Communication Scholars Oral History Project
Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA

OSCAR H. GANDY, JR.

interviewed and transcribed by

JEFFERSON POOLEY

recorded by

ANDRES SPILLARI

July 22, 23, & 24, 2019

Tucson, AZ

BIOGRAPHY

Oscar H. Gandy, Jr. (1944–), professor emeritus at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, is an influential political economist of communication. Gandy has made significant contributions to the study of privacy, data brokerage, public relations, framing, and the representation of risk. He is the author of four books, including *The Panoptic Sort: A Political Economy of Personal Information* (1993), a widely celebrated work that—among other things—anticipated Silicon Valley's business model of surveillance capitalism. Gandy, born in 1944 in Amityville, on New York's Long Island, was raised by an aunt in nearby Hempstead. He was educated at Catholic institutions, including an all-boys high school where he was the only black student. After securing an associate's degree in social sciences at Nassau Community College in 1964, he matriculated to the University of New Mexico (UNM) in Albuquerque. At UNM Gandy majored in sociology, participated in anti–Vietnam War and anti-racist activism, and worked as a research assistant to radical sociologist Harold Meier. After his 1967 graduation, Gandy moved to Philadelphia to pursue a master's in social work at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), with the aim to work as a community organizer. He soon dropped the program and—after a stint living in Oakland, California—returned to Philadelphia to join a master's program at Penn's Annenberg School for Communication. There he was mentored by the School's influential dean, George Gerbner, and produced a thesis on the effects of television camera movement on viewers. While at Annenberg, Gandy produced the *Right On!* community affairs program for the local CBS affiliate. After his Penn graduation in 1970, he took up a post at the University of San Diego California (UCSD), teaching television production, where he worked alongside critical communication scholar Herbert I. Schiller. In 1973 Gandy moved to the Bay Area to pursue doctoral studies in Stanford University's Communication program. At Stanford, Gandy took a number of courses from radical economists and education scholars, and created a model of development communication, TrEE (Transformation, Effectiveness, and Efficiency). After completing his dissertation on the Defense Department's subsidies for educational technology in 1976, Gandy moved to Tanzania in an unsuccessful attempt to apply his TrEE model. He soon returned to Philadelphia and the Annenberg School, as a post-doc under Gerbner's sponsorship. In 1977 Gandy moved into a position at Howard University in Washington, DC, where he spent a decade on the faculty. At Howard, Gandy published *Beyond Agenda Setting* (1982), which developed the influential concept of the "information subsidy," whereby resourced organizations help shape news coverage by providing ready-to-use materials for journalists. He also took an active role in communication policy work in this Howard period, with the DC-based Telecommunications Policy Research Conference in particular. In 1987, Gandy—by then an established member of the community of radical political economists who gathered at the Union for Democratic Communication (UDC) and the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) conferences—assumed a tenured post at the Annenberg School, where he would remain for the balance of his career. His landmark book *The Panoptic Sort*, whose research was improbably supported by AT&T, was published in 1993, to great and lasting acclaim. In this same period Gandy began working on news framing, including research on proactive framing for social justice ends, with special attention to race. That work culminated in a 1998 book, *Communication and Race*. Fueled in part by participation in a Penn seminar on racial statistics and public policy in 2002 and 2003, Gandy developed an innovative research program on the representation of risk and probability, leading to *Coming to Terms with Chance* (2009), a major if unheralded work that connects the prevalence of probabilistic decision-making with unequal life chances. Gandy retired from the Annenberg School in 2006, moving to Tucson, Arizona, where he resides with his wife Judith.

ABSTRACT

Session One (July 22, 2019)—page 6

In the session Gandy recounts his childhood on Long Island, New York, and his exposure to social science at Nassau Community College. He describes his decision to attend the University of New Mexico, and his work as a research assistant to radical sociologist Harold Meier. He discusses his coursework in sociology and in the psychology of learning, his friendships with anthropologist-students, and his participation in anti-Vietnam War protests. Gandy's decision to apply to the University of Pennsylvania for a social work master's is discussed, together with his decision, soon after, to abandon the program. He recounts his move out to Oakland, California, where an unsuccessful stint selling encyclopedias led him back to Philadelphia and a master's at the Annenberg School for Communication at Penn, as mentored by then-dean George Gerbner. Gandy's experiences at the Annenberg School, and his concurrent work producing a public affairs TV program, is discussed. The interview continues with Gandy describing his move to the University of California at San Diego, to teach production in the university's new communication program, and his exposure to Herbert Schiller and others. Gandy recounts his decision to pursue a doctorate at Stanford University, and some of his coursework with economists, radical education scholars, and communication faculty such as Emile McAnany. The interview includes a discussion of Gandy's dissertation on educational technology and defense, and his post-graduation travels to India and a short, failed stint to work on development in Tanzania. Gandy, to close the session, recounts his postdoc at Annenberg, arranged by Gerbner, before his departure for Howard University.

Session Two (July 23, 2019)—page 45

In the session, Gandy describes his decade of teaching and research at Howard University in Washington, DC. He recounts his major research collaborations with students and faculty colleagues. His active involvement with the Telecommunications Policy Research Conference and communication policy from a political economic perspective is described. Gandy discusses his relationship to radical political economy, including regular conference attendance at the Union for Democratic Communication (UDC) and the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). The background to, and research for, Gandy's first book, *Beyond Agenda Setting* (1982), is discussed. The session includes discussion of Gandy's early engagement with questions of segmentation and targeting that would be the subject of *The Panoptic Sort* (1993). Gandy discusses the influence of Anthony Giddens and Michel Foucault, among others, on his thinking. His move to take up a faculty position at the Annenberg School is described, alongside his impressions and memories of the school and its faculty in that late 1980s/early 1990s period. The session concludes with Gandy's discussion of themes around, and the reception of, *The Panoptic Sort*.

Session Three (July 23, 2019)—page 71

The interview covers Gandy's career in the period between the publication of *The Panoptic Sort* (1993) and Gandy's retirement from the Annenberg School for Communication in 2006. Among the topics discussed include his year as a fellow at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center in 1993–1994 and his engagement with the literature on risk, probability, and life chances. Gandy recounts his work in framing, beginning in the mid-1990s, including his interest in the representation of (statistical) risk and race, as well as his engagement with proactive framing for social justice ends. The relationship of this 1990s work to George Gerbner's legacy and approach is discussed. Gandy describes his relationship with the political economy tradition in North American and the UK, and his encounters with political-economic communication scholars, including Vincent Mosco, Herbert Schiller, and Nicholas Garnham. A related strand of the interview is Gandy's criticism of cultural studies on methodological and quietism grounds. His involvement in privacy policy around the turn of the millennium, including his public criticisms of Alan Westin, are recounted. Gandy discusses his mixed feelings about teaching, especially undergraduates, as well as his appreciation of close graduate-student collaborations.

Session Four (July 24, 2019)—page 89

The interview mostly covers Gandy's post-retirement years in Arizona, from 2006 to the present, though it begins with a recounting of his participation in a University of Pennsylvania seminar on racial statistics and public policy organized by sociologist Tukufu Zuberi. Also discussed is Gandy's collaboration with Chanita Hughes-Halbert on race genetics and African Americans' health representation. Gandy explains his decision to relocate to Tucson, as well as his involvement in local politics and activism. He describes his research and writing process, in the context of his home office. The interview covers Gandy's attempt to think through the concept of a racial class, and engagement with rational discrimination and cumulative advantage, especially in relation to his 2009 book *Coming to Terms with Chance*. The implications of the representation of risk, in relation to unequal life chances and policy, is extensively discussed. Gandy recounts his recent engagement with neuromarketing, and with behavioral economics.

RESTRICTIONS

None

FORMAT

Interview. Video recordings at the home office of Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., in Tucson, AZ. Four mp4 files of approximately one- to two-hours each.

TRANSCRIPT

Transcribed by Jefferson Pooley. Audited for accuracy and edited for clarity by Jefferson Pooley. Transcript reviewed and approved by Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., Jefferson Pooley, and Samantha Dodd. Transcript 101 pages.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CITATION FORMS

Video recording

Bibliography: Gandy, Oscar H., Jr. Interview by Jefferson Pooley. Video recording, July 22, 23, & 24, 2019. Communication Scholars Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Archives, University of Pennsylvania. **Footnote example:** Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., interview by Jefferson Pooley, video recording, July 22, 23, & 24, 2019, Communication Scholars Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

Transcript

Bibliography: Gandy, Oscar H., Jr. Interview by Jefferson Pooley. Transcript of video recording, July 22, 23, & 24, 2019. Communication Scholars Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Archives, University of Pennsylvania. **Footnote example:** Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., interview by Jefferson Pooley, transcript of video recording, July 22, 23, & 24, 2019, Communication Scholars Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Archives, University of Pennsylvania, pp. 34-35.

Transcript of Interview conducted July 22, 2019, with OSCAR H. GANDY, JR. (session one)

Tucson, AZ

Interviewed by Jefferson Pooley

Q: This is session one of an oral history interview of Oscar Gandy conducted by Jefferson Pooley in Dr. Gandy's home in Tucson, Arizona. The interview is part of the Communication Scholars Oral History Project of the Annenberg Library [*sic*] School for Communication Library Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. And the date is July 22nd, 2019. So thanks, Oscar, for sitting for these interviews. And I thought we might just start off with your recollections of your childhood on Long Island.

GANDY: All right. Sure. I was born in Amityville [New York]. I grew up in Hempstead, Long Island, New York. There's a story, of course, about that. And I suspect that you have an interest in it. My mother and father married in Amityville, had my sister first and then me. Then my mother became ill and she was hospitalized. Indeed, she stayed in the hospital until her death. My father left and moved to Canada, and my aunt, Clifford Fitz, took both of us into her household in Hempstead. And we lived there, our life. However, because of the family in Amityville and because my aunt managed my mother's house and her property, we went back a lot. So we were very closely connected to the cousins and the aunts and the uncles in Amityville. So that's a different part of me traveling back and forth between Hempstead and Amityville, New York.

Q: And once you moved in, what age were you when you joined your aunt's household in Hempstead?

GANDY: I don't know. It certainly was as a youth. I don't remember when I moved in. And we had no record of when I moved in, but it was certainly all of my developmental life. My aunt was a special parent. She raised my sister and I. She trained us. She taught us how to cook, she taught us how to clean, she gave us piano lessons, she gave us dance lessons. She sent us to Catholic school, both of us. She was not Catholic, but her sense of that was our future, that was the path to take, and she followed through with that. So that was a good life, please.

Q: What was her background? And did she have a bachelor's degree or anything like that?

GANDY: I believe she didn't. She had one of those things at Tuskegee [Institute]. She was trained to do redecorating. She did, I guess, furniture reconditioning and the like. But she had other skills as well. But this was an education. I mean, this was the education of African-Americans in Tuskegee. It was a really special place. So we're fortunate that she went there. Her sister, not so much, other relatives, not so much, but that was a special contribution. So she knew the value of education. As a matter of fact, she sent me to 12 years of Catholic education—that is, I went through grade school and an all-boys high school. Indeed, an all-boys high school in which I was the only black student for four years. But I survived.

Q: And what was her—

[interruption]

Q: So you mentioned that you went to these Catholic schools for 12 years and that you were the only black student for four of the years in high school. Was race a topic of discussion, often in Clifford's household while you were growing up and among your family and extended family?

GANDY: Well, we certainly talked about race. You have to understand that while she didn't have a business with an office—therefore she had clients—but she mostly did work cleaning households. So both my aunt and my grandmother cleaned households, worked for white people, and therefore understood what that was and that relationship. And I guess I had to be trained. That's interesting. She was not a man, and therefore she didn't give me that speech that black fathers give to their sons in this regard. But yes, race was certainly something that we were aware of. But I don't think we had the struggle that a lot of black kids did have because of her and her experience in people's homes and bringing us to people's homes—this continual contact with it.

Q: And your experience in the Catholic schools throughout the years, did you feel like your education was a strong one? Did any particular subjects stick out for you as interesting—or a teacher?

GANDY: Well this is kind of a magical story. So in my undergraduate—no, my kids' training in school—first, second, third grade—somehow one of the teachers, one of the nuns, recognized that I could read. I could really read. And so she brought me to an upper-level class and had me read to the class, in that regard, which—a curious introduction to what people thought about your capabilities. I didn't have any sense that they didn't think that I had capabilities in that regard.

The only story, and I'm not sure I've told it to anyone else, but since you asked about race, it's important, I think, to tell the story. There were visitors, not the people who were in Hempstead, but visitors had come through. One was at a bus trip or something or other, and so I told this

nun that this kid called me a nigger. And she said to me, But aren't you a little nigger? I haven't forgotten that story. That was a press, a weight, on the expectations about how it was that nuns would treat people. But she was a Southerner. She was not local. She was not part of that family that I had grown up with, that we were friends with the cop, we were friends with everybody at the school, and there was this person who damaged it, you know [laughs], with that comment which he just threw—I mean lots of people encountered that, but that was kind of the first one that I'd encountered with a nun.

Q: And was that an isolated experience more or less throughout the Catholic education?

GANDY: No, I had one more experience, not with brothers out of line. They were all wonderful. Indeed, we were more bad than they were bad in that regard. So I was in the band, I was in the glee club, I was in the theater, and all of those things. So Chaminade [High School] was a good experience for me. However, I did fight with students and I broke some guy's collarbone, not because I was a good wrestler, because I was a fat kid and I jumped on him and it broke his collarbone [laughs]. But nevertheless, I didn't have a lot of fights. That was one fight that I needed.

I should say, though, that my behavior was not great at school. They said I probably needed to go somewhere else. My father offered to take me and my sister to live with him in Canada. But aunt said, That's not going to work. And she went back and begged, on hands and knees, I assume, in order to get me back into school. And I adjusted and I think I did well enough. And the end, in order to pass the Regents Exams that you have to take in New York. But I didn't do well enough to get into an important kind of school, the kind of schools that made my career. I went to Nassau Community College.

Q: And so you had this early recognition that you were a great reader, and that you were misbehaving a bit throughout the time that you were in middle school and high school, and maybe your aunt had to beg to get you back into the high school. How was your academic performance in high school at the Chaminade, for example?

GANDY: I think it was marginal, because I was a fat kid. I was the only black kid in that school. A sense of myself was one that was continually challenged. So it was not until I came back and was thinking about graduation that I really got serious about my studies [laughs]—had to pass my studies in that regard.

Q: And you mentioned that you thought about going up to your father's. Did you maintain a relationship with him after he abandoned the family?

GANDY: I did in fact visit that summer with him, but my aunt said, You're coming back. And I did, and we did, and the rest is history. So yes, we had a relationship until his death. He married again. His second wife was a lovely person. Met her, visited with her. He moved to Long Island,

got a house—certainly visited with them at this house. So yes, we had a connection until he died.

Q: And you mentioned that you were thinking about going on after Chaminade.

GANDY: Chaminade, yes.

Q: Chaminade. And you ended up at the local community college.

GANDY: Yes.

Q: What was the experience like there? Were you taking just general education courses? Was anything like sociology on the agenda?

GANDY: Absolutely. Nassau Community College, though it was a community college, was a great experience for me. Sociology professor, I don't remember his name, was good. He accepted my failure of studying for the final exam or writing that paper, or something along those lines. Again, I still wasn't perfect. I'm still not perfect [laughs]. But I still needed work. But it was a good school. That is, I was involved in drama. I was involved in student government—actively involved in the student government. I was never elected, but I participated in a student government association for New York, and traveled to Grossinger's [Catskill Resort Hotel] in order to go to—that was the beginning of my going to conferences, which became kind of the rest of my life, going to conferences. That's the way to survive in this regard.

So the school was good, but I was also a member of a fraternity. When I tell people that, they just can't believe that I was a member of a fraternity. But it was a fraternity whose purpose was social, as well as drinking and partying and the like. So that was a good thing as well, for me. I made good connections with the advisors, good connections with the managers of organizations as well. So that was a plus for me to recognize that I could be a member of the process, a member of the organization, a member of the institution. I could benefit from that—a good thing.

Q: And was there a degree that you got in particular—I mean, an associate's degree, but what it in—

GANDY: Social Sciences.

Q: Social Sciences?

GANDY: Yes. So it was moving me along that path.

Q: And do you have any recollection about why the social sciences interested you?

GANDY: That's an interesting question. I mean that's magic again, some kind of magical reasoning that said, that's what I wanted to do. The social sciences were the path to understand my condition, the condition of the family, the condition of the people who I encountered, my friends. I'm not sure I've told people about my friends as much. So the friends in Hempstead were not as fortunate as I, didn't go to a Catholic school. I knew that they were going to have a troubled life, and I'm sure that they in fact did. So it was that difference, alright, between me and the friends that I played with—who didn't go to my school—that also made sociology, social psychology, all of that, as important for me to understand how that came to be. And maybe there was a way to intervene, and alter, that structure. So that's the best explanation. I've never been asked that, but I think that that works as an explanation.

Q: It makes sense. In some ways, that's a through line.

GANDY: Yes.

Q: It really is. And what about political consciousness? You were in student government, but were you at all radical at this point? It is 1965, '66. Were you engaged in electoral politics?

GANDY: Not at all. Now that's a really interesting question as well. I don't think I thought of politics beyond the life that I was living at that time. So it was important for me to get along. It's still always been important for me to get along, whether it's a problem or not. That was who I thought I was. And getting along was part of a skill that I had in the drama club—in all of those activities, it was me getting along.

Q: And you weren't engaged in any politics of the—

GANDY:—political sense that you—no, not at all.

Q: And that would probably, then, it sounds like, awaken in the next stage in your life, when—

GANDY: [laughs]

Q: —but before I ask about the University of New Mexico, I'm so curious about why you chose to apply to colleges that were so far away in the first place? And then why you selected the University of New Mexico in particular?

GANDY: I really only looked at New Mexico and [University of California,] Berkeley. So those were two different schools, also in two different locations. And I do often think about who I would have been—what I would have been—had I gone to Berkeley rather than the University of New Mexico. This is not at all a criticism of the University of New Mexico. Indeed, my wife

and I just made a grant to establish a scholarship at the University of New Mexico, because we thought it was very important in my development.

But I just know, given that point in time, I would have been very different had I gone to Berkeley. But I didn't. I went to the University of New Mexico, which, again, I had—I've been so fortunate. I had the good fortune to be in, now, sociology, having been in social studies. And I had the good fortune—don't know how it came to be—but I got to be an undergraduate research assistant. At least far as I knew, that was rare. Harold Meier, a radical. I think he was a student of the mines, in the bureau of the mines, at that time. His office was not much bigger than mine now, at home, and I had a desk in his office. He had me to help him do the analyses of his studies. He had an old Friden calculator that I had to learn to use—poorly. It bounced around. If I did it wrong, some error went.

But I also had the opportunity to learn how to use the computer, the university's computer. And we'd punch the cards and fill the boxes and take the boxes to the computer and come back the next day and say, I placed this card out of order and therefore [laughs] it didn't run. It was just the most wonderful experience, of him to treat me as his partner in that regard. And his work was on social mobility. So that also mattered to me. What was this process and how did he understand it? What did he expect were the factors that shaped social mobility? What were the limits? What were the location limits? What were the economic and social limits there. And of course, he knew about [Karl] Marx. Yes, he did indeed [laughs]. What was this tension that was going to limit the kind of social movement? It was a real plus for me.

Q: Well, I actually want to return to Harold Meier in one second because, I think, yes, I'm so curious about his background in mining, I think, right? In organizing around unions in mining? But I realize I did forget to ask about your grandmother, Maggie Williams. And that year, maybe close to a year you spent after you graduated from Nassau Community College, where you were working at the Sperry Gyroscope Company—

GANDY: Yes.

Q: —if that's what it's called? And what was it—and you were an engineering clerk. So could you just talk about her and that one year?

GANDY: Sure. But it's important to say that I might have been an engineering clerk, but I was an engineering clerk without a basis for being an engineering clerk. I never had any engineering—no training in that regard. I was maybe a ham radio person, so I knew a little something about technology in that regard. But not to be an engineering clerk. I am willing to say I was the spook who sat by the door, meaning I was this black kid who had a desk right by the front door to the engineering group in that regard. But again, they treated me as a resource. They told me the secrets of getting extra money—you know, working overtime and getting your pay bumped up

in that regard. So I'm not criticizing them for having taken advantage of this opportunity to get this kid who wanted to be a success—which I certainly was—but I knew I didn't belong there.

Maggie, my grandmother, worked in the kitchen. She worked at the steam table where the people came through and served and got their lunch in that regard. Well, you have to be able to imagine how proud she was to see me coming in with the engineers to her table and getting their lunch there at that time. And she certainly would say, That's my grandson Oscar. So that was a good thing for her and a good thing for me at the same time. Clearly, she struggled with her life. I benefited from her making a home for my sister and me. I had my little Volkswagen, which I crashed, after my first year [laughs]. I really was still a bad kid, who didn't know how to treat his car well and his own well-being well in that time. But she made space for that in that regard.

Q: And you were living with her? Had your aunt passed away by then?

GANDY: Yes, she did. Yes. My aunt passed away. I'm trying to think. She had a heart condition, as did my aunt. Both of them had medical constraints in that regard. I'm not sure whether we'd travel somewhere and she died. But grandmother made the space, made life possible. Liked me, and liked my—maybe I'm leaping forward a bit—and liked my wife as well, wanted to be part of that, loved having a daughter, a granddaughter and all of those things. So she was pretty special.

Q: Well, I'm going to then return back to New Mexico. So you made this trip out to the desert.

GANDY: By bus! [laughs]

Q: Oh by bus. And you are essentially a junior because you've got your associate's degree, right?

GANDY: Correct. Correct.

Q: What was your living arrangement? Did you go in knowing you wanted to do sociology since you had done social studies?

GANDY: Sociology seemed to be the only place for me. But I still had enough of a sense of self that I would take advantage of the kinds of courses that were available. So I took sociology and I took psychology and I took the psychology of learning, which was also very important to me and my future, I guess, to understand what that process was about in that regard. Those were really smart people in the psychology department, that were real stars, I thought, in terms of understanding what the factors were that shaped people's ability to learn. And it kind of fit nicely with mobility studies as well.

What else did I like about the University of New Mexico? It was New Mexico. So this is a special place. New—and one of the reasons was it was new, it was different. It was not Long Island. It

was a desert. It was a desert with desert people and desert populations. And so my friends were not only sociologists, my friends were anthropologists. And they invited me to share their experiences of going out to the desert communities and experience the kinds of celebrations that they had. And I'm really struck by—I can still see—this two-story house which didn't have a main floor. It was two stories tall. And they had men on stilts dressed as kachina dolls—different variety of magical figures that have different kinds of roles within that culture, moving back and forth in dancing. The anthropologists respected these people and the people trusted the anthropologists, and therefore we were given food. We were given opportunities to come back in and participate in these ceremonies of theirs. We were bad people in that we would also sneak in and take a look at celebrations we weren't supposed to see. We were up on the mountain looking at—great time, great time.

But there was also the other culture as well that was available. So we had a place which me and my motorcycle could make my way up, with some difficulty, to a bar where Allen Ginsberg would come and perform. This was a good time. This was a wonderful time to be part of that crowd that was in that bar that was hearing Allen Ginsberg tell his stories and be himself in that regard. It was a good place to be. There was good theater—did acting there as well. So all of these parts of me had the chance to grow. But in addition it was the war. It was this long war. And it was our resistance to this long war that I was able to use—all of these different connections and all of these different kinds of skills and capacities—to protest. We used to go to meetings with—hiding balloons, which we would release [laughs] and would make their way up. I mean, that was kind of a dramatic effect in order to say, here was the nature of our protest. Other kinds of protests were common as well, marching and the like, but it was part of our effort to make our protest memorable in this regard. And I think we had a lot of them, but that's one that I remember most pleased.

Q: Well, I'm so curious about two different things, one of which I'll ask first, which is, what was the social life and housing arrangement that you had? Did you live in the dorms? When you mentioned your friends, were they mostly other students?

GANDY: So I was a junior, and therefore I had the opportunity not to be in dormitory. So I got a place, which was maybe a mile, a mile and a half, away from campus, right off the main road—something like $25 a month. It was an adobe, and if you have any sense of an adobe, meaning it was falling apart. And it was also subject to the winds that blew all the dust, which blew the dust into my house, blew the dust around. It had a bedroom with shelves like these, where I had books there. And it had a small wall, behind which was my kitchen, where I did my cooking—and that was the house! That was my whole house for $25. You can imagine my social life with that tiny little space, but it was a good life. It was a very good life for me.

You can imagine my father coming to graduation, having to share my small bedroom, share my house, share my cooking. It was a great moment for me. It was a great community. A Latino

host, who welcomed me to their community, cooked me meals from time to time, shared those meals with me. Albuquerque was a great—is still a great town. The campus was a great campus. They had markers of the various cultures, the kivas and the like, and a very large kiva where we had meetings. It was a great campus, a great place to be. Great organizations, great groups you could become part of. I was part of the UDC, I was part of the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]—I guess it wasn't the UDC, I was a part of SDS—I was a part of the Du Bois Society. So here's a black community and here's a white community, essentially—which SDS was in that regard. Both of them were making their contributions to our resistance to the war. Please.

Q: Yes, and so given that you're already saying you were at protests, you were riding your motorcycles to protests in some cases—I want to hear about the motorcycles—but I'm wondering about the backdrop of the war and it was '66, 1967, and the classes you're taking in sociology, maybe with Harold Meier and others, and contributing, and—how did you start to get involved in SDS and Du Bois, and what—can you just go into some of that change in your consciousness at the time, becoming more politically aware.

GANDY: Meier was probably the primary source to my change in consciousness. Because here I was, day to day, with this fellow who was a unionist, who was with the Colorado bureau of mines. I have no sense of how I became a member of other groups. And this maybe was at best around lunch in the cafeteria. So the cafeteria was a place for meetings, and groups would meet in the cafeteria, and I met with those groups. I'd meet with SDS. I would meet with the Du Bois Society. I'd meet at different times with different groups. I don't have a good sense, though, that the Du Bois Society was anywhere near as active as the SDS was at that campus. So I guess my sense is saying that there weren't that many black students at the campus. And it also means that I didn't have the black identity that would have made me comfortable with that society in the same way that I was with SDS. And that's probably the beginning and end, really, of that story.

That's an interesting question, though. I mean, how is it that you became involved? I mean, I spent more time with anthropologists, visiting and talking about those visits, than I did with folks that were talking about a mobilization against the war. It was a small group of friends that were involved with mobilization against the war. They had a large group.

Q: So you mentioned that the Harold Meier research assistant role, you were working with calculator and going and using the university computer. And I was wondering if—it might only be in retrospect, but—if you recognize your interest in quantitative methods from that role?

GANDY: Absolutely. I can't think of any other way. I don't believe I had any undergraduate statistics and therefore the undergraduate statistics I had were with Harold Meier. But they were substantial. So these were tables. These were correlations. These were analysis of

variance. These were the kinds of things that I was doing with him and representing them in tables. And it was something that I could do.

Q: And did you find that you liked that kind of work? I mean, you were partly self-trained. You must have been if you hadn't taken many courses.

GANDY: Yes. People like to know that they have skills, including jumping off cliffs. And it was a skill that I had. And I don't think that he complained to me about the work that I was doing with his numbers. I don't think that I made stupid mistakes in that regard. Now whether that meant that I was reading statistics in order to understand what it is that I was doing, it may have been the case. He may have given me things to look at in that regard. But I didn't understand it as a test that I had to pass. This was the job that I had, which was a good job. I was glad I had it. And I was treated as a colleague, not a partner, but a colleague in that regard in the work that I did. And it was fine for me.

Q: Did you have a sense from maybe your senior year that you might be interested in social science or was that only something that would come along later?

GANDY: Oh, I think it was pretty clear that I was interested in social science.

Q: Or that you'd become a social scientist?

GANDY: Well, that I didn't know, because I was going to do something. I was going to be a social worker. So I applied to University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, not to quantitative methods. I was going to get there and I was going to be a community organizer. I was going to get people mobilized in order to change the world in which they lived. And University of Pennsylvania was where I was going to learn how to do that. It didn't quite work out that way [laughs].

Q: Well, before you mention why it didn't work out, was there anything else in coursework, exposure to a certain thinker or maybe another professor that you remember as being important, or anything else about the University of New Mexico that turns out to have been important?

GANDY: I think I took the courses that gave me an understanding about social theory with Meier. And that was my source in that kind of literature—[Emile] Durkheim and everything was with Meier. And I don't think there was anybody else who came close to him, other than those psychology of learning people, which didn't go away either, right, in terms of what they understood. Please.

Q: And I just was curious if you were exposed to economics at all, because it turned out to be so important in your career and certainly at Stanford and elsewhere. But did you have any exposure?

GANDY: I don't think I had a course in economics, which is silly. But I don't think I had a course in economics at the University of New Mexico, which is curious indeed.

Q: So you make this decision that you want to be in the world, maybe a community organizer. What led you to University of Pennsylvania, to Philadelphia, and to that program?

GANDY: I don't know. So I don't have any answer to any of those questions about, why did you end up here. I'm just lucky that it turned out. So there isn't any kind of research program that I went to, but I believe I did know that the School of Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania was a highly rated school of social work. So I went there. I thought, oh, it was because I must have looked at schools of social work and that was a star. I didn't apply to any other one, which is curious in that regard.

Q: And so what was your experience like? You start the program, you're in Philadelphia, and clearly you didn't finish the program. So I don't know how long you were there, what were your experiences?

GANDY: I don't think I got through a year at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work. And I talk with some pride, which has no basis, that I wasn't the only one to leave. [Yolande Cornelia] Nikki Giovanni [Jr.] also left [laughs] from the School of Social Work. But for different reasons. She was in a different program. I don't know what her program was. And she, as I, maybe came into recognition of who she was in the same sense that I came into recognition that I'm not this.

The one experience—two experiences. One is in my placement in a community group that provided support for the minority community, not too far from the University of Pennsylvania. But I don't think the head of the program was ready for the likes of me, was ready to have a black assistant who had some kind of sense of self and maybe had a different understanding about what the role of that community organization was. And it certainly wasn't about community transformation. So I was not going to get along with that program and that supervisor and that school. And I was certainly ready to get a new placement.

But I also took courses at the School of Social Work, which informed me about the nature of the government and the rules that they established having to do with social development. And I learned about all of the rules and all of the limits and all of the barriers to any kind of intervention, right, in getting ahead—of poor people getting ahead. And it didn't seem from the fine people that taught me about it that there was much hope that the conditions that we were being taught about were anywhere near ready to change. And so here I've got a placement which doesn't work, and here I've got a smart teacher who told me about a system that doesn't work either. And I quit.

Q: And so some of the early writings you did do—even your dissertation—talk about the limits of policy intervention and even the prevalence of victim blaming and lots of social problems—

GANDY: Yes.

Q: —areas. And I'm wondering if some of that is traceable?

GANDY: Well, certainly that was clear as could be at the School of Social Work. And I just said, I quit. I'm gone. I'm out of here.

Q: And you're in the middle of, I don't know, Philadelphia and you have no program left. You've quit. What made you decide to go out to Berkeley, which I understand you did?

GANDY: Well, I went to Oakland. So it's important to note that I was living in Philadelphia while I was here. I had a life in Philadelphia while I was here and I would have liked to have stayed in Philadelphia. I met a woman who would become my wife while I was here in Philadelphia. I met her at an anti-war mobilization here at the University of Pennsylvania.

Q: Can you tell us about that?

GANDY: I'm a crazy guy and she recognized me as a crazy guy. And I was a crazy guy who would dance to Bach. She would dance with a guy who would dance to Bach and other kinds of classical music, which I did at one of these mobilizations, where we were planning to go to some kind of demonstration in that regard. So we met again and again and again and again and became good friends in that regard. I met her brother who visited. I don't think I met the family before I left. I might have met the family, but I left before it got really serious in that regard. But we were friends and we liked each other and traveled and demonstrated and the like.

But I left and said, OK, I'll go to a friend that I had met at the University of New Mexico in Oakland who was engaged with the [Black] Panthers. And so, OK, maybe that's a way for me to deal [laughs]—to go with a group that was going to deal with local communities in a way that I thought was a good kind of move. But I hadn't planned on living in a basement. I was living in his basement. I didn't have a job. I tried selling encyclopedias. That was not a good-paying job. That was not a future that I could see making out. So I asked Judy [Judith] if I could come back—come back to Philadelphia.

Q: And did Judy move out with you to—

GANDY: No, no, no, no. She stayed at home—no, she was studying South Asian studies.

Q: So I'm curious, you mentioned that you were—in the University of New Mexico era—not fully owning your black identity maybe and that's why the Du Bois Society wasn't as interesting. When the Black Panther Party sounded attractive to you, did that change at all or were you coming into a stronger identity, more radical?

GANDY: Well, I mean I knew this guy who lived in Oakland and he was connected. And I'm looking for what am I going to do because that's not going to work and so here is something else. And that didn't work because I couldn't afford to live in a basement selling encyclopedias, which I couldn't do.

Q: So were you involved at all with the Black Panthers in the end?

GANDY: No. Other than that I knew that the Panthers were there and they were doing community feeding and doing community education and doing a whole host of things. I later did a show in my life about the Black Panthers. I mean the Black Panthers have a good place in my memory and in my life. I'll maybe tell you about that after I get back to Philadelphia and start a new life there. But the Panthers—certainly there's criticism of the Black Panthers, but the Panthers were an organization that understood about power, understood about weapons and power, had a sense of self that meant we could wear a uniform and we understood what the rules were with regard to weapons [laughs]. And therefore we could demonstrate that we knew who we were and we knew what was possible for us to do. And so, again, had I been in Berkeley, had I gone to Berkeley rather than New Mexico, I might have wound up being a Black Panther. I mean, who knows? There was SDS and Black Panther and all kinds of organizations at that point in time. But I don't know what my life would have been. It wasn't that. It didn't turn out to be that.

Q: So you found that you couldn't make a living off of selling encyclopedias and you moved back.

GANDY: I did. I moved back. Judy, who later became my wife, gave me a place to stay. But I got another terrible job in the Youth Study Center, which was a, if you will, kind of a residence for troubled kids. And so here is a former social worker going to, exactly, going to work for a place that was mistreating kids, young kids, black kids. I mean, guys that would beat up on kids and see that on a regular basis—that couldn't last and didn't last too long. So I became a regular social worker, working for Philadelphia's social work. But, I mean, I had all kinds of intermediate moves into my careers. Yes, I became a regular social worker, with a number of people that I had to go in and visit and ask about and spy on and all kinds of things.

Q: Working for the city of Philadelphia?

GANDY: Yes, as a social worker.

Q: How long was that?

GANDY: That might have lasted the rest of that year.

Q: And it must have been some point around this time that you met George Gerbner. I just am trying to figure that out. How did you—

GANDY: Well, I've tried to figure it out, since I imagined you'd want to know about that. And I don't know how that happened—where I met Gerbner. Whether or not somehow I heard about the Annenberg School [for Communication, University of Pennsylvania] when I was at the School of Social Work—there were a stone's throw from each other. So maybe I visited the Annenberg School or maybe I asked about the Annenberg School. But how I met George Gerbner, I don't know. But it must have been—and all I can think of is that somehow in one of those meetings Gerbner knew something about me. Maybe—I mean, again, I'm just imagining—maybe somebody at the School of Social Work told George Gerbner about me, a dropout who was back in town. But I have no idea. But Gerbner offered me a postdoc.

Q: So he contacted you.

GANDY: I don't know.

Q: OK, so somehow—but you got in the master's program at that point. Is it that he, did he make some kind of invitation for you to apply to the master's program?

GANDY: I don't know.

Q: Yes, well—and so it turns out then that there was some connection to him already at that point.

GANDY: Yes.

Q: Yes. And the next fall, you're done being a social worker. You're fed up with that, it sounds like. And you started the Annenberg School and you hadn't had any exposure, at least formally, right, to this field or would-be field called communication?

GANDY: Other than the extent to which you would accept theater as being part of communication. But my connection to the rest of communication happened at Annenberg. [laughs] So how does life happen?

Q: So you had not really known anything about the field beforehand—

GANDY: Correct.

Q: —and had some kind of invitation and ended up there. And you were—what was it, 1968, '69?—so it was the height of the war and student protests, and you were radical. What was the Annenberg School like then? Do you remember anything about the coursework you took in that master's program or memorable teachers?

GANDY: Well, I took statistics and I did well. I didn't expect to get an A in statistics, so something happened to me along the way. I took a course with [Klaus] Krippendorff. I took a course with—I took a course in media and society. I took a course in criticism of media. I took courses in—the only course that I took at Annenberg, outside of Annenberg, [was] from regional studies [Regional Science]. I took a course in regional studies about technology, the adoption of technology, and the spread of technology in society. So that was a really important course for me in terms of my development.

And again, in that it was a single—like an independent study, actually—with this professor, meant that I was introduced to a good literature in that regard, with regard to the adoption of technology and how technology spread. And that was, therefore, important in my development. I took a course in television production—that was as close as I got to the stage or in the theater—with Al Rose from WCAU. That was a CBS affiliate in Philadelphia. Indeed, my connection with Rose was such that I had to go to—that didn't have to go to—I chose to go to summer school in order to graduate more quickly from Annenberg. So I took courses during the summer that allowed me to actually start working at WCAU before I graduated from Annenberg. So, from a kid who couldn't sell encyclopedias, here was a kid who was a writer-producer at CBS Philadelphia, an owned-and-operated station [laughs].

Q: While you were still at—

GANDY: —while I was still at Annenberg as a student. So life is changing [laughs] if you will get—

Q: Well, I really want to hear about that experience at the CBS affiliate, but before, wasn't Annenberg experiencing some student unrest? I mean, of course there's just student unrest everywhere, but—

GANDY: Exactly so. I mean, there's unrest and demonstrations about the war all over this campus, all over—that is, the University of Pennsylvania campus—all over other campuses. And we certainly wanted to protest at Penn. Klaus—Klaus Krippendorff—had a media laboratory in

which we were doing prints and painting and other kinds of things. And I went and I made a poster in Klaus's laboratory that I was taking a class in, I'm sure—which was against the war. And I think the title was Sanction for Revolution. Essentially, you don't need a sanction for revolution. You're going to revolt, you're going to revolt. Again, understand George Gerbner recognized something in me, and whether or not he made for my application getting through or not. I remember George saying to me that I didn't understand the nature of power within universities at that point in time. It probably was true, but I didn't think so. I thought I had the right to protest in that time.

Q: Was he responding to you being a visible protester inside the school?

GANDY: Oh I suspect so.

Q: OK.

GANDY: Yes, yes. I'm trying to think of who the artist was at that time. Sam Maitin was one of the artists. And we respected the school and we respected Maitin's art. So we didn't damage any of his art around the school, which people did in other places, you know, with spray-painting and the like. We didn't do any of that. Ours was this, if you will [laughs], an Annenberg bit of protest or resistance.

I'm trying to think of what other kinds of petitions or struggles we might have had. I would probably mix my graduate student experiences with my postdoc experiences in that regard. So I won't offer anything about it. I won't try to remember anything else about that, please.

Q: And what about any other contact with Gerbner? Did you take a class with him when you were a master's student?

GANDY: Oh sure, everybody did. Everybody took an introductory class with Gerbner. I don't know whether I took a second course with Gerbner, probably not, because there were other people to take courses with, including Krippendorff, including—oh, I took a course with Marten Brouwer on public opinion at that time. So that was an important course. I'm trying to remember whether or not Brouwer differed with Krippendorff in terms of their orientation to content analysis and measurement in that regard. Statistics I took—I don't know what some of the other ones were in that regard. I've lost the name of—oh, that's a shame. So there was only one member of the faculty without a PhD, but he was a media specialist. Maybe it was Maitin, I don't know, that I took one, maybe even two courses, probably just one course with him—who really was knowledgeable about the media industry and about content and about criticism in that regard.

But other than that, I can't think of another Annenberg class. They're going to find out—people are going to feel bad about that, but what can I say? [laughs] I don't know who else. Oh, I mean sure I did. I took a course with Larry Gross. And I took a course with—that's good, I'm glad we got to that. I took a course with the famous psychologist there, lost his name—that is, Gross and [Percy] Tannenbaum. Yes, I took a course with Tannenbaum as well, who also gave me an A [laughs]. So some part of me was doing all right in that regard. And I guess Tannenbaum would have been the social psychologist on the team here. And so he would have given me methods, but also the literature in that regard, which would have built on the literature that I got from the learning theorists. That would have been an interesting committee, Larry Gross and Percy Tannenbaum in that regard. Larry was really the lead in my master's thesis in that regard.

Q: What was your master's thesis?

GANDY: My master's thesis really was the only experiment that I think that I have ever done, and I've not done one since.[1]

Q: You've done every other method since, I would say.

GANDY: Well, I mean an experiment is a broad method. I mean you think about all of the places where one could do experiments. One could talk about public opinion experiments and whether anything that I did, or whether anything that I was involved in, would be characterized as being a public opinion experiment or not. I don't know whether or not that's the case. I think not. So here's a true experiment—a true experiment that was made possible in that I had already, not only married my wife and met the family, but made good friends with my wife's father, who was a teacher in the public school system. And he provided me with access to his classroom for me to do an experiment with four groups of students. That is, it was a two-by-two table [laughs]. I had four groups of students where I modified those conditions. So here, if you can imagine the Sam—the Sol Worth class that I would take, and the theater class—this was a study of which movement—subject movement or camera movement—was more powerful, which influenced—that is, if I were to show people the same character, but this is a character who moved toward the camera versus one where the camera moved toward him—which one was going to make that figure that moved or didn't move more powerful?

Q: In perceptual terms?

GANDY: Well, so if the students would say which one is stronger, which one is more powerful, which one has got more stuff in that regard. The person who stood still while the camera moved was what I theorized, and the data indicated, was more powerful. But there was also a need condition—that is, whether or not they were told that they were going to be tested on what

[1] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *The Influence of Movement in Television* (Master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1970).

was in this videotape, so they had to pay attention. So they had a need for learning what the tape was about, whereas those that didn't have a need were just told, pay attention, watch this film, pay attention for this film. So the question of moving camera and need in that regard were the variables that mattered in that regard.

It was a nice study that showed that camera movement really mattered, and that need really mattered in that regard, in terms of—but what was a surprise for me and my committee was that, in terms of this third measure, liking—the extent to which this was a likable person—went the opposite direction. The stronger person [laughs] was more likable. And I thought, strong people were bad people. I learned from that, strength is recognized as a good thing. I did publish that in a small local journal at Howard University. So it did get published. It didn't get published in the *Journal of Communication*. It didn't get published in a leading magazine, but it did get published. And I felt good about that.

Q: You mentioned Sol Worth and Larry [Gross]. I don't know if they were already working on what they considered kind of visual communication as a sort of subfield. But was Sol on your committee as well?

GANDY: No, no—it was just two person committees. Two person committees. This is out of—sorry—this is talking out of school. I'm not sure that Sol Worth thought anywhere near as much of me as Larry Gross did. So I don't know, when the time came, that Sol Worth was supportive of my joining the faculty in that regard. So I'm surprised that Sol gave me an A. So the nature of the course must have been the kind of things that I could study up on and perform, rather than the kinds of things that I might be able to do in research and in the theory in that regard. But that's an aside.

Q: So you had this master's thesis that you'd finished and you were also at the time already a writer and producer at a local CBS affiliate, WCAU?

GANDY: It was an owned-and-operated, so that's one of the major five stations.

Q: OK, so it was one of those five owner-operated?

GANDY: Yes. Yes.

Q: So what was the nature of the work you were doing there, and what kind of program?

GANDY: It was the best—for me, at that stage in my development—opportunity. I worked in the public affairs, I guess, unit of WCAU. I worked for a supervisor called Inez Gottlieb—Inez Gottlieb, who was a progressive, and her association with and identification with famous black people in the arts—there was a certain part of that. And she was really supportive of me. She

allowed me to do, of all things, to do my first television series and to name it *Right On!*. If you know what "right on"—"right on" was the Black Panthers [emphasizes] "right on!" —was the title of my program. So here was a show, in which was using a Bill Adams—not sure which school he was in, something says reading or literature or something. But he was the host for my show. And I actually had Bill Adams to say, Get black, be black, keep staying—keep black and keep moving. Right on! It's the end of the show [laughs].

Q: So he would actually state that?

GANDY: He would state that—that was the tag. That was the closing show tag. You can imagine that didn't go over that well in some parts of Philadelphia. So at one moment in my show—let me tell you a little bit about the show. This was a show, because of my interest in music and theater and the like, where we took a film crew—imagine getting a film crew, to go out of the station—imagine coordinating that film crew with a local musician to play at a black poverty housing project. And so we would go in and set up either in the courtyard or inside—the team would, the group would play, we would record that, come back and edit it, and put it on my show. So it said something about living conditions. It said something about coming out to that community. It said something about the value of coming out to that community. It said something about the talent, that people might not have known about in the city. And it was on a show called *Right On!*. [laughs]

The lesson—the time that I knew something was up was that I heard my show being screened in somebody else's office. Might have been my boss's office. So after I heard my show being played—reviewed if you will—in my boss's office, and then I get a summons to go to the assistant director's office. That might be his name. He might have—he was a lawyer. So he was the legal head, who said, We need to talk about this show. People have been concerned about this show. He couldn't have seen anything bad in the show. I don't think he actually saw that part of the show in which I had a University of Pennsylvania graduate student come in and do a segment about spending money, about consumer abuse, really—telling people how to spend their money correctly and how not to get hooked, how not to get done harm to, in the commercial market. I don't think that was in the show yet. In any event, the guy said, You need to—I mean, this is a, that's a Panther title. He didn't say, Change the title. I said, Was there anything objectionable in the show? This was a show that brought talent on. Indeed, the most objectionable thing that happened in the show that had to be changed, when I had a rock and roll band come in which the breasts of the female lead were too much in evidence, they came down and covered up her boobs in the show. I mean, that's just bizarre.

They did not change a minute of the show. They let the show go. It was only on at "n" o'clock in the morning on Saturday, when there was no possibility of an audience. But I got to include in

that—or in my, if you will, my resume—documentaries. So I did documentaries of, if you will, the same kind of thing that's happening today. That is, documentaries of agricultural workers and what life was like. What happens to life of people down on the farm after people come back from the shore. It was really about what life was like in those environments. And it played. Didn't get an award. And nevertheless it was still a good program. I mean, I can imagine the kind of discussions that went on amongst the cinematographers and the editors that had to edit my content with my looking over the content in order to put in the statements about life in that kind of farm.

I did a second documentary, which I think got some citation—was about transportation, which was because they were building a train in the city. And what would the city do to the community—what would it do to the neighborhoods—was a major concern about that. So it really was a study of transportation in the city and what the impact was going to be on the neighborhoods there. It was kind of a good piece of transportation that [inaudible] many, many years later in my history of writing about transportation. But it was a good documentary. That was a good job, but it was that. It was a job.

Q: And you thought of it as a job?

GANDY: I did.

Q: OK. And even though you had these creative outlets—

GANDY: —wonderful moments—

Q: —with the documentaries and the—

GANDY: It was not the core of the business. It was the worst timing. It was a public affairs program. It went into the annual report—how good the station was doing to its community. Well, it had a public affairs program made for the black community called, God forbid, *Right On!* [laughs]. So they would certainly report that one, but that was not their prime television. That was not important. It never got good time on the air. I needed to be doing something else. Something else was going back to school and getting a Ph.D., which I planned to do and did.

Q: And you had that intention even when you were in that first year after Annenberg—you were at *Right On!*, you were making these documentaries. You knew—

GANDY: —that that was not going to make it.

Q: You did.

GANDY: No. That was not my future.

Q: OK. And then somehow you must have given up the job, but I presume what was going out to UCSD, the University of California at San Diego, to work for Herb [Herbert I.] Schiller, the next step, wasn't it, in 1971?

GANDY: So, dissatisfaction with the university—with the TV station—was shared with Gerbner and Gerbner's friend, Herb Schiller. Gerbner's long-term friend, a radical professor teaching at UC San Diego, and he must have told George Gerbner that he was starting a new program, which was a really, truly radical program. It was called initially, it wasn't official, but it was the Lumumba-Zapata College, two revolutionaries, an African revolutionary and a—no, I've lost the Latin, I've lost the nation for the Latin American example.

Q: Mexico?

GANDY: It might have been. In any event, so two revolutionaries were going to be the name for this college, which had Angela Davis as one of its leading lights, bringing together people from the left, people, you know, white people, black people, Latino people, in order to be a third college, a third people's college. It became, officially, the Third College, because it was the third one at that part of the university, but nevertheless, it had a very radical, progressive faculty, including Herb Schiller, including Herbert Marcuse. It was quite the campus and it was quite the moment in time. And I was a member of the faculty.

Q: So you were a lecturer?

GANDY: I was a lecturer. I was a lecturer brought there primarily for television. Brought there primarily to build—I did—and run a television studio with good help from a good guy in the television department, who saved my [inaudible] at the time. I taught television production. I taught television production to undergraduates using stuff out of the store, built it with wood—not a good system, lots of kinds of errors made in the system. But I think it was a good effort in that regard, brought people into television—some of which who did very well, thank you, in the industry.

But I did teach a communication theory and methods course there. Herb certainly wasn't going to teach that. Mike [Michael] Real, who was also a professor there, might have taught that, but he wasn't even going to teach research methods. He was really kind of the cultural studies person in the program. So I taught methods and an introduction to communication theory and methods in that regard. That was me. And it was a great place with a great place in time. Herb Schiller was an absolutely wonderful colleague—a good family, invited us to dinner and the like. I don't know what to say about Herb. I actually came to know Herb later, after I left the university, rather than time when he was there at the university.

Q: So he was working, I think, at the time on *The Mind Managers*, probably, which was published just after you left, I think, and certainly identified as a radical, of course, and as a political economist of a certain kind. And did you have lots of intellectual contact with him?

GANDY: No, we didn't. So we didn't spend a lot of time talking about his work or my work. He was connected really with the radicals on campus, of which I was not part. I was part with Latino scholars, Latino scholars who were anglers. Believe it or not, I became a fisherman as a result [laughs] of having been at UCSD because—well, Arturo Madrid, not so much—but Arturo, I've lost his name, would take me fishing, which was a wonderful experience to collect fish in the Pacific Ocean. It was a good time that we spent. I don't think that I was much involved in discussions of the field from a political perspective as I was at Stanford.

Q: So I was curious just about the world of Third College and its radicalism and especially the Communication program itself, which I think had just got underway maybe two or three years before you arrived—what the atmosphere was like in the program? You mentioned a few of the faculty. Did you attend department meetings? Were the students really involved in the program, since they had helped kind of start it apparently? Anything about UCSD's early Communication program?

GANDY: That's an interesting question. Whether or not the students who really were responsible for its creation as the Lumumba-Zapata College—I don't have a sense—and maybe it was just because this was my job—that there were those kinds of faculty meetings in which students participated. I don't think that was Herb's type [laughs]. Herb Schiller would not have invited students in to suggest how he would teach. He would go in and teach his classes and he might bark if you told him you shouldn't teach like that. He was an incredible teacher. I'd go into a couple of his classes to see him in style in those classes. But I don't think he was much involved with the students as a guide to the program.

I'm trying to think of the other, beside Michael Real, who might have been oriented toward involving the students in shaping the program, but I can't identify somebody in our department. So there were the Latinos in Latin studies work, which was organized. But I wasn't there. I wasn't part of that department. I didn't know how they did it. And I was not part of African-American organizing. We had a provost who was an African American, but he was like me, one of those kinds of schools, as opposed to being a radical black faculty member. So at the university—UCSD, I was really not a political economist. I was really not a radical. I was a University of Pennsylvania master's graduate [laughs] who had some ideas about politics in that regard, but not a radical yet.

Q: So that does bring me to my next question which maybe partly answers it, and that is to say how you decided, well, first to apply to go to a PhD program—it sounds like you might have been already intending—but why you chose Stanford in particular, whether you applied

anywhere else, I'm curious, and whether Stanford's reputation as being rather mainstream and kind of oriented to the effects tradition, whether that was an issue for you, an attraction, or something you were indifferent about?

GANDY: Nicely the way you put that. So here was kind of a box. George Gerbner got me that job at UCSD. George Gerbner would have been a real fan for me to come back and do my PhD at Annenberg. But Stanford was just up the road [laughs]. It was convenient. It was right there. It's also a tech center. I didn't really know who the faculty were and the kind of work that they were doing there. I might have known about [William] Bill Rivers, who was a journalism professor. And I didn't really know about Stanford as the place where you could go and take all of the courses in economics you wanted and still be a communications scholar. But I didn't want to move across the country again. It was right up the street. That's why I chose to go to the university, at Stanford.

Q: And it turned out, like you said, to be rather open compared to some other programs, that you could take courses in lots of different disciplines.

GANDY: It was miraculous!

Q: Yes. So was this something that you then took advantage of, or was it the culture of the graduate program to send you out to these pastures?

GANDY: I think it was me [laughs]. I think I took advantage of that university. As professors, they want you to take their courses, but they still understood that I was taking courses in the department of economics. [Henry] Levin and [Martin] Carnoy, who were these two radical professors—Carnoy more than Levin, who were teaching the economics of education. It was wonderful for me to take courses with those guys.

Q: So maybe I'll just ask you about both of those two. So [Henry] Hank Levin and Martin Carnoy were maybe not in the proper economics department?

GANDY: No, they were in education. They were in the School of Education.

Q: So how did you come across their work and what got you interested in it?

GANDY: It may have been because I took a course with [John] Jack Gurley, who was a Marxist professor. It was a Marxist course that I took before I took the courses in education, where I've met students and learned about these guys who were teaching this course there. That's why I took courses with these folk rather than others. But again, I was also still interested in education from the sociology, the social psychology of education, of course. And here was economics, which was always something of interest to me after having taken this course there. But I would say it was from friends rather than from my faculty.

I don't think Emile McAnany, as wonderful as he was, really recommended these other courses to me. So McAnany would teach a course in economic and development, but I found courses in the economics of development that I wanted to take myself. And it was fine with them, which was fine with me, to make my way around. I mean, I can imagine what they would have thought of this course on the economics of health. He was absolutely brilliant in terms of understanding the way in which we made choices about the technologies that we would use. And that turned up in my work later, that the technology—the technology industry and the kind of subsidies they would provide in order to get them to buy these fancy machines—was stuff I learned about in his class. It was a great—please.

Q: Whose class?

GANDY: I can't bring up his name at the time. Famous. I mean, he was famous for the economics of health in that regard.[2]

Q: And this was in some way like a little germ of some of what became the subsidy focus later in your dissertation?

GANDY: Oh, absolutely. That is, the exposure to the economics of health was a way for me to think about the political economy of health, in the same way that the economics of education was a way for me to think about the political economy of education. But the economics of education were—they paid double value, double duty, because of their methods. Yes, so, Carnoy was the radical and Levin was the methodologist. So they created a, if you will, an economy of the production of students. It was the production of students. And the methods—the technology of production of students—which used regression in order to evaluate the attributes of the students as material, the attributes of the classroom, the school, the attributes of the teachers and the courses they took in the schools they went into, to predict how well the students would do in terms of the kind of jobs that they got.

The ability to build models in order to predict how well classrooms would do is what I got from Carnoy and Levin. But it vibrated well with the courses I took in economics of health, and was connected through a long reach back to the sociology course, of learning. It was the sociology of learning, not the economics of learning, in that regard. So understanding what are the relationships between these ways of looking at data, facts, and theory that kind of fed me through these paths which became those later books.

[2] Gandy may have been referring to Victor Fuchs. See Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *The Panoptic Sort: A Political Economy of Personal Information* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 240n82.

Q: So I'm curious—while you're taking these courses, and maybe Jack Gurley was part of this too, how was Emile McAnany, if I mispronounce that—

GANDY: McAnany.

Q: McAnany. And the rest of the faculty. Did they care that you were out foraging in other pastures?

GANDY: Oh, no, they were supportive. Emile—so here's another point that you'll get as we talk. Part of the value of a professor is if they publish volumes in which the students are published. McAnany did this. I got to know Vinny [Vincent] Mosco in part through his being in this volume.[3] That was the important role that professors like that played. When they put together these volumes, which brought different people from different institutions, together, to evaluate the work of their colleagues in this regard and to meet with them in these conferences in these wonderful places. So Emile was the professor for whom I presented a paper in the African Studies Association, which became the TrEE [Transformation, Effectiveness, and Efficiency] model that you'd heard about—this notion of what is the relationship between the choice of a technology, and the consequences, the production effects, the impacts on the society, that result from the choice of this technology rather than that one. They all work together.

Q: Wow. And did you write the paper that you then presented at this African Studies Association meeting for a class of his? Is that where it originated?

GANDY: I suspect that, yes, that this paper was written with McAnany as the spark, as well as the other economists in the development area. So a different department, still doing economy, but still doing that kind of work. Although the paper that I wrote in that course was really about subsidies.

Q: In which course you were talking about?

GANDY: Yes, the fellow who was doing the economic of development.

Q: Oh, so that was another moment in which you kind of got onto the subsidy topic. And I want to return to it in a second. I guess I was curious, then, about the TrEE model. You mentioned it. So why don't you provide just a quick sense of the genesis of it and what it even is?

GANDY: So understand that people can read it and say it's a great model, but understand that it was never published outside of a community of common interest. So it was published at Howard University, a volume at Howard University. That said, I still think it was a good model.

[3] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "The Economics of Image Building: The Information Subsidy in Health," in *Communication and Social Structure: Critical Studies in Mass Media Research*, ed. Emile G. McAnany, Jorge Schnitman, and Noreene Janus (New York: Praeger, 1981), 204–39.

And I'm leaping forward, but I think you'll accept this. It was a model that I wanted to apply in Tanzania when I went there to teach. That is, this was a model about the choice of technology and the consequences of a choice of technology on the use of labor, on the dependence on particular kinds of product providers in this regard. So the beginning of this TrEE—and it was the suggestion that you look at a tree from its roots. And its roots are effectiveness. You want to buy a technology that does what it says it does. That's the basis of this TrEE. Efficiency is where the economics come into it. It's a TrEE that uses resources correctly, water and other kinds of things. And the fuel that you provide this TrEE, that provide its transformation, the fruits that it provides.

That's a TrEE from its roots through the food and the resources that it takes in to its productivity, to its goods, to those resources. Transformation though applies to a developing economy in terms of this is what happens to you in terms of you're dependent on labor that is from somewhere else—that don't understand and recognize and value your nation and its people in quite the same way that you do. Indeed, the way in which you use labor in terms of Africa and African nations that have multiple cultures, which are located in different regions of the nation, feel bad if they are not hired to work on this new technology in the capital, because they've got a partner who only hires from these regions in this regard. So the notion of the labor and the regional distribution of labor that works on these projects is an important part of it. A number of other—I identified six measures—that related to the kinds of transformations that would occur in an economy if they made a decision to acquire this kind of technology in order to teach, or in order to develop agriculture, or in order to do something else, which they decided is going to be—build a transportation system.

So I think it's still a good model. I just haven't tried to sell it again in a very long time. But it's a right model. If they had hired me in Tanzania, it would have been to the benefit of Tanzania, which is still struggling to develop. I would have helped it develop in a way that would have, given that point of my development, that would have reinforced its socialism in comparison to what it is today in that regard.

Q: Thinking back to your interest in development and this range of topics—technology and development—you mentioned that you at the University of Pennsylvania had taken a class outside of the school of communication that had some of this character to it, right?

GANDY: Yes, the diffusion of innovations, correct, well said.

Q: But so was it, at Stanford, Emile's influence that got you back interested in overseas development?

GANDY: You're absolutely correct. So Emile—and he's no reason to be ashamed of this—was really responsible for us going to Tanzania. That is, my wife and our not-quite-yet-two-year-old

daughter, went off without a job to Tanzania. And Emile and his influence on me, as this is a respectable area of work, is responsible for that. So Emile, if you will allow, was one of those faculty members who worked for USAID [US Agency for International Development], worked for the government. But his soul, in my view, was in the right place and so I feel not at all troubled by that part of his history. He made up for it in many, many, many other kinds of ways.

Q: And he was in the end your dissertation advisor. Wasn't he formally at least?

GANDY: He was a member of the committee.

Q: Well, he seemed to be the one that officially was the signer off anyway.

GANDY: No, at my dissertation at Stanford?

Q: Yes.

GANDY: No, my dissertation at Stanford was signed off by the journalism guy.

Q: Bill Rivers?

GANDY: Yes.

Q: Oh, well my mistake then. You're right. I'm sorry about that. It was indeed my mistake. So, actually that does bring me though into a tributary that I just want to get at because it does resurface from time to time, even in the dissertation. And that is the engagement with the more mainstream political communication work. And you did this bibliography with, I think, Bill [William] Paisley or certainly a couple of other—

GANDY: No, no, Bill Rivers.

Q: And Bill Rivers.

GANDY: Yes. And a student, and a graduate student, classmate.

Q: OK, and so if you might mention that. You also at around that time gave a paper in East Germany at the IAMCR [International Association for Media and Communication Research] conference on—well, this is probably a separate question.

GANDY: I delivered that paper as a paper, I didn't go there.

Q: Oh, OK, so let me ask just first about the bibliography and just being involved in what we would call political communication research and doing that work. Did that—how did it come about? What was it, does it have any impact on your—

GANDY: No, so think of it as a bibliography.[4] Alright, so, and people work together in reading and then characterizing this work. I don't consider that to be a political act. And I don't feel that it was in the sense that I wrote things that the editor would say, Sorry, you have to modify that. I don't think that occurred in that process.

Q: Well, I guess I mean I'm just interested in the way that you ended up orienting the first book around agenda setting. And becoming familiarized with all of that literature that was emerging in the early '70s and Steve [Steven] Chafee and others.

GANDY: Yes.

Q: That you got exposed to this body of work and whether that was significant to you going forward.

GANDY: Oh, it's clear that my first book deals with communication, deals with journalism and journalists, but it also deals with the influence or the impact of those sources on government decision-making. Alright, so that's a connection which seems appropriate for me. I'm not sure about the conflict that I think you're looking for in that. I didn't feel a conflict in that work—other than I began that work by saying that agenda-setting was not all that—is essentially what I said [laughs]. Indeed the people—this couple, this married couple whose name I can't bring up at the moment—was really the source for thinking in this area—this agenda setting didn't take us where we should go.

Q: Oh, Kurt and Gladys Lang?

GANDY: Yes, thank you. Yes.

Q: Yes, good. Well, I was more just interested in your exposure to the kind of mainstream effects, political communication work in the mid-70s when you were doing this bibliography that it must have—

GANDY: Well, you should understand that we were critical of McAnany because he worked for USAID. But one of the radicals that published in the book that he edited was also a radical that was critical of USAID. You know, Noreene Janus was on that side as well. So it was not that he was poisoned by his work. It was the work that I say he chose to do at that point in time. I

[4] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., William L. Rivers, Susan Miller, and Gail Rivers, *Government and Media—An Annotated Bibliography* (Stanford, CA: Institute for Communications Research, 1975).

would say, if we look at his work afterward, when he moved on to this Catholic school in California, he kind of changed his orientation. So I was not an evil person [laughs]. We certainly criticized that work and criticized and demonstrated against USAID but not against the individuals who worked in it.

Q: Good. So I wanted to turn to the subsidy question.

GANDY: Please.

Q: You mentioned that you took this class on health economics. And that there was another class, that was where you worked on subsidies too, which might have been more in the development—

GANDY: No, that's on education.

Q: On education.

GANDY: That there's a long literature about who paid for—indeed, if you look at the dissertation, you'll see there's a large chunk of it, is about the money that went in order to buy equipment for schools and teachers and the like.[5] So that's my education professors, concerned about—indeed, Carnoy's book talks about education as cultural imperialism. I mean, that's the title of his book. There's no question about his orientation to what happens in schools here and overseas.

Q: So you place great importance on the notion of subsidy in the dissertation itself—

GANDY: I did.

Q: —and did you develop that through the classes with these—I mean, with the education economists or through that health economist course it sounded like? Or was it really more of a melange of all of these fields?

GANDY: That's a good question. No, that's really an economic piece. So there are lots of places where one would get into economics and the role of subsidy, but they all point in the direction of the role of the state in allocating resources in order to support industry as global competitors in that regard. So the work that we might do with regard to film was related to America being the filmmaker for the globe. And so you provide subsidies for American filmmakers who are profit-seeking, but you want them to be the leaders of the competition in that regard. So I don't

[5] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *Instructional Technology: The Reselling of the Pentagon (An Examination of a Subsidy for the Capitalization of Education)* (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1976).

know if I answered your question. I hear my voice rising, so go back to where you want to go on this.

Q: Yes, well, I mean, it may be impossible because you've got this incredible exposure across health, education, technology, development, where you're dealing with economic concepts all the way through and economists in most cases. So you have this orientation that's supply side, thinking about subsidies, and you're set to establish a dissertation topic. And it could have been on health or it could have been on, I suppose, development.

GANDY: But Levin was on my committee. So for me to bring an economist from outside the school in to be on an Annenberg [sic: Stanford] committee meant that they valued his work, thought it was good work and thought that he would, as he did, add to the quality of my dissertation. Rivers said fine, and everybody else said fine.

Q: So that was probably the main reason why the focus was on education technology because it could have been health, it could have been—

GANDY: I'm trying to think of whether or not I wrote anything prior to this about technology. It's not coming to mind right away, but it's a support for technology that was in my dissertation that came from subsidies in order to acquire this technology.

Q: And your interest in connecting defense in particular and the way in which defense R&D and its legacy became the source for educational technology—how did that particular mix come about as the focus?

GANDY: Well, I mean, certainly that responds to us petitioning and demonstrating against the war and the military. But also it also came from Herb Schiller and his sense of who is the power actor in these kind of relations with government. So I would say that that's where it came from. You want to say, All right, so here's a technology. And now if you add the claim, that I was not able to make as strongly as I would like, that this is another economic establishment, like the military-industrial establishment in that regard. The military exercises a level of control but not that which I hypothesized. That is, they came in answer—they bought the companies that developed these technologies in this regard. All I was able to demonstrate in that dissertation is that the technologies that were paid for were used to train soldiers, as opposed to train or to teach kids who wanted to learn about health in that regard.

Q: And so sticking with the dissertation but also connecting it to the question—you'd said when you were at San Diego that you didn't consider yourself a kind of radical scholar. And it seemed to me by the time you were writing the dissertation at least that some of the prefatory remarks in the first few pages really did stake out quite a radical position on militarism, on the capitalist state, and on and on. And I just wondered whether over those couple of years at Stanford, had you become more self-consciously radical?

GANDY: Clearly. I think there's no question that I became more radical and demonstrated more and wrote more—of having read more and believed and responded to Gurley, responded to other kinds of economists, talk about the nature of power and its use within a capitalist society. So no question that I had caught the bug, as it were, at that time.

Q: So your dissertation is filled with economic concepts. And in particular, you're coming from the supply side often, and you have this idea of managed demand or the management of demand throughout. And maybe you could just explain that and whether the focus on the supply side had any importance going forward.

GANDY: Well, I mean, excuse me of actually looking like, But wait a minute. What else is the game about? I mean, it really is about supply, especially if supply shapes demand. And so that my future work began to be related to the way in which the resources in supply shape demand. And not only that, maybe future work goes into not only shaping demand, but understanding the nature of how one can divide demand in order for it to be shaped more efficiently and effectively than one might do it otherwise. That's why—and let me just hit George [Gerbner] again in his death—you know, I hit George at his funeral. I've said to people that one thing about George Gerbner is his Europeanness, and he would never allow anybody to hold the door for him. So that I said, George, you went before me. Understand that George Gerbner was a major force in my life. So I'll tease him in his absence. Please go ahead, I'm sorry.

Let me go back to where you had me last. Understand that demand is the way that systems work. Imagine, though, if you were able to control both sides of the game. So that focusing on management of demand is how you would expect control within any kind of system, but certainly an economic system, to work. Imagine that management of demand also really works, I mean, with trying to understand a new product, where the consumer is the product. What again, we're manufacturing the production of products that do what? That manage demand [laughs]. So management is part of what I've been working on.

So in the dissertation, it's talking about, how is it that providing a subsidy—that is, providing money to help people behave—that is, to demand, to choose to pay for—affecting demand by paying for it, is really powerful. And if you can manage demand by paying for it in ways where people don't know who paid for it, if you manage demand by military, which is the only thing that nation-states are supposed to be involved in at all—so that if military is involved in the management of demand for more military, who's going to raise an eyebrow along that line?

So, important then to study the way in which the military has been able to manage demand. It's important also to understand that management of demand is not only with regard to consumers—that if you understand the role of the state, government, right, in shaping, in providing resources, in supporting education, in supporting development, in supporting competition with other nations, being able to influence the state is also an important thing to

do—again, managing demand of the state for things that matter, that the state thinks matters to it, that the state thinks matters to its future. So that book, that dissertation, is really about the role of the military in managing the state in order to manage demand for educational technology.

Q: And that is the dissertation. And what's fascinating about the conclusion is you do make reference to Herbert Schiller and his recently published work on *The Mind Managers* and his idea of EDCOM—this kind of educational commercial nexus. And you make a couple of other analogies that are more mass-media related, to the film industry. But I mention that only because there's a hint—and I wondered if you would develop this—a hint of what would become a different kind of subsidy, not a direct financial subsidy, but instead something like an information subsidy, that appears in the last few pages of the dissertation.

GANDY: So I might have made a reference to information subsidy in terms of convincing, but I don't think I was anywhere near where I wound up in understanding the value and the power and the importance of information as a subsidy, working in the same way other kinds of economic subsidies work. But I don't think I had any understanding of where I was going, where that was going, and the importance of that kind of subsidy.

Q: So just maybe an inkling that I'm reading back in, but it really is striking to see you referencing how the brochures and the materials that were provided along with the financial subsidies were a kind of engagement like that.

GANDY: Sure. How could I not be aware of advertising as the way of marketing or as a component of marketing? But thinking of it as a subsidy was something I hadn't come to yet.

Q: So you finished the dissertation, and you've defended it. You're living in Palo Alto. You mentioned that your next jobless move was to head off to, I think, India first, or am I wrong? But in any event, Tanzania. And can you speak to how that happened? Emile seems to have been really important in that.

GANDY: So I have a dissertation now. And I am, in my eye, an expert about education, education technology. And I'm also an expert, at least in terms of my TrEE model, in how it is that governments—I still believe in the state, as an important decider about things that matter for its people—and that if one were to inform the state about how decisions that it made had consequences for its people, that I was going to be able to teach Tanzania about that.

I went to India—we went to India, because my wife studied South Asian studies, learned Tamil. We have a whole set of stories when she's interviewed about her life that have to do about Tamil and the role Tamil played in her life, and maybe still plays marginally. But where am I going to go? So I was going to suggest then that I was ready to go to Tanzania in order to be the

source of advice to decision-makers in Tanzania about how they ought to make decisions about things that's going to move Tanzania forward. That is, I thought I was prepared to be what Tanzania needed to go forward. And left carrying a not two-year-old child and a wife, you know [laughs], not knowing anything about that world. Lots of stories about life in Tanzania, and experiences and fears and frustrations, with trying to make life in Tanzania.

Q: So how long, first of all, did you end up staying in Tanzania?

GANDY: Probably no more than a month and a half.

Q: Wow. OK, and then maybe you can say something about what it was like. You had this ambition, you leave India, and you're on your way to Tanzania, and you hit the ground.

GANDY: Well, I mean, think about, again, this guy who had this idea in his head about becoming what Tanzania needed, coming to Tanzania and discovering that Tanzania needed something other than what I wanted to sell myself as. And that Tanzania made, if you will, opportunities for me to interview and did dog-and-pony shows to show me what they wanted, but none of them were what I wanted and it became pretty clear—indeed, my wife teases me in front of other people, so I might as well do it in front of other people now, and say, Well I got an offer for a job in Tanzania, and she did, whereas I didn't get an offer for a job in Tanzania.

And we went back to India for another experience, but knew that a job was not coming along the way. I mean, we—hardship for us in Tanzania with this not two-year-old child, moving back and forth from where I was staying, waiting for a call from somebody from Tanzania for me to go have an interview for the job that I know that I was ready for, was not going to happen. I never got asked about my dissertation. I never got asked about what else I could do. I never got asked about anything related to what I wanted to do on the job. They said look at my studio, look at this, look at this, look at all of the things that we're doing. How do you say, Talk to me about something—how do I say, Talk to me about something else in that regard.

When we came to Tanzania, we were struck by the militarization. We were struck by all the people with guns in Tanzania and, maybe what should have been a sign to me and to us when we moved to Tanzania, they said repeatedly, You don't have the documents that you're supposed to have to be in Tanzania [laughs]. But wait a minute, I went through the form. I went to this. I went back to an office in Tanzania, n times, in order to find out how I could get the form that I was requesting. And I say the report that was made, Gandy reports that, You can't get. Thank you [laughs]. I'm reporting that. What are you saying? Gandy knows that. I can remember also that we had a time on the beach where our adopted daughter is darker than either of us and therefore calls attention to herself and to us, and to having some senior citizen come over to us in in Tanzania and say, That's not your child. Wrong! Lots of ways you can have a child. We had lots of moments of challenge in Tanzania, finally figuring out this is not going to

happen. And if we've got two or three pennies left, we better do something that we're going to enjoy and did and finally went home.

Q: After going back to India. And during this time when you had realized Tanzania wasn't going to work, did you reach out to Gerbner? How did the postdoc end up happening that you took the next fall?

GANDY: I don't know whether I reached out to Gerbner before I returned home, but I'm sure I reached out to him after I returned to Philadelphia in poverty and anxiety about what my future was going to be like. And George, because of his resources, invited me to have a postdoc. And that was once again one of the most important moments in moving me forward in my life. And I know you've asked me about information subsidies, but I really learned about information subsidies on my postdoc.

Q: And so talk about that. What was the exposure you had?

GANDY: So let me first tell you about what didn't happen. I mean, so—every moment I still have to say, you know, things could have been really wonderful with Gerbner, especially if you followed George's path down the road. And at a certain moment I was not following a path down the road and I did a study that should have interested Gerbner but didn't. Should have been published in the *Journal of Communication* but wasn't. This was, I thought, a really ingenious study, not like my master's thesis, but a study that I did that I was enabled to do by Gerbner, who had received from a nursing organization a set of newspapers that had published stories about nursing—stories about, by nurses, who talked about doctors who were responsible for patient deaths. Marvelous story, doctors kill patients.

I did a content analysis in order to explore the influence of markets over the coverage of, yes, over coverage of stories about doctors and health. I thought it was a marvelous story. George didn't want to hear about it. And maybe now, in retrospect, in terms of George's entire focus on a small number of options that he assumed everybody had in common, and a research strategy that assumed everybody had the same experiences in common, didn't want to hear about people having different experiences. So my study of the paper that he gave me was about the newspapers and their headlines and their lead paragraphs in market after market after market and how they covered this story. If you can imagine that there was variation in coverage of the stories—coverage in terms of the lead paragraph, coverage in terms of the use of that modifier, killed, responsible for, death in markets, varied with also features of the economics that the people in those markets faced.

My later work went further on that, but certainly that study I thought did a good job about how, where the paper was published, what time of day the paper was published, and here's the kicker, what share in the spenders of budgets of householders would predict whether the headline appeared and the critical headline and the hard headline, the scary headline,

appeared. If the share of the population's annual expenditure was high for medicine and health care, then they got a softer newspaper coverage. Clear as day [laughs].

Q: So can I follow up and ask what the objection of Gerbner was? I mean, was it around the variation?

GANDY: We didn't talk about it. This is just my sense of George—sense of, that was nothing I should pay any attention to in that regard.

Q: But because of the focus on the kind of supply side institutional analysis that he had sort of abandoned.

GANDY: Abandoned.

Q: Or the fact of you finding lots of variation when he was telling a story more about the mainstreaming.

GANDY: One or more of those applied, either one, but whatever it was, I was not able to influence George in the nature of my work. I was able to do work for him while I was there on a postdoc that was of value, because I had all kinds of skills about things that I could do. But I had another article that didn't get published in the *Journal of Communication* that should have gotten published in the *Journal of Communication* that I'm still pissed about after all of these years [laughs].

Q: Which was?

GANDY: So here is a study of, again, a media organization and the nature of community organizations, media organizations, and groups that were organized in order to change media in that regard. And George published another article on media and success, and mine didn't get published anywhere.

Q: And why do you think—

GANDY: I have no idea, except that it was not something that he thought was an important study about how decisions got made in important places. So my view of the way the world works was different, I suspect, than George's view about the way the world works and the parts of the way the world worked that mattered. And that he lost, somehow, institutional process analysis was striking, is still striking to me, where that went. I mean because I thought George had power to argue against a very powerful capitalist. A lot of money [laughs]. I mean that he could still argue against. So something changed in that way. But I don't know.

Q: Well, you mentioned that you, kind of on the positive side, were coming up with the idea of, or it was coalescing, the information subsidies and you were reading a lot in decision theory, I think.

GANDY: Yes, and reading a source. Randall lost his last name.

Q: Bartlett.

GANDY: Bartlett, thank you. Randall Bartlett, you know, that talks specifically about two things that radical political economists talk about. The first one that they talk about a lot is power. And it was really about the nature of power and how power was organized and how power was operated. And he had the nerve to talk about power being delivered through information subsidies. And I was hooked. I said, That's the way this goes. And I haven't let go of that yet. I don't know how Bartlett is doing but I was really taken by that.

Q: You just read him. He wasn't at the university.

GANDY: Never. Not only that, I don't own him. Out of all the books that I have, I don't own Randall Bartlett. I read it because I was a postdoc at the university and things could sit on my desk forever in that regard. And I could gather, I could write quotes about things that I had read in that material. And I'm sure I quoted, I did quote Bartlett a lot, but I never owned Bartlett. That's just really stupid.

Q: So that reading you were doing essentially as a postdoc, Bartlett, maybe some others—decision theory you mentioned?

GANDY: Oh yes, I went to school again. A postdoc took me to school again. But I was teaching myself in that regard in order to—reading. So, for example, the idea that I had—I certainly read a lot of economists and read radical economists, and the idea that I was reading administrative economists on [inaudible] was also a way for me to think about somebody else who was willing to say that there was a nature of power and we needed to pay attention in order to understand how the system worked. And his focus was on the government and how it is that the bureaucracy and how it is that the administration and how it is the judiciary could influence the public and societies in general was important—remains important to me. And I think I actually offered praise to some folk who are trying to make us pay attention to way all of those actors play a role in the shaping of our futures, in part through information subsidies, but other kinds of subsidies as well—experiential subsidies, other kinds of subsidies as well.

Q: So when you were there in 1977, the Cultural Indicators project was in full swing. And I noticed that you were working at least a little bit with Nancy Signorelli on a project around health. And I just wondered what your role was or relationship was to the Cultural Indicators

project. You've talked a little bit about your attitudes toward the model. Did you do work? And what about that particular paper and study?[6]

GANDY: I will say two things along those lines. One is that I have done things that are cultural indicators in terms of whether or not there is a relationship between exposure and behavior. And I don't see that there's any problem with that. And indeed, one doesn't get the full set, which George said mattered, institutions, exposure, and consequences. You just needed the institutions and the actors there who were setting content available to you, or not making content available to you. So Nancy and I did a paper, which—I'm not sure it was when I was there—but it did explore the influence on the production of audiences. And it was consistent with Gerbner's assumption of just prime-time television, as opposed to state by state television, state by state press, or any other kinds of divided audiences in this regard, where the nature of the audience, where the attributes of the audience, where the qualities of the audience, matter in terms of what kind of material they are supplied.

So Nancy never studied that with me. She just studied whether or not the audience production functions worked at the level of mass communication, and clearly they did. We could identify what was the nature of what kind of content produced what kind of audiences. I'm not sure she was as happy as she might have been or should have been, that one of the things that did produce audiences was violence [laughs]. You can say that more violence did produce more audiences of a certain kind. But we could have gone lots of ways in order to say what kinds of audiences—we could have gone in order to say who made decisions about what to watch, the guys decided about what we watch, and many families.

Not here—you know, a wife who made a number of decisions decides who watches what, and I fall asleep, which is quite alright in that regard as long as I don't say no. But there are lots of ways in order to understand how it is that success in the production of audiences, for audiences as audiences that pay, or audiences that others pay to get access to, is another way that audiences pay. To understand what content does in order to shape those audiences is really important. And I think she would have eventually recognized that and could have recognized that and her own work could reflect on that. It didn't at that point in time.

Q: And I know that you were working on health on that and you had done the work on health economics and you have had this long interest—it's persisted for decades—on health as one of the topics you touch on. And where do you think that comes from?

GANDY: So I didn't have this other answer, but it may be I do now. So, for example, the idea that information and health are important was some of my earlier work, and I wrote a piece about information and health. But the idea that members of my family were not healthy [laughs] is a

[6] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and Nancy Signorielli, "Audience Production Functions: A Technical Approach to Programming," *Journalism Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (1981): 232–40.

certain way to say that health really does matter and is important to me. But a very early paper was really on technology and health and whether or not—and so CT scanners and other kinds of things were information and health in that regard.[7] So the notion of technology in large industry firms that would produce technology, like educational technology, did have an impact on health in that regard. But I don't know.

Looking back, lots of members of my family—my mother, my sister—have constrained health options. Even I have constrained health. I've been fairly lucky in terms of my health—having been identified with something that some people don't get very well with a lot anyway. I have [inaudible]—is that what it's called? I don't even know. I have a disease where vision and other kinds of possibilities go away from you. And I almost lost my first job because I had an attack. So health is a really important part of my life. Maybe that answers the question. Maybe there's more in there. I can't think of anything else other than exposure to it, and direct experience with peoples whose lives are shaped by health makes health important.

Q: That makes total sense. And I also noticed that in some of that work that seemed to have been rooted in your postdoc year, including the paper with Nancy, that you were looking at entertainment media a bit in terms of the messages that come through as opposed to news.

GANDY: Correct. You're so right. So I don't know whether I ought to do this, but clearly where I am does matter, right? Where your environment is—in the air you breathe does matter. Howard University is a very different school. Its focus and the importance of journalism, journalism writ large, was more important. The importance of the Association for Education [in] Journalism and Mass Communication [AEJMC] is very important. So even though I love IAMCR, I was in an institution where AEJ[MC] was something you'd better pay attention to and I did. So my focus [laughs] changed to the degree that it should have in order to be successful.

Q: OK. That's a great structuralist answer in a way of that kind of—yes, it seemed to have mostly fallen off, although it appears in other places later in your career, interest in entertainment a little bit here and there. And I guess just circling back to the audience production quickly. You know, this was right at the same time that Dallas Smythe was publishing the beginnings of that, what's now a crazily resonant view of the commodity audience and the labor that the audience does and so on. I've seen you comment on that over the years, but did you think of the audience production function and process as having any parallels to that view?

GANDY: Sure. And even a recent piece that called back to some early political economist talked about the household and the household as a place where the production of a commodity, in a way its commodity [laughs], it happens. Dallas never talked about that. Others didn't talk about it. There are lots of ways to try to understand the production of a valued resource, a valued commodity. And if a commodity is the audience and the audience is in the household, we really

[7] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Information in Health: Subsidized News," *Media, Culture and Society* 2, no. 2 (1980): 103–15.

ought to pay attention to the economics of the household and how it is people in the household get the resources they need in order to reproduce the labor power, in order to be good workers out there in the economy.

So no, I didn't—I mean, there are lots of things. I still haven't thought of everything that I can think of. There are lots of things out there [laughs] that are still—you still have a chance to get in and say, Wait a minute. I'm still open to that. But places do matter, you know, in terms of—as well as personal experiences do matter. Who could deny that persons and personal experience matters in that regard? But others do matter. Institutional others do matter. Maybe I'm going to become a deist again. Talk about God's got a role in here and has got a plan which he reveals or she reveals to me somewhere about my future. I don't know, I'll grant that that's possible in that regard. There are so many important sources or actors or constraints. I mean, I know you didn't want to get to the end of the road. I don't want to worry about robots in the future and technology—but so it's still technology. It's, Hello [laughs]!

Q: I mean, it's partly, you can kind of read into the future from *The Panoptic Sort* in a way of where we are. But I guess, did you find that thinking about the audience interesting at the time?

GANDY: I must have published a handful of things which dealt with the audience. I certainly published a book in which a segment of the audience was identified as being an audience you ought to pay attention to. So yes, I mean the audience is—I firmly believe that George was absolutely correct that there were three things. There are institutions with persons, but institutions that produce content. He learned from Klaus [Krippendorff] it's important to know what the damn content is, right, in order to talk about it. You also have to have theory about how content affects different kinds of people. But you ought to—so you need all three of those things. All three of them are part of a system in the same way Marxists would talk about the economic base, you know, as well as the superstructure there, and whatever it is we had in the middle in order to make use of the economic base in our future in that regard. All of those are, you know, triumvirates in terms of these three moments, which are really important to me. George borrowed these three moments from somebody.

Q: From who?

GANDY: Oh, other Marxists.

Q: Other Marxists.

GANDY: Yes.

Q: And I guess I just will ask, were you obviously reading in Marxism and had some exposure, you were more of a radical, and would you have considered yourself a kind of critical political economist by this time—

GANDY: Without question.

Q: —the late '70s. And would you consider yourself a Marxist?

GANDY: No.

Q: OK, at that point—

GANDY: I still don't, I'm still not an -ist.

Q: Right, but you would not have had that label then, you just were—

GANDY: I don't think so, I was still struck by, yes, this is good, but that's hard to read [laughs]. That stuff, I don't know, I don't get an aha right away with that. I'm told repeatedly, you have to go back in and look at this, you have to go back in and reread that. And I'm not yet convinced that there is, you know—so [Vincent] Mosco and [Christian] Fuchs published an interesting volume in which they said Marx is back. Well, no, he's back more than he was a few years ago but he's not the universal thought, I don't think. Marx is hard work. Fuchs just doesn't change. His orientation toward, you got to read this, you got to read this, and it's the same chart with a few modifications on it in that regard.

Q: OK, well then, Yes, I agree. And then I guess just to close today's session, here you were at the end of that postdoc year, and you were faced with a choice about which job to take. And if I understand right, you had an offer at [University of] Illinois [Urbana-Champaign], and you also had an offer from Howard [University].

GANDY: I don't know if I had an offer, but it was a real sense of interest. And I knew people at Illinois. I had connection with them. We worked together in the past. There would be good colleagues in that regard. But Howard was different. Howard was a black university and I'd never done any of that. And I was ready to do that.

Q: And so was it a dilemma or did it make it pretty obvious that you wanted to go to Howard?

GANDY: No it was pretty clear that Howard could happen. I gave them ten good years.

Q: Well thank you for this session today and we will pick up again tomorrow.

GANDY: OK.

END OF SESSION ONE

Transcript of Interview conducted July 23, 2019, with OSCAR H. GANDY, JR. (session two)

Tucson, AZ

Interviewed by Jefferson Pooley

Q: This is session two of an oral history interview of Oscar Gandy conducted by Jefferson Pooley in Dr. Gandy's home in Tucson, Arizona. The interview is part of the Communication Scholars Oral History Project of the Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. The date is July 23rd, 2019. So we ended the last session with your decision to take the job at Howard [University], and you had mentioned that it was significant that it was an historically black university, and maybe you can talk a little bit more about—maybe in the early years as you were building up to publishing *Beyond Agenda Setting*—how Howard and its context as a historically black university was important to you.[8]

GANDY: I think there's some surprise here in that it's a historically black university, but it is an international black university as well. It's not only black but that's—sorry that I start with this, but the idea that there were relationships between the African-American students and the African students, that was striking and that was kind of a part of my trying to make sense about racial identity in this context here. It was a matter of race and class. The students from Africa were elites, come from families with resources, were expected to go back in and assume positions of power in their countries, whereas the black kids were just hoping to get a job, in that regard. So different kinds of tensions.

Howard was not your average school of communication. It was, if you will, led by Orlando Taylor, who is globally known for his work in speech and audiology—hearing problems, speaking problems, and the like. So large department, and many of my colleagues were in that area, something I had never encountered in my life. Then we had a very strong, and I would say a powerful and influential, film division. I can't think of his name for the moment—Abiyi [Abraham] Ford was one of them—but there may be three filmmakers that had national reputations, international reputations, and continue to do work there at the school. I came, actually, in order to be the coordinator of the broadcast production sequence, so bringing my television experience from WCAU. I think that was a good experience, was not my primary—as I may have mentioned with regard to my other job—you want to have the right job for the right place. That was not what I was designed to be, but it was still good—it was good relationships

[8] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *Beyond Agenda Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1982).

with students, who became partners in my writing later. Paula Matabane was also in that department, so that was an important contribution to my development as well.

I don't know if I should say, but because it was this tension—let me lay this one out as well. The tension between African-Americans and African students was also reflected in a tension within the African community as well. So, we had a faculty member, Nigerian, who I believe influenced his students, and the ones he wanted to go, and so I got one or two students who were Nigerians who actually studied with me, and what they paid [laughs] as a result of having made that choice is still a question. But I think the ones that did make that strange choice benefited from it, because they had a chance to develop a real history with regard to telecommunications policies. So there was no guilt—they were rational choices that they made.

I was on a dozen committees at the university—maybe that's part of my career as well. I've spent a lot of time on committees with varying degrees of responsibility on each of those kinds of committees, but I was on committees at Howard. Faculty committees and content-determining committees—what kind of course material, course evaluation, tenure and promotion and hiring—all of the committees you could be on I've been [laughs] on them—I was on them at Howard University. So there was no way that I didn't get a chance to know my colleagues and get to be known by my colleagues at that university. I suspect my wife and I actually found a way to work our way through the tensions between African-Americans and Africans, in that regard, in that we had parties and we would bring students to our house and party together, in that regard.

So it was a good culture—it was a good place. I know this is not an academic side of me but, nevertheless, my wife and I enjoyed ourselves immensely because there was a large African community, and therefore there was a large Afropop music. There were places to dance and go and consume and be part of that culture all around the city, so that was a benefit. The benefits of being in the nation's capital and all of the kinds of cultural events—and political events—but there were the cultural events, there were all kinds of fairs. There were all kind of events, music came to town and we went to the music when it was in town.

They were a good ten years at Howard University. Can't think of—other than need to change life, take another step, you know. Howard University was good for me there. I suppose an important part of my time at Howard was my relationship with the Telecommunications Policy Research Council [TPRC]. This was a very important introduction, for me, into that that part of my research, and my writing, but it was also—is another example of me getting a position of power and importance and responsibility in the organization, in that I was on the organizing committee—got to be the chair of the organizing committee for the Tenth Annual Telecommunications Policy Commission [*sic:* Tenth Annual Telecommunications Policy Research Conference]. I had to finance it, and that is, to go out and find the funds, and so that was also a new experience for me—to go to all of the various sources that had been used in the past to provide some contributions, including Canada, in order to provide money to support this conference, because Canadians were an important part of it as well. Even more important though—you have a question.

Q: Well, I was just curious about the telecommunications policy conference. How is it that you got involved in it in the first place?

GANDY: I really don't know. So maybe it was Vinny [Vincent] Mosco, maybe it was somebody else that I know that said, Here's this thing, did you want to go to it? Or it was just that I found it and said, I want to go to it [laughs]. That here I am in television production, I ought to understand about the television system, in that regard. It was an invitation-only conference. It had a design in that it was to be academics, it was to be industry, it was to be government. So again, one of these triumvirates—everyone was supposed to be there. It's a struggle in order to say what kinds of papers were going to be here. Economists had a very important position—they were major providers of papers there—but the social scientists, the communication scholars, got a chance to play a role in that. The people that became part of my identity as a radical communication scholar were also involved in those as well, so again, it was a good thing to be in—it was a good thing to have an influence over. So that—I certainly played a role in selecting my colleagues from Stanford, and that history, in order to present papers at those panels. And in order to be in what I thought was a historical accomplishment, that was to get the publication, the annual report, our book published, the very next year, in time to be distributed and sold at the next conference. As far as I know that had never occurred [laughs] and has never happened again [laughs]. That was a good win, a good achievement, in that regard, and it's a good book too, good people are in it.[9]

Q: I'm curious whether you ended up staying involved in the Telecommunications Policy Research [Council] conference going forward?

GANDY: Must have been another four or five years. I mean, there's an interesting and a powerful story that goes along with it. I don't know that I've mentioned Vinny Mosco before, but I certainly will again. So Vinny was part of the Union for Democratic Communications [UDC], he was part of the radical communication scholars as a radical political economist, IAMCR [International Association for Media and Communication Research]—all of these things. We were part of a family, and Vinny got to be the organizer for the Telecommunications Policy conference. But what occurred was that Virginia refused to pass the Equal Rights Amendment for women, and we said, We're not going [laughs] to Virginia, in that regard. So the challenge of having to find a new location for this conference, and deal with the unions, deal with all of the things that were involved in moving the entire conference to Maryland—I suspect, in that regard. I think that that event, and the disruption, changed the Telecommunications Policy conference. It changed the extent to which it was not a permanent—not a rapidly changing—but a permanent management group. So if we were to do the history we'd find out that TPRC changed, in that regard. So if I left, that was certainly part of the reason for not going anymore, not doing policy. But I think it's probably also that I wasn't doing as much writing policy after that.

[9] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., Paul Espinosa, and Janusz A. Ordover, *Proceedings from the Tenth Annual Telecommunications Policy Research Conference* (ABLEX, 1983).

Q: And I guess I want to take a moment to ask about, since we're talking about it, conference, and the community around the conference. Over time, even over the decades of your career, has there been a particular association or gathering of communication scholars, or more than one, that you've found is your home?

GANDY: Sure, it's a good question. Now part of the answer, I think, is a structuralist answer. Alright, so that I'm at Howard University and it's got a school of journalism. It was essential for me to be at AEJMC [Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication], so I was actively involved in AEJMC. I also published in *Journalism Quarterly*—I did reviews of books for *Journalism Quarterly*, so that was a very important source. I also went to ICA [International Communication Association], but journalism was much more important to me. Indeed, my current home is, in part, the product of we're having gone to Phoenix—an AEJ[MC] conference, in that regard.

But the most important in my career and in my identity is the International Association for Media and Communication Research or IAMCR, and it is such in part because political economy was a central—is still a central feature of the organization. So the people who became my friends or who were my friends, who introduced me to their friends in this conference were a very important part of that. So [Herbert] Schiller went, [George] Gerbner went, just—one can identify the list—Mosco went, [Janet] Wasko went [laughs], the whole list of the full core in critical and radical communications and political economy went to IAMCR.

IAMCR should be understood as trying to be egalitarian, in the sense that it would go to a conference once in the North and once in the South, once in the East and once in the West. And the East included Poland, included all sorts of places that I would not have gone—I did go to Poland, in fact, in order to deliver a paper there. So that was also—and I'll admit my wife and I like to travel, we traveled extensively. We continue to travel now that I'm, quote, retired. But IAMCR provided the opportunity to travel—then she would go in a place that she wanted to go to. Even Klaus Krippendorff—we traveled as a family. My wife, our daughter, and Klaus Krippendorff traveled to India [laughs] and further north, in that regard. I can just see us walking around parts of the city in order to find an artwork that he wanted, and one that I wanted, along those lines. A fabulous camaraderie, collegiality-building kind of conference.

I believe I give credit for one of the people at the conference who suggested the kind of table that I should use in the paper that I was doing, so it was that kind of conference, where older senior scholars would provide insights to younger scholars. It was, and continues to be, an outstanding conference. I just went to Madrid, which was an outstanding conference—my students, my colleagues, the other students, the people who got me through things were there—are still there—people go and stay. I don't go to ICA anymore. I don't go to AEJ[MC] anymore. I go to IAMCR.

Q: Thank you.

GANDY: [Laughs]

Q: And actually it is a good lead into the next question I have, which is rooted more in the period of the late 1970s, but that was IAMCR-related in the sense that it was one venue in which this debate over what got officially called the New World Information [and] Communication Order [NWICO]—and UNESCO's role more broadly—and debates between the free flow of information and cultural sovereignty, to use two of the—

GANDY: —terms of art, yes.

Q: —and you did write a little bit about this, particularly a 1980 paper on the kind of market dynamics in cultural imperialism, and I just wanted to ask about that paper, but more generally, how involved you were in those debates or whether you were exposed to them, engaged in them?[10]

GANDY: Sure. I was certainly exposed to them. You can find a connection, right, between my dissertation in terms of education, you can find it in terms of my earlier work with regard to development communication, and you can find it in Martin Carnoy, that I referred to as education as cultural imperialism. But Herb Schiller certainly has written about this area as well. So a lot of the people with whom I associate and identify with, and spend time with, were part of the debates about, and the arguments about, cultural imperialism and the domination of developmental countries' communication by the American media, the American systems. So I make a connection between Herb Schiller and Trần Văn Dĩnh, a Vietnamese scholar and activist, in that regard. So there was a lot of discussion about that there. I don't think my paper was anything really special about the New World Information and Communication Order, except in terms of American domination, and government support for American domination of this media market. But that was really the extent of my engagement with it. I'm not sure that I actually wrote anything more about that particular debate in an argument after that. I may have, but it's not salient to me.

Q: I have a slightly different question. It has to do with your early years at Howard and how you balanced this identity as a scholar, including your participation and organizing of this Telecommunications Policy Research Conference, but in lots of other ways too—you were working on your book—how you juggled or balanced the demands of service that you had at Howard and especially the broadcast teaching that you were doing, which wasn't oriented to research, or at least wasn't designed to be oriented to research. How did you carve out, in those early years, a role for your scholarship?

GANDY: That's interesting. I didn't see that as a problem, so maybe it was the shift, which I did make, from the broadcast production sequence into the graduate department, where research was an important part of that. But I don't think that there was a major moment when Howard did not support my research. So, that is, one of the supports was for them to send me to these conferences to present papers. You didn't get to go to the conference unless you had a paper

[10] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Market Power and Cultural Imperialism," *Current Research on Peace and Violence* 3, no. 1 (1980): 47–59, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40724885.

[laughs] to present. So I didn't—it wasn't a different game afoot, at Howard in that regard. The fact that they sent me to overseas to present at IAMCR was pretty different, but nevertheless they valued that—understood that that was important, that it said something, you know, for an international university as well, which Howard is and was. So it was no struggle for me in order to do the production. I mean, I published with my colleagues at Howard University, I published with my students at Howard University, so that—I didn't see that as anything out of the norm, for me anyway, in that regard.

Q: So it was during these early years at Howard that you were finishing the book that would become *Beyond Agenda Setting*—

GANDY: Yes.

Q: —and we talked a little bit in the last session about the idea of the information subsidy and how your encounter with Randall Bartlett's work was important for that. But even before asking about that, how was the process of writing the book? Do you recall—and since it was really your first major, kind of, solely authored book, outside the dissertation, you conducted—even the choice of a publisher, that sort of thing. Is there anything in your memory that stands out?

GANDY: I suspect that Herb [Schiller] played a role in that as well. That is, the editor of the communication series, Mel [Melvin] Voight, was at UC San Diego, and if one were to look in the front matter, you'll see all of the people who are part of this community—others as well. I mean, he wasn't just solely limited to radical political economists, but he really was focused on, and really did make a place in his publications, you know, that he managed as editor, in that journal. So that was—I didn't perceive that I had any constraint or anxiety about finding a place to get that published.

Q: I'm guessing that during the years after the post-doc while you were at Howard, but before the book, that you were continuing to develop the information subsidy idea and build it out in a way?

GANDY: Well, I mean, so I think as I've said, I mean that is, that postdoc was so powerful and so beneficial in terms of providing me the opportunity, and the incentive, to understand this window into economics, that was not very well-developed at this point in time. And so that was an important drive for me. I don't know about the source of my political interest, the political interest that is part of *Beyond Agenda Setting*, in that regard. But again, if one looks at the dissertation one has to understand that that financial subsidy didn't drop out of the sky, alright—it was the product of influence in order to bring funds to those companies, in that regard. So, in order to understand how it is that the distribution of subsidies and resources, and the creation of new markets, was a political process as well, and that was part of what was developed in that book—that is, how is it that politics plays a role in this process [laughs].

Q: Yes. Which is a great answer, because I'm going to ask next about the choice, I suppose, of taking the information subsidy argument and making it, in terms of, at least in the initial

chapters, as an intervention around agenda-setting theory. And I ask this just because, you can imagine, maybe developing it as part of kind of critical public relations scholarship. And so I'm curious about why you chose to intervene with agenda-setting in this kind of political communication context? And maybe you just answered that.

GANDY: Well. No, no that's a good question. So, in that book I was audacious in terms of identifying the Langs [Kurt and Gladys Lang], alright, as being the real source of agenda setting, and I was certainly more supportive of their contributions to critical research in that regard. But please understand that if information subsidy is an economic argument—and my dissertation was an economic dissertation, and indeed some question said, Was it even a communication dissertation? But certainly it was an economic dissertation. And therefore there was no need for me to move away from that. Now, I didn't consider that public relations was to be addressed by an economic analysis. Public relations is part of what Schiller would talk about with, you know, mind management and the like, but I didn't focus on that. And I still don't see that as being an economic issue or economic feature. It is, if you will, an advertising feature and a marketing feature.

I could see you could write a book about public relations in that regard, and indeed public relations authors made reference to the book and talked about in that regard, and indeed got me to write a chapter in a public relations journal.[11] But I have been only unconstrained in my criticism of public relations as an activity. I still don't think we should be allowing that activity to shape people's understanding of the world. So I have no good space in my heart for public relations and it's reflected in that work as well.

Q: Your career-long interest in inequality, and particularly inequality and the distribution of information, was so vividly on display in this first book. And so you called it, in a few years after the publication, kind of social power orientation—but you really were describing what you had developed in the book. And so, maybe you could say something about how you were thinking about inequality in this *Beyond Agenda Setting* era.

GANDY: Well, I'm not sure I didn't have a chapter, actually [laughs], which dealt about inequality to some degree. And so, to the degree that subsidies are provided by actors with power and influence in order to amplify and extend their power and influence, it contributes to the development and the worsening, if you will, of inequality. Now, I didn't have any idea at that point in time that the degree of inequality that we were observing these days, you know, was going to come to be—but, nevertheless, inequality and then what got to be, in later work, racial inequality, was certainly something on my mind and was reflected in, you know, in that work. So inequality and power, inequality being able to produce influence over government decision-making—I was really not so much focused on corporate decision-making, it really was

[11] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Public Relations and Public Policy: The Structuration of Dominance in the Information Age," in *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations*, ed. Robert L. Heath and Elizabeth L. Thoth, 131–63 (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1992).

government decision making in that regard—that's an inequality that has all kinds of consequences in terms of who has access to goods and services.

I think I wrote a later piece about communication competence, and so differences in the ways in which access to education, access to media and information, influenced and shaped and limited the ability of African Americans and others, and the poor, but also it was racially oriented—I mean, in terms of their ability to participate in governance, to participate in the production of influence in that regard, without having the capacity to understand and to be understood, which I characterized as an important part of shaping inequality in that regard. So it's got a link back to that work.[12]

Q: Absolutely, I know—and also has a link forward to *The Panoptic Sort* work, where some of those inequalities are maybe amplified by the segmentation, but—[13]

GANDY: Absolutely, well said.

Q: Yes, we're getting ahead of ourselves, in part because I am curious about what you've mentioned, which really isn't directly related to *Beyond Agenda Setting*. But the collaboration, a lot of it that you did with Howard colleagues in the early to mid-80s before you left for Annenberg. And, you know, I'm not going to dwell on any particular papers—you worked on Jesse Jackson's campaign and student attitudes toward it, a study with a former student on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a couple of others. I can ask you about them, but more generally I'm just curious about that period of time while you were at Howard. You were now in the graduate program and you're doing lots of work, much of it in kind of political communication, much of it oriented toward issues of African-Americans, and all of it collaborative.

GANDY: And that's a really good insight. Alright, so to understand that I must have been, if I'm an economist [laughs], deriving some kind of benefit [from] that collaboration. I was clearly learning more things about politics, and about race and politics, through my collaboration with my students, with my colleagues—some were multiple collaborations, others were one shots. Students, often, it was a one shot, you know—they would do a master's thesis and we'd get something out of that. I'd be pushing, pushing, and pushing that in order to turn that into something and, you know, but sometimes they got a chance to present their papers at AEJMC or conferences. So again, mutual benefit in that regard. I learned, we learned together. They got a publication in their resume, and I learned some things which turned out to be valuable.

Now, it's not that I went back to the politics, but you can't really ever leave the political process. Now the focus, now, is not on, you know, race and politics as it was then, because of the structure, because of being at Howard, because of the interest of my colleagues in that regard. I just happened to think of one of my student colleagues, co-authors in that regard. So a number

[12] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "The Political Economy of Communications Competence," in *The Political Economy of Information*, ed. Vincent Mosco and Janet Wasko, 108–24 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
[13] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *The Panoptic Sort: A Political Economy of Personal Information* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

of my students were business-oriented. So I've got one who has, you know, publishes and provides services for businesses in that regard. But I don't look down my nose at him in that regard. We both, you know, did well and communicated years after, in that regard. Howard was a great and important experience of learning—that is, getting and giving. I mean, I can see people who have made progress in their life, I think, as a result of our time together and I really feel [laughs] good about that, and its international community—all good.

Q: I'm wondering if any of those particular collaborations stand out for you? You know, you did a couple of papers with Larry Coleman on Jesse Jackson and those studies you did a couple of papers with Paula—and I know I'll mispronounced her last name—

GANDY: Matabane.

Q: —Matabane on perceptions of South Africa, and the African series, and you published quite a bit in this *Journal of Black Studies* as well—

GANDY: I did.

Q: —and you continued to going forward even. But I just wanted to give you the opportunity—if there's anything in particular—

GANDY: So Paula Matabane is an important one of my students. I mean, in terms of our collaboration. And I hesitate how far I'll go in talking about her, the transformations that she made in her life, as other students of mine have made transformations in their life. Paula was married to a South African, a South African activist very much involved in [laughs] the revolutionary movements in South Africa. So that was certainly part of our work on Africa and a focus on what students learned from the Africans, in that regard. But Paula has changed and has become a minister—people have moments in their lives, which you've got to find a place for. It doesn't change any of the work that we did together. We haven't worked since, we haven't had contact since. You don't want to have an interaction with someone where you know there's this elephant in the room [laughs] and you don't want to talk about. So I didn't do any of that, but we were very close colleagues there because of Africa, because of its orientation, because of the politics of Africa, so that was a good moment.

Larry Coleman was more politically oriented than I, but—Jannette Dates—I mean, there was just a whole host of colleagues that I worked with that were just a blessing for me. I won't say that there weren't any bad connections [laughs], you know, but there were just so many that were a blessing that just—nothing I could do but say Howard was an absolutely wonderful part of my life and my development in that regard.

Q: It's a perfect segue, then, to ask about this Center for Communications Research. That was, it looked like, in a planning phase, maybe the year before you moved along. And then you were the director for its first year of existence, and I'm just curious about its origins. Did you propose it? Were you—

GANDY: No. So I made reference to Orlando Taylor. Orlando Taylor is a success, he's an innovator, he makes things happen, in this regard. And I'm sure Orlando saw that he needed a research center, and I guess he said, You're the guy that could do it for me [laughs]. And I said, alright. I think most of the work that we did, and that was published through the center, was really about speech pathology and audiology. There is credit given to the center for the support that was given for this TPRC issue. But I don't think I've published anything else through the center—might have, but I did not. So it was not part of my career path and, therefore, I did not feel that much guilt by leaving it. Because I was going to next step on my ladder, you know—life is like that. People get an offer and they go to the next place, so I don't know that it still exists. I don't know who next got to be the director. Do I—is that true? No, that's not true. So the person I think that became the director was a very good friend and I continued to write reviews of articles for publications of the *Howard*—maybe I'm making a mistake here, maybe I would think that the center would be the site for the publication of the *Howard Journal of Communication*. So if I were to do the research and go back and see the *Howard Journal of Communication* was maybe its biggest success. I don't know whether that's true or not, and the person who is the editor, and the set of people who were editors, were good collegial connections there. And if I helped that along, fine, but I'm not going to pin a badge on my chest from that.

Q: Well, I want to shift, if you don't mind, to what I'm very curious about, the earliest engagement—and I'm not expecting that you can recall this—but with the bundle of interests that would end up resulting in *The Panoptic Sort* in 1993. It seemed, just from the evidence I could find from published sources, that you started to look at these questions of segmentation and targeting in the mid-80s, something like that. Can you recall anything about what triggered that interest and whether it was a particular set of readings or an encounter?

GANDY: So I'm reflected now over all of the things that we've said during our interactions and I think I probably said each time, I don't know when this happened [laughs]. I don't know how that happened, so that's not a way that I understand my transitions or my developments. So I think you may have asked me about my work and my scholarship and how it is that I use resources in that regard. So certainly something that I read before may somehow spark some thinking, and then I'll go in and read more and more and more about that. Understand that my postdoc at Annenberg with George [Gerbner] that introduced me to, or at least allowed me to, look at a whole different set of schools of economics. They're still there, they're still available to me, those people that I read at that time—are still productive and therefore I'll go back in and read them some more. I think I may have criticized my work. I certainly have done it in speeches where I say, I didn't understand, when I wrote *Beyond Agenda Setting*, segmentation. I didn't understand targeting. I didn't know anything about that. So that was a missing part of my work at that point in time, I just don't know how I got to it.

Q: It makes perfect sense, but it was around that time that you seem to have gotten at least to the stage of giving talks. There are a pair of conferences—or not conferences necessarily—symposia, one at Syracuse [University] around their new communication school that—

GANDY: Sure, OK.

Q: —resulted in an edited volume and another, I think, *Mass Communication Yearbook Review*—

GANDY: —in Massachusetts, is that—

Q: —in Maryland, I believe, with Jay Blumler [*sic:* Mark Levy] and—

GANDY: Yes.

Q: —Michael Gurevitch. I'm not asking about the specifics of those papers, but it was just that you started talking about, for the first time, at least publicly, segmentation and targeting, and you were clearly monitoring the trade literature and beginning to gather thoughts around this topic.[14]

GANDY: So, I mean, that invites reflection on my part about how is it that invitations to make a presentation change my path—knock me off the path that I was on onto another path. So I would say that that was probably, that is, the structure of the conference and what they said about the conference, might have said, Well, you know, I need to know something about this. I mean I had to write a paper for a privacy conference about inter—what is the term now? I lost it. So there's a term from black feminists about inter—

Q: Intersectionality?

GANDY: No, there is a term about the relationship of gender, and relationship of race, and relationships of class. Intersectionality is the term of art there. And so I didn't know anything about it, but I was invited to make a presentation at a conference about intersectionality. Well, of course, I'm going to go ahead and read [laughs] and read, and read, until I could make what I considered to be an acceptable, informed, compelling, and successful presentation about intersectionality and privacy—because it was at a privacy conference. So I would say that was the nature of the invitation that would spark me toward reading materials that I might not have been reading before. But examples? I don't have them.

Q: That is so interesting. What about—maybe I'll ask you about Jacques Ellul. He appears as an important figure around this time in your writing, all the way through to *The Panoptic Sort* itself, and then after as well. ou're both clearly engaged with him and compelled at some level, but also critical to some degree. So how did he come about? Was he someone you had been

[14] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Headlong Into the Future Toward the Blue Sky of Information Technology With Both Eyes Open," in *Communications Research: The Challenge of the Information Age*, ed. Nancy W. Sharp, 125–28 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988); and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "A Research Agenda for the Information Age: A Personal and Institutional Response," in *Mass Communication Review Yearbook 6*, ed. Michael Gurevitch and Mark Levy, 30–35 (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE, 1987).

engaged with in the past but hadn't really appeared in your scholarship, or was it a new encounter?

GANDY: I have no idea. I mean, so that's interesting. So those things that matter in your trying to understand people's work, and I'm perfectly willing to say, well, Oscar doesn't fit into [laughs] any of those categories, because he doesn't do it the way that they did. So again, I characterize my life as being one of good fortune and good luck, but I also characterize it as one where my path has been shaped by an author or invitation that somebody has made, in this regard. So it's not that somebody told me to read Ellul, so I read Ellul before, but he then becomes a resource for me to respond to this new challenge, in this regard. I mean, so certainly Ellul and criticism of technology and the consequences of technology on society is something that is definitely in my work, but I don't know who to give credit or blame to for the rediscovery, if you will, of Ellul in my work.

Q: And at around that same time, I guess Frank Webster and Kevin Robbins, they published a big book in 1986 [*Information Technology: A Luddite Analysis*], and I think James Beniger was also—he published the same year his *Control Revolution* book, which both seem to be important to you.

GANDY: Those are powerful—both of them, from different places in the world—were very, very [laughs] powerful bits of work. Beniger really, on power as well, and nature of influence, and nature of influence across time, and the nature of influence on theory and research. But Webster—I had to go back in and look and see what these guys were doing. But I was just struck by their critical position. Indeed, I met somebody at the IAMCR conference this year, and she says, Webster. I said, Really [laughs]? He was part of your network, in that regard?

But I mean, again, the only person—and maybe you weren't expecting this—who I would say had a dominant influence was [Anthony] Giddens. Yes, you know, once you encountered Giddens and you start reading all of Gidden—so it's not like there was one book that each of them wrote [laughs]. Here's a guy who has written dozens of books that it's your responsibility to read and engage, in order to understand the kind of contribution that work can give to your work, including giving you the sense of self where you can say, Well, he slipped up here [laughs]. He didn't go where he should have gone, in that regard. So I would say that, out of all of the people that you might have seen, as having had an influence on my work, in that they are cited, nobody comes close to Giddens.

Q: It seems like the focus on structuration in particular and the role of agency and structure, and their mutual shaping, is especially important. Is that fair?

GANDY: Yes, it is. Yes, and so the contribution that Giddens makes in trying to talk about agency and then the individual, with their ability to shape the world, but inviting the criticism that says, They didn't know what the impact of their work was going to be, nor did they know what the impact of other people's work would be, on their understanding of the world and their actions. So kind of the—and I'm seeing some of my students now discussing this notion of agency, some

of the students that I've published with, we had lots of discussions about Giddens and agency and the nature of limits, and indeed, if I can bring up his name, from this poor memory of mine now. Really was going to take me down a path of where technologies had their own power, and its own power. I can't think of the name of that school.

Q: Technological determinism?

GANDY: No, there's another school where—talked really about the agency of technology in that regard, and so they were an active player, they were an actor—actor network theory [ANT]. Yes [laughs]. Is the nature of that work there—and we just had incredible discussions over coffee about, Yes, wait a minute, it can't really be—whether I'm getting to his view of the world now or not, I don't know, but it's possible, alright? So that is, when we get to talking about robots, we talk about the like, maybe there is [laughs] a certain degree of agency that at least we've got to find a place for, in granting true agency, as Giddens talked about it then, in that regard.

Q: It struck me that, when I was reading this, it's earlier in the sense that it wasn't immediately before *Panoptic Sort* was published. I'm thinking of, like, mid-1980s, roughly speaking, that you were talking about inequality in two different ways that were completely compatible, just slightly different emphases. One has to do with the growing bureaucratic advantage, as you came to call it, the way in which the state and corporations, because they were gaining this knowledge asymmetry, through segmenting and the data gathering, had over the individual. And so it was more about the bureaucracy versus the individual. Whereas a second emphasis was that particular individuals and groups of individuals were particularly affected because they might not be attractive consumers, because they might not have spending capital or they might be racially excluded or other kinds of particular ways in which the sorting mechanisms punish particular categories of people. It seemed like both of those were expressed in this mid-80s period, and they're compatible. But do you—

GANDY: Well, thank you for the for the distinction. I mean, that it is a real one, and it is important, and so therefore inequality at a bureaucratic level or at a government level is quite different from inequality at the human condition level or the social groups, or the neighborhoods, or gender—all those other areas in which we look at inequality and say that it's important and needs to be engaged. So inequality within the policy structure is certainly one thing, but also inequality that's related to information subsidies also—that are related to shaping policy outcomes, is also a part of understanding inequality in that regard. And everybody didn't have the same amount of power in order to shape and they didn't use the same technologies, and the same processes, in order to shape their future. So yes that's a meaningful distinction, thank you for that.

Q: And I'm thinking now might be a good idea to talk about that move to Annenberg. When it was, I suppose, 1987, so you had just hit what turned out to be a decade's tenure at Howard. How did it come about that you found yourself returning, a third time, to Annenberg—this time as a faculty member?

GANDY: I don't know but I can't think of anything other than George [Gerbner] said, What about—[laughs]. So that's the best—but I mean, the moment, the discussion, the event, the negotiation, if there was one—and there wasn't, far as I know—that's a prime offer. I think I will say that I think George wanted to bring me to Annenberg much earlier than that, and an unnamed faculty member was not supportive of that, and that was not going to happen.

Q: Oh, OK, and I assume you're deciding to leave the name unnamed on purpose.

GANDY: Yes.

Q: Well, with that in mind I suppose I'm curious what it was like to be at the Annenberg School. This period of time in the late '80s, I think, Gerbner himself might have been stepping down as dean during this five-year stretch from the '80s to the early '90s—

GANDY: Right, interesting.

Q: —and what the Annenberg School was like itself, if you—I mean it's impossible to reconstruct, but just your sense of particular faculty that you interacted with, or notable students you remember from your early years as a faculty member.

GANDY: Well, I mean, think about the the particular kind of magic, to come and have people, from an earlier moment in history—Bob [Robert] Hornik, you know [laughs]—be a faculty member there in the school in which I was then going to come in and be a colleague. Bob Hornik was an important part—I mean, we have not had much contact in a long time, in that regard. But we had a lot of contact, did a lot of work together, published together, made opportunities available, made students available, so that connection from Stanford. And Emile McAnany—not here, but nevertheless those connections were all still very very powerful in that regard. Again—here's me being a structuralist again—a spatial location matters. Joe [Joseph] Capella was right across the hall [laughs] from me. We became good friends. We spent a lot of time—I mean, I'm an early arriver and Joe would be an early arriver, so we'd spend each beginning of the day there talking about what happened in the news, or talking about something that either one of us was doing, in that regard.

I would say, an overwhelming majority—not everybody—of the colleagues at Annenberg just resonated real well with me and my sense of place. Carolyn Marvin was not exactly the same place, but nevertheless our interactions were active. Barbie Zelizer—I'm not sure she actually was there in the beginning, but soon came—marvelous person. I mean, it was just—as wonderful as Howard [University] was, the kinds of interaction with colleagues in the Annenberg School were just special, which is wonderful. For me to come—and after having been at Howard teaching telecom—to come in and teach telecom or did I—do I even remember when I was still teaching telecom in my next life? I guess I was.

So, Al Rose at WCAU television station, was still a faculty member, and therefore a colleague, and spending time together was a real plus in that regard. I didn't spend that much time with

Paul Messaris, even though he had a media background. A structural thing hooked me up with Charlie [Charles] Wright, because he was right next to my colleague—so we would still spend time together, in that regard. The—excuse me, it's kind of crazy, but the Xerox machine was right there. You couldn't not go in and see somebody as you were going to the Xerox machine, you would nod and make references, in that regard. There were changes in the location of faculty, I guess, maybe with the [Annenberg Public] Policy Center, so that some faculty were down the hall and some faculty moved into an upstairs—so that changed relationships. Just passing somebody each morning, being front of their office, said you were going to say some things and engage in conversations that you might follow up on, in that regard. When people were located in different parts of the Annenberg School the same contact didn't occur. You have to plan for it to occur.

Q: And I am curious about some of the teachers you had who were still on the faculty, and I suppose—I don't know if you ever took a class with Charlie Wright. He might be in that category. But Klaus Krippendorff and Larry Gross were both around, of course, and how was your relationship with them as former teachers and as—?

GANDY: As colleagues, absolutely wonderful. Klaus and I differ in our constructions of the world, but we were such compatible friends and colleagues, and so we were family friends, dinner friends, in that regard, as well. We still differed about power, and so we actually had a debate, a public debate, in the Annenberg School, where he and I [laughs] argued collegially about the notion of power and understanding of power. And we're still friends to this day. Larry, of course, became an editor in his next life, but clear colleagues. He didn't go to as many IAMCR's as I did, but he and his partner did go to some of those conferences, and we talked at length about the world in that regard. As the editor of the *International Journal of Communication*, and as somebody who would send things for me to review for the journal, you know that—again, a good relationship. There is no—I don't think that Larry and I had a moment's difference of opinion about how the world worked [laughs]. I mean, we were really resonant, you know, in our understanding of the nature of the world. Klaus and I had a place for our differences in the way we understood the world.

Joe and I had a, you know, that is [inaudible]—so Joe [Joseph] Turow—dare I go there, but I guess I should—Joe has become a privacy scholar in his work. But Joe was a business guy, Joe was a market guy before, and we didn't have a comfortable space at all. I guess I misbehaved when Kathleen [Hall] Jamieson as dean—so this is later—kind of created a fund, had real money fund, and she'd naturally expected that Joe and I would be partners, but I didn't want to partner, because he was not a partner of mine. Maybe that's me and public relations, and how I understood that, and how I expected—but he's gone on to do well with privacy. Privacy has—I mean, he has become the privacy guy at the Annenberg—whether he'd become the privacy guy at the University of Pennsylvania I don't know, but he's been making a real contribution, and in fact been making those contributions with some of my former colleagues from the Electronic Privacy Information Center, so I'm just pleased.

Q: I can't help but remember reading about UPCs [Universal Product Codes] in your work in the mid-80s and think now to the kind of supermarket surveillance publishing he's doing today.

GANDY: Yes, I mean—no, he has clearly become another person in terms of his orientation toward privacy. I mean, I just think that that's wonderful, in that regard, and blessings upon you, in that regard. But we were not, in the same way that others were—were partners of mine and discussants.

Q: Alright. Well, thanks for that. And I was hoping we could talk a little bit about the work that led up to *Panoptic Sort*. And it really must have accelerated once you are at Annenberg, and you seem to have had, from that period more or less, a large grant from AT&T that helped underwrite some of the research that was included in the book.

GANDY: I don't know whether I should give credit to George [Gerbner] or not, but I expect probably at some point George informed somebody—now it is quite possible that somebody might have known, that is, this person who gave me the grant who essentially foisted [laughs] a grant on me. I'm not sure how much I actually wrote in terms of a proposal, in order for me to get a grant. So I'm offering that as maybe George said, Here's Oscar, here's the guy who probably could come closest to meeting your need in that regard, and we want to make a connection between our school and your school, and a grant would be a good way to do that. I'm imagining George working that out, in that regard. But, yes, I got a substantial grant from a telecommunications engineering center that funded—so it may have been—I don't know, I could check in my [curriculum] vitae—it may have been $300,000. It was real money, in that regard, that supported me during the summer. It supported my research assistants.

It supported my doing external research that they provided indirectly, the research there. It was an interesting partnership with AT&T—I mean, so, the University of Pennsylvania and that scholar, and all of the other grantees, that were going through his structure and therefore he's got some power there as well, and also some responsibility. But also AT&T as a partner in this grant has a concern about what's happening with their money, and as they learned more about me and my research, they were actually a little bit anxious about what kind of research—so they saw the kinds of questions that I wanted their researchers to ask in my surveys. They said, Why you asking those things? Well, I mean, I said, I'm asking those things because that's the way things work and I want to pursue them. I didn't change anything in that regard, but AT&T certainly did have a raised eyebrow.

Q: It is an irony, isn't it—

GANDY: It is.

Q: —because you certainly include AT&T, in the narrative of *Panoptic Sort*, as one of the players.

GANDY: Absolutely. I mean the idea that a corporate source funded a large part of my research that's critical of their power, and their partnership with other people who were involved in

gathering personal information, that they paid for that—life's likes that [laughs]. That's the best thing I way I can say that [laughs]. OK, I mean, if you would think about the majority of control and influence over science and health and all of the things that I wrote about before, through information subsidies in that regard—for them to have some criticism come from a microscopic fraction of the amount of money they spend on influencing scholarship, influencing science, selecting people. I mean, so they didn't invite me to go out in the field and speak about my book [laughs], because they knew it was not going to go down very well, it wouldn't fit it. It wouldn't reinforce what they usually spend their public relations money on. But I credited them. It absolutely was good research resource, good funds that I could spend in ways that made sense to me. *The Panoptic Sort* was a major contribution to my presence, my visibility, and the next phase of my life, and they paid for that. How can I be mean and ugly—no I can't [laughs].

Q: Well, it's kind of incredible.

GANDY: Yes, it was a good moment.

Q: It might be an entry point for me to ask—since lots of what they paid for, or at least the method that they paid for, was a very well-done survey—just about the sheer variety of methods that you employed all the way back from the late '70s through to this period. I'm thinking, just looking at content analysis you were doing regularly of a quantitative kind—

GANDY: Annenberg.

Q: Yes. Right.

GANDY: Absolutely.

Q: —survey research—

GANDY: Annenberg.

Q: —industry analysis—

GANDY: Maybe some Stanford is on part of the survey research, because George didn't do—at least in that part of my life—but no, in the latter part he did—so I don't recall that I worked on survey research for George. I did content analysis for George—please?

Q: Industry analysis following the trades and reconstructing—

GANDY: Well, that's a certain part, an early part of George Gerbner—institutional process analysis—and he let go. I didn't [laughs]. That was important to me still.

Q: You even did citation analysis in this wonderful paper looking at the rise of economics concepts in literature in major communication journals—was published around this time with a co-author. So you're doing citation analysis and focus groups.[15]

GANDY: Well, I wasn't there, so I didn't do them, but I made use of the insights that were developed by focus groups that AT&T paid for with a company, in that regard. But I mean, I understand both the role of and the limitations of focus groups in terms of that third part of Gerbner's—that is, one doesn't do focus groups for effects, one does focus groups in order to get information about how people think about, how people understand, how they feel about—and certainly that fit into—and indeed one part of my publication talks about the process of how people develop their orientations toward privacy. So [laughs] that fit well.

Q: I'm just struck by the sheer diversity of methods and the range across qualitative and quantitative—not in this project alone. I just mean all the way up to that point. What's your attitude toward working in all these different methods, if you have one? Is it something self-conscious?

GANDY: No, that's a marvelous question. Certainly in parts of the struggles within political economy of communication, and communication in general, there are struggles in terms of, What are you doing that method for? And I think I spent a lot of time explaining it, but I felt that I am credentialed. I felt that I'm confident [laughs], I'm competent, and I think that that provides an insight that we ought not cast aside, in that regard, and so, I don't. I haven't done too much at the level of quantitative analysis that I did in that book. I haven't been back in that direction in a while, but I'm pleased that the reviews that are done by mainstream communication scholars, including one that I cite, who was also in the area, who talked about, And this Gandy book does this and this. Other people say, give me credits for the work that I've done in that area. Well, I'm pleased about that. I'm proud that I'm able to play in that field and still be a radical political economist.

Q: It's Harold Meier in a way.

GANDY: Yes [laughs].

Q: All the way back to the calculator. OK, good. You draw on, in that work in the late '80s and early '90s, and the book itself, some of the same people. Like, Beniger is there and so are Webster and Robbins—

GANDY: And they are on different parts of the world [laughs]. Alright, please—except, I'm sorry, but Beniger is really talking about power. He's really talking about influence, right, so it fits.

[15] Kurt M. Miller and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Paradigmatic Drift: A Bibliographic Review of the Spread of Economic Analysis in the Literature of Communication," *Journalism Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (1991): 663–71.

Q: So they remain constant over this period that you were engaging with them, but what's new—or one new interlocutor—so Giddens is also there throughout. But I'm thinking in particular of Michel Foucault takes on a new prominence in the book and in a couple of those late 1980s papers, where he is central, including, of course, providing the central metaphor of the panopticon from *Discipline and Punish*. And so, I'm just curious about Foucault and in some ways—one way of reading his approach and some of his orientations to epistemology, they might be at some tension—even that notion of power—with some of your other thoughts and work.

GANDY: [Laughs]. But that's interesting, I mean. So you certainly understand that Foucault has many lives and he has many selves in these different lives, and so it's alright for me to leave some of his lives aside [laughs]. I don't feel that because I quote and cite and use and benefit from the early Foucault historian, that I don't have to deal with the the Foucault identity in quite the same way that cultural studies people do. So Foucault's history about data and research, and he focuses on schools, focusing on health, focusing on all of the things that you've already pointed out, that are part of my identity, fits well into the kind of understanding about how research and data and analysis are appropriate in order to understand power. Now, he might not apply it in quite the same way that I do, but that's alright. I don't owe it to an author to use all of his or her work in the same way that they used it, in order for me to find value and utility in its use in my work. And Foucault, as I think I say in the book, is really an important source [laughs], almost as strong as—and I have given Giddens the same credit that he deserves. But if one were to go back in and do kind of a citation analysis, Giddens comes up pretty well—thanks—in relation to Foucault.

Q: That's true. So, how about the choice of that title, and that phrase in particular, which does stick with you and is the shorthand that the overall theory is a token for—*The Panoptic Sort*. Can you say something about the choice?

GANDY: Sure, and certainly I recognize the limitations on my work when that panopticon doesn't exist—even the prison doesn't really exist. But the idea—actually, I went to China to visit, on an invitation of a student of mine—it was another one of these things, an invitation brings a possibility—to lecture, can you imagine this, on privacy in China, for a student of mine, in that regard. She took me to a place in China that she described, and it looks exactly like a panopticon, this building with dual levels, and with inside space. Now her explanation of its structure was the security for the people within those spaces to have others looking, but looking on not to power, not to control, not to structure, not to influence, but to protect. You know, notion of lots of ways of building structures and some people point out there are some buildings—even including in Philadelphia—that have the same character of the prisons where the guards were there.

Alright, so, the panopticon is metaphorically still powerful in terms of actors who are able to view, who are able to construct the expectation and the belief that you're being viewed, which influences the behavior of persons within a structure, because they don't know when they're going to be viewed—they don't know what punishment is going to fall upon them, on the basis

of their being viewed—is powerful and still works. So certainly people criticized my work and say, But now wait a minute, your panopticon doesn't work with regard to markets because they are not in a central tower. They don't share their information. That is, they use their information for competitive advantage rather than their shaping and training. But they are shaping and training, even if they are not in a center tower, so I still think there is value in getting to that technology through a prison, which was not built, through an application which doesn't apply to mass communication and mass marketing. But I think the underlying process is still to be found. It is just different structural features.

Q: And of course the title had a second word, which is sort. And it does qualify the first, and that subtitle has this phrase personal information, which seems to enter your lexicon more and more around that time, and maybe that aspect you could talk about too.

GANDY: Alright, so, good. Part of what *The Panoptic Sort* wants to do—and I think I make reference, if not in the book, in other places, about my not having focused so much on in *Beyond Agenda Setting* in terms of the personal—that's really institutional, and institutional power, and corporate power, and organizational power. *The Panoptic Sort* is about individuals, the same ones that Foucault talks about in those prisons [laughs]. But here, now, is that system that I looked at in terms of information subsidies, in order to get government to act and provide resources, is trying to provide information subsidies to individuals in order to influence the choices that they make within markets. More critically, the kinds of choices they make within the political arena with regard to elections and outcomes in voting and public policy. I think that's really important in order to understand how it is that surveillance, that logically enabled surveillance, that surveillance that facilitates or enables not just studies of the mass but the visions of the mass based upon location, based upon differences in exposure to threats and promises that influence how they're going to respond to opportunities and challenges in this regard.

So *The Panoptic Sort* helps me to respond in an indirect way to limitations and struggles that I had had indirectly, but not face-to-face, conflict with George Gerbner. And George Gerbner's model that said, It's not what television you watch but it's how much television you watch. Whereas segmentation and targeting is really about the technology that provides different information to different people in order to influence their behavior in different kinds of markets. So that's an important part of my work that focuses on how individualized data, also data certainly that deals with types, but the kinds of types that exist are not the kinds of types that have—I mean, I'm not entirely or I'm not limited to the kinds of types that have a government basis for their existence—that is, exist in terms of laws that are meant to provide protections for African Americans that exist before. Some of the types of people that are produced through panoptic sorts are in groups that people are not aware they are in those groups, that influence their life chances in ways that are not available to people. They don't understand, so that they can't organize politically in order to resist, in order to appeal for government support or limitations, on the use of information to structure their opportunities and changes.

People don't know what groups they're in, in that regard. So it's a very different kind of use of information about individuals, but also people as members of groups, and groups that are different depending upon who's engaged in the sorting. They have their own reasons for paying attention to particular kinds of attributes that put people into groups. If I really think about this work in terms of how hard it is for individuals to organize politically, because they don't know about the groups to which they've been assigned, and therefore it's hard for them to organize—to groups, and the groups that they organized with aren't stable, don't last, don't hold together well, don't work well, because they don't know the groups to which people identify with and are identified.

You know, the extent to which people understand and accept the groups to which they've been assigned is an interesting question. I haven't really pursued that, but the idea that people are learning which groups they are in, and how they ought to behave in order to be successful in the groups to which they've been placed, is an important path. I hope somebody's going to follow down that path, I'm not sure that I am. I'm trying in one sense to deal with group privacy, and how it is that groups have a right and have privacy rights. Privacy law is so far behind where we need to be in terms of understanding the role of groups and the individuals who have been assigned to those groups. A lot of work to do [laughs].

Q: I'll tell you that that sense of the kind of futility, which might be too strong, of individual resistance was suffusing the work that is in *Panoptic Sort,* and I would also say maybe that the sense that privacy law is inadequate was very, very pervasive too, and you hadn't yet, in this period, started to talk about group privacy or even develop policy alternatives much. You were more pessimistic it seemed to me.

GANDY: Well, I mean, so understand, part of the constraint that policy scholars—especially legal scholars—understand that they can't actively respond in the courts. They can respond, maybe, in the regulatory center through making presentations and arguments. But they are always going to be against what the law says [laughs]. But the law says, Privacy is an individual concern—it's how it affects you. Where's the evidence that it affected you? Maybe they'll listen with some special consideration—does it affect black people, in that regard? But not so quickly, because it needs to be evidenced, and the smart people who are on the other side of that argument will say, Well, now wait a minute, what do we know about 'Joe' in this community? One of the studies that I cite, maybe, in lots of places, is about the white woman who suffers discrimination because she lives in a black community [laughs]. So whether or not she's able to talk about the use of the data in her community, that applies to 99 percent of her community but not her. Why is she suffering in this regard and, Why aren't they paying attention to me? The notion—does she want them to invade her privacy in order to make sure she doesn't get abused [laughs], because she is identified as a black person? It's a serious challenge here, as to how it is that policy-oriented scholars are able to move the policy-oriented scholars and their colleagues who are in activist organizations toward the next necessary construction of the target for a policy intervention and a regulatory change, in that regard. So this notion of group privacy is coming but it's struggling [laughs] to make its way onto the policy agenda.

Q: So one of the things I noticed, Oscar, about this later work that led right up to *The Panoptic Sort* was that you focused more on prediction and the way that targeting and surveillance leads to prediction and ultimately to some kind of control. I wondered if you would talk about that interest in predicting?

GANDY: I can't tell you when that prediction tendency occurred. It occurred clearly in insurance-related businesses, long-term investment-related businesses, but it also occurred in the social sciences—that is, the ability to be able to predict how it is a person would respond to a stimulus or a threat, or something along those lines. And I'm not happy about this. The problem is that prediction is not explanation. Prediction is not understanding. And, indeed, in the big data era there is even less incentive or motivation for understanding. All they care is, Can I identify what's likely, and strategically, can I identify what kind of intervention, what kind of stimulus, what kind of payoff, is going to work in terms of getting the kind of response that we like, or we desire, in that regard? And that's really troublesome, because we should understand—especially for those of us who might be concerned about changing the status of population segments, that is, improving them, helping providing them with what I referred to as communicative competence—that is, being able to speak and to be understood, in that regard. Just predicting isn't going to do it.

Q: Great, and you know, I was curious about the way in which, after the book was published, it was received, both immediately by your community at Annenberg, but also throughout the profession and maybe even beyond its borders, in book reviews—and just if it had any impact on your career?

GANDY: It was, again, a transformative kind of event and so it was received very well and it made me—I can go that far with it—made me somebody that people wanted to associate with, or affiliate with. And so I became a member of Electronic Privacy Information Center following that book—Mark Perry invited Oscar Gandy to come in and join the organization. Oscar Gandy eventually actually became, for a moment or two, the chair of the board of the Electronic Privacy Information Center. Oscar was invited to be a member of the National Research Academy on privacy [*sic:* National Research Council Committee on Privacy in the Information Age], and we published a privacy book, in that regard.[16] So, again, I was an authority on privacy as a result of—that book was its source, in that regard. A business author, Robert Posch, whom I had no reason to be connected with, reached out, told me about the book, but also told me about this extended review that he did, which identified the book as the one book that marketers needed to pay attention to if they were going to read any of this academic stuff [laughs]. This is the one that they should be reading. He was nice to have met, a good interaction with him, in that regard. It certainly was the source of invitations to go to conferences and make presentations and the like, and to write. So that kind of impact that you'd like to have with a book matters. And an expectation that I could not possibly have had—it was the source, really, had to go through faculty members—but it was a source of Anthony Giddens

[16] James Waldo, Herbert Lin, and Lynette I. Millett, eds., *Engaging Privacy and Information Technology in a Digital Age* (National Academies Press, 2007).

being the host for an invitation for me to come and make a presentation at the London School for Economics.

Q: Maybe you could just say something about that since we were talking about Giddens, a few minutes ago, being important all the way through this book—how that came about and what the context was?

GANDY: So the people in the communication program somehow decided to—having read the book, I guess and seen Giddens all throughout the book—suggested that we ought to bring Gandy here, and you ought to be the one to interview him. And, of course, I said yes [laughs], and went. I think the relationship was acceptable, but he was critical—especially with me being a wiseass in responding to a question that he said, What should we do? I said, Make it against the law [laughs]. He didn't like that much at all and went on. Indeed, most of my responses were not those that were satisfactory, in that it was talking about you ought to limit this, you ought not to allow this, you want to understand what the consequences of this are, and he wasn't in that place. But it was still a wonderful experience for me. I was arrogant, almost, in the sense that, in my opening statements, I said, This is the fellow—I didn't know I was going to be speaking with the fellow whose use of language and neologisms would make my wife, the editor, crazy, but I'm pleased to be here [laughs]. So I don't know if that started us off on the wrong foot, but there I was at this point in time.

Q: Oh, that's fantastic. And that might have been a little bit later—maybe 2002? Or maybe I'm wrong about that. But either way, it was in the aftermath of *The Panoptic Sort*?

GANDY: Yes, it had gotten popular. It had become known—a thing.

Q: So right around that time, in the early '90s, '92–'93, you were also writing about economics again, economics of information and subjective utility a little bit. And you were writing about the political economy tradition in communication. And there were a couple of papers in this period on this, and one thing in particular I wanted to ask you was—you really, in a deep, engaged way, dealt with the labor theory of value and the—in the context of this question of non-productive labor, partly speaking with Dan Schiller's work on that.[17] So I wondered if you could talk about that kind of engagement with Marxist theory.

GANDY: I don't know how far I can go with that, and I wish I could get my hands on that article again. But my understanding and my response was this distinction about non-productive labor—that is, did it produce something, making use of labor, in order to provide resources for capital. The argument was that here was this thing called information that was terribly different. It wasn't the kind of materials that were manipulated in order to produce something of value

[17] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "The Political Economy Approach: A Critical Challenge," *Journal of Media Economics* 5, no. 2 (1992): 23–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/08997769209358221.

with the application of labor. It was something that was—what's the right word for it—could go off in the wind. The problem with it—

Q: Superstructural.

GANDY: [Laughs]. Yes. The problem with it is that it's not a good commodity, is problematic as a commodity, in large part because it is easily reproduced. It is not used up when somebody else consumes it. Others can consume it. That makes it a really, really, really strange good and a very strange kind of commodity. So I wanted to make a point about the problems with information, especially in the context of all of the work in sociology and political economy talking about going to become an information economy. So, how are we going to become an information economy where that which we produce is not like any other commodity? Even when Dan [Schiller] talks about it, he includes many references to the machines, to the computers, to the transmission systems. He doesn't talk about the thing, the information—this intangible resource, tangible only because of the medium used in order to deliver it. It might be that we ought to be talking about the market for the devices that we use in order to deliver this other kind of consumable resource, enjoyable resource. I probably didn't say at that time, but certainly there's value in thinking about this as being part of an experience.

So the extent to which one has a place within a labor theory of value, where one could say that, produce an experience for other people and charge them for that. So think about that in terms of the kinds of personal services that we provide in the marketplace, where people pay a fee to have their hair cut, to have whatever it is done for them, to have the experience of a theater, of a play, of a set of activities that they could consume themselves and want to pay for that experience. It's just this magical quality of not being consumed. Now, you might say that a theatrical performance is consumed, unless it's now captured by this technology, where it's on a disk and you can play it again and again. But that's the challenge and so to try to understand how this product, the use of which actually is not even obviously known to all of the people who might use it again—so my concerns about communicative competence is to say, well, now wait a minute, everybody can't use this tool. It is not something that has a value, and should have a value for everyone, because it is not usable, its use value is not the same for others. So there are lots of questions still, to this moment, to be raised with regard to that commodity.

Q: It makes me think of a paper that—I won't be able to tell you the exact name, but some time a few years after that, maybe just a couple of years—where you and a co-author attempted to find the value of, or determined the value of, a user or personal information, basically.[18] You attempted to empirically break down, on the basis of the prices that—

GANDY: —that they would pay—

[18] Eleanor Novek, Nikhil Sinha, and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "The Value of Your Name," *Media, Culture & Society* 12, no. 4 (1990): 525–43, https://doi.org/10.1177/016344390012004006.

Q: —database companies were charging.

GANDY: But that couldn't be an accurate [laughs]—

Q: Yes, and you admitted that.

GANDY: It couldn't be actually measured because, look, prices are not fixed. And the nature of the distribution systems are such that you can vary the price for whoever it is delivering that you're delivering it to, and changes in the technology that actually limit your ability to share it with somebody else—I mean, all kinds of changes in the nature of the markets for information.

Q: So, by in some ways kind of pointing out problems with Marxism and Marxist theory in the analysis of information and media, what relationship did that put you in in terms of your sense as a radical political economist? Did you think of yourself like this in this period?

GANDY: You did not and do not have to be a Marxist [laughs] in order to be a radical political economist. I never felt that that was a necessity. It did mean that I needed to read, it did mean that I needed to have a sense of—I mean, I just didn't want to be stupid in this regard. But I didn't need to wear a flag around my neck [laughs] in that regard, and I didn't and do not—not concerned about that. Still could engage in conversations with, participate in debates about, so it was not a problem for me.

Q: In that book, *The Panoptic Sort*, and in other writings, you talk a lot about the role of the critical scholar. And there's a continuity throughout your whole career, but it's notable right around this time. And maybe you could say something about that—what the role of the critical scholar is as a scholar but having a role in the world somehow.

GANDY: You want both of those things, alright. So, certainly, there is an identification as being a critical scholar. You can expect somebody who's going to find the holes in—who is going to stick pins in—that work, try to get you to understand that this doesn't do all that it was set out to do, in that regard. So that's a critical role. By the same token, being a critical scholar is supposed to be also a political act. It is supposed to mobilize others to act. If they understand what the nature of—even the nature of their own positive consumption, beneficial consumption—that advances them while it does not advance others, including making inequalities between them, in that regard—changes in market value and the like. So a critical scholar always says, Wait a minute, you want to understand what the consequences are of buying this, using this, producing that, consuming that.

There are so many things for critical scholars to do in this environment that we are in right now. So think about—I actually tried to get a media policy related organization to deal with environmentalists. That is, somehow there is a common need for us to provide a criticism about communication, information, and the environment, and understand those as two different kinds of concerns. Andne of the things about them is that they should be focused on the future, talking about the next generation, the next population, the kids that are growing up, in that

regard. We have a responsibility for acting in ways that don't damage or limit the life that they can experience. So that's what a critical scholar does. Wait a minute. Pay attention here. Listen. Do you really understand where this is going? Or at least have you asked, have you explored, do you understand? Is what a critical scholar is supposed to do. I think I tried to do that [laughs].

Q: Yes, completely, and it makes me think of the intent you had way back after the University of New Mexico to go be a community activist, community organizer maybe, and wanting to be in the world in that way. And do you feel like the critical scholarly role is a form of that or a variation on a theme?

GANDY: That's a good question. That's nice. Alright, so it is certainly one thing for a scholar to also be an activist, where the scholar works directly with the publics that she or he is committed toward helping. That's quite substantially different from the person who stays in the office or in the library, or whatever it is, and does this work. So those are important kinds of distinctions, and maybe in my latter years I have been, and will be doing, more—although I have been in organization after organization after organization after organization in my life, but—

Q: Including activist organizations?

GANDY: Oh, yes. I will certainly consider the Union for Democratic Communication, at least in its early creation, at least as we thought about it, was going to be an activist organization. And we talked about who the members should be in order that we would be able to do something in the world rather than just talk about it or write about it. So, yes a number of such organizations. But now I'm actually actively involved in a community public policy organization called Tucson Residents for Responsive Government, and it is our activity in order to shape, to influence, policy here in Tucson.

Q: Well, I'm looking forward to talking about that soon.

GANDY: Absolutely.

Q: OK. Well, this is a perfect point to wrap up our second session. So, thank you, Oscar. We will pick up with your year at the Freedom Forum [Media Studies Center] in the early 1990s just after you published the book.

GANDY: Super. Thank you.

END OF SESSION TWO

Transcript of Interview conducted July 23, 2019, with OSCAR H. GANDY, JR. (session three)

Tucson, AZ

Interviewed by Jefferson Pooley

Q: This is session three of an oral history interview of Oscar Gandy, conducted by Jefferson Pooley in Dr. Gandy's home in Tucson, Arizona. The interview is part of the Communication Scholars Oral History Project of the Annenberg Library School for Communication Library Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. The date is July 23rd, 2019. So Oscar, we've wrapped up the last session talking about *The Panoptic Sort*, and it was almost immediately after that publication that you then got invited to be a fellow at the Freedom Forum [Media Studies Center] for the 1993–1994 year.[19] And it seems that you began work on a new project that involved risk and race and framing. And so maybe you could just talk a little bit about that year and what it was like.

GANDY: I have had a number of wonderful, important years. This one was not all that it could have been, in large part, because I commuted. It was supposed to be a residential fellowship. I commuted every day to New York and to Columbia University, even, in order to have these kinds of meetings. I'm not sure that what I decided to write about was exactly what they thought I was going to write about before. But again, it was an opportunity for me to read, an opportunity for me to share my ideas with colleagues in that group. I actually met with one of my graduate students there, so lots of meeting and greeting and thinking in that regard.

But I don't believe, and I could be even wrong, in terms of whether or not I spent my year doing the kinds of analyses now that I had been doing in the past—that is, some kind of data manipulation, rather than reading and writing and theorizing in that regard. So I'm not even sure, actually, what I did in my project there. I don't think they resent my having been there in that regard, but I'm not sure exactly what I actually produced at the Freedom Forum. Other than, as you identified, the kind of shifts in my work relating to risk and difference in that regard.

Q: You did seem to attribute, in the papers that came afterwards—

GANDY: credit

[19] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *The Panoptic Sort: A Political Economy of Personal Information* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Q: —credit the year in New York City as being an important point of engaging with this literature and reading it. And I did wonder if some of it harkened back to the reading in decision theory and kind of making decisions under constraints. That kind of Annenberg post-doc reading that you did—or if there wasn't much of a connection.

GANDY: I should say, though, one of the communities of engagement at the University of Pennsylvania were, in fact, decision theorists. So there's a large group of decision theorists that talk about the constraints in that regard. So I read their materials and heard their presentations in that regard. So that's where maybe some of that comes from, but being at the Freedom Forum gave me the opportunity to go further with that. That is, what kind of constraints were decision makers facing in terms of the resources and information and the arguments that they confronted in trying to decide to do X rather than Y.

Q: It seemed like there was a concern—this phrase "life chances" shows up, an interest in the distribution of life chances and the ways in which that seemed to be the motivating, underlying concern somehow in lots of this work that came after. And I'm just speculating about that and want—

GANDY: —so maybe that's a happy happenstance in terms of this author—talk about risk. But this author, I think, was probably writing 20 years before about life chances and things that affected how it is, the choices that you would make, generate and modify your life chances. And so that just resonated with me as a way of talking about how it is that decisions made by one group at a particular point in time affected the opportunity—that is, the outcomes of struggles throughout life that you could characterize as life chances. But it's the resonance between the language of life chances and the language of risks and the language of predictions that made that the right language, that the right metaphor in order to understand what was going on in this regard. How is it where the kinds of decisions that were being made, changing the paths, the tracks, the opportunities and the chances, the life chances—the gamble. So writing again about probability, writing again about prediction, or about life chances in that regard, and how is it that somebody's engagement with the activities, and the limits, and the opportunities affect life chances—the kind of life that you can have.

Q: And there's one way of saying that's the through-line through all of your work, even way back to your associate degree in Nassau Community College. Not to say it was work then, but just your interests as you'd described them back then about your friends in Hempstead and their fate.

GANDY: Yes. Yes. So the notion of—certainly you've got an economics that talks about decisions that individuals make on their own. But they're making decisions in the context of sets of choices or options that have been presented to them. Even [Anthony] Giddens has this discussion about the kinds of decisions that you make and the kinds of informed choices—this nature of agency that you are choosing, but you really don't know what the conditions of the choice are. You don't know what the interests, determinations, desires, plans, and hopes of those who are providing you with some options that you might not have chosen yourself. Indeed, a lot of the options that we face are imposed upon us. You need to choose between one

of these boxes. Even boxes that you choose in order to identify yourself in order to meet one of these five categories, in one of these checklists in that regard.

So this notion of choices—notion of whether or not you are making those choices, that is, choosing what you're going to choose, or whether or not you're choosing from choices that were placed before you that you didn't even know that they were reflecting somebody else's interest, or that they were even responding to pressures that they couldn't avoid. So life chances is a very powerful construct for me.

Q: Speaking of risk itself, this could be a very short answer, but I wondered if Ulrich Beck in *The Risk Society* [1986/1992] was important for you at the time.

GANDY: Sure.

Q: IIt came out just before.

GANDY: Certainly cited. I mean, so this whole movement, which I—again, I pointed in the direction of social scientists, theorists, also having adopted this prediction orientation. So risk is part of—even though it's not generally applied in the affirmative, I mean, in terms of a positive outcome in that regard, it's mostly in the negative, the loss, the danger, the harmed kind. But it is still the same prediction of what's going to occur, what are the consequences that are going to flow from it, what are the benefits or the cost, what are the returns. So it is, was in the discourse.

Now part of the notion of risk in that regard was that people didn't know. We couldn't know. That is, there was greater uncertainty about what would happen if we were to choose X rather than Y in that regard. That's how I understand that literature.

Q: Well, I want to ask—I want to ask about another major, I think, completely related—in fact, absolutely tied into the work you were doing then and the many, many years following—but the turn to framing, to the analytic approach of framing as a concept. And I want to just ask about it in general, but also that you ended up at a—being invited to a symposium in 1997 that became the book that you co-edited, called *Framing Public Life*.[20] And your critique of, that you expressed in that keynote address, which became the epilogue of that book, of the limitations of framing, or at least the way that framing is often approached without the origins being described.

GANDY: Alright, so framing is a tool, right? It is a resource. It is a strategic resource in order to influence how it is that people understand a threat, an opportunity, a public policy, or the like. And so that's kind of a power tool. Which is different from agenda-setting, but it can be related to agenda-setting. It is a focus on how the same facts might be presented just slightly differently in order to generate a different kind of response. And so the psychologists that talk about this in

[20] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Epilogue–Framing at the Horizon: A Retrospective Assessment," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant, 355–78 (New York: Routledge, 2001).

terms of just a slight adjustment of [gestures] will change—substantially, significantly—the kind of responses that people make. So the power of framing has been recognized by certain communication [scholars] especially, but others it fields as well. Again, the ability to frame a situation, the ability to identify a responsible party, the ability to identify the outcomes—and the outcomes that should be preferred, rather than others. That's all part of this process of framing—assigning responsibility, to act, to choose, to respond.

So, yes, framing has been a substantial part of my research. Think about that, though, in terms of this history which I've given you, really of content analysis. So examining newspapers, examining television programming, examining other kinds of things—but think about them maybe just as deciding, especially with regard to violence studies, what are the nature of the acts that occur. So these are things about which one can have great confidence—that you think you saw it and you know what that was and, therefore, you would count that as an act of violence, or you would count that as a killing, or you would count that as something else.

Well now, framing is quite different. It influences the way you understand this—maybe in terms of an accident or an intentional act or an unfair organization. It shifts the responsibilities in certain ways. So framing is another part of communication research that became important to me.

Q: OK, and that brings me right to the body of empirical research that you then began in the year after the Freedom Forum stint, which was to do content analyses of—a number of them—of the way in which, you might say, outcomes, often around statistics, which I want to ask, specifically the way that statistics are portrayed, but not always that. The way in which racial differences of life chance expectations are represented with small differences in wording that you use a large corpus, corpi of newspaper articles to judge. And there's more to ask about it. But I guess I just want to ask, first, your decision to focus on race in particular, where—almost all of this work dealt with over the years to come—race and these representations of risk through frames.

GANDY: I guess there are other representations of risk, but—you're correct. So race was the anchor. Other times there is place, where there are places that are more dangerous than other kinds of places in that regard. But the race part is certainly a carryover from my Howard [University] days, and my orientation toward who are the population groups that are most affected by framing of policies and responses—and framing of responsibility for their own behavior.

So if I could just, you know, take you through all of these little, if you will, domains of application that matter. So you think about framing health, framing responsibility in health. Who's responsible for obesity? Who's responsible for a whole host of things that have to do? Well, people frame that in order to say how we're going to intervene in people's lives in order to move them toward the appropriate, the desirable, the inexpensive, the efficient, whatever the titles you use in that regard. So the power of framing in order to mobilize or influence and control people's behavior is especially important with regard to a population that has been

abused and mishandled throughout our experience in this nation. So race is an important factor in there.

A lot of research then talks about how is race treated. So I think it's important to say that part of the statistics, or part of the methodological orientation, is to say, well now there are a number of ways one can talk about probable outcomes. One can talk about, black people are more likely to lose, but you can also say black people are less likely to win, white people are more likely to win, and white people are less likely to lose. So those are kind of those four options there. And if you will allow [me] to make another reach back to George Gerbner, who talks about, It is not what you're exposed to, it is not where you live, it is how much time you spend in this medium. But my research in this area and the focus in this area is to say, No, no, this stuff varies dramatically from market to market to market, and it even varies within markets in terms of the material that people are exposed to or choose to consume in that regard.

So it was important for me to try to say, Well, what is it then about the market? What is it about the characteristics, the socio-economic characteristics, of the market? What is it about the political characteristics of the market that might explain the choice of the headlines or the frames that are used in order to tell the story about opportunity and risk in that regard? So, yes, a lot of that research then tried to say, How is this risk level framed and does it vary as a function of the size of the population, the income of the population? Here we go, the proportion of African-Americans in the population, the political status and power of African-Americans in the market, and all the work in terms of explaining how it is that risk, that outcome, is likely to be framed. I thought and still think that's an important kind of way to look at this.

Q: And I just can't help but remember you talking about how this was potentially a source of tension with Gerbner back in 1977, when you—when that paper wouldn't be published, that did look at—

GANDY: Yes. With regard to the nursing.

Q: —the market-specific—

GANDY: Yes. Yes, it's not a new thing. It's been around for a while. But if we both understand—that is, I'm not misrepresenting Gerbner's commitment to—and I find lots of places where it's said that Gerbner is really interested in how much you consume, not what you consume. The assumption, therefore, is that the content is all the same. The lesson of capital is the same, through all of that content, which it's not. If you understand that, if it's going to have effectiveness, it needs to be prepared differentially, for a different audience segment, for them to get it, for them to understand it, for them to see that it associates with them.

George [Gerbner] wasn't going there in his work. It was not laid out that way, because there were only three television networks, or however many there were, that people were exposed to. But the newspaper world and the fine work by journalism scholars in different markets that talked about the differences in the performance of the newspapers in those markets. They

didn't say why. They just described the differences. But I think my approach would help to say why [laughs]. What was the nature of the commodities—audiences—that they could provide, that would explain where they could go with their production and the quality of their production in that regard.

Q: And you were referring to these as structural differences at the time, which would obviously go on to—it's a language maybe that you already had, but Giddens seems to be important there.

GANDY: Yes.

Q: And I guess I was—so when you were in, some of these papers from the mid '90s, that were talking about risk and race and framing around winning and losing, like you just talked about, you seemed concerned in the policy implications of these word phrasing changes—that white support, for example, for policies that might be in the welfare state tradition would erode if stories tended to be framed in one way as opposed—

GANDY: It's for them, rather than us. Yes [laughs].

Q: Yes, especially when the Clinton administration was in the middle of dismantling the welfare state. And then, but it seemed that there was also this interest in how black audiences might perceive their own life choices being artificially constrained by how the statistical reporting was conveyed.

GANDY: I'm not sure that I pursued the extent to which African Americans—as an audience—understood their status as an audience who could be affected by those people reading this frame. I'm not sure I did that. I may have, but it wasn't a prime part of my engagement with African American perception of their own risk, of which there is a literature. And I contributed to that literature.

Q: And that's what I was referring to.

GANDY: Yes.

Q: So the policy context, though, did seem really important—you were concerned with the implications for public support of policy.

GANDY: I think really that, probably my whole life, my whole scholarly and academic life, has been focused on public policy and the consequences that flow from public policy, and the consequences that flow from certain actors with certain resources and certain pathways being able to implement, being able to influence, those kinds of public policies. Yes, you're correct.

Q: And it did seem like you extended this later to look at kind of public intellectuals and expert witnesses—how they framed statistics. And I don't know if you want to say anything about that work—it's like in addition to journalists, these other kinds of public representers, if you will.

GANDY: So part of my work—and I don't know if I've leapt into another space here or not. I mean, trying to understand where are the places, where are the locales, what are the circumstances where people's framing is for a different audience and requires a different kind of framing. And my expectations about whether or not particular kinds of frames would be working in Congressional hearings versus being directed perfectly to the press, or whether or not in popular television, is an interest in saying, Do people understand where frames may work better than in other settings where those frames just aren't going to move the audience.. I did a study that tried to explore the extent to which presentations about risk in Congressional hearings made it in the press.[21]

So that's the kind of question that says, OK, how is it that the presentation of material, which on its face could be important in terms of helping to identify the problem, helping to identify persons responsible, helping to identify the consequences for somebody else—the fact that the press wouldn't publish, was not likely to publish very much, certain kinds of frames that appear in those Congressional hearings, is a real question.

That even caused me to reflect and weaken my own concerns about the extent to which testimony in Congressional hearings does the work that I think it does. Because the data suggests, maybe not so much [laughs]. There are only certain things—there are only certain kind of frames—that are going to maybe respond—I'm not sure I've written this—maybe respond to the news strategy of a particular media, a particular newspaper. That is, we're going to get the audience that we need to get by paying attention to this, not that stuff. And so despite how you framed it, if it don't get covered, it didn't happen.

Q: The tree falling [in a forest]. So this is backtracking a tiny bit, but I just wanted to quickly ask about the influence in this framing work of—it's a question, really—of Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman's work. You were citing it way back in the late '70s when it was still unknown or very—well, becoming very influential. But it's now in this 1990s period where you're, in every paper of this kind—

GANDY: I make reference to it [laughs].

Q: —and you make reference to, and giving examples of how little changes in framing can have big effects. And so was that work important to you?

GANDY: It was. I mean, certainly that's not that—I referenced them because, you know, they make the point, and lots of people, as you say now, know who those authors are and understand the nature of their work. So it's easy, important and expected that you make reference to that kind of scholarship that shows just that little adjustment is enough to move the needle in some cases.

[21] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Public Opinion Surveys and the Formation of Privacy Policy," *Journal of Social Issues* 59, no. 2 (2003): 283–99.

Q: Well, I'm hoping we can move to a related topic, which is—and in some ways, I'd be curious how it is related—this really interesting book, *Communication and Race: A Structural Perspective*, so it has this word in the title.[22]

And it was published in 1998. But before even asking you about the book, I noticed that one of the engagements early in the book is with cultural studies, and maybe a couple of years before this you had edited a special issue [colloquy] on political economy and cultural studies.[23] And so my question before the book is just, as cultural studies became such a prominent phenomenon in communication studies, including at the Annenberg School, how did you engage with it in that context?

GANDY: Sure, so I hesitate to do this, but I'll do it anyway. I mean, until what I would characterize as his adjustment, Vinnie [Vincent] Mosco was with the rest of us in terms of cultural studies is not an appropriate use of our resources in that regard. And Vinnie, you know, adjusted and got closer to cultural studies than certainly I have in that regard as being an appropriate response to—I would call it the abuse of power in society. So, yes, this is part of what I consider to be political economy's orientation toward its project and the project of cultural studies.

And, again, characterize cultural studies as having a project of denying power, denying influence, denying concentration, whereas political economists are about identifying and explaining and pointing out power and its exercise. The reference that you make is to kind of a debate between Nicholas Garnham, who is certainly one of the really important scholars of political economy—interesting histories of some of these folk, I mean, in terms of filmmaking, in order to go into political economy and write extensively about, as economists, about that. And that's certainly part of his background and work there. Him against Larry [Lawrence] Grossberg. So here are these two American, not American, British and American voices that are really the loudest and in some sense, harshest.

And indeed, if you go back in and look at that piece in *Critical Studies* [*in Mass Communication*], we had a fifth guest who dropped out because Garnham was too mean, too disrespectful in terms of his interaction with them. She said, I'm not going to play along with this. So I mean, it was a good struggle. I mean, and the title of it was appropriate—is this going to be a coming together again? No, it was clearly not, because he doesn't, didn't play in this regard. I thought that was an important, fair representation.

Now, for whatever reason, however, I don't know, I haven't had these kind of conversation of Vinnie, although in my own mind I associate part of his shift is his sharing work and visions with his wife, who's a cultural studies person. And maybe that starts to make—but then he may also have had a closer partnership with Graham Murdock, who was really comfortable in this middle space in that regard, and that might explain part of it. But this division between political

[22] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *Communication and Race: A Structural Perspective* (London: Arnold, 1998).
[23] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr. and Nicholas Garnham. "Political Economy and Cultural studies: Reconciliation or Divorce?" Colloquy, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 1 (1995).

economy, as I understood it at that point in time, and cultural studies, as I understood it at [that] time, was never the twain shall meet.

Q: And it seemed like your critique, as you laid it out in this introduction to the race and structural analysis book, was both the absence of power, which you had a beef with that, but also a refusal to even try to generalize and to focus on particular texts.

GANDY: Which is, if you think about, again, kind of the methods that you've seen as being all over my track record in that regard, numbers matter. And you can't get numbers of the kind that you think by just talking to one guy or just talking to one woman. It's difficult to challenge. It's difficult to assess the breadth, the impact, the accuracy, the truth, and the importance of this single person's impression of another single person in that regard. And to the degree that I was being fair in characterizing much of what cultural studies is, says to me, well, that's not going to take us anywhere. Because you want to understand about population and maybe even population segments, but nevertheless, we're not talking about one or two, we're talking about a group.

And what do we know about a group and group's experience and group's orientation and the things that affect group's orientations and behavior? So yes, I didn't think that that was—that was fun. I mean, think of, if one thinks about—forget my hand waving—but if one thinks about the pleasures being derived from being creative and being poetic and being even musical, as you're presenting the lives of the people that you spoke to, well alright, sure, you can make progress and that, and you get evaluation of some of that work in terms of how creative and how engaging that is.

OK, but that doesn't do social work. That doesn't do political work. That doesn't, as as far as I know, change society. And political economy is about, in my view, about change. It's about making things better than they are right now. If we only knew how to act, but nevertheless, it still is about making change. You work to make things better, to understand how to make things better, to know which things you ought to work on in order to make things better. I didn't get that from cultural studies.

Q: Well, this might be a question you don't want to answer, but was there—I should ask, Does this critique of cultural studies that you will outline now and in the book, did it resonate at all in the Annenberg School context where the buckets were at play and there was a kind of cultural studies bucket, more or less?

GANDY: No, because you don't have to—I mean, other than this cute little interaction that Klaus [Krippendorff] and I had about power, there was no confrontation. And I'm not sure, if you'll allow, that in my time at Annenberg—and I was there a long time though—the kinds of people who I would identify as on the outer fringes of cultural studies, didn't last long. They recognized this is not the home for me to look down on my colleagues and to speak my displeasure with those other colleagues. They just said, Can't do that here, and wouldn't stay. So I don't think there was anybody that I would characterize as being the kind of cultural studies people that I spoke bad about, spoke ill of. I don't think we had any of that.

Q: So the book itself, can you just talk a little bit about what motivated it? It's a theoretical book for the most part, and it's an intervention in a way. And it announces its intervention in the word structural. And so maybe, you know—

GANDY: So again, here's George Gerbner, in that it's about institutional processes. It's about markets and actors with power in markets that are producing content, which is described in the book. And the third part is, what are the consequences? What are the effects? What are the effects on inequality? What are the effects on African Americans? What are the effects on poor people? So it's my taking George's project, his project, and applying it to the current day, but applying it my way, in terms of how I think that one ought to make your way through all three of those levels.

Q: And even treating the structural part as being, or I should say, maybe the—the kind of content not just being the amount of exposure, but—

GANDY: Well, no, you need to know what's in the content. You need to know—but that's not, that wouldn't be a fair criticism of George. That is, George certainly talked about it, and his work with Klaus would provide the description of the content there. I mean, yes, some of it might think of how many acts of violence, but it was much more sophisticated than that, right, in terms of describing what kinds of things were being portrayed and people were consuming in the marketplace, so—

Q: But you were elaborating in the book this kind of—different structural conditions that vary by population and by region and along all of these lines.

GANDY: Yes. Well, I mean, so, to the degree that there are people maybe from a journalism tradition and therefore doing content and framing analysis from that kind of tradition, they studied not one market or one family or any of those single things, but they're interested in—because they understand from a structural institutional sense—that that markets matter, places matter, populations matter, resources matter, predictions about the future matter in each one of those markets, and it's reflected in the kind of content people get to read in their life space.

Q: And how was this book received within the community of communication scholars that work on race, within the broader universe of scholarship that is focused on questions of race and difference?

GANDY: Night and day. So *Panoptic Sort*—all across the board. I mean, it is very popular. It explained my international presence. The race focus is marginalized, smaller populations. I did get some reviews, some nice reviews that I liked, with a twitch here or there in that regard. But they were good reviews. But beyond that, that book didn't, in my view, go anywhere.

Q: And do you have a structural analysis of that difference?

GANDY: So maybe there was nothing to do, that is, there was no plan for intervening with that. This thing is too big and too complex for this analysis of yours, which doesn't open my eyes, to

something special about the world, nor does it provide me with, you need to do X, Y, and Z, in that regard. I don't need this, is what I'm saying. And they're probably right.

Q: Yes, I have a quote here from the book that you wrote in the conclusion. You said, We're no longer as confident as we once were that we could identify the primary contradictions within the capitalist system. And so there was an interesting omission there.

GANDY: [Laughs] Where do we go? Yes, which one of these do we grab on to it and twist? Where do we strike first? You're absolutely right. And I guess others read that and said, What do I get from that?

Q: Well, anyway, it's something that we'll pick up on again because the theme of risk appears again, and you continue to work on this topic. But I wanted to move to what really was a kind of maybe a second life for *The Panoptic Sort* work, when the early internet came along, which is immediately after. When I say the internet, I really just mean the World Wide Web. But immediately after the publication of *Panoptic Sort* that all of a sudden there was another techno-utopian discourse around the World Wide Web's emergence. And you continued to basically extend the *Panoptic Sort* approach to internet questions, in a couple of papers.[24] Is that the way you thought of it?

GANDY: Well, why shouldn't I have?

Q: No, you should have, and I'm just—

GANDY: [Laughs] So, I mean, if you say, and if you've already demonstrated that it matters what people are consuming and where they are, and now you have a technology that is able to divide and distribute and, not only that, get data, get information about where it's going, well then that just makes that process of segmentation and targeting even more powerful. So, yes, I mean a natural extension of that other work, I would think, I'm sorry.

Q: Yes, no, no, completely. And you seem to focus even more on those papers from the '90s through about 2000, when you were writing in this period on the internet, on categorical vulnerability. Again, it's obviously there in the original book, but you seem to be more focused on it. Is that fair?

GANDY: Well, I'm not sure if I said anything about that, I mean except the distinction between assignment to a group by officials with power to assign, as opposed to analytical categories—that is, the generation of categories on the basis of a kind of sophisticated statistical analysis making use of all kinds of data from all kinds of sources changes the game rather dramatically and, in part, it changes the game in that the way that people don't know the category to which they've been assigned. Their antenna are not up. They're not paying attention, and the expectation that they are being manipulated and targeted and set aside for a special version of

[24] E.g., Anthony Danna and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "All that Glitters Is Not Gold: Digging Beneath the Surface of Datamining," Journal of Business Ethics 40 (2002): 373–88; and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Exploring Identity and Identification in Cyberspace," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, & Public Policy* 14, no. 2 (2000): 1085–111.

that. Although there is some research that people have more understanding than they did when I started writing, right, not saying I explained to them, but they understand something about segmentation and targeting in population reconstruction.

Q: It's maybe not unrelated, that you were working in this period on legal and policy interventions much more. And writing in law journals quite a lot and including analyses of what you were talking about a bit before—group privacy, what informed consent might mean, opting out versus opting in, and some concrete policy interventions, actually. And it's striking, you made a critique of this legitimate business interest defense from would-be data-miners. Was this kind of new interest in getting into the weeds of policy—I'm not saying it's new, because you always reference policy, but you had, it seemed to me, maybe a bit more of a fatalistic attitude in *The Panoptic Sort*, about—

GANDY: —nothing to be done.

Q: Yes. And that there was quite a lot of active work and plotting what might be done, if not couched in optimistic language.

GANDY: So this later work tried to understand, in one sense, even segmentation and targeting in terms of the policy environment. And again, trying to understand how information subsidies played a role in shaping particular kinds of policy outcomes. And I don't know if you're making reference to this one piece which talked about public opinion and its influence on privacy policy, and the way in which, then, information subsidies—people making testimony within hearings related to privacy in order to shape—and that project, identified the actors, identified the kinds of actors, identified the kinds of resources they had.[25] And if you'll forgive me again, I mean, kind of my identification of a major figure in the privacy environment, Alan Westin. And kind of my emergence as a new kid on the block and one that challenged his connection, indeed his financial connection, with those industries.

So much of my research, you know, made use of research that was paid for by his clients. But as a scholar, he made a lot of that work, research available to the public, so that you could go in and do secondary analysis on his data and ask different questions of those data. But the idea that that group of actors, the kind of actors—those actors in the information business, those actors in the public relations business, those actors in the advertising business—were the ones who were financing the research in terms of how the public responded and understood their, if you will, their risks and their needs, with regard to privacy legislation.

It was an interesting moment, I mean, in terms of the debates in policy conferences and policy writing about what does the public believe? What does the public feel? And where did the public come to understand how they felt about these things? So yes, that was a challenge within the field. I mean, so, he was really a star. And Gandy attacking a star—OK [laughs], I'll go in that direction. Because it was clear to me that he was a paid expert in the field and dominated the field. And his focus was primarily initially on government. And he moved, maybe

[25] Gandy, "Public Opinion Surveys and the Formation of Privacy Policy."

in response, but he moved to pay attention to regulation of businesses in that regard. So there needed to be some kind of struggle in that regard.

Q: And so the use—well, I suppose his own scholarship is an example, perhaps, and also in that what I think is a brilliant paper about commissioning of public opinion polls and the way that surveys are used instrumentally, as you say, as information subsidy is, well, it's really, really interesting.[26]

And it's basically kind of sociology of knowledge in a way of like, How does the information—

GANDY: It doesn't drop out of the sky [laughs].

Q: —and I never asked about it yet, but in very early reference, even in your dissertation, appears here and there to [G. William] Domhoff and his analysis of—

GANDY: Yes, yes, yes, power structure analysis. Yes, absolutely, G. William Domhoff.

Q: Yes. Domhoff. And does that work resonate with you? I mean, it appears here and there.

GANDY: Sure, it does and did. I mean, so maybe I've read a number of pieces of his. But, you know, in order to understand what's the nature of the power structure, who are the actors, what are the resources that they have, and where do they use them in order to shape the policy outcomes, is interesting. Another, and I can't bring his name to mind, and maybe it will come to me, he is identified—identifies himself and his son as communitarians. And so he—I'm sorry, I can't bring up his name—he talks about limitations on policy formation, because people will not go to the marketplace, they'll go to the government. And he will talk about—that is, you get more bang for the buck by subsidizing government workers than you do trying to go in an indirect way to get the public to go in that regard. So that was kind of inconsistent. I felt, in one sense, good that there was this star who was talking about this policy process in this way. It was consistent with—

Let me make another reference about this community of scholars. There's a publication, if I can find it, on the *Journal of Social Issues*, which was on privacy formation. So Westin was in that journal, Gandy was in that journal, and Gandy was beating up on Westin [laughs] in that journal in that regard.[27]

The notion again of making it clear that this is not the way democracy is supposed to work. And anybody who is being paid to provide a blanket of protection for commercial actors, capitalists, ought to be called out on it. And I had the good fortune, I guess, enough visibility from *The Panoptic Sort*, to be called to speak. And to speak truth to that powerful actor. Even though I used his data.

[26] Gandy, "Public Opinion Surveys and the Formation of Privacy Policy."
[27] Gandy, "Public Opinion Surveys and the Formation of Privacy Policy."

Q: Did he ever respond to you?

GANDY: No, no, no, he didn't. Indeed, in his paper, in that journal issue, I don't exist. We've looked at each other in conferences and he didn't comment.

Q: That's interesting. I wanted to also just ask about some work you did on African Americans' opinions about privacy and some of the explanations why their answers tended to be different in patterned ways.[28]

GANDY: Right. I wish I could remember that work, but I'm sure it has to do with the nature of the experience, the nature of their black identity, a whole host of things that explain how it is that people make identifications with self or group as self. That's reflected in what they think about risks to collective self.

Q: And that was your argument.

GANDY: Oh, OK.

Q: Yes, and even that they, and in these opinion polls anyway, were less concerned in a sense about kind of invasive commercial marketing, and your speculation was that they just are excluded from that marketing.

GANDY: But anyway [laughs]. You're not in that space, and your newspapers don't collect money from those sources because you're not going to buy that stuff. Or you're going to buy it anyway, without having been marketed in that regard.

Q: This is only partly related, but I just noticed around that time you were engaging with Habermas more, Jürgen Habermas and the public sphere works. And there were references earlier, when you were talking about communication competence and so on, but did you read more and get more interested in Habermas in this period?

GANDY: So it's probably I had a new student, a Chinese student, whose orientation was toward Habermas and wanted the press in China to have that same orientation toward—and so I had to read more. And did read a lot more. She still wrote a dissertation that dealt with, but she didn't do it in an individual paper—she did it in comparison of with five nations, in terms of how it is that they framed these kinds of issues in that regard. I won't say any more about her in that regard, but nevertheless, that was the source.

So often, in my working with students, and I can—after with some time to go back to my records, I could identify a number of students whose projects were so far out of my experience that I had to go in and read a lot of material that I hadn't read before. It didn't hurt. I mean, it benefited in that regard. And so both of us kind of negotiated our way toward an understanding

[28] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "African Americans and Privacy: Understanding the Black Perspective in the Emerging Privacy Debate," in *The Information Society and the Black Community*, ed. John T. Barber and Alice A. Tait, 31–58 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).

of that work in relationship to what it is that they did. So students were in one sense the person who would introduce me to something that I hadn't looked at in the past.

Indeed, I'll say, a student of mine who is, I'm not sure if she's full professor yet, but she might be, might be real close, did really well in school, and she had administrative skills as well. She, because of her research, got me reading more [Pierre] Bourdieu than I would have read otherwise. So it's a good job, especially graduate students, the degree to which you are partners in this process, and you are collaborators in this process. And that you can [say], OK, I'll read that, and we'll come back and talk about it. I had one student, in fact, negotiated with me that he would do an independent study, where we would both read the same material and come back and talk about the same material. It was neat. It was very, very good.

Q: Well, it actually does make me curious about your teaching in this period at Annenberg. And what were the classes that you would typically teach or on your rotation?

GANDY: Oh, I taught *Communication and Race*. I had a good audience on *Communication and Race*. I had *Political Economy*, two courses in the political economy. I might have done *Media and Content Analysis*, and maybe the equivalent of agenda-setting kinds of things. I think that's probably the limit. I mean, again, since you've gotten through my history, you know that technology is a big part of that. You know that politics are a big part of that, and political influence is a part of that. So that's what I thought. The lesson of the Annenberg School is that you teach what you do.

Q: Did you do undergraduate teaching much?

GANDY: I did. I had to. I taught a big course, but it was about new media. So I could get up there and wave and show all kinds of material to them, and so they followed on it. Indeed, they had to write papers too. But I also had a research assistant or a teaching assistant in that regard, who would go through that material. I had some great teaching assistants, as well. But if I could have avoided teaching undergraduates, I would have in a hot minute.

Q: And why is that? So you're—the teaching that you did do most, that you liked a lot better, what was it about the graduate seminar?

GANDY: Oh, it's a small group. A small group that I could intervene with. A small group that had to write papers. A small group that did essay exams. All of the things that rarely happen unless you're really special with undergraduates in that regard—that they won't do. So, that I think that I had a good relationship to those students, even the ones that managed to come over from [The] Wharton [School], would sit there in the class and take those classes. Graduate courses were not the same partnership as a research project, but nevertheless it was a sharing of this kind of space and responding to the same material publicly, but also in their own paper.

Q: And did you feel like you looked forward to teaching graduate classes?

GANDY: Again, I'd take three graduate classes over one undergraduate class any day of the week. Of course I didn't have to teach three graduate classes and one undergraduate class, but any day.

Q: But even relative to research or service obligations, is teaching something that you cared about as—graduate teaching in particular?

GANDY: Well, I mean, again—no, my graduate research was better than teaching because we were really partners then. So almost everybody on that team was committed to that project and was going to make a contribution to that product and hope they got paid off by not a grade, but by a publication. So those relationships were much more valuable to me than standing up in front of a class or even in a class where there's a lot of interaction in that regard. That interaction was special. I mean, that's really teamwork.

Q: Yes, it's almost Harold Meier.

GANDY: Yes, exactly so. Thank you.

Q: Yes. And, you know, I'm going to ask a couple of questions in our next session, but I'm curious about the Annenberg School in the, maybe the second half of your career. You retired in 2006. So this period in which, you know, you had published *The Panoptic Sort*, you were the Herbert Schiller Professor. And I'm curious about your decision to choose Schiller.

GANDY: It was a bad choice. I didn't ask him. How about that? I mean, I was bad. Nobody said anything. I mean, nobody gave me advice and said, You're not supposed to put somebody's name in when he's living. But I did. Life went on [laughs].

Q: Did he ask you about that?

GANDY: No. I'll say this. I saw him before his death, maybe a couple of months before his death, in his house. And I handed him the card, and he was—he must have known about it, but to actually see it and be in that space. He didn't say anything negative about it. He moved him, I thought, in that regard, so I felt OK.

Q: Good. Well, I'm curious about that period in which you were, for most of it, under the deanship of Kathleen Hall Jamieson, or at least a good chunk of it, and how the school changed after the reins were handed over from Gerbner. And you can speak to it as much as you want or as little as you want.

GANDY: Sure. I'll give it some thought.

Q: OK.

GANDY: Or do you mean now?

Q: Yes.

GANDY: OK. I mean, so certainly George was a powerful force, and George had his own scholarly mission that he and Larry [Gross] defined for the world, and therefore the research effort moved to that first. But Kathleen had her own, and very different—and didn't involve, I don't think, didn't involve the rest of the faculty in quite the same way that George involved as many of the other faculty as he could. Kathleen had a different vision of what the school had, and I suspect—I think that's probably correct—that she had a different relationship with the funder, Walter Annenberg, than George did. I think George's was much more close, you know, at risk, all throughout that process than Kathleen's was. So that changed the nature of the process. Beyond that, Kathleen gave almost all of the faculty chairs. So who's going to argue with that? So here's this pool of money that you can pursue your interest without having to go through this process of fundraising. I had managed at Howard [University] to bring in some kind of money, but I didn't have to get any money. Who can beat that? Not me.

Q: And what about the decision to close down the master's program. You had been a master's graduate yourself.

GANDY: I'm not sure I was even there when that happened.

Q: I can't tell you the exact date.

GANDY: No, but I'm not sure. But certainly the master's program was close enough to a relationship in that you had to do a research—you were expected to do—a research project. So that was still a good relationship. And sometimes that turned into a Ph.D. relationship with your students. So I don't remember that point in time when it went away. Interesting.

Q: And were there any close relationships during that last stretch in the 2000s, especially with faculty, other faculty I mean? Like, had you maintained your friendship with Joe [Joseph] Capella? Maybe you weren't across the hall from him any longer.

GANDY: So are you describing when I was retired?

Q: No, in the years of—the last ten years.

GANDY: I think I mentioned that Joe had moved upstairs. And so I didn't encounter him regularly. And so the kinds of discussions that we had almost every morning—Joe would come in with his half gallon of coffee [laughs]. And we'd chat in that regard. So in one sense that was an unfortunate structural change in the way that things facilitate the production and consumption of other kinds of things—that one made it much harder. And I don't know that Joe was replaced with anybody for me in that regard.

Q: And you continued to have friendly relations with Klaus and—

GANDY: So Klaus wasn't there anymore either. Where was Klaus? Maybe I'm trying to see that space in my office where Klaus was still right across the hall from me. But I'm not seeing him there, so I don't know.

Q: And what led to your decision to retire? I mean, you could have stayed on if you wanted and here you are, faced with turning 65, you decide that you—

GANDY: —could afford not to stay there and deal with the undergraduates. I'm a frugal person as you can see [laughs]. I don't spend a lot of money. Never had a new car in my entire life. And I was reasonably well paid at Annenberg, so I didn't have to stay. The University of Pennsylvania provided me with three years salary. Yes, you know, a gold ladder, to go down, so that was, you know, that was cutting the retirement time again that way. So, yes, hey, you took it.

Q: OK, and what did the school do as you decided to retire? Was there an event?

GANDY: There was. There was a wonderful event. So you hadn't heard about it?

Q: No.

GANDY: So the people knew, especially the people that knew that I liked to dance, that I liked zydeco dancing. And they first had gotten a Philadelphia zydeco band. And then I found out that a real zydeco band was coming to town, and they did it! Got me a real zydeco band. And so we had a party [laughs]. It was like—it was just absolutely wonderful. Can you picture a faculty retirement party with a zydeco band?

Q: No, I can't.

GANDY: I've had a good life. I've had a really good life.

Q: Well I can't think of a better way than that to end this third session. And so thank you, Oscar, so much. And we will pick up tomorrow with a fourth session.

GANDY: Super. Thank you. Have a good day, y'all.

END OF SESSION THREE

Transcript of Interview conducted July 24, 2019, with OSCAR H. GANDY, JR. (session four)

Tucson, AZ

Interviewed by Jefferson Pooley

Q: This is session four of an oral history interview of Oscar Gandy conducted by Jefferson Pooley in Dr. Gandy's home in Tucson, Arizona. The interview is part of the Communication Scholars Oral History Project of the Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. And the date is July 24, 2019. So Oscar, we ended our last session with your retirement from Annenberg and the University of Pennsylvania, and one thing that I neglected to ask you about, but which I'd like to circle back to, is your collaboration with and friendships with figures who are at Penn, but outside the Annenberg School. And in particular, I was curious about Tukufu Zuberi, a sociologist, and your work on racial statistics and public policy for four years. It looked like you had a seminar that was funded. So anyway, I wanted to ask about that.

GANDY: Sure. I mean, there's so much to say about Zuberi, Tukufu, his importance at the school, my relationship with him, and how important that was for me. This seminar, funded by the university for four years—not a lot of money, but enough to bring in scholars from around the nation, primarily, that were dealing with matters of race. We had a research assistant, one of my students, Jessica Davis, was working as an assistant in order to make this thing occur. It was beneficial for me in terms of introducing me to so many people that I later cited in my work, in that they had particular kinds of insights, many of them being lawyers, but also famous critics in the area of race.

He, that is, Tukufu, is not only a specialist about race, he's a race guy. There's no question that that's what he does. But he is also a sociologist, a demographer in that regard, but he's also, and I've lost the title of his program now [*History Detectives*], but he's a television star. He's this magical figure who travels all around the world and goes to the museum and the like and tells people about them all. So he really is one of these multi-powered kinds of persons—so it was a good part of my work at the university. He was also part of kind of an organization of black scholars or scholars who worked in the area. He got funding for a center [Center for Africana Studies], a center which has grown since I left and continues to attract scholars and provide events that builds the status and the visibility of black scholars at the university. Very important fellow at Penn.

Q: And that series of statistics-oriented seminars, it clearly had something to do with the work that you would eventually publish as a book in 2009. Is there anything in particular that you were exposed to during those four years that seems important?

GANDY: So a lot of it, despite having noted the role of statistics, encountering other scholars who also talked about statistics and talked about the representation of African Americans in statistics and in data, was also a part of those visitations there. So many, I would say maybe five, of the speakers who came wind up in some of my writing. So that's what a seminar is supposed to do. I mean if it's not for credit, it is supposed to expose you to other people's positions and understanding. Many of them really caught my attention and had me read their material in ways that I wouldn't have. I didn't have to agree with them all. They were just powerful presentations, so it was an enjoyable experience for me.

Q: Great. Well, I wanted to ask also about a second collaborator or person that you worked with, Chanita Hughes-Halbert, on race genetics, African Americans' health representation.[29] So, can you say something about that?

GANDY: Sure. I mean, as you noted, I guess I had a long-time interest in health, kind of maybe the first paper that I wrote with colleagues and classmates was really about health.[30] So this is, Chanita is a, I'm not sure whether she's a physician. I think she is probably not. She might even be in nursing in that regard, and she'll forgive me if I don't locate her correctly. This was, and I think it is a correction of my statement that I didn't do any more experimental research. In fact, we did something that approximates an experiment. But it's kind of a simple—that is, it assigns people to groups and asks the questions in slightly different ways, so one can see about the framing of the question, how it influences their responses. So she was part of this study, of which there are many at the University of Pennsylvania about smoking, about African Americans and smoking. But it was the connection between African American smoking and genetics, and whether or not those respondents, those participants, those subjects in our research, would participate in a study of genetics.

So given kind of the history, yes, of African Americans and scientific research and research having to do with genetics and the identification of African Americans and all of that, we wanted to understand, What is it about? You know, that subject matter and its presentation that might lead people to say, Yes, we'll volunteer to be subjects or not. So we did a series of studies that were related to how we presented the choice to have genetic studies about tobacco and whether or not they would participate. The question was really how we could and how the field could get more African Americans to participate in research given the history of African Americans and biomedical research in this regard. I'm not sure what our conclusions were. I

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[29] Chanita Hughes Halbert, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., Aliya Collier, and Lee Shaker, "Intentions to Participate in Genetics Research Among African American Smokers," *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers & Prevention* 15, no. 1 (2006): 150–53; and Chanita Hughes Halbert, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., Aliya Collier, and Lee Shaker, "Beliefs about Tobacco Use in African Americans," *Ethnicity & Disease* 17, no. 1 (2007): 92–8.

[30] June Fisher, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and Noreene Janus, "The Role of Popular Media in Defining Sickness and Health," in *Communication and Social Structure*, ed. Emile McAnany, Jorge Schnitman, and Noreene Janus, 240–62 (New York: Praeger, 1981).

don't think they were that strong, But that was the nature of that work. I want to say that those articles that we wrote involving one of my undergraduate—one of my graduate research assistants—has gotten a lot of citations. So that's an attribute, if you will, of medical research, health-related research. Lots of people gather all of that material to make references to it. And here was a study about African-American subjects that was deciding whether they would or would not participate in research. So it's gotten a lot of visibility.

Q: I also wanted to just ask if there were any other either Penn-based or Philadelphia-based intellectual friendships that were outside the Annenberg School? I'm not fishing for anything—just curious if there's anyone who was important to you during your years of living in Philadelphia in those terms, who might have been at Penn, maybe at Drexel, Temple, whoever, wherever.

GANDY: Sure. There's a colleague who was at Penn [University of Pennsylvania] and went away to Washington to become the head of a massively important research institute, who went away. And we were very friendly before she left and we made friends again when she returned back to Penn, so—but again that's in one sense of a connection with a scholar who has power within a Republican administration and that stayed in a Democratic administration in an independent organization. So very powerful. Her name won't come to mind, so she'll be embarrassed if she finds out that I never mentioned her, but very powerful great scholar, friend, in terms of research—research that had a public impact in a whole range of areas, not just including health, but education and the like. And I'll think of her name in a minute, but can't—

Q: OK. And anyone else?

GANDY: I suspect that—that's all I'm going to pull up at the moment.

Q: Right. OK. Fair enough. And why don't we then turn to your post-retirement life? In fact we're sitting in a room that I want to ask you about, but before that, I'm curious about your decision to move to Tucson and your research life post-Penn, how that has been structured, how it's worked, that kind of thing.

GANDY: So let me invite a correction then. I left the University of Pennsylvania as an emeritus professor, so I didn't leave the university in that regard. What I managed to do was escape classroom teaching [laughs]. I did not cut off the rest of my connection to the university or the Annenberg School, and therefore continued to be a productive scholar who credits and who signs his name as an Annenberg—as an emeritus professor at the university. So that's a distinction that I want to make clear there.

I would say that the process of winding up in Tucson was one that took quite a lot of time. I would say it was probably a four-year process in winding up in Tucson. Our daughter lived in California. I went to school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, so all of those were potential sites for our making a new home in that regard. California was far too expensive. Arizona, nowhere near as attractive as Tucson is, as a community, although it still has friends there. So that was really the choice, except that it also had to be where in Tucson, then, is it that you're going to put your

house. And we spent a lot of time, and we had a fine realtor that took us around and around and around, here and there, and all of these neighborhoods. But this was the neighborhood that we chose because it was in walking distance of the University of Arizona.

I did not expect and did not really develop a close relationship with the University of Arizona, one of the graduates from the Annenberg School is, in fact, is a professor here and did connect. Another policy person also came to Arizona and got me to give a lecture, but that's really as close to the university as I have been, other than a presentation or two that I have been invited to, or our use of the university for some of my own political activity. It's a fine university, but it's there. That—my relationship with that university changed because the political economy of universities changed. The resources at the university that were available to us as residents of the city, which were free, later came to have a price. And that limited our use of the university as a resource. And it's a great university in terms of the variety of things that we did and might still do if they didn't charge us for them.

Q: That's telling, for sure. I want to then ask about this space and your work life. I understand that Judy [Judith Gandy] had different plans, your wife, for this space when you moved in and that you managed to convince her to allow you to have this office. And it's been the site of your scholarly production since.

GANDY: Well, so it wasn't a great struggle. She imagined that this might be rented out. But the people who owned the house before us had a daughter who lived in this space. And so it reflects that daughter's sense of self, the bathroom actually was a photography studio. So if there are spaces or buildings or furniture in that space for a photographer—and the power is for a photographer. And you know, use the table in that space there. So this room had all of these—I didn't put these bookshelves in there. They were put here. The desk was here.

So this space was designed as an office. So it didn't take much to say, Why can't it be my office? When we first moved here, we stayed in what has turned out to be Judy's office. She is an editor and continues to edit. But it had one of these pull-down-from-the-wall beds [laughs] that we stayed in until all of our furniture got here and we moved. And then she turned that into her office. So both of us have offices. They are almost the same size. She doesn't have as many bookshelves as I do, because she's producing other people's work in that regard, so that's the difference. But we managed to negotiate a good space for both of us.

Q: And we haven't really talked about your work process, and I know it must be very different when you have collaborators to when you're actually working on your own, but what is it like if you sit down to, let's say, deliver a paper at IAMCR [International Association for Media and Communication Research], and how is it that you go about producing a paper or even a book project?

GANDY: Sure, but let me answer a question you didn't ask, but I want to make a note that I continue and continue to work with other people. So there's a lot of collaborative work, so that part of my work has not changed. It is only really the books that represent just my work. I mean, certainly there are other—there are book reviews, that's my work as well. But it's kind of a

different kind of structure. You read the book and you think about it, and you say, Alright, this is what I want to say about this. And there's almost a formula for writing a book review, at least that I follow, whether or not there is a published formula for writing a book review or not that I do or do not follow. So I haven't got a special way for doing that other than sitting down and reading it and then having it before me when I go say, All right, now it's time to turn that into a review in this regard and go back through and find examples in that book.

My own work is one that is kind of reflective of how I use the computer. I use files in the computer. Before retirement, much before retirement, I used paper files. I still have a lot of those paper files now. But now I have PDF files, so almost everything that I use despite the books that are in this room—came to me in PDFs and are organized in PDFs. And I can write on them. I can underline them on PDFs, and I can search and find things on PDFs, organize them now in that way. Although, because I have a number of different buckets—an inequality bucket and a race bucket and a production bucket and a policy bucket and other kinds of buckets—well, I have those buckets on my desktop. There are those files there and I read something and it'll go into the bucket and I can find it in the bucket. Or if I can't, I'll search for it and the computer will find it for me in that bucket.

So my work, even though I don't have a project in mind, and I will now confess, it is primarily shaped by *The New York Times*. So I get up very early in the morning and I read the local paper and then I read *The New York Times*, and *The New York Times* has become, if it wasn't always, a major source of my reading, because of the articles filled with hyperlinks. So that is, I can read and someone will make reference to something and provide a hyperlink and I'll capture it. And there it goes into a file—well no, there it goes on the desktop to be read and then it'll make its way into a file and it will be annotated. All of those files and all of those annotations and the ability for me to search and, What did I think about that at that point in time?, is available to me when I go writing. That's the process, putting things into files.

Now, then, there's another step. I suppose that's the way other people do it, but it's certainly the way that I do it. That is, I have an outline. That is, I need to get to an outline. What are the sections of this book or of this project? And that's the way the pieces get into it from their place within this outline. I mean, outlines in Microsoft Word are not fixed devices, they are adjustable. One can move things around. This doesn't work [laughs]. This one has outgrown its space. So that's kind of what my work project is like. Here's the overall subject. Here then becomes the outline for that. And here are the segments that I think that belong in that, which will get changed. Here's the order for them. This is the one that has to come first, which means I might have to change something else and talk about this, which I'm going to do, but that's, if you will, that's the structure of my work.

Here's this project. Here are the components of the project. Here are the moments or the minutes, if you will, of that project. Here is the relationship between them. Here's the path that I'll take through them, which again, which I will often alter. Here is the review process, where you say this is not doing it. I mean, so some chapters disappear. They're not there at all. I can't think of what else might be of interest.

Q: How about writing itself? Do you find that to be a pleasurable activity? Do words come quickly or do you prefer the outlining and the conceptual work that predates the writing process?

GANDY: No, that's good. I mean, I used to—I don't think I write as easily as I used to before. And so I think I did write well, so that I think writing was a creative process, as well as the scholarly process of gathering the materials—and so I enjoyed that. I actually enjoy my work more now when I go back in and look at it and say, Did I really write that? Was that me? And that was actually done rather nicely, Oscar. I mean, so I think writing came fairly easy to me. When I was teaching, writing was limited. And there's [airplane noise]—people should know that I live near a Defense institution. So not a commercial air force, but a military Air Force. And planes can get to be a real problem. And it's not just a problem for me. I mean, it's a problem for the family—in that they sometimes make their space available. We may have to stop because you don't know whether or not they're doing a training for the Air Force or whether they rent out the space and our airspace for others who are training their pilots in that regard. So I don't know whether that particular exposure to the impact of the air is going to continue on, or not. We can continue on. Yes. So that's part of living here.

So while we chose to be next to the University of Arizona, we're not that far from the Air Force, which chooses this space. I mean, kind of the politics, as maybe we'll find a point to talk about, kind of the politics of our relationship to the Air Force has gotten to be an important part of life here. There's a mobilization of people to try to adjust that location. Please.

Q: Well, I do want to ask about your life in Tucson outside of your work in this office. And we talked last session about the role of a critical scholar and the kind of intellectual interventions that, and policy interventions that, a scholar might make. But since you don't have undergraduates, and when you're not working, I'm curious if you've been involved in local politics. You just mentioned the Air Force and the mobilization around that—what has your life been in public terms here?

GANDY: Super. I have been more involved politically in local organizations than at any point in my history. So, that is, I've certainly been involved in organizations that had a political purpose, but they were connected in one large sense to me at the academy—professors participating in this activity. Not long after I got here, I became a member of something called DOG, Democratic Organizing Group, and it was really a response to the citizens movement and the movement that the court that gave corporations more and more and more and more rights that belonged to human beings, not to corporate entities in that regard. So the DOG was organized in part to respond to that court decision about granting rights to corporations. And we're trying to say, Can we mobilize? This can't go. This can't stand. We need to deal with that one.

But that was not a working organization. Indeed, somebody who came to one of our meetings said, This is not a healthy organization. And we said, Yes, all right. So we got a better organization after that, which had a name which kind of reflected our sense of ourselves. It was called the—can I do it? Oh, I lost its name for the moment. So it was really about what you put into something in order to bake it, in order for the flour to rise in that regard. So it was really

about [laughs] that device, that thing which you would enter. And we were going to make movements rise, movements grow as a result of that. I'll find it at some point in that regard. It is and was a lovely organization—people from around the town who were political activists, who were concerned about the need to mobilize and to address corporate power. So I've got a bumper sticker on my car which still says that corporations are not the people. So that was the movement. And this group, I wish I could think of its name, this group organized meetings. It invited a nationally known group about community rights to come here and do a three-day seminar in order to mobilize and inform people about the nature of rights, the history of rights, and the organization of rights, and the importance of rights in this regard. These became close friends—close friends at the University of Arizona. Close friends within the community. Close friends who were teachers. Close friends who were nurses. I mean, really a good group of politically active and politically concerned people here that I still love, every single one of them. So that was one kind of organization.

What was another organization that I became involved in, yes. So another part of my identity is related to environmental activists. So an organization of environmentalists into some—that's not its name either. I'll think of it eventually, perhaps after we're on something else, but nevertheless a very well-organized, continuing-to-exist organization that's focused on environmental concerns, environmental activism, and, again, saving Tucson, making Tucson survive in terms of its environmental policies. I eventually became a member of its board—one of my, I guess—because of me at a typewriter—one of my roles has been secretary. I've been secretaries of lots of organizations because I can take the minutes for those organizations. So, I was a board member and then the secretary of that organization—I can't think of its name—of Tucson. But it was really environmental Tucson survival in that regard.

Many kinds of educational functions, many kinds of attempts to influence the government here in Tucson, whether or not we were actively involved in or in support of or against political figures. It's important to understand Tucson as being southern Arizona, being very different. So we currently have a Democratic mayor and six members of the city council who are also Democrats. And that's kind of unusual, with Phoenix and with our current governor in terms of his being a Republican and the northern part of the state being very Republican in that regard. But this is then a left progressive city in all of the ways that one can identify a progressive city being. Tucson is that and has been that, although its city council members are not all in identical districts. They differ in terms of their population and they differ in terms of their politics, but it is still Democratic. And it's variations along those lines.

I'm currently involved in another organization called Tucson Residents for Responsive Government. That's what I'm struggling with, primarily because its identity is shaped more by, if you will, homeowners. And so there's a different kind of political economy of homeowners and homeowners' interests and their orientation to government policy with regard to its influence on homeowners. So there's a little bit of tension within the organization in terms of the extent to which we have attracted non-homeowners, that we have not attracted the transient population. We have not attracted others who live in Tucson and are affected by city policy in that regard. So that's a constraint. I don't know how long that's going to last. I mean, indeed, I

had research proposals which I presented to this organization and did the research anyway, but they did not identify it. They did not make it one of their projects in that regard. So that's part of this tension, about the kinds of projects you choose as a scholar, making a contribution to a policy organization with the expectation that it would influence policy locally, and it did not, and I'm not sure that it is going to.

I was a member of, perhaps because of the environmental group, a member of the Imagine Greater Tucson. So here's a project, which is part of the responsibility for the city every 10 years to do a new plan. So this was a project that I was going to do the next plan, and it involved me doing part of the community meetings in order to talk about how they understood the plans and the changes in the city. But it was also me as a statistician, as part of me doing the data analysis from the surveys that they did. And I'm so pleased that one of the members of this three-member team that did the analysis for Imagine Greater Tucson is actually going to be a very powerful actor in what I may get involved in next, transportation. So he is working for the new transportation secretary for the city of Tucson in that regard.

The last thing I'll say about this process, which maybe is a source of tension and I thought it might not have been a good thing, but I did it anyway Our city council member is a magical person. He's an ideal city council member, but he was a Republican. And he was such a good city council member that my wife and I were going to vote for him as a Republican, but he became a Democrat. He fought so much with the Republicans in the city, in the state, that he changed horses in any event and so we had—in any one of those organizations, we had a lot of contact with Steve Kozachik, is his name. He's really special. So Steve actually put me on a committee, a commission actually, a public safety commission. And when he made that recommendation I talked to myself a lot about whether I really wanted to do that. That is, I'm going to be on a commission that was somehow going to be dealing with the expenditure of a substantial amount of money by police and fire in that regard. But I had spent so much time with Steve and had such trust in Steve, I could only say yes.

But it actually turned out to be a benefit in that it provided more motivation for me to study body-worn cameras. So the police are involved in this kind of surveillance, and this kind of surveillance technology. I started, as I do, reading like mad, writing out everything I could about body-worn cameras and police surveillance and monopoly within this industry. Indeed, the major source of this technology now was identified, I believe, last week as having the third most well-paid chief executive—is one that produces tasers and body-worn cameras. But in any event, I have learned a lot about, and indeed, whether or not I'm going to get to be a thorn in the side of the police group and the representatives. I mean, the representative, the head, the second level police commissioner, has responded to my questions. And he said he was pleased that he knew something about this stuff before, but I have so many more questions to ask about this technology and the role of the manufacturer and marketer in the associated services related to the processing of data that are captured by the ownership of data. So it's going to be a lot more interactions between me and the police on that commission. So that was a good move, and I said yes to Steve.

Q: Great, well, I wanted to turn to some of the work you were doing—it might have been in this first case work that began while you were still living in Philadelphia, but either way this, I think, important paper from 2007 on the formation of an isolated racial class, where you're talking about the kind of damage to a black public sphere.[31] In some ways, the political economy and cultural studies debate that you've carried on a little bit before crops up here again.

GANDY: Sure. I mean, that's an important kind of distinction, right—so part of the response from cultural studies folk but also from political economists—more from political economists that are focused on class and therefore not focused on race, right, as a point of contention, a part of struggle. So I tried to find a way, alright, to bring race into this discussion, and to at least explore why it is that political economists need to pay more to race. But also to understand why they don't, and part of that is that we're not going to get a racial class, alright. That is, there are so many signs both then and now that we're not going to get a racial class that will have that kind of political force that we'd expect class and class consciousness to have in kind of developing an alternative to capitalism. That's not going to happen on the basis of African American organization in that regard.

And so this was an attempt to understand what a racial class would mean. This was an attempt to understand what would get in the way of the development of a racial class that would be a political force in that regard. In order to understand whether or not consumption of media—again, connection back to [George] Gerbner and the notion of people looking at different kinds of content, but also kind of strategic manipulation, strategic shaping of the kinds of content that African-Americans would expose themselves to and the extent to which that would build a racial class.

I'm so struck now—though that's not a comment on that work—I'm so struck now by what seems to me to actually be a political strategy to erase class identity. My wife and I sit down and watch ads on television where more and more and more and more of these families are mixed families—multiracial families in that regard. And the kinds of early arguments within the university about whether or not the black kids would check that box, and they felt they were able to check the box and identify themselves as being black rather than being mixed or blended or some other kind of construction. So the possibility for a racial class emerging was not at all clear to me as a possibility at that point in time. And it is much less clear now that a racial class that will have a political influence, a powerful influence—I mean, think about our black president and the extent to which he's shifted. I mean, he is a mixed-race child. He was attacked for that status, but he became America's president. He became America's president for two terms in that regard. Clearly, he's not going to stand then as a figure for the mobilization of a black class and a political—that could be a long discussion about kind of the history of black political mobilization and the kinds of organizations and the variety and the character of those different groups have kind of evaporated. I mean, there are still black Muslims that retain a particular kind of racial identity but also a religious identity and a political identity as well. But they're not going to come along the path that those Black Panthers that I talked about were

[31] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Privatization And Identity: The Formation of a Racial Class," in *Media in the Age of Marketization*, ed. Graham Murdock and Janet Wasko, 109–28 (New York: Hampton Press, 2007).

moving toward any more. I think that that black racial class has not any possibility of—despite even Black Lives Matter in the current moment, that was a reach—not for black people to make this argument—that was a reach for white people to recognize black lives matter in that regard so understand, no racial class coming out of that, as I understand it. So that's my sense of what that work was—trying to engage but not winning that debate with Marxian scholars about black racial class, but in fact saying, OK, that's not going to happen.

Q: I mean, it really does feed well into the book that I want to talk about next, the one that you wrote in 2009, in some ways a culmination of the project that got underway in the Freedom Forum year, way back in 1993, with the turn to risk and framing and race. The book's title, of course, is *Coming to Terms with Chance*, and I really wanted to ask you about the two terms in the subtitle, because they're both really important in the book, and they don't really appear before in any of your writing.[32] The first one—well, I'll read the subtitle: *Engaging Rational Discrimination and Cumulative Disadvantage*. And first, I guess, just the notion of rational discrimination. Maybe you could talk about where the idea came from and what its importance was.

GANDY: So both of those are more recent, right? And so engagement, that's a good question. I mean, the engagement with rational discrimination came out of that seminar that I did with Zuberi, alright? So that is, the scholars that came and talked about rational discrimination. I can't bring up the name of the primary source of that work who was really compelling in kind of having us engage rationality with regard to discrimination. I lost the name that he would use. So there were two of those presentations that dealt with this question about rational discrimination and whether or not there was a justification for the kinds of choices that made, or whether or not those kinds of decisions were the reflection of racial thinking, rather than some attempt to be justified, in terms of the kinds of choices that we're supposed to make as economic man and woman in that regard.

So rational discrimination is an economic—out of the Chicago School in large part—notion that we're supposed to make choices based upon the consequences that flow from the choices that we make. However, there was not, and there is not, a sensitivity to the consequences that flow from making use of data, making use of sense of self, making use of goals that were generated, that were reinforced, by things in the past and therefore are, in one sense, irrational in terms of their application to present circumstances. The second part of that, then, talks about how rational discrimination contributes to cumulative disadvantage and again, black scholars were certainly part of an attempt to develop measurement of discrimination.

And cumulative disadvantage is part of the reflection that was made in that work, that body of work that says, What does it mean when a choice is made that's considered rational by some actors that actually works in building upon, adding more, adding another block to the constraints on the development of African Americans as competent participants in the social sphere. So that's this cumulative disadvantage that—this thing which we had from birth, based

[32] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *Coming to Terms With Chance: Engaging Rational Discrimination and Cumulative Disadvantage* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

upon what neighborhoods we were living in, based on segregation, based on a whole host of things that have to do with racism, accumulate when people make rational decisions based upon, well, what kind of job did you have? How far did you go in school? How well did you do in school?

All of those are rational considerations about how you choose someone, although colleagues at Howard [University] and colleagues at Penn would say, Well, now, wait a minute. People still succeed, still make positive contributions despite where they went to school, despite how they were measured on this test, despite—other kinds of benefits explain the way people don't fall where they're predicted to fall. And indeed, if I ramble a bit, part of data and predictions talk about means. That is, talk about centers of distribution. Don't talk about people on both ends of those distributions. And you want to make sure you're not making decisions that constrains people's life choices, where the ones who could be and who could perform on the upper end of the distribution, on the end that everybody would consider to be beneficial but they never got a chance—because somebody made a rational decision about the mean of that distribution and said [negative noise], so those folks are not going to be.

That's part of what that project is about, is about what's the nature of the kinds of decisions that are perceived as being rational but have, we would certainly agree, irrational consequences, especially with regard to people of color, people of certain class, and that's really what that book is about. How do these constraints get reproduced and distributed in special groups in society?

Q: And so in that respect, it's very much in keeping with your, I would say, career-long focus on life chances, even if you didn't always use that terminology. The deck is stacked, you said, in the game of life, in that introduction. And in particular, what's so exciting about the book, if I might, is the focus on statistics and statistical reasoning and even actuarial logic, as you put it. And the insurance industry turns out to be important in this story. So maybe you could talk about that aspect, the way in which statistics and a statistical way of seeing even seems to be important to this cumulative disadvantage story.

GANDY: So I didn't know that our current focus these days on big data would be part of this process through which statistics in research and evidence in argument and, as we talked previously, prediction. But those are all based upon computation and statistics, analysis about what happened in the past and predictions of what's going to happen in the future. Taking the past as being, if you will, a predictor of what's going to happen in the future. So maybe it's just commonplace to me, but it seems that it is in statistics, it is in analysis, it is in prediction, and it is in the insurance industry, which is kind of the leader of the specification of what we ought to pay attention to in terms of risk. And I think I made reference to that before. That is, the idea that risk primarily talks about things you want to avoid, things you want to minimize.

I mean, you could certainly say that you have predictions about benefit. Who's going to succeed in school? Who's going to become the president? Who's going to do all these other things? But the focus primarily of insurance is to avoid negative risk. Avoid cost by avoiding those folk that are more likely to be associated with cost to us rather than realization of profit. So that's the

aspect of risk that's important in that work. But it is also, I think, spread across policy. I mean, the extent to which public policy focuses on the benefits that are likely, rather than the harms that need to be avoided, is not something that I really explored—I guess to the extent that I probably should. But again, maybe that has to do with the nature of political economists, and here I go making my connection to Herb [Herbert] Schiller again.

We talk about the bad stuff. We talk about the harm. Not only that, we talk about the harm in terms of its accumulation, in it's piling more harm on the harm that was there already, rather than focusing on the way in which information subsidies might talk about the benefits. Clearly, government talks about and focuses on, we need to make investments in this area. We need to provide support in order to realize the kinds of benefits, realize the growth, realize the development, realize the employment, realize the futures that come—but I think critical political economists talk about, let's not talk about the benefits, because they're going to do that anyway. They're going to use that as part of their information subsidies. Let's talk about the harms that are going to come. Let's talk about the distribution of harms that are going to come. Let's talk about the people whose life chances are worsened. I mean, part of—I think you've gotten a sense of inequality and the ways in which focuses on inequality are a part of my work and a part of the future, of my future work and the work that comes up in this book, talks about inequality as distinct from poverty.

So a lot of work talks about the poor, but that's talking about a group. And it's distinct from this construction of inequality as looking at the whole array of forces and how in which the bulk of the resources from capitalism are distributed to a smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller share of the population—and that's why, for me, inequality is, I'm not sure I could say more important, but it's important to keep on the table and not just talk about poverty, not just talk about the poor, not just talk about the unemployed, not just to talk about it. Yes, it's important to talk about the poor people who are harmed by this kind of exploitation of resources in society, but it's important to talk about them in terms of their relationship along this distribution. And there's something really powerful to talk about—one fraction of 1% that captures more and more and more of the resources produced within the system. So that's part of my focus. I may have stepped over where I should have gone.

Q: No, no. It's completely perfect, actually, in terms of a summary of a kind of way of thinking, I think, that suffuses that book, but also lots of your work before. And I did want to ask about the—you discuss in the book a lot about the authority of statistical thinking, especially as it's represented in policymaking and in media representation—the way in which numbers have a particular purchase and expert authority almost. And maybe it goes hand-in-hand a little bit with what you also talk about in the book, which is the way economics and economic logic have gained traction in policymaking especially.

GANDY: That's exactly where I was going to go, alright? So, you know, again, as a political economist, why wouldn't I talk about economists [laughs]? But maybe I kind of misperceive the extent to which public policy and public policy discourse focuses on, makes use of, the work of economists. Remember now, I talked about earlier on, that is, the policy group—that is, the

public policy meetings that happen every year, a big part of my life [Telecommunications Policy Research Council]. Well, economists played a major role and these were mainstream economists. They were not political economists. Political economists snuck the way into—snuck our way into—that space and maybe were responsible for the shrinkage of those policy research conferences.

But clearly economists have come to be, I would say, dominant voices in kind of the structuring of policy choices in terms of talking about risk and talking about the distribution of benefits there. And the models that economists use in order to say, This is how we're going to move, this is how we're going to benefit in that regard. And here are the major actors in the field. There's no question in my mind that economists are very powerful actors in policy formation and policy evaluation. So I don't know what more to say about that.

Q: And it is connected somehow to statistical reasoning and evidence and representation of that evidence.

GANDY: Yes, but it's a point to make, maybe, kind of the distinction between statistics that are used by another part of my community, historic community, but experimental scholars. They use statistics as well. But the economists—I mean, there is a school of experiments in economics, but they're just kind of on the margin there. But the data that are used by economists in order to characterize changes within the economy and the site and the locations and the future is statistically based. And the extent to which insurance, and risk as framed by the insurance industry, and the economists who work for and with the insurance industry. I guess I haven't written that much about the elevation of risk or even how risk became the term of art here in my work. I don't actually know how that came to be. You know, who were the people who could claim authorship of the shift toward risk—but clearly, it is dominant in our thinking about our presence and our future in terms of risk and its avoidance in that regard.

Q: Let me ask about the conclusion of that book and the sort of focus on social movements and policy. And maybe I'll pair that with a question, since we didn't really talk about it when it first appeared earlier in your work in the 1990s, but the ironies of investigative journalism—that investigative journalism ironically can sometimes undermine the would-be effort to expose and thereby invite a policy response through the framing of risk and statistics.

GANDY: So it's a challenge, right? It's a challenge for sources, which I certainly wrote about. But it's also a challenge for the journalists who take some material from sources, but they don't take it all. And they have their own ideas as journalists that have an identity. They want their names to matter in that regard, but they may also be influenced by the sources that they identify with. And so it becomes really a challenge to say, Alright, how do I take the statistics and turn them into a statement about the nature of the problem? How do I take those statistics and turn it into a statement about the responsibility for the problem? And again, how do I use my work to frame— and I don't know how much I've' said about framing—I mean, it's important to understand framing as the way in which journalists and sources and all of the rest of us kind of try to influence how we make sense of the story.

And I suggested, and will say again, the way we make sense is to say who, what's the nature of the problem? Who's responsible for the problem—that is, who caused the problem, but also who is responsible for changing the problem because the problem really matters in that regard? And so it's frames. It's how you tell that story, how you capture attention, how you move people through the story that you're going to tell them, has to do with how you frame that story. And so framing is a very important part of the process of journalists telling us about things that's supposed to guide our behavior as, if you will, as citizens, as members of our local community, members of our global community, for example, with regard to the environment. And how it is you frame the problem of the environment and the future, and our children and their lives, please.

Q: Yes, well, that actually feeds really well into a question I had about this body of work, which must have been tied to some of your local politics. But in around 2013, up to the present, but certainly 2016, working with a former student, Mihaela Popescu, on environmental justice, mass incarceration—a separate but related project—and inequality.[33] In each of these papers, you were talking about what I would call proactive framing, or framing for social justice or something like that. How framing might be used as a counter-response to the information subsidies that the more powerful and more resourced bring to bear.

GANDY: Mihaela's work, and my work with her, you know, early on and continuing, is really important in this regard. And it even makes a link, alright, back to the black identity. And indeed, who gets to make decision about black identity and the identity of communities. So the work that we published—just they're' marvelous stories about Mihaela going out to do field research in order to gather what people thought about in different parts of the United States that mattered. So here's this question about, how is it that a community, a black community, a minority community, was going to be able to argue that they had standing in a deliberation about polluting their environment and their neighborhood? And so it became a question about the extent to which they were members of a black community, and therefore the decision in order to poison their community was made on a racial basis for which we're not supposed to do in the United States.

And the ability to be able to frame that critique in terms of a racial act, where a community that might have just become black, or was moving toward becoming black [laughs]—I mean, the argument that black people move to risk, black people move to danger, certainly can be explained in terms of the cost of access to housing and schooling and other kinds of things. But we said—we looked at the struggle that we're faced in terms of identifying a community as a black community and identifying their abuse by licensing, as being oriented toward racial comments of black communities, is part of what we were doing in that work.

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[33] Mihaela Popescu and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Whose Environmental Justice? Social Identity and Institutional Rationality," *Journal of Environmental Law and Litigation* 19 (2004): 141–92; Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Wedging Equity and Environmental Justice into the Discourse on Sustainability," *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 11, no. 1 (2013): 221–36; Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Choosing the Points of Entry: Strategic Framing and the Problem of Hyperincarceration," *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 22, no. 1 (2014): 61–80; and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Toward a Political Economy of Framing: Putting Inequality on the Public Policy Agenda," *Political Economy of Communication* 3, no. 2 (2016): 88–112.

Q: OK, good and then you—and so you've taken it in this later period to other topics, and thinking about how you might frame, as a social movement, your issue in a way that will resonate with the public or policy makers or both.

GANDY: So here's me being an interventionist then.

Q: Yes.

GANDY: Alright? So saying, alright, so here is what I've learned about framing. Here's what I've learned about information subsidies. Can I help movement organizations frame their arguments, frame their subsidies to the press in ways that will mobilize the population? So that becomes kind of a challenge. What can I learn about what works and what doesn't work in that regard? And looked at it in terms of the environment, and indeed I published a piece which talks about how do I insert—I'm not sure that's the term that I used—ethics and race and environment into the discourse about environmental issues.[34] So struggle about what do we know so far about?

That was another organization who leapt into some prominence in my reading, and then again also with my contact with them, and indeed in my hopes in order to get them to work with media groups and political economy groups and telecommunications policy groups—that is the FrameWorks Institute, I think it's called the FrameWorks Institute. So here's a group of communication scholars who study framing. They study framing through surveys, they study framing through interviews and the like, through experiments, in order to inform progressive organizations about how they ought to frame. So I thought I'd kind of make a contribution, at least explore the problem of frames and framings, and what works and what doesn't work, and what we might use in order to frame environmental comments, in order to frame privacy interventions and the like.

From what I learned from FrameWorks, I could write about, then, the kinds of things that appear to work and the kinds that don't work. They were just marvelous in terms of exploring and reporting from their work about the hard, the challenges that you run into in trying to move people in one direction with regard to the substance that you provide, and where the risks are—for people to slip back into a dominant cultural set of assumptions about how things work. And that was the attempt in my work in order to say, What have I learned and what could we learn in order to improve the ability to engage in framing, to deliver information subsidies, to move a movement in the right direction?

Q: Right. No, there's something poetic about that, given that you started with information subsidies and you kind of have worked on them from the opposite angle now in your later career in order to deploy them as resources—

GANDY: Nicely said.

[34] Gandy, "Wedging Equity and Environmental Justice."

Q: —for the under-resourced. Yes.

GANDY: That's true.

Q: Now, and I want to just move on to ask about some much more recent work, or I guess in the same basic era, but I think of you writing in the 1980s about targeting and segmentation and the kind of dystopic future that you predicted seems to have come about. And in particular, neuromarketing was one recent project you had—remote sensing and neuromarketing. It's an obvious extension, I suppose, of panoptic sorting, but I wanted to ask you how you got into that and what the project was.

GANDY: Super. So when you, quote, retire, or when you at least leave the classroom, people say, Let's get Gandy while he can still speak and make presentations. And so I've been invited to make another, I mean, a good number of these old-guy lectures. And one of the old-guy lectures I made was to, in Spain actually, so it was to a privacy group. And one of the people in the audience, Selina Nemorin, came up and introduced herself to me and said, You introduced—you shaped my life, all this work you are doing on privacy. And I said, OK, and what are you doing now? She said, Well I'm working on this and that and the other thing. And one of the things that she was working on was neural marketing. I said, Well, that's very interesting. And we started to work. And she was in London. I guess I actually wrote a recommendation for her for the London School of Economics, which worked, and she got a job there, so we continued to work while she was there.

I didn't know anything about neuromarketing. So I had to learn an awful lot about neuromarketing, and indeed we wrote an article that got reviewed twice by the *International Journal of Communication*, and one of the reviewers was incredibly kind in providing citations is to make sure that I—we—knew what we were talking about, we were going to challenge neural marketing. And indeed it was going to challenge him or her own research in that regard. Very generous. A wonderful experience. Learned more about it. But neural marketing didn't die because I wrote a piece about it, we wrote a piece about it. It's growing. It's not going away. The ability to be able to understand what people feel, without depending upon what they say they feel is an important part of neural marketing, and the kind of inferences that they are able to draw about how target audiences do respond from their too-small samples, but nevertheless good enough—small enough samples for them to be able to say, This is how the average person is going to be able to respond. They're still going to struggle with the demand for more precision than the average person. They're going to want to know about different kinds of persons. Whether or not they're going to get data, because neural research is very expensive in that regard in terms of the information. It's not like having a focus group, it's not like having a laboratory experience with undergraduates. It's a very different kettle of fish in that regard.

Q: Well, great. And I'm excited if you continue to work on that. And I want to turn to another paper that was just published last year. It's wonderful, on smart cities and nudge, and the nudge, I would say. And in a way it's a picking up of a thread of [Amos] Tversky and [Daniel] Kahneman, and the way they've helped—their work, anyway—has helped shape this behavioral economics field and its policy offshoot has made major inroads in the UK and the US, famously

around nudging.[35] And I'm just curious about this paper and where it came from and its argument.

GANDY: Alright, so this paper is also a jointly authored piece with with Selena Nemorin. We decided to do it while we were waiting to get our other paper published. She's interested in smart cities, she's interested in technology, she's interested in big data analysis. I guess she was not so much interested in economics in that regard, but economics clearly played a role in it—and behavioral economics played a role in it. So this paper then grew from this interest in behavioral economics as being the source for one kind of intervention in the development of smart cities. And it's the extent to which behavioral economics could be used in a kind way, in a useful way, in an important way—although because, as a political economist, I'm a critic, they're not using it in a way that I think they could or should. That is, I think, and I guess we think, since it's both of our names on that paper, that they should be not manipulating people, which they are doing, even though they say that they're manipulating them in the same way people would choose to be manipulated if they knew what the environment was and the circumstances were.

I don't believe that. That is, I believe it's important to make education. So again, it's important for you to agree, again, that I'm still stepping on my own toes in terms of manipulation, because my trying to get people to frame, my attractiveness of FrameWorks Institute—my trying to get FrameWorks Institute in order to partner with my democratic communications people is manipulative, alright? So here's this constant struggle we engage in. I mean, so in one sense, you know, as [Martin] Carnoy says, education is imperialism. So it's also information subsidies. The extent to which we are able to adopt social responsibility for informing and enabling people in order to change their life, change their practices, become smarter about—I'm not sure that the work they're doing with nudges are educational in the same way that I think that they might.

Indeed, I would say that the nudging that they do and I was critical of, is designed to be not identifiable. It's designed to be sub rosa. It's designed to be, they don't know that I'm being—they could at least say, Let me make material available. You want to read more about this? You want to understand more about this? Here's the material that can help you understand how it is they are and we are nudging you along a particular kind of path. But I'm still interested in, we, Selena and I are—presented in Madrid at IAMCR a third paper that we're going to do, and this is really a content analysis of a marvelous project, because it fits our skill. Some 80-plus states—cities, I'm sorry—submitted to a U.S. Department of Transportation [USDOT] grant opportunity and award to be a primary source for a model for smart cities with regard to transportation. So what's transportation and smart cities and USDOT funding research into? And so ours is a critical discourse analysis of those proposals.

We did 70 of them. Curiously, that is, my software could not translate eight of them. Could not turn it into text for me to do the kind of analysis that we wanted to do with it. But it is a fine

[35] Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and Selena Nemorin. "Toward a Political Economy of Nudge: Smart City Variations," *Information, Communication & Society* 22, no. 14 (2019): 2112—26. Selena Nemorin and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "Exploring Neuromarketing and Its Reliance on Remote Sensing: Social and Ethical Concerns," *International Journal of Communication* 11 (2017): 4824–44.

discourse analysis in order to try to understand what were—then again, here are my pointing to George [Gerbner] again. What is it about the characteristics of those cities and the people in those cities and the power of the people of those cities and the nature of political development in those cities? And we finished the paper by saying how wonderful it would be, although how hard it would be, to do a second study that would include measurement of the level of activism by minority, black, and other activists in that city—and does that explain the nature of the city's proposal about how they would be a smart city? It's a good life.[36]

Q: Speaking of fortune and luck and life chances and the rest, all of those themes that are part of your work, how would you reflect on your own fortune? And I ask that half in jest, but—

GANDY: I think I've probably used it many times during this discussion here, but luck is an important part of my sense of my life. I was, as you might remember, I was raised as a Catholic. I did 12 years of Catholic school, including in high school, so God is supposed to play a role in that. But luck has been the winner in my sense of my life. I have been very lucky throughout life. Some people would say I've been blessed, which is alright. I'll accept that in regard, but I don't think I've ever said in anything that I've written that I've been blessed in that regard. That's not how I identify it.

I see myself as being lucky. I've been lucky to be in the presence of people who were willing to give me an opportunity, to make an opportunity available for me. So my life now is a reflection of my having made an acceptance of the opportunities people gave me. I've stepped away from other ones, but I took advantage of ones that shaped me, that have provided me the next opportunity. So I've been very lucky. And I've made some of my own luck, and I'm so pleased.

Q: Well, that is a perfect way and point to wrap up this series of interviews. And I just want to thank you immensely for agreeing to conduct them and for providing such insight over the last few days. So thank you so much, Oscar.

GANDY: Well, thank you as well. This was a challenging experience for me. I have to tell you that I was anxious about it, even though you suggested to me that I shouldn't be doing homework. I had to be able to look at my work. So thank you so much.

Q: Thank you.

END OF SESSION FOUR

[36] Subsequently published as Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and Selena Nemorin, "Transportation and Smart City Imaginaries: A Critical Analysis of Proposals for the USDOT Smart City Challenge," *International Journal of Communication* 14 (2020): 1232–52.