wanted to go up and read a book, kind of thing.
- (51) We just didn't communicate really.
- (52) Um (p) what else, um (p)
- (53) You know we continued to have children
- (54) I think, you would think that
- (55) you you bury yourself in the things that have to be done on a daily basis
- (56) and that's one way of not having to discuss
- (57) what's lacking in your own marriage.
- (58) And I think we had more children
- (59) that took up a lot of time
- (60) there were always family things
- (61) and we just didn't deal with our problems.
- (62) And (p) he just started coming home less and less
- (63) and making up excuses for
- (64) for being at work and
- (65) and I had all these young children running around
- (66) I had *no* time for myself.
- (67) And I buried all of what I needed for myself
- (68) for years and years and years.
- (69) We had a bad marriage
- (70) we really had a bad marriage.

- (71) I: And gradually you just realized that.

- (72) N: There was just no communication
- (73) there was no sex
- (74) there was just nothing
- (75) we slept in different bedrooms
- (76) that started out really early in our marriage

- (77) I: Who first suggested it?

- (78) N: Well when we lived in Providence
- (79) right after Nancy was born
- (80) she was born in '74
- (81) we moved to Providence
- (82) and he was finishing up school
- (83) and we were in a double bed
- (84) and I couldn't get any sleep
- (85) I was I had I always all through all those years
- (86) I was the one that got up in the night with the kids
- (87) he didn't do that

(88) for years
 (89) occasionally but basically I'd be up
 (90) two three four times a night
 (91) I didn't really know how to
 (92) how to *argue* at that time
 (93) I'd just I'd bury everything
 (94) and um so not only was I getting up with Nancy
 (95) but then I could— I
 (96) I literally couldn't sleep in the same bed because he
 (97) you know men snore and they (both laugh)
 (98) so then I suggested we suggested single beds in the same room
 (99) which is what we did
 (100) and then the *following* year in '75
 (101) we moved up here
 (102) and we moved into my mother's house
 (103) for one year before we bought a house
 (104) because we didn't have any money

(105) I: She was here at the time

(106) N: She was living here at the time
 (107) and there was a third floor room
 (108) and (p) was he the one?
 (109) he just sort of moved up there
 (110) um cause he he liked to stay up late at night
 (111) and I couldn't stay up late
 (112) because I knew I had to get up in the night
 (113) so he sort of had his own little *nest*
 (114) up on the third floor
 (115) this was on Garden Street
 (116) and um you know if he wanted to stay up until one or two
 (117) reading in the morn-
 (118) you know he could do that
 (119) 'cause I tried to get to bed at a decent hour (can't hear)
 (120) Yea
 (121) and um then when we moved here
 (122) first thing we did was to redo the attic
 (123) which was a cold— put some rooms up there
 (124) and then he moved up there as soon as that was done.

(125) I: So it just gradually dawned on both of you that you should get separated or?

(126) N: Uhm (p) we just didn't *talk*

- (127) we just kind of existed in the same house
- (128) like roommates kind of (p) um (p)
- (129) it was a long time
- (130) I guess (p) I don't know as I look back it's amazing that
- (131) that you accept things and you just
- (132) you know that they're wrong
- (133) but you just kind of go along and
- (134) take each day and
- (135) and the days become weeks
- (136) and the weeks become months
- (137) and suddenly you have three children and
- (138) you're communicating less and less
- (139) but you're just kind of existing
- (140) we were just existing
- (141) we didn't (p) really (p) openly fight and get angry
- (142) we didn't have that it was
- (143) the anger was all buried
- (144) but after you know many years
- (145) finally the anger sort of surfaced [uhm uhm]
- (146) and um (p) and then we just we just realized that
- (147) we couldn't even be in the same room
- (148) we just we just weren't happy with one another.
- (149) (Interviewer asks next question on interview schedule)

APPENDIX B

- (1) I: Can you state in your own words what were the main causes of your separation?
- (2) N: I guess the mental abuse.
- (3) I: What do you mean?
- (4) N: (p) I find it very painful (p) to be treated (p)
- (5) like I was treated when I was living with my mother uh
- (6) no communication
- (7) he was very irresponsible
- (8) I mean, he could have a job but yet (p)
- (9) it didn't matter much. (p)
- (10) To him it was like well
- (11) if it happens it happens and if it don't it don't.

- (12) With me I like to work.
(13) I've made, I have made sacrifices
(14) where I didn't, I didn't spend much time with my children due to
you know, working and what not but
(15) someday I know my children will accept it
(16) and they will respect me for it.
(17) But no, I do, eheheh, if you were about to ask if I resent any of the
things I have done
(18) no, I don't. Uhm
- (19) I: But what about, talk more about the causes of the separation?
- (20) N: (p) I guess we both had
(21) he had more growing up to do than I did.
(22) I was too advanced for him in a lot of ways.
- (23) I: What about, you were talking about irresponsibility, say, tell me
a little more what you mean.
- (24) N: O.K., like (p) he did not mind dedicating a [EPISODE 1]
lot of time to his sports
(25) his friends, the softball league, and things like that.
(26) And if I asked just to go like to a movie with the children
(27) or go out to dinner at a restaurant
(28) just *one* day
(29) he couldn't understand *why* I wanted to do that
(30) when I could do it at home
(31) just sitting down watching TV or
(32) just having a family dinner
(33) which would be the same going to a restaurant
(34) and you, the cost is the same
(35) except that you don't do the dishes afterwards, you know.
(36) Not that I didn't mind doing them
(37) it's just that
(38) I just wanted for us to *go out*
(39) and *be sociable*.
(40) He didn't like the idea of being surrounded by one too many
people, person.
(41) And, uh [uhm] (p) I really don't know
(42) it's very difficult. (p)
(43) I guess it was outgoing versus not outgoing

(44) I: You mean he didn't like to go to a restaurant because there'd be people there?

(45) N: No, I really, to him the excuse was always [EPISODE 2]

(46) "well we don't have the *money*

(47) we don't have a *car*"

(48) uh, when it came to a movie, "I don't know if I want to put the time in."

(49) But yet when it came to a softball game on a Sunday afternoon

(50) "well why don't you come along with the kids"

(51) and I would please him then.

(52) Also because I liked, I enjoyed watching the games [uhm]

(53) not just because he was in it

(54) or because he like them so much

(55) but because I also enjoyed them.

(56) There were a lot of my friends there along with

(57) as much as his

(58) and we all had a great time.

(59) But when it came to things *as a family*

(60) there were always (p) *obstacles*.

(61) I just couldn't *understand* it.

(62) He would, he was, he was more happy just staying at home not doing anything

(63) or doing something around the house

(64) than just going out

(65) and just doing something just for each other

(66) and our children and ourselves.

(67) I: And did you talk to him about that?

(68) N: Yes

(69) I: And what would he say?

(70) N: Well, he felt threatened when I asked him if [EPISODE 3]

(71) "can I have one night off

(72) and just go out with the girls, from work"

(73) I: [can't hear]

(74) N: Yes, or uh if my girlfriends or relatives asked me out to dinner

(75) he didn't like that very much

(76) he couldn't understand why.

(77) Uh, anything dealing with friends or relatives

(78) or anything work related
 (79) he felt threatened by it. [hum]
 (80) Uh (p) I guess the one thing that did it most [EPISODE 4]
 (81) was when I got hired to work at the fire department
 (82) and uhm (p) he felt, he really, to him,
 (83) I, I didn't feel I was trusted.
 (84) I was surrounded *by* men
 (85) and the demands came *from* men
 (86) where I was cons— I had to do my job.
 (87) Period. That's all I was doing.
 (88) He didn't like it very much
 (89) I guess the friendship of *those strange men*
 (90) didn't appeal to him very much.

(91) I: And, he wanted you to quit.

(92) N: He didn't quite admit it
 (93) but he would have liked it
 (94) if I would have, you know, quit, my job.

(95) I: You had a sense that he wanted you to, he wouldn't say that

(96) N: Yes, definitely yes.
 (97) Just quit in general and just stay home
 (98) take of the children
 (99) take care of my house
 (100) and him
 (101) and never mind what my, my wants, desires were.

(102) I: (p) So the major things you see as causing it are, one, his irresponsibility and, two, his going, not wanting to do things with the family

(103) N: Yea, not being, antisociable-type thing I believe it's called.

(104) I: (p) And you had, you were real different that way.

(105) Um hum. And when it came to family [EPISODE 5]
 (106) (p) uh (p) his family and my family are two different people.
 (107) My family were city oriented

- (108) his family was more island-type-oriented people.
- (109) I: What is, what is, how does?
- (110) N: O.K. Even though both of our parents came from the same place
 (111) *my family*
 (112) not only did the majority of the children were born out here in
 the United States
 (113) we had a more easy going fast type living while
 (114) (p) his family only knew the slow pace (p) [uhm] type living
 (115) very old fashioned
 (116) more so than my family
 (117) I guess I could say that
- (118) I: Can you give me some examples of what that, how that showed
 itself?
- (119) N: "Well, why can't she stay home more often."
 (120) Uh, "She should take more care of the house."
 (121) "Children come first
 (122) so does husband"
 (123) "those are first priorities." [ahh]
 (124) My mother says yes
 (125) or my father
 (126) "yes children have to be taken care of
 (127) yes husband has to be looked after
 (128) and yes a home has to be looked after
 (129) but the wife also has things that she needs to do for herself
 (130) we're only human beings"
 (131) that type of attitude.
- (132) I: And did his family exert pressure on you?
- (133) N: Very much so.
- (134) I: They what would they
- (135) N: His mother and father were
 (136) his mother was (p)
 (137) uhm (p) overly sociable to a point where

- (138) she was a very friendly loving person, O.K.
 (139) don't take me wrong
 (140) but she was also cruel (p)
 (141) she was, uh huh huh (p) oh, how do I describe her
 (142) (p) selfish (p) she was the
 (143) not a one-man women type thing
 (144) she would go for whatever came along type thing.
 (145) Uh she was, she cohabitated
 (146) she fornicated
 (147) she, every, uh she committed adultery
 (148) every sin in the book she did. [uhm uhm]
 (149) His father took all that in and
 (150) until he started practicing that himself
 (151) Uh he came from, uh, uh, the type of uh marriage in the family
 where
 (152) there wasn't really much there [uhm]
 (153) even though there were fights in my, my parents' marriage, O.K.
 (154) a lot of the, as we all have learned to accept was
 (155) from my mother's part
 (156) because, uh (p) she wasn't really being selfish
 (157) but that, that feeling, that feeling of insecure
 (158) uh be being insecure
 (159) really did a number on her. [uhm]
 (160) My father on the other hand has always been very passive. [mhm]
 (161) So he was like
 (162) the strength, you know, the type of thing [uhm]
 (163) just do what comes natural
 (164) so long that, so long that it's right, type of thing you know.
- (165) I: So, and he, did his family put pressure on you to stop doing the
 kinds of things you were doing, like going to the fire department?
- (166) N: Well, when I started working at the fire department
 (167) uh (p) they weren't around.
 (168) The relationship was broken off
 (169) there was no communication
 (170) there was nothing
 (171) they wanted to do
 (172) they didn't want anything to do with me after the birth of the
 second child. [uhm]
 (173) I did not approve of them coming into *my* home
 (174) uh, very loud type of behavior
 (175) intoxicated
 (176) uh, certain behaviors that they had I did not approve of.

- (177) My home is my home
- (178) and it should be respected
- (179) I have rules and regulations along with everybody ah ah like
everybody else.
- (180) (p) My family, yes, they're they're loud and everything else
- (181) but they cooperated with me.
- (182) They didn't, they did, they never did, uh, make any accusations
like
- (183) "that's not his child"
- (184) or, uh, "we're not going to help you"
- (185) or, "we're not going to do this"
- (186) no matter how much anger there was
- (187) we always stuck together. [uhm]
- (188) And there was no feeling of togetherness in his family at all.
- (189) (p) I guess his main thing was
- (190) him being bet, bitter
- (191) and wanting to make a, a a
- (192) model type
- (193) whatever he had in his mind
- (194) of me
- (195) and it didn't pay off.

(Tape runs out and new tape begins; some lines may be missing.)

- (196) not face-to-face but at a distance.
- (197) The first thing he said was
- (198) "my god, instead of you
- (199) moving your race up
- (200) you're, you, pulling, you're pushing it back
- (201) like 200 years."
- (202) Well we're both being Spanish, O.K.
- (203) I was just darker, you know, skinwise [Right] than him
- (204) and he didn't approve of that
- (205) I guess what I'm saying is
- (206) they already had picked out the girl
- (207) they would have preferred to see him married to.
- (208) This was the girl that caused
- (209) our uh breakup in our engagement.
- (210) This was the girl that that that that
- (211) caused a lot of heartaches (p) and a lot of
- (212) (p) bitterness I guess on my part.

- (213) I: What what happened with her?

- (214) N: Well, she stayed in Puerto Rico, you know
 (215) she really never came here but
 (216) the times that she did come
 (217) she made it a point to see him.
 (218) I never disapproved of it, I mean
 (219) I trusted him enough.
 (220) But her actions were are such that uh
 (221) I never knew what it was they saw in her. [mhm]
 (222) Not that I was Miss Perfect
 (223) I do have my faults but
 (224) I don't know (p)
- (225) I: An and his seeing her caused fights?
- (226) N: Not on my part.
- (227) I: No, but
- (228) N: It was like his (unclear) family felt threatened you know like
 (229) well why can't you just stick with that one originally
 (230) and just drop this one type of thing
- (231) I: And what was his response to all of that?
- (232) N: Well, I love this one not the other one
- (233) I: Her, her meaning, her
- (234) N: Meaning, me
- (235) I: Meaning that he didn't love her
- (236) N: Right.
- (237) I: But but you said that in some ways you feel as though she caused the breakup, what
- (238) N: Not on my part but
 (239) I guess for him
 (240) He felt the I guess in a way he felt he made a big mistake
 (241) I don't know

- (242) I really can't answer
 (243) there was really not much communication
 (244) and there never was.
- (245) I: But this was just something you'd felt
- (246) N: When it happened yes
- (247) I: When *what* happened?
- (248) N: When the engagement break up came about.
- (249) I: Engagement or marriage?
- (250) N: Engagement.
- (251) We were engaged to be married
- (252) I: Oh, first the *engagement* broke up
- (253) N: Right
- (254) I: Then you went back together again
- (255) N: No then I went to college.
- (256) I: O.K. yea then you went to college, let me get the, then you went to college, and then what happened?
- (257) N: When he found out he was very upset
- (258) "I wanted to marry her
- (259) I didn't want her to go to college"
- (260) he was like
- (261) you know that that male chauvinistic type attitude
- (262) I don't *like* to use the phrase
- (263) but that's exactly what it
- (264) comes down to
- (265) I: (p) And, so you went to college, and then what happened?
- (266) N: That's when I got pregnant.
- (267) I: uh huh, O.K., and then what happened?
- (268) N: I was always surrounded by friends so

(269) his mother automatically assumed
 (270) that I was be I was pregnant by
 (271) one of my one of my college mates
 (272) not by her son

(273) I: But that wasn't true

(274) N: No it was not true.

(275) I: And, *then*, you got back together with him

(276) N: Um hum

(277) I: And then you got married

(278) N: After the second child, yes.

(279) I: O.K., gotcha, [laughs] I didn't have the order of it. O.K. Oh, I see
 so this other woman caused the breakup in the *engagement*, not
 ah

(280) N: Not the marriage

(281) I: Gotcha, O.K.

(282) N: There were no women no men involved

(283) when our breakup of the marriage came about

(284) I: O.K.

(285) N: Nothing at all, no.

(286) I: Mm O.K.

(287) (Interviewer asks next question on interview schedule)

NOTES

1. Interviewees were asked to name the people they knew who helped them with a series of tasks, and a list of these network members was made in order that specific questions could be asked about each person.

2. Some might argue that Marta's account is not a narrative because it is not structured by time and relies so heavily on abstractions and not instances or specific events. There is considerable disagreement in the literature about the definition of narrative (see Mitchell 1981). The most restrictive is Labov's (1982) notion of a story that encodes specific past events. As Bell (forthcoming) shows, linked stories are a prototypic form that individuals use to reconstruct personal experience in research interviews. Yet respondents also use ordered event clauses that do not encode specific events, as in habitual and hypothetical narratives. There are a variety of narrative genres (Polanyi 1985) that convey meaning differently (Riessman 1986).

3. The notation (p) in the transcript indicates a pause of four seconds or longer by the speaker.

4. Italics indicate a marked increase in loudness or emphasis.

5. Material within brackets indicates the interviewer's nonlexical utterances during narrator's speech.

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