

**Ch. 4 – Bodies, Faces, Physical Spaces and the Materializations of Authority**

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A more recent version of this chapter is published as

Bencherki, N., Bourgoïn, A., Chen, H.-R., Cooren, F., Denault, V., & Plusquellec, P. (2019). Bodies, Faces, Physical Spaces and the Materializations of Authority. In Bencherki, N., Matte., F., & Cooren, F. (Eds.). *Authority and Power in Social Interaction: Methods and Analysis* (pp. 77-98). New York, NY: Routledge.

Available at <https://www.routledge.com/Authority-and-Power-in-Social-Interaction-Methods-and-Analysis/Bencherki-Matte-Cooren/p/book/9781138484597>

**Abstract**

This chapter presents three perspectives that show what kind of difference bodies, spaces, and other physical aspects make in interaction and how that difference can be analyzed in terms of power and authority. The first perspective, presented by Vincent Denault and Pierrich Plusquellec, consists in considering the human body not only as a subject but also as the object of analysis and reflects on ways in which experimental research on nonverbal communication may complete observation of naturally occurring interaction. The second, presented by Nicolas Bencherki and Alaric Bourgoïn, proposes a decentering of analysis towards objects and suggest that it is possible to describe them as communicating without reducing them to tools that are only relevant when they are used by human individuals. Finally, a last perspective, presented by François Cooren and Huey-Rong Chen, bridges the gap between verbal and non-verbal communication and proposes a ventriloquial analysis that embraces the confusion between human and non-human participants rather than seeking to neatly sort them out.

#### Ch. 4 – Bodies, Faces, Physical Spaces and the Materializations of Authority

There is an increasing interest in the language and social interaction community for the bodily and material elements that participate in interaction (Brassac, Fixmer, Mondada, & Vinck, 2008; Nevile, Haddington, Heinemann, & Rauniomaa, 2014). This interest has taken the form, among others, of multimodal analysis, which has allowed for drawing attention to the way people position their bodies relative to each other in public space or use pointing to coordinate interaction (Mondada, 2007, 2009), how they orient to and learn about bodies (Koschmann & Zemel, 2011; Zemel & Koschmann, 2016), or how they may bring objects into the interaction (Hindmarsh & Heath, 2003). Documents, presentation slides, photographs, and other artefacts all play a part in animating people, in guiding and displacing action, and in providing durability to otherwise ephemeral conversations (Cooren & Bencherki, 2010; Cooren & Matte, 2010; Vásquez, 2016).

However, interactional studies into bodily and material elements have yet to explore their role in authority and power issues. Other research traditions have hinted at the importance they play, including Foucault's (1977/1995) description of prison design's part in discipline and surveillance, Althusser's (1971) insistence that ideology exists through apparatuses—the Church, the school, a petition—and practices, or more recently Latour's (1992) account of how technology inscribes and provides potency to morality and norms. Each in their own way, these authors have understood that authority and power need to materialize in order to matter, i.e., to make a difference in any particular situation. They respectively insist on the quite real participation of architecture in controlling prisoners, of the unfolding of a Mass in reproducing ecclesiastic power, or of a seat belt that automatically positions itself on the driver's chest in propagating a particular understanding of drivers as irresponsible. However, they do not quite provide a methodology to tease out such participation in everyday interactions.

This chapter therefore proposes to discuss the ways in which it is possible to observe the kind of difference bodies, spaces, and other physical aspects make in interaction and how that difference can be described in terms of power and authority. The three positions that will be presented here will operate three different sorts of decentering away from human subjects. The first, presented by Vincent Denault and Pierrich Plusquellec, will consist in considering the human body not only as a subject but also as the object of analysis and reflect on ways in which experimental research on nonverbal communication may complete observation of naturally occurring interaction. The second, presented by Nicolas Bencherki and Alaric Bourgoïn, will propose a decentering of analysis towards objects and suggest that it is possible to describe them as communicating without reducing them to tools that are only relevant when they are used by human individuals. Finally, a last perspective, presented by François Cooren and Huey-Rong Chen, will bridge the gap between verbal and non-verbal and propose a ventriloquial analysis that embraces the confusion between human and non-human participants rather than seeking to neatly sort them out.

But first, given that we focus on dimensions of the interaction that are not entirely captured by the transcription, we provide below an alternative description of the sequence focusing on the physical setting in which it takes place as well as the nonverbal aspects of what is happening. This description will be then followed by the presentation of the three analytical positions.

### **Description of the Interaction**

A service counter divides the frame in two. On the right side, from the viewer's perspective, a mass of people is pressed against the counter, among which several are holding what appears to be video cameras. On the first plane, two men. David Moore wears a black shirt and leans on the counter, his hands joined. The other wears a white shirt and glasses and has one hand flat on the counter—it is David Ermold. On the other side of the counter, two clerks are sitting, one in the first plane and the other further up the counter. The two are separated by a table on which lies a printer. At the back of the main room, several doors seem to lead to individual offices. One of these doors, on the left, is open.

A woman—Kim Davis—emerges from there, wearing a pale blue shirt under a darker blue overall dress. She is followed by Flavis McKinney, a 72-year-old retiree “who came in almost daily to make sure [she] was okay” (Davis, 2018, p. 68) and who will remain next to the door for most of the sequence. As soon as she exits her office and has taken only a few steps towards the clerk in the first plane, Ermold yells at her, “Don't smile at me,” while Ermold verbally marks her arrival in saying, “Here she is.” She answers, “I did not smile,” before taking her place right next to the first clerk and in front of Moore, seeming to rest both her hands on the counter. She then explains that she is not being disrespectful to them, which the two men deny.

As they speak, camera shutters can be heard. One cameraman lifts his camera up to take a high-angle shot over people's heads. While the two men remain still while talking, Davis has her head slightly tilted and makes small hand gestures. For instance, when she is asked whether she “would do this to an interracial couple,” she answers, “A man and a woman, no,” which she accompanies with a sideways gesture of the right hand. Both she and Moore bob their heads as they keep talking, but she is more expressive, as when she makes a broad pointing gesture towards the crowd when she says, “I would ask you all,” or when she points at herself and then to Moore when preparing to say, “I've asked you all to leave,” and then makes a sideways gesture with both hands as she mentions that people are interrupting her business and no marriage licenses would be issued that day. Moore then asks her why she is not issuing licenses and, following her dry answer—she tilts her body forward and says “Because (.) I'm not”—Ermold clarifies: “Under whose authority?” The question seems to surprise Davis, who turns her body to the right towards Ermold, frowns slightly in what may appear as a defiant look, and answers slowly “Under God's authority.”

At that point, McKinney, the retiree who had remained at the back, begins moving toward the front of the room. Camera shutters continue to roar, telephones are taken out to record, and journalists' video cameras continue to turn. The clerk in the front plane remains remarkably still, and her colleague appears to focus on his reading. Some moments later, Moore raises his voice and points accusingly at Davis as he reminds her that he pays her salary. When he says, "I'm paying you to discriminate against me right now, that's what I'm paying for," he bangs his fist on the table a few times. He then points at Ermold, and then slaps his hand on the counter when he says, "I'm paying (.) for this memory (.) with my partner that I love and that I've been with for seventeen years." He then slightly bends forward toward Davis when he asks her, "What's the longest you've been with someone, that you've been married to someone?" This is when she invites people to "push back" away from the counter and makes a gesture as if she were guiding the crowd backwards—to no avail.

When Moore tells her that they are not leaving until they have a license, Davis turns around, makes a dismissive sign behind her, as if to indicate she is ignoring the men, and walks back to her office. As she is about to enter, Moore forcefully and accusatively points at her and yells, "Call the police." The woman waves one last time and enters her office. The first-plane clerk keeps looking at Moore the whole time, and her colleague continues to read something. We also see McKinney slightly approaching Davis's office. The cameras, after having followed Davis, turn back to Moore.

Moore then yells that "everyone in this office should be ashamed of themselves," which prompts Ermold to put his hand on Moore's shoulder. He points somewhere—perhaps at McKinney—as he asks, "Is this what you want to remember? Is this what you want to remember, that you stood up for this?" McKinney answers at that point, "Amen, yes sir." Moore begins to bang his fist on the table, as he continues, "That your children will have to look at you and realize that you are bigots, and that you discriminated against people?" McKinney then answers, "No, no discrimination," at which point Davis comes out again from her office. As McKinney explains that he finds solace in God's words, and as Moore tilts his body forward to explain that "God does not belong in the county clerk's office," Davis walks back to her previous position in front of Moore and next to the first clerk. When she arrives, Moore slaps his left hand on the counter and repeats—speaking of the police—"Somebody call them."

As the two sides continue to argue, Davis continues to make hand gestures while Moore bends towards her, his hands joined on the counter, and while Ermold looks at her, his right hand on the counter. Cameras continue to record, shutters continue to shut, and the first clerk looks at them while the other hands a sheet over the counter to someone, which seems to indicate he is attending to a client. He then looks briefly towards Davis. From the far right of the room, behind the two men, someone screams at Davis, "This is not the house of God! . . . Do your job . . . But you're forcing your religion on other people." This screaming from behind him appears to break Moore's concentration, as he turns around

towards the crowd and asks, “Can you guys shut up?” After a brief pause, Moore explains himself: “You’re the press, so shut up.”

The people at the back then clarify that they are also waiting for a marriage license, a clarification that is followed by an apology, a brief laughter, all the cameras turning towards the newly discovered allies, and an invitation by Moore to come to the front. Meanwhile, on the other side of the counter, another man, in a white shirt, emerges from a door at the back of the room to speak with McKinney, who then follows him to the back while a journalist in a turquoise shirt manages to get to the front of the pack and to put his microphone on the counter. When the two partners finally position themselves next to Moore, they explain to Davis that she should resign, as she looks intently at them before mimicking taking a hat off and explaining that she cannot separate her beliefs from herself. Ermold then says she should quit, and Davis turns towards him with a surprised but defiant look and asks, “Why should I do that?” In the meantime, the second clerk reaches out for a sheet of paper behind him.

After the brief discussion between Davis and the two men over quitting, the first clerk now has her hands positioned as a triangle in front of her and seems to be waiting this situation out. The second clerk continues to look at whatever he is reading. Shutters continue to be heard, and camera people continue filming. Davis points at herself, saying that she is ready to face her consequences, and then points at the two men, notifying them that they will also face theirs “when it comes time for judgment,” displaying what appears like a look of displeasure. She points at them again to indicate that it is their choice not to believe after they tell her they don’t. When the conversation moves to whether she made herself the “figurehead of this new church,” Davis leans towards the two men and seems to count on her hands as she explains that “Jesus is the same today, yesterday, and forever.” This seems to upset Moore, who points at himself and then looks at Ermold, before asking Davis, “Do you even know what our religious beliefs are?” He then makes several hand gestures as he answers himself, “You know why? You don’t need to know, we don’t need to know yours.” He goes further and taps into his hand and says that he believes she “should have the right to have whatever beliefs [she] want[s].”

At that point, she points a complicit finger at Moore and repeats “exactly” several times. Davis then highlights, with a circling motion of the hands, that the two couples can get a marriage license in any surrounding county, an argument that is dismissed by Moore, who insists that they do not have to do so since it is legal in their county. At that point, the second clerk reaches out for another sheet of paper behind him. Moore then states that it may take five years to sue her, which he does not want to do, and Davis seems to concur by pointing first at Moore and then to herself, saying that she does not want them or her to be “put out any more than that.” She then raises her finger up and proclaims that there is a remedy, which would consist in the governor of the state doing his job.

Having described some—although certainly not all—nonverbal aspects of the sequence, we now present three different ways to analyze the materialization of authority. While the first section, authored by Vincent Denault and Pierrich Plusquellec, focuses on experimental research on facial expressions and gestures as well as other bodily elements, including proxemics, to inform conversation analysis, the second section, authored by Nicolas Bencherki and Alaric Bourgoïn, mobilizes a transductive approach to analyze how the action of physical and architectural elements take their significance and meaning from their participation to broader systems of action. Finally, François Cooren and Huey-Rong Chen present a ventriloquial analysis of this sequence by focusing on how two opposite situations end up authoring themselves in these circumstances.

### **An Experimental Research Approach**

#### *Vincent Denault and Pierrich Plusquellec*

According to Stivers & Sidnell (2005), “face-to-face interaction is, by definition, multimodal interaction in which participants encounter a steady stream of meaningful facial expressions, gestures, body postures, head movements, words, grammatical constructions, and prosodic contours” (p. 2). Unfortunately, even if particular bodily actions such as gaze direction, facial expression and body orientation are studied by interaction analysts (e.g., Goodwin, 1980; Kaukamaa, Peräkylä, & Ruusuvuori, 2015; Mondada, 2009), transcription methods often lack visuospatial modalities that would otherwise help “to obtain a more complete understanding of the dynamic nature of the conversation that is unfolding in real time” (Ashenfelter, 2007, p. 3).

Moreover, even if nonverbal communication has been the subject of thousands of peer-reviewed publications since the 1960s (see Plusquellec & Denault, 2018), exchanges between these traditions, often adopting experimental approaches, and interaction analysts remain rare. However, regardless of epistemological and methodological differences that may seem irreconcilable, such a rich body of knowledge “can lead to novel insights into language and social interaction” (Kendrick, 2017, p. 9). Experimental research on facial expressions and proxemics may be of great relevance to understand power and authority issues in interaction, what Judith Hall called the vertical dimension of human relationships (Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005).

Facial expressions, in particular, have received scientific attention at least since the 1860s, when French neurologist Guillaume Duchenne de Boulogne (1862/1990) used electricity to stimulate facial muscles and study emotions. Just a few years later, English naturalist Charles Darwin (1872) wrote on the subject, but scientific attention remained limited until the 1960s when American psychologist Paul Ekman started to study the cross-cultural aspect of nonverbal communication and gave an impetus to research on facial expressions (Ekman, 2003). Among various bodily elements, facial expressions are probably the

aspect of nonverbal communication that has come under the closest scrutiny from academics (Plusquellec & Denault, 2018).

For example, using the Facial Action Coding System (FACS; Ekman & Friesen, 1978), a coding system to describe facial-muscle contractions (referred to as Action Units, or AU), several academics consider that different facial expressions reflect different underlying emotional states (Du & Martinez, 2015; Ekman, 2016). According to the neurocultural perspective, facial expressions are similarly displayed by people from different cultures when they experience the same basic emotions. However, social conventions can modify their display to what is more socially appropriate according to the context. Therefore, emotional facial expressions described using the FACS can represent “a combination of one’s true feelings and the feelings that one wishes to project” (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2010, p. 302). Understanding the ins and outs of this perspective offers several hints into how Davis’s, Moore’s, and Ermold’s power and authority can be influenced by their emotional facial expressions.

With regards to Davis, from the outset of and throughout the interaction with Ermold and Moore, she displays emotional facial expressions which seem to contradict, confirm, modulate and accentuate (Ekman, 1965) the vocal and verbal modalities of her discourse. At the very beginning, when Davis emerges from her office at the back of the main room, she looks in the direction of Ermold and Moore and displays a smile (what the FACS would code as AU6+AU12), which likely explains Ermold’s comment: “Don’t smile at me.” However, Davis’s answer, “I did not smile,” comes into contradiction with (or at least modulates) her facial expression, whether or not her smile shows her true feeling or the feeling that she wishes to project. She smiles, but she denies it. While this detail might at first seem anecdotal, similar contradictions can call into question the authority under which she really acts, and more so considering that experimental studies highlighted a relation between the intensity, frequency and duration of a facial expression (including smiling) and power and authority (de Lemus, Spears, & Moya, 2012; Hecht & LaFrance, 1998; Hess, Blairy, & Kleck, 2000; Knutson, 1996).

For example, when Davis is asked under whose authority she acts, she replies: “Under God’s authority.” However, the facial expression of anger (AU4+AU7+AU31) she displays while replying comes into contradiction with (or at least modulates) the peaceful and respectful tone of her voice (a vocal modality) or the words she used at the very beginning of the interaction (e.g., “I’m not being disrespectful to you”; a verbal modality). A similar contradiction is also displayed when Davis says that she is ready to face the consequences of her actions and that Moore and Ermold will also face theirs “when it comes time for judgment,” along with a facial expression of disgust (AU9+AU10) as she looks in their direction.

Therefore, if one was to argue that actions “Under God’s authority” ought to be based on love, peace and respect, the contradictions between bodily and spatial—what we term visuospatial—as well as verbal and vocal modalities can call into question the authority under which she acts. Is it really under the

authority of a God of love, peace and respect? When, on the contrary, Davis expresses anger and disgust, despite her previous verbal and vocal modalities, one could argue that she now acts under the authority of a different God, namely the God of Judgment Day, a God that tells her not to allow a gay couple to get married, a God that will punish Moore and Ermold, a God that is feeling anger and disgust toward the gay couple, and her negative facial expressions would therefore confirm (or at least accentuate) the authority under which she acts.

Obviously, the use of findings from experimental research on nonverbal communication to understand power and authority issues in interactions exceeds facial expressions. Proxemics, or “the study of our perception and structuring of interpersonal and environmental space” (Harrigan, 2005, p. 137), is another research subject that could be deemed very informative for conversation analysis. As Paul Ekman did for facial expressions, the beginning of research on proxemics dates back to the 1960s and the work of American anthropologist Edward T. Hall, who developed the landmark notation system for interpersonal distances (Hall, 1959, 1963).

Using naturalistic research methods, Hall divided them in four categories: 1) the intimate distance for private and informal interactions, 2) the personal-casual distance for romantic partners, family, friends and coworkers, 3) the social-consultative distance for casual and formal interactions and 4) the public distance for interactions between people of different hierarchy such as speakers with their audiences and celebrities with their fans (Burgoon et al., 2010). However, research on proxemics goes well beyond those four categories. The interaction between Davis, Moore and Ermold appears to be particularly telling on the proxemic norms differentiating superiors from subordinates. For example, compared to the territory of lower status individuals, higher status individuals tend to have larger and less accessible territories (Remland, 1981). They may also have more control over the conversational distance (Dean, Willis, & Hewitt, 1975) as well as the initiation and the interruption of a conversation (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2006; Hall et al., 2005). The physical setting where the interaction between Davis, Ermold and Moore takes place provides a perfect example of such proxemics norms.

Located at the back of the main room, Davis’s office is a closed space, rather inaccessible for anyone who comes through the front door of the building. If Moore and Ermold wanted to access Davis’s office, they would have to jump over the service counter and kick down a door. Compared to the two clerks’ working space, accessible only by leaning over the counter, Davis’s office offers greater security from undesirable clients, a visuospatial modality that implies power and authority. Furthermore, such an isolated space, behind walls and the counter, allows Davis to initiate and interrupt the interaction at her own will, which accentuates the power asymmetry with Moore and Ermold. The fact that she has a lot more room to move and decide on the conversational distance when she wants to speak to them also accentuates such power asymmetry. This is further evidenced when, by leaning repeatedly on the counter,



Moore arguably appears to call into question the distance created by the counter, as if he were trying to invade as much as possible Davis's privileged space.

Furthermore, since experimental research suggests that louder voices as well as more expressive faces and gestures are perceived to be associated with higher status individuals (Hall et al., 2005), one could also hypothesize that Moore and Ermold embrace such behaviors during their interaction with Davis to communicate power, lower the power asymmetry and try to secure submission to their verbal request (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2006). However, since their strategy fails, one could argue that Davis considers that the power communicated by their behaviors (or by any other sources) did not outweigh the power of the God of Judgment Day.

While experimental research on facial expressions and gestures as well as other bodily elements, including proxemics, also have limitations, the above analysis serves as an example on how considering this body of knowledge could enrich our understanding of power and authority issues in interactions.

### **A Transductive Approach**

*Nicolas Bencherki and Alaric Bourgoin*

Another way of decentering authority away from the sole contribution of human beings is to look at what *things* do. To avoid bringing back human beings in the picture, we must be able to describe the meaning of those action without resorting to human interpretation. This is key when negotiating authority, as being able to present meaning as stemming from another source besides one's own interpretation can be crucial in shaping a situation to which all parties defer. In other words, being able to say "the computer needs an upgrade" requires the IT technician to fix the computer more compellingly than someone saying "I believe that you should do something."

We propose to call such a perspective, where authority concerns the ability of things to act and the meaning of those actions, "transductive" in the sense that we pay attention to the way action is carried around through people, artefacts and other entities. The term "transduction" was coined by French philosopher Gilbert Simondon (1958/2005) to refer to the way action is transported along a series of entities of various ontologies: for instance, the action of raising a glass takes several consecutive incarnations, from interactions between brain cells processing visual stimuli, to electric current flowing along a nerve, to serotonin crossing a synapse, until it translates into a sequence of coordinated muscle movements. One important theoretical assumption that we make—and that we borrow both from Simondon and from ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967, 1996)—is that what an action or an object means is what it contributes to a broader action. In other words, we consider action to compound yet other actions to which it provides meaning. For instance, what the movement of our arm means can only be understood in the "context" of raising our wine glass, which in turn takes on a

particular sense as it contributes to “giving a toast” (a similar idea can be found in the distinction between a wink and a blink in Geertz, 1973).

Simondon’s (1958/2005) approach to signification has the advantage of de-personalizing meaning: we do not need people to form a meaning in their minds, and then to share it verbally or in other meaningful actions, for meaning to be observable. In a transductive perspective, people mean things, but so do an arm, a wine glass, or other objects, as long as they contribute it to a more complex system of action that provides them with meaning by forming their context. In this sense, our proposal is close to the way conversation analysis understands the notion of context: it is not of a different analytical level than the communicative actions under study; rather, context is offered by prior and subsequent action inasmuch as together they form an activity in which participants are engaged (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990).

However, a transductive perspective does not limit this view of meaning and context to the actions and activities produced through human language alone. The revolving doors at a building’s entrance slow down the flow of people not because they (the doors) *want* to or because people *interpret* them as such but because, as far as the broad activity of people moving in and out of the building, the revolving doors’ contribution indeed—and probably without anyone wanting this—consists in slowing down people’s flow. There is no need to attribute intention to the revolving doors, or to survey users’ understanding, to observe this contribution. As far as other activities may be concerned—say, preventing wind drafts—the revolving doors may contribute other actions and therefore have different meanings.

The fact that the same action (whether it is authored by a human or not) can participate to several activities at once and therefore have several concurrent meanings is, for instance, what Davis, Moore and Ermold discover at the very beginning of the transcript. Davis comes out of her office and moves towards the two men, sporting what appears like a grin. For Moore, this is a “smile,” as it is according to the Facial Action Coding System introduced in the previous analysis. He seems to attribute this meaning to the apparent grin because he locates it within the context of a history of tense relationship between Davis and him. For her part, Davis denies this meaning and seems to explain this denial by the fact that “I’m not being disrespectful to you” (line 8). Moore immediately rejects this explanation. He provides a different activity to which the alleged smile contributes and that provides it with its ‘disrespectful’ meaning: the fact that she is “treating [them] as second-class citizens” (line 10).

In this sense, power or authority is exercised over the meaning of action by pointing out the activity to which it contributes and therefore taking advantage of the fact that action may have several concurrent meanings at once because it contributes to several activities at once. This first example, however, could be reduced to a situation where two people, Davis and Moore, struggle over the meaning of an “object,” the so-called smile. Yet, even in this case it should be acknowledged that a physical feature of the situation contributed something to the activity underway independently of human control (unless

we suppose Davis intentionally smiled and then lied about it). To borrow from Derrida (1994), we could say that “it smiled” in the same way that “it rains,” and that human actors then had to deal with this unexpected action/contribution to the interaction.

Another case will help illustrate the contribution of objects to interaction, and the way they participate to authority, even without obvious controversy over meaning between human participants. It is perhaps the most obvious non-human participant in the interaction between Davis and the two men: the counter (see also the analysis of a service counter in Latour, 1996). The counter *does* two things that appear to be significant in this interaction: it prevents movement from one side of the room to the other, and it offers a surface between the two parties. These two actions may appear to be obvious, but their meaning is revealed to be particularly important when it is looked at through the lens of the activities to which they contribute.

Interestingly, the clerk at the back of the room, away from where Davis, Moore and Ermold are arguing, offers an example of what may perhaps be the more usual contribution of the counter. When a person who appears to be a client approaches the clerk, the counter *separates* the two individuals and *establishes* two distinct spaces in the interaction, that of the clerk, who is sitting and has his equipment and documents accessible to him on his side, some of which—including the computer screen—are hidden from the client, and that of the client, who remains standing up, out of reach from the clerk’s material. Power and authority, in this sense, also take the form of the imbalance created by the counter, in terms of access to information and to the tools and documents required to evaluate client requests and grant or deny them.

The counter also offers a delimited collaboration space to both parties to the extent that the countertop constitutes a surface on which the client and the clerk can jointly look at documents, fill them, etc. This is exactly what happens in this case, as the client puts what seems to be a piece of paper on the counter, and both men orient to it. In this sense, the counter not only separates the two sides of the service interaction and defines which of the two parties has control over it but also delineates the extent to which the client can be involved in the processing of his own demand.

Coming back to the first plane of the interaction, Davis herself notes the crucial part played by the counter in the interaction and more generally in the county clerk’s office when, at line 80, she asks people to “push back away” from the counter, accompanying the demand with a hand gesture, after noting that they are “interrupting [her] business.” This comment by Davis, and the subsequent refusal of people to push back, constitutes a recognition that the very crowding of the room by Moore, Ermold and their supporters constitutes a form of disruption and resistance. This reiterates the central role played by the counter in the service interaction and in the institution of clerks’ authority as described above: by

preventing access to the counter, resisters are also rendering inoperative the main instrument of administrative authority in Davis's office.

Yet, the counter still contributes to creating an imbalance between the two groups. First, even in this unusual situation, it continues to play its role of establishing two unequal spaces. On the side of the couple, the space (and the screen as we watch the recording) is very crowded, to the point that sight and movement are difficult. For instance, Moore does not see who is shouting behind him and does not at first realize it is a fellow gay couple. When he invites the other two men to the front, it takes them a while to move through the crowd.

The importance of this sequence is highlighted when the couple's space (the crowded side of the counter) is contrasted with that of Davis. In agreement with the previous analysis, we see that she can move freely thanks to the floodgate offered by the counter. She chooses the moment when she moves into the room initially and is then able to retreat to her office and to come back again as she pleases. This is especially important given that Moore, who cannot move with the same freedom, must shout at her when she moves away and as the counter creates distance between the two. To some extent, then, it could be said that Moore's shouting following line 94, when Davis leaves to her office, is at least partly *caused* by the counter, as it creates an imbalance between the two parties' abilities to move and therefore establishes increasing distance between them, forcing Moore to shout in order to be heard by Davis.

The counter also continues to delineate the space available for interaction. While Moore does attempt to bend forward to gain a few inches on Davis, as was already pointed out in this chapter's first analysis, his ability to physically express his "request" is limited to the space afforded by the countertop: he bangs his fist or taps his hand on it to state exasperation (e.g., lines 69, 108 and 222), and the journalists whom he invited and are—literally—on his side can put their microphones or voice recorders on the counter to record the argument. The limited form of involvement made possible by the counter means that Moore only had his hands and the incline of his body to express himself physically, thus making him look either angry—as he banged his fist—or perhaps even aggressive, as he bent forward. In contrast, Davis could move back and forth, retreat, make large hand gestures and so forth, allowing her to appear less impatient throughout the interaction and to retreat when, possibly, she had had too much.

A transductive analysis, therefore, recognizes that the counter—and certainly other artefacts in the situation—contributed action to the broader activity in which Davis, Moore and Ermold (and the others) were involved. This contribution did not only depend on the interpretation people made of it, although on one occasion at least Davis did seem to acknowledge the importance of the counter for her "business." In fact, the counter, while instrumental in what was taking place and in creating an imbalance between its two sides, was nearly never mentioned by the parties. By proposing that action takes its significance and meaning from its participation to a broader system of action, a transductive perspective allows moving the

analysis of artefacts to what observably takes place without reducing it to what participants say about objects or to a pre-defined list of possible roles artefacts may play.

### **A Ventriloquial Approach**

*François Cooren and Huey-Rong Chen*

We now move to what has come to be known as a “ventriloquial” analysis (Cooren, 2010; Cooren, Matte, Benoit-Barné, & Brummans, 2013). What does it mean to study interaction from a ventriloquial perspective, and what can this type of analysis tell us about the enactment of authority? As we will show, a ventriloquial approach focuses not only on speaking and doing, but also, and maybe especially, on making one speak or making one do something (*faire parler* or *faire faire*, as we say in French). In their interactions, people indeed keep making figures say things (“figure” is the term ventriloquists sometimes use to talk about their dummies), whether these figures are facts, situations, texts, other persons, organizations or institutions, which often act as a source of authority (Cooren, 2010). For instance, if X decides to light a cigarette in a public area, Y can react by pointing him to a no-smoking sign posted on a wall. By signaling this sign, Y is making the sign say something to X, which is that the latter should refrain from smoking.

Y could have also said, “Sorry, but you cannot smoke here,” which appears less like a ventriloquial move, but even in this case, her reaction consists of implicitly invoking an authority (a law or policy) that allegedly allows her to tell X that he is not authorized to smoke. In other words, ventriloquism, whether we deal with verbal or nonverbal communication, has a lot to do with what ethnomethodology calls *accountability*, that is, the accountable character of people’s action. If X came to question Y’s injunction, the latter could simply reply, “It is the law!” In that sense, *the law is supposed to speak through Y* when s/he calls upon X’s conduct. Ventriloquism, then, is about adding *authors* of what is being done or said, hence the etymological link between *authoring* and *authorizing* (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, 2010; Taylor & Van Every, 2000, 2014).

As we see in these illustrations, another interesting aspect of ventriloquism is that it is *bidirectional*. When Y points X to the no-smoking sign, something very strange happens, as the sign is now signaling X that he should put out his cigarette. In other words, by pointing X to the sign, Y and her finger become intermediaries through which the no-smoking sign can express itself and possibly make a difference as a source of authority. Analyzing an interaction from a ventriloquial perspective thus leads us to decenter our analyses, as human beings do not *necessarily* have to be the center of our observations. *When people interact with each other, they can also be positioned or position themselves as the means, intermediaries or media through which other elements speak*. In other words, human interactants are not only ventriloquists, they are also, whether they like it or not, dummies.

Although some ventriloquial moves can be intentional (like the one that consists of pointing to a non-smoking sign), they do not need to be. As soon as we recognize that human beings are as much ventriloquists as they are dummies, our analyses can highlight all the elements of a situation that can express themselves through what is intentionally or unintentionally done or said. This also means that what expresses itself through someone does not necessarily have to be a source of authority or legitimacy for this person, as some elements can have, on the contrary, *delegitimizing effects*. A good example is what happens at the beginning of the interaction between Davis, Ermold and Moore.

- 1   ERMOLD   Absolutely ludicrous ((Kim David arrives from her office. She is smiling))  
 2           (1.0)  
 3   ERMOLD   Don't smile at [me  
 4   MOORE                           [Here she is  
 5           (0.5)  
 6   DAVIS       I did not smile  
 7           (2.0)  
 8   DAVIS       I'm not being disrespectful to you ((shaking her head))  
 9   ERMOLD   You absolu[tely have disrespected us  
 10  MOORE                           [You absolutely are, treating us as second-class citizens=  
 11  DAVIS       =[No I don't ((shaking her head))  
 12  MOORE       =[is what you are doing, telling us that we don't deserve the same right rights that  
 13           you do think that you have  
 14  DAVIS       I'm saying that [you do-

As Kim Davis arrives with what looks like a smile from her office, we see Ermold enjoining her to stop smiling at him (line 3), an injunction to which Davis responds in saying “I did not smile” (line 6) and then, two seconds later, “I’m not being disrespectful to you,” (line 8) while shaking her head. Although Davis first denies having smiled at Ermold on line 6, we can interpret what she says on line 8 as a way to call into question how Ermold might have ventriloquized her conduct so far, that is, what he might have *made it say*, i.e., that she disrespects him. Smiling in the context of a conflictual situation can indeed be interpreted as such to the extent that conflicts normally *call for* some kind of seriousness or gravity, which Davis’s smile appears here to contradict.

In terms of authority and legitimacy, we can thus note that in saying “Don’t smile at me,” Ermold is indirectly telling her that the situation they find themselves in *does not allow* her to smile. Ventriloquism is at stake here to the extent that Ermold *makes Davis’s smile say* that she is disrespectful to him, something that Davis understands very well when she explicitly denies that such is the case (line 8). While a smile is supposed to mark, in normal circumstances, a form of respect for the client, it becomes, through Ermold’s reaction on line 3, a way to *deny* the conflictual situation they are involved in. Through her smile, a form of lightness, flippancy or detachment is supposed to express itself, while the situation calls, according to him, for seriousness, severity and gravity.

Reacting to Davis's denial, we then see Moore and Ermold affirming that she has been and is disrespectful to them (lines 9–10). Interestingly, Moore ventriloquizes what for him has been her conduct so far when he says, "You absolutely are, treating us as second-class citizens is what you are doing, telling us that we don't deserve the same right rights that you do think that you have" (lines 10, 12–13). In other words, what she has been doing and saying so far (a sequence that might also include the previous encounters the three of them had before) becomes, through Moore's reaction, not only an act of discrimination (as they are allegedly treated as second-class citizens) but also a denial of their rights as citizens, a ventriloquation that Davis again explicitly and implicitly denies (lines 11 and 14).

Throughout a big part of the interaction, except at specific moments we will go back to, Davis will maintain what could be called the face of a professional county clerk, a face that is supposed to contradict Moore and Ermold's accusations of disrespect. This professionalism starts with her smile (line 1) but can also be identified through the calmness of her voice (e.g., lines 19), a calmness that sometimes is accompanied by firmness when she tells everyone on the other side of the counter that they have to leave (lines 55–56, 77) or push back away (lines 80–81). As Moore gets more and more angry, especially when he bangs his hand against the counter while saying, "I pay you to discriminate against me right now, that's what I'm paying for" (lines 69–70), we see her imperturbably reacting with a look and a hand gesture ventriloquizing that it is too bad for him and that there is nothing she can do about it (line 71).

This verbal and nonverbal conduct is important in terms of authority as it allows her to remain the official voice of the office she is supposed to represent. Acting like a professional who does not lose her temper even when she is facing adversity means that she still embodies the role of the county clerk responding to her clients, angry as they might be. Ventriloquial effects can thus be recognized throughout the whole excerpt, as it is the voice and deeds of a "professional clerk" that will keep being heard and observed through her conduct. In other words, when Davis speaks, it is almost uninterruptedly the professional clerk that we hear and see speaking.

Even when the register of professionalism gives way to a more informal (almost intimate) approach on her part, we still see her remaining calm and unruffled. After Moore has been shouting at all the office employees, accusing them of bigotry (line 122) and discrimination (line 124), Davis comes back a second time from her office and starts addressing him with his first name in a calm and polite tone ("David, listen to me" (line 140); "David, please, [I'm asking you, please listen to me]" (line 144)), trying to establish a rapport with him (e.g., "I know you don't care" (line 150); "You believe passionately in wh[at you are doing as I do ((making a circle with her hands))" (lines 156–157)).

Two ventriloquations thus appear to oppose each other in this office. On one side, Moore and Ermold, whose expressions of anger and exasperation are supposed to express their indignation regarding what Davis is doing to them (for instance, Moore says, "You do not understand what you are doing to

people” at lines 158–159). In other words, the indignant/outrageous/offensive character of the situation is supposed to express itself through their interventions. On the other side, Davis’s calmness, politeness and placidity appears to indirectly deny the way Moore and Ermold materialize and ventriloquize the situation. Through what she says, and especially how she says it, it is as if a certain normality of the situation was expressing itself: *she is still serving clients despite everything that might contradict her reading of the situation.*

Through this calmness/politeness/placidity, one could even see an attempt on Davis’s part to express a form of love or care (see chapter 6) with which Moore and Ermold’s expressions of anger and exasperation contrast, especially if they are understood as an expression of hatred or at least animosity against Davis (see, for instance, lines 21, 74–76). Moore seems to understand the danger this contrast creates as he responds, “I’m beyond listening to you” (line 141), with a tone of exasperation when she starts addressing him with his first name, as if to calm him down. On line 146, he even says, “I don’t- I don’t care how polite you are,” which Davis cleverly takes up by saying, “I know you don’t care” (line 150), which appears to add an additional contrast between someone who is supposed to paradoxically care for her interlocutor (Davis) and someone who does not (Moore).

Visibly aware that this contrast is not to his advantage, Moore then replies, “You’re not- This is not polite” (line 152), and then, “I would never do this to someone, what you are doing to us, I would never (.) do to someone” (lines 154–155). After having alluded to the extra-politeness of her interventions (line 146), Moore thus now denies it. While Davis is indeed having a conduct that could be considered respectful and considerate of her interlocutors (which is usually what we mean by politeness), something crucial is missing for Moore and Ermold, that is, the fact that she does not respect their legal right to be issued a marriage license. *Moore therefore attempt to undermine Davis’s strategy of normalization, a strategy that amounts to denying the extraordinary character of the situation.*

Although we do not have enough space to develop further our analysis, we would like to go back to two moments where a change of register is taking place, that is, moments where Davis appears to take off the mask of calmness and placidity while still remaining polite. The first moment takes place in response to Ermold, who had just asked her, “Under whose authority? (0.5) are you not issuing licenses?” (line 47). Davis then looks defiantly at him and replies, “Under God’s authority.” This again happens, although maybe in a milder form, where she tells her interlocutors that her beliefs cannot be separated from her (lines 184–186) and when she calls into question the fact that she should resign: “((Turning towards Ermold and looking at him defiantly)) Why should I have to” (line 188).

In both cases, we note that her calmness gives way to defiance, which could also be interpreted as a change in terms of source of authority. While we saw that calmness and placidity allowed her to remain the official voice of Rowan County, these brief moments of defiance appear to position her as none other



than (her version of) the voice of God, a God that will, as she reminds her interlocutors, judge their conduct when times come: “I’m willing to face my consequences and you will all face your consequences when it comes time for judgment” (lines 195–196). A sort of mild polyphony can thus be heard throughout this excerpt. While she manages, for the most part, to remain the voice of the office she is supposed to represent, we see the voice of God expressing itself when times come to defend her faith and convictions.

As we tried to show in this section, ventriloquism is about *what* or *who* expresses itself/himself/herself through what is being said or done; that is, it is about all the different ways by which a situation ends up communicating itself through various elements that are supposed to embody it. Although this approach does not question human beings’ incredible capacity to not only make sense of situations but also strategically mobilize some of their aspects, it shows that this sensemaking and strategy precisely amounts to ventriloquizing the world they find themselves in. In conflictual situations, like the one we analyzed here, we saw that these activities of ventriloquation keep contradicting each other, that is, literally and figuratively say different things about what the situation is all about.

From a ventriloquial perspective, a conflict not only marks disagreement between two or more people, it also, and maybe especially, expresses at least two different ways to convey what a situation *calls for*. The game of authority that we analyzed thus consists of multiplying the authors that are supposed to say something about what the situation is or requires, whether it is a look, a smile, a politeness register, what is being explicitly said or even God himself. Did we observe a clerk trying to serve her clients the best way she said she could or a clerk blatantly denying a couple their fundamental rights? As our analysis demonstrates, what we actually observed was the clash between these two cooccurring situations, which kept expressing themselves throughout this altercation.

If authoring is about authorizing, the game of authority is about who or what is allowed to ventriloquize itself/himself/herself in a given situation. It is this game of expression that the ventriloquial analysis helps us decipher and analyze.

## **Conclusion**

The three analytical perspectives presented above share a commitment to decenter the analysis towards the “things”—whether physical objects or seemingly abstract entities—that are active in the situation. In Vincent Denault and Pierrich Plusquellec’s proposal, insights from experimental research comfort the analyst’s recognition of facial expressions, which are then compared to verbal statements and actions from their owner. In that sense, facial expressions may challenge the speakers’ other expressive modalities and reveal discrepancies between the authority they invoke and what actually drives them to say what they say or do what they do. Nicolas Bencherki and Alaric Bourgoïn, for their part, suggest that things

may participate in interaction irrespective of the interpretation people make of them. The meaning of their action proceeds from the contribution they make to broader activities. Since a same action may participate to several activities, it also has several meanings. Negotiating authority, then, consists in pointing out different activities to which action contributes, and therefore its very meaning. Finally, François Cooren and Huey-Rong Chen propose an analytical strategy based on the observation of the way people share the authorship of what they say and do with different figures, which are thus brought into the situation and presented as authorizing those actions, thus sharing their authority with the speaker.

**Table 4.1: Summary of Analytical Approaches to Authority’s Materiality**

<b>Perspective</b>	Experimental research approach <i>Vincent Denault and Pierrich Plusquellec</i>	Transductive approach <i>Nicolas Bencherki and Alaric Bourgoïn</i>	Ventriloquial approach <i>François Cooren and Huey-Rong Chen</i>
<b>Analytical focus</b>	Facial expressions and proxemics, especially as they are described in experimental research on nonverbal communication	The contribution of action to broader activities	The sharing of action with figures through invocation
<b>How authority is constituted in interaction</b>	By contradiction, confirmation, modulation and accentuation of vocal and verbal modalities.	Through a struggle over the meaning of action, which corresponds to attributing action to different activities	By presenting oneself as authorized to act in a given way by different figures that make up the situation
<b>How it shifts understanding of authority</b>	Shows that comparisons of the speakers’ nonverbal behaviors with stated authority sources reveal what actually drives their actions	Connects authority, action and meaning without privileging human interpretation	Shows that authoring and authorizing have a lot to do with each other. By multiplying the author of a position, we tend to look more authorized to voice it.
<b>Key concepts</b>	Facial Action Coding System (FACS), emotion, vertical dimension of human relationships	Transduction, action, meaning, attribution of action	Ventriloquism, polyphony, figure, authoring
<b>Suggested readings</b>	Knapp, M. L., Hall, J. A., Horgan, T. G. (2014). <i>Nonverbal communication in human interaction</i> . Boston: Wadsworth.	Simondon, G. (2016). <i>On the mode of existence of technical objects</i> . Minneapolis, MN: Univocal Pub.	Cooren, F. (2010). <i>Action and agency in dialogue</i> . Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

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