



Box 11.11 KEY RESEARCHER Professor Charles Goodwin: non-vocal interaction

How did you become interested in communication and social interaction?

I chose the field of communications and, specifically, the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, because I felt that communications – then a new academic discipline – offered exciting new perspectives for thinking about a range of interesting phenomena, including human social life. At the time I was most influenced by people such as Marshall McLuhan and film as an art form. When I actually got to graduate school I was quite unhappy with both the methodological and theoretical frameworks in social psychology and related fields that informed much of my coursework. I did, however, have a quite brilliant and exceptional adviser – the cybernetician Klaus Krippendorff – who introduced me to the work of Gregory Bateson, which I found very exciting. At the same time I began to sit in on classes with Erving Goffman. His approach, with its focus on looking at the details of actual interaction, seemed relevant, appropriate and exciting in ways that the experimental methods and topics of the social psychology I was being taught never did. I learned that people who had worked with Bateson on his Palo Alto project on human communication were now at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic where they were helping to create the field of family therapy. I very much wanted to have an opportunity to work with them. However, because of budget cuts the only job available in the summer of 1969 was typing the plastic identification cards used by patients at the clinic. I took the job because I really wanted to at least have a toe in an environment focused on systematically looking at human interaction. For this work they also hired a young anthropologist who had been doing fieldwork studying the daily lives of African-American families in South Philadelphia. While working, we talked together about many things, including with passion how one might study human interaction. Candy has been my partner and intellectual companion ever since.

Shortly after we got together, Erving Goffman phoned Candy (whose written identity is Marjorie Harness Goodwin) and offered to fund her PhD research through the Center for Urban Ethnography in Philadelphia. For her fieldwork, she studied the daily lives, talk and social organisation of preadolescent African American children on the street, a project that was published in 1990 as *He Said She Said*. In class, Goffman told us that you could not do

ethnography with a tape recorder. He mentioned someone I had never heard of, called Harvey Sacks, and said we should not be misled by what he was doing. However, he gave Candy's several tape recorders as part of her research package. I reminded Candy of what Goffman had said in class and argued that she should not use the tape recorders. However, she refused to listen to me. The tapes she made opened important new domains of analysis, which would have been impossible without them.

Sometime after this, I got a job at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic and worked as part of the team that recorded family therapy sessions and used some of them to make training films about how to do therapy. I was thus in the position of studying videotapes of human interaction – albeit in a very special situation – all day long. Moreover, I was deeply influenced by the work of the clinic, which stressed how psychological phenomena were constituted through interactive practices.

Meanwhile, Candy spent approximately two months writing detailed transcripts of children's street talk then took them and her ideas to Bill Labov. He was very enthusiastic and told her about the work of Harvey Sacks. At the time, Labov did not know me or of my own interest in human interaction – I was simply Candy's boyfriend. Candy went to Labov's office regularly and made copies of one or two lectures at a time and brought them home for me to read. Both of us were blown away by them. I now realise we were in an ideal position to read the Sacks lectures. Working with different, though related materials (video and audio recordings of people's activities in consequential natural settings) both of us were grappling with the question of how to describe the practices of interaction that human beings used to build talk and embodied action in concert with each other. The brilliance and insight of Sacks' lectures were immediately clear to us and extraordinarily illuminating. We could immediately use what he said to try to see patterning and structure in our own data. In working with the Sacks lectures, we were not reading literature but using powerful materials that helped us to think through the issues we were facing in our own work. Moreover, instead of being faced with what later appear as a gigantic tome, we only had one or two lectures at a time and looked forward to each next instalment as a special treat.

I had planned to do my dissertation using as data the family therapy sessions I was recording at the

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clinic. However, I began to realise that there were some serious problems with this. The work of the clinic put a particular analytic focus on everything that was happening. I would be expected to analyse what was happening as family therapy, using their theoretical frameworks, rather than as basic mundane interaction.

Though we had very little money, Candy and I bought the first consumer video recorder – the Sony Portapak – and began to videotape whatever events we could find. Shortly after we began recording our own video, Gail Jefferson came to the Center for Urban Ethnography. Because of our deep immersion in the Sacks lectures, we got in touch with her immediately. This quickly led to weekly informal seminars focused on video in our home that were attended by the three of us (Gail, Chuck and Candy) and Malcah Yeager-Dror. Gail was a truly extraordinary teacher and the seminars with her were the greatest intellectual experience of my life. In these seminars, we first looked with others at the materials, such as the cigarette utterance, that would form the basis for my dissertation and 1981 book. Gail is best known for her extraordinary work on audio materials. However, I would like to emphasise her central importance in the development of video analysis as well. My ability to work systematically with video materials was formed through interaction with her in these seminars. Despite the fact that she was not on either of our committees, Gail was the primary intellectual mentor for both myself and Candy. I would also like to emphasise the uniqueness of Gail's theoretical contributions to the study of human interaction.

With Gail, we went to the 1973 Summer Institute of Linguistics at Ann Arbor. There we had the opportunity to take classes with Sacks and Schegloff and to continue our most important weekly seminars at our apartment with the three of them, ourselves, and Malcah. On weekends, we recorded more data, including the tape now known as Auto Discussion.

In later years, two events led me to think about interaction in ways that I hadn't before. First, Lucy Suchman invited us to study workplace interaction at Xerox Parc. That, in conjunction with work I had started to do with archaeologists as they excavated in the field, led me to see that, while I had done analysis of both language and the body in situated human interaction, I had drawn an invisible barrier at the skin of the actors and not taken into account analytically the structure of the environments they were working within. Second, my father had a stroke that left him with a three-

word vocabulary. When I visited him the night after the stroke, I could see from the placement of his eye movements that he was acting as a hearer to what I was saying (the doctors thought he had no understanding whatsoever). However, for a number of years, I did not want to record his interactions, though I found them enormously interesting because of my prior work with the organisation of embodied face-to-face interaction. I eventually realised the importance of showing people the competence of someone such as Chil and, with a growing body of other researchers, the importance of analysing phenomena such as aphasia from a perspective that focused on the organisation of interaction rather than exclusively on events inside the individual brain.

My immersion in the study of talk and human interaction occurred during the years in the late 1960s and early 1970s that are now known as the Sixties. What I recall most from this time is taking extraordinary ideas, art and events for granted. A new recording by Bob Dylan would be followed almost immediately by something like Sgt Pepper from the Beatles and, in addition to generational engagement and political events, such as opposition to the Vietnam War, there were also amazing revelations, such as learning that Richard Nixon was recording all of his conversations. I accepted this richness as normal, just the way things were. Only in retrospect do I appreciate how special that time was. A similar extraordinary environment shaped my development as a scholar. When the work of Gregory Bateson led me to the study of human interaction, I could both begin to work with video with some of his former colleagues, and start to sit in on classes with Erving Goffman. I could meet someone else who shared my passion for human interaction and together we could begin to make recordings that opened up talk and embodied action in the mundane social world in ways that we couldn't imagine when we began them. Once we got interested in this, people such as William Labov, who inspired Candy's fieldwork recording natural conversations on the street, were generous enough to lead us to the Sacks lectures at a time when almost none of his work had been published. Shortly after we began to immerse ourselves in them, while pursuing our own analysis of recorded interaction, Gail Jefferson appeared and turned our little living room into a site for extraordinary intellectual growth and, indeed laid the foundations for the kinds of video analysis I do. We then got the opportunity to actually work with Harvey Sacks and Emmanuel Schegloff – indeed, during the summer when they were doing the final revisions

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to the turn-taking paper. When we returned to the University of Pennsylvania, we sat in on the seminars where Erving Goffman was working out his model of the speaker that appeared in *Footing* and had graduate student data seminars that included Goffman, Labov and Gail Jefferson. In reply to the question asked here, my interest in communication and social interaction was shaped by the opportunity to grow through encounters with an extraordinary set of stimulating creative minds.

How does your approach compare and contrast with others?

My early work differed from much other contemporary analysis of talk-in-interaction because of its use of video and focus on embodiment. However, even at that early period there was most important work on these phenomena being done by people such as Adam Kendon, Christian Heath and later Jürgen Streeck. I am not trying to be exhaustive and apologise for names not included. However, this work was, and is, treated by mainstream conversation analysis as different from its focus. I am very happy to now have a host of younger colleagues all over the world who share my interests in video analysis of embodiment and interaction in a range of different settings, including scientific, medical and work settings (including research that grew independently from fields such as ethnomethodology), others who are doing groundbreaking research on the lives of people with aphasia, autism and other disabilities, and new, very important work, on how units are constructed through cooperative action between speakers and hearers in languages such as Japanese and Korean. I feel there are strong ties between what I do and work in fields such as linguistic anthropology, cognitive science of the type pioneered by Ed Hutchins and his colleagues, functional grammar in the United States and interactional linguistics in Europe, the very exciting work being done on prosody in interaction, etc. There is an incredible amount of important and exciting work now happening that I find most relevant to my own interests.

I am not happy with trying to set up comparisons and contrasts. On the surface my own work spans many

different kinds of phenomena: face-to-face interaction in conversation, the work of archaeologists doing excavations, chemists in the lab, oceanographers at sea, lawyers in the courtroom and others in workplace settings, interaction with a person with severe aphasia, etc. However, I do not think of these as distinct and different lines of research. They all shed different but complementary light on how human beings build the actual worlds they inhabit with others through situated interaction. Basically, I make recordings of what people are doing in the settings that are relevant to their work and lives and try to systematically describe the practices they use to build in concert with each other the events that constitute the activities that make up those settings.

What do you recommend to people wanting to start to research this topic?

I do the kind of work I do (with video and particular kinds of interests) and not everyone has to do that. For me, what I find most valuable is getting a recording of people performing some activity and then really looking at it, even if, and perhaps especially if, it appears too simple to be interesting (for example, pointing at something in a bit of dirt, someone saying they have stopped smoking, etc.). Listen carefully to precisely how words are spoken (Gail again), what people are doing with their bodies, how they are attending to each other and relevant phenomena in their surrounding, etc. Then try to figure out and describe what practices participants use to construct that event and what has to be in place for what you are looking at to seem obvious and uninteresting and how it is in fact organised. Don't start with a predefined set of categories or focus exclusively on what can be written down as words spoken. For example, don't let noticing of a pointing lead to an exclusive focus on the gesture. Is the world being pointed at also part of the organisation of what is happening here, etc. Initially, follow the trails indicated by the materials you are working with. What do the participants themselves treat as important? Then, try to describe systematic practices, which leads to collections of similar and contrasting phenomena.