

U of C. professor studied 'face-to-face interaction'

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[浏览] May 17, 2007. Starkey Duncan Jr. made a lifetime study of the gestures, pauses and facial expressions that are part of human communication. Dr. Duncan, 71, a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago and father of Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan, died Tuesday, May 15, of complications from heart surgery at Bernard Mitchell Hospital at the University of Chicago Medical Center, said his daughter, Sarah.

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Dr. Duncan, 71, a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago and father of Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan, died Tuesday, May 15, of complications from heart surgery at Bernard Mitchell Hospital at the University of Chicago Medical Center, said his daughter, Sarah.

My research is concerned with the process of face-to-

face interaction," Dr. Duncan wrote in his university Web site. Using videotape and flow charts, Dr. Duncan's research uncovered the complexities and subtleties, the twists and turns in what on the surface appeared an ordinary conversation between two people, said David McNeill, professor emeritus of psychology at the U. of

The research methodology was often simple enough. Two students were put in a room and told to talk to each other while a camera rolled. The meeting could be awkward and contrived initially but quickly took on the characteristics of a normal chat, McNeill said. Videotape of the conversation was broken down frame

-by-frame in an effort to figure out patterns of behavior.

"It takes something that's a common occurrence and shows it can be analyzed quite rigorously," McNeill said.

Dr. Duncan's methods and the language he developed to describe his studies were put forth in "Face to Face Interactions: Research, Methods and Theory," a 1977 book he co-

After studying adult communication for many years, Dr. Duncan turned to the interactions between parents and children. He again used videotape to study, for example, how a parent gets a child to eat with a spoon.

He found that children understood complex interactions much earlier than once thought and were engaging in and winning conflicts with adults as infants, his daughter said.

More recently, he was working on sequential behavior patterns of children to understand disorders such as autism, said Stephen Porges, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Illinois

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Chicago who worked with him. His research showed that the behavior of autistic children was contingent on their interaction with others and therefore could be predictably diagramed, opening the way for earlier diagnosis of the problem.

Relaxed in manner but full of vitality for his work, Dr. Duncan retained a hint of a Southern accent from his boyhood in Nashville, Tenn. He received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Vanderbilt University, served two years in the Navy, then came to the U. of C. for his doctorate and never left. He had been a tenured profes

An avid follower of U. of C. athletics, he attended thousands of sporting events and was the school's liaison to the NCAA. A folk music aficionado, he played banjo proficiently and was for many years the faculty representative for the U. of C.'s annual folk festival.

In a statement, Arne Duncan said of his father, "He was an innovative educator and researcher who cared deeply about his students."

Dr. Duncan was divorced from his wife Susan in 1995. Other survivors include his fiancée, Marilee Marchey; a son, Owen; a sister, Martha McHenry; and seven grandchildren.

