

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

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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)

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.

RESTRICTIONS

None

FORMAT

Interview. Video recording at the home office of Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., in Tucson, AZ. One mp4 file of approximately two hours.

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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CITATION FORMS

Video recording

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

Transcript

Bibliography: Gandy, Oscar H., Jr. Interview by Jefferson Pooley (session one). Transcript of video recording, July 22, 2019. Communication Scholars Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Archives, University of Pennsylvania. **Footnote example:** Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., interview by Jefferson Pooley (session one), transcript of video recording, July 22, 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—

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

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 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.

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.

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: 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. 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

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.

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.

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).

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 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 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.

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).

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

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

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 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

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

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 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