

# A question of perspective. Response to Henning Engelke

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To begin, I want to thank Henning Engelke for sharing his “media archaeological perspective” (Engelke 2021 [this volume]: 110, 133) to NHI, as it is very different from my own approach, and thus quite interesting to read. Clearly, as we come from distinct backgrounds and research interests, what we bring to the analysis of NHI will be quite different, and so what we take away from it will also be quite different. That leaves a lot of room to learn new things. So, let me respond to a few comments, and also mention a few things I learned by reading this manuscript.

I have a little more information about the filming to contribute, based on what Birdwhistell told me. Writing about himself in the third person, because he was critiquing a draft of my 1987 paper, he wrote: “Birdwhistell had been out to Bateson, Jackson et al. as a consultant a number of times in relation to Bateson et al. filming. He knew of footage [the various films Bateson was making] and suggested to McQuown (the real organizer) that Bateson might be interested [in participating in the NHI seminar]. [Here he switches to first person] I went to see him [Bateson] – he was interested and attended nearly all of group review sessions” (Birdwhistell, undated letter to WLH, received April 23, 1984). Supporting this, McQuown says, “In the search for suitable materials, Birdwhistell persuaded Gregory Bateson to show the seminar some of his sound-filmed family-interviews” (1971: 1).

Although we are largely analyzing the same materials, we come to the NHI with few overlapping resources. For example, there’s a reference to Heather Love’s 2013 article on the values of thin description, which was new to me. Thank you for the unintended introduction – she and I have now corresponded about overlapping interests. And, although I had read Zabor’s (1978) dissertation (based in large part on research conducted while at EPPI with Birdwhistell), I had not thought to look for a list of other students who took classes at EPPI with him

and/or Van Vlack. This is a good reminder that there are often additional points of view needing to be captured for any historical research.

The focus on Doris' anger (Engelke 2021 [this volume]: 106, 126) surprised me. Emotions, like thoughts, were not what interested the NHI group given that their project was not focused on the individual level. Rather, they wanted to understand interactions and relationships between persons, what people do and say and how they react to one another's words and actions. Of course, they also wanted to understand the ways in which everyone's words and behaviors interrelated during communication, what today is typically called multimodality. None of this would have led to a study of anger, especially presumed, rather than explicitly expressed (and responded to) during the interaction being examined.

But I particularly appreciate the felicitous phrase "transitional object" (Engelke 2021 [this volume]: 105) for the Doris film, given that it marks the intersection between research film, documentary film, and communication theory. All in all, an interesting read.

## References

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