

## OBITUARIES



*Chuck Goodwin doing fieldwork in 1990 aboard an oceanographic research vessel at the mouth of the Amazon River. (Photograph by Heather Astwood)*

### Charles Goodwin (1943–2018)

Charles (Chuck) Goodwin died on March 31, 2018, in Los Angeles. Initially appointed in 1976 to a position in anthropology at the University of South Carolina, he had taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, since 1996, first in the Department of Applied Linguistics and then in the Department of Communication. He retired in 2017 as distinguished professor of communication.

Goodwin was a consummately skilled and imaginative analyst of the moment-by-moment conduct of social interaction face-to-face. Across his forty-year career, he developed an increasingly comprehensive theoretical account of the combination of diverse semiotic resources for meaning making in everyday social interaction, considering such interaction as an elementary form of social life—a primary site for human cultural evolution.

He was born on October 9, 1943, in Los Angeles, though he grew up in New Jersey. After receiving a bachelor's

degree with honors in English at Holy Cross in 1965 and undertaking a year's study at New York University's School of Law, Goodwin began graduate study in the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. There, he served as a research assistant to his advisor, Klaus Krippendorf, and as a researcher and videographer at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic and the Developmental Center for Autistic Children. During this time, he met his wife and close collaborator, Marjorie Harness (Candy) Goodwin. He was awarded the PhD in communication from the University of Pennsylvania in 1977.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were heady times for communication study at Penn. The sociologist Erving Goffman and linguist William Labov had joined linguistic anthropologist and folklorist Dell Hymes at the university, where, in addition, Klaus Krippendorf and anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell had faculty appointments at the Annenberg School. All these scholars shared interests in the particulars of communication behavior as these took place in the real-time conduct of face-to-face interaction. The Goodwins developed especially close relationships with Goffman and Labov, the latter recommending that they read the then privately circulated notes on lectures on conversation analysis by Harvey Sacks, who had been a student of Goffman at the University of California, Berkeley. In the early 1970s, Gail Jefferson, who had worked with Sacks at UCLA, had come to the Center for Urban Ethnography at Penn as a postdoctoral fellow. She collaborated with the Goodwins in beginning to analyze and transcribe video footage the Goodwins were collecting, audio-visual recordings of everyday occasions of social interaction.

Some fundamental ideas influenced Charles Goodwin at the beginning of his career, coming from domains of inquiry that were new then: human ecology, cybernetics (a key interest of Krippendorf), and the biosocial perspective on communication and cognition articulated by Gregory Bateson. These ideas were extended as Goodwin's work developed.

One guiding notion was the continuous mutual influence in real time among components as parts within a whole system. In the case of living organisms, this meant organism–environment relations in an ecosystem. Social interaction can be thought of as an ecosystem in which people act together, in concert, monitoring one another's actions, making next moves that take account of what others are doing. Another guiding notion was that participants in interaction use multiple sensory means to monitor one another's actions—not

attending to speech alone through hearing but to visually and kinesthetically available information—and they draw on multiple semiotic resources in signaling meaning to one another. A further notion was that the social ecology of interaction takes place in time. Initially salient for Goodwin were the immediate timescales of everyday events in which social action takes place in microseconds, seconds, and minutes. Later in his career, he came to realize ecological relations across more distal timeframes, as cultural practices inherited from forebears were being reanimated and transformed for situated use in present circumstances.

All these notions except the last were foundational for Goodwin's dissertation research, completed in 1977 and published in 1981 as *Conversational Organization: Interaction between Speakers and Hearers*. Focusing on the coordination that takes place in dyadic interaction between a speaker and a hearer within single turns at talk, Goodwin demonstrated with remarkable clarity a range of ways, simultaneously, the speaker's speaking behavior is influencing the listener and the listener's listening behavior is influencing the speaker. Close transcription and analysis of videotaped examples of interaction, tracking the listener's gaze during the ongoing course of the speaker's talk, showed that what might seem to be infelicities in talk—hesitations, restarts, syntactically incomplete utterances, and reiterations—could be seen as meaningful and appropriate within the process of attentive coordination between speaker and hearer.

The then newly developing approach of “conversation analysis” in sociology (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) was emphasizing relationships of connection between successive turns at talk. To this focus on sequential organization of interaction, Goodwin added a focus on its simultaneous organization—its *whiles* (*while* in a given moment the speaker is doing X and the hearer is doing Y).

In later research, Goodwin moved beyond dyadic encounters, attending to gaze as the nonverbal means of signaling and to multiparty interaction and multiple semiotic means of communicating meaning through combinations of speaking and listening behavior as well as through engagement with artifacts and the physical environment. He joined participant observation with video recording, microanalysis, and transcription in a series of studies in a variety of work settings, including a geological field school, an archaeological excavation, an oceanographic research vessel, the ground-control room at the airport in San Jose, California, and everyday interaction among parents and children in households in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. In addition, he documented the interaction of family members with his father, “Chil,” who had become aphasic after a stroke.

The intimate studies of Chil (as insider ethnography) illustrate continuing themes in Goodwin's approach (see Goodwin 2003, 90–116; 2018a, 59–90). Chil's interactional capacities rather than his incapacities were foregrounded in Goodwin's analysis and reporting. Chil was portrayed as intently engaged and adept at marshaling opportunistically a variety of semiotic resources in making

meaning with interlocutors. After his stroke, Chil had a vocabulary of only three words: *yes*, *no*, and *and*. In spite of this limitation, making use of the three words together with prosody and gesture, and drawing upon shared background knowledge and inferential capacities of those around him, Chil was able to engage with others in rapid-fire social interaction and even in telephone conversation. Goodwin, by combining fine-grained transcription of nonverbal behavior, pictorial representation of still frames from the video record, and transcription of speech, was able to show the *how* of Chil's assembly and use of multiple semiotic resources to make meaning and the *how* of his interlocutors' collaboration with him in shared endeavor to communicate.

In Goodwin's studies of work groups, one of the earliest was a summer field school for archaeologists. Goodwin focused on expert/novice interaction, as professional archaeologists taught their students how to observe certain distinctions in soil color and texture as archaeologically significant features (e.g., as evidence of post holes). Semiotic resources employed involved the physical environment itself—the soil—together with gestures, as in pointing toward and in inscribing portions of soil with a trowel, and the use of an artifact, the Munsell color chart, to scaffold the categorizing of soil color, together with language. Yet speech was only one among the diverse semiotic media involved in demonstration to a novice—and it was not speech in isolation but speech taking place in the context of all the other semiotic resources employed, including speakers' gestures and salient characteristics in the soil itself. What was being taught was disciplinarily relevant ways of seeing—“professional vision,” as Goodwin termed it in an influential article published in *American Anthropologist* (Goodwin 1994; see also Goodwin 2018a, 189–227).

The coordination of differing professional visions was explored in Goodwin's fieldwork on an oceanographic research vessel. Scientists from differing specialties—physical oceanographers and geochemists—together with scientifically lay members of the ship's crew, were measuring the characteristics of water beneath the ship using an underwater monitor. As they did so, information was coming to them from the winch cable operator's visual attention to the apparatus for lowering and raising the monitoring equipment. Further visual information was coming from a video screen that displayed water depth, temperature, and salinity. Still further information came from the notes being written by the scientists for themselves. Information also came of course from talk, both among the scientists and between them and ship crew members. All this information was available to participants interactively, in successive moments in real time. But each subgroup had different approaches to noticing significance in the various information sources, as well as different interests at stake in their collective conduct of the ship's activities. This is “distributed information” and “distributed cognition” within an overall work group—a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts (Goodwin 1995; see also Goodwin 2018a, 275–306).

The development of Goodwin's thinking across his career can be seen as an increasingly comprehensive view of what is involved in the semiotic ecology of social interaction face-to-face. Initially, he focused on certain features of a single speaker's language in relation to the gaze of a single listener. In later work, he considered multiparty situations of interaction and an increasingly wide variety of semiotic media as they were employed together in making meaning, including not only human verbal and nonverbal behavior but artifacts and the physical environment. Time was considered at first in the timescale of enchrony—the real-time conduct of everyday interaction during the course of uttering single turns at talk.

In Goodwin's final book, *Co-Operative Action* (2018a), the timescale under consideration broadens beyond enchrony to diachrony: to cultural practices (language, technology, and specialized knowledge) invented by predecessors and accumulated across the full range of human cultural evolution. All this is encompassed by the term co-operation—not “co-operation” in the sense of exchange of mutual help, but “co-operation” in the sense of working together—which he defines as the opportunistic conjoining of diverse semiotic resources in concerted action among multiple participants who innovate in the present moment by adapting cultural resources inherited from the past for situated use in current practice. As Goodwin observes (2018a, 477), “The shaping of [interactive] phenomena as a temporally unfolding process extends from within noun phrases, to transformative operations on the talk and action of those around us, through apprenticeship across generations, to the use of materials inherited from predecessors to create locally relevant action.”

In addition to many articles and two single-authored books (Goodwin 1981, 2018a), Goodwin published three edited volumes: one on conceptions of context in interaction (Duranti and Goodwin 1992), one on aphasia and interaction (Goodwin 2003), and one on embodiment in interaction (Streeck, Goodwin, and LeBaron 2011). He discussed the origins of his work in two recent published interviews (Dickerson 2012; Goodwin and Salomon 2019). Goodwin also appeared on videos now available on the Internet: in a talk on aphasia,<sup>1</sup> in a lecture/demonstration discussing his book *Co-Operative Action*,<sup>2</sup> in a keynote address on the same topic at a European conference on multimodality (see Goodwin 2018b),<sup>3</sup> and in his videotaped dialogue with John Haviland, where they watch and together begin to analyze a video clip of young children's interaction with a teacher in a classroom.<sup>4</sup>

Goodwin's work has been distinctive in the breadth of its influence across differing social science disciplines and fields of inquiry: social, cognitive, and cultural psychology; ethnomethodology and conversation analysis in sociology; interdisciplinary workplace studies and social studies of science; semiotics; linguistics; communication studies; and “learning sciences” research in education (on this last, see the commentary in Keifert and Marin 2018). His article on

professional vision in *American Anthropologist* (Goodwin 1994) is the most frequently cited article in the history of this journal. He received honorary doctorates from the University of Aalborg in Denmark and from the University of Linköping in Sweden. In 2018, he received the Garfinkel-Sacks Award for Distinguished Scholarship from the Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (EMCA) section of the American Sociological Association (ASA) and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Society of Conversation Analysis. In 2019, his book *Co-Operative Action* received the ASA/EMCA Best Book Award.

Yet his academic center was in linguistic anthropology and anthropology broadly, as shown in his concluding remarks in *Co-Operative Action*:

The original vision of anthropology was the study of all aspects of what it is to be human—language, diverse forms of social organization, tools, biology, our ties to other animals, etc.—from a framework able to encompass all these phenomena, and investigate their mutual relationships . . . Study of the many manifestations of co-operative action explores the possibility of recovering through ongoing research the integrated vision of human capacities in their full linguistic, social, material, biological, cognitive, and historical intertwining, which sits at the root of anthropology's original, radical vision of what it is to be human. (2018a, 477–78)

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## NOTES

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1. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnrkxvBa&list=PLoAkqLNKq5aI-JAIKIJndI5nAraJIHxq&index=1>.
2. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNmbj2cHcW8>.
3. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5sO2GMb11E>.
4. See: <https://www.learninghowtolookandlisten.com>.

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