

Michael Delaney – Dmitri Shalin Correspondence, 2012-2014

January 1, 2012

Hello, Dmitri, and Happy New Year to you too (and Janet and the rest of your family)!

Realizing that you are snowed under with many tasks and issues attendant on your Chairmanship, I haven't wanted to bother you. Still, in the interim I was beginning to think that maybe you took a dislike to my EG manuscript, or some aspects of it. I had something of that reaction from Renee Fox. She wrote me a letter with high, even effusive praise for the overall book, but said she wanted to discuss a number of points with me by phone. We did so soon thereafter, for nearly two hours (the first time I had talked with her in some 36 years). I won't go into her specific comments and criticisms at this point, as I much prefer you to come to a reading of the text with fresh eyes.

Overall, Renee suggested that I add a Prologue as a way of drawing the reader into the text, explaining my enduring fascination with the intellectual figures it is most preoccupied with, accentuating my somewhat self-contained focus, while offering an overview of what she considered to be the sui generis or singular style of the text, with its interweaving of biography, autobiography, history of ideas, philosophy, sociology, social psychology, perceptions of Penn at the time I was there, and so forth. She also thought I should try to blend some of the appendices in with the text, while modulating some passages she thought in bad taste or otherwise inappropriate. On a couple of remarks I attributed to her (on the basis on my own memory or, in one case, Sam Heilman's), she flatly denied that she would or could have said what I reported. She is obviously, and understandably, concerned with her own legacy and that of a number of the other sociologists I discuss. (When it comes to her circle of intimates and close colleagues, Renee is less like a fox than like a ferocious lioness protecting her den of cubs.) Well, memories fade and differ (she's in her 80s now, I'm creeping up on 70), and I have dropped or fudged these attributions when memories are at odds. After all, that's one reason I gave her a list of all citations to her in the text.

I have since done yet another read-through and tried to meet as many of her objections and suggestions as I can. Given that I dedicated the book to you and Renee, there is an implicit grant of license or authority to have both of you make whatever criticisms and recommended changes you see fit (although without burdening you unduly with being an Official Critic). I will do my best to accommodate any criticisms that seem warranted, particularly from people who I know are of good will and well-intentioned as regards the project. In short, I am receptive to criticism, although I will stand my ground on points that I consider solid and worth making.

As for several of the points you raise. Of course I'm aware that *PSEL* first came out in the Edinburgh 1956 (as I note in several other places, including the bibliography), but in a sense the 1959 version was EG's first real "book" (as distinct from a "monograph") and it was the first appearance of the work to a North American audience in a widely available edition. I try to set up a certain momentum in the very first paragraph, without getting overly scholiastic, but maybe I can make the reference something like" (1959, original monograph version 1956)".

Referring to structural problems from the outset might indeed be a red flag to some reviewers (and how the critics love to seize upon such admissions in book reviews, usually as if such points were their own piercing insights). I know that there is too much hammering on points I wanted to make sure to establish, especially as between the main text, endnotes, and appendices. Renee detected a certain "musicality" of theme and variation (and repetition) running throughout, but probably too much of it. (She suggested that a good editor would improve and tighten the text; I am inclined to agree, but truly expert editors are exceedingly hard to come by these days.)

As for the “somatic-affective” emphasis you favor: frankly, I think you are a far better-informed and -equipped person to write about such things than I am. Come to that, I confess that I tend to side with the “mind” part of the merged “mind-body” entity that Dewey insisted on. (I don’t even put too much stress on EG’s comparatively short stature, as I’ve had quite a few short guys as friends, a couple of them quite the Romeos.) Also, I simply do not feel that I have enough information or enough of a grasp of EG’s early biography to make sound surmises in this area. Just how much was he bullied or put-upon as a kid? Just how much of an outsider did he really feel himself to be? Renee has already pounced on several instances where she thinks I was overly conjectural (although I try to mark such passages as such). I do tend to resist efforts to box EG into stock Marxoidian social-class categories (as Sherri Cavan seems prone to do), especially in light of the relatively fluid class lines of post-war American society and the exceptional social mobility of EG’s own generation (as with his U Chicago contemporaries), not least his own. (As a small-scale artisan, Cavan herself could be typified as engaged in a “petit bourgeois” enterprise, but what insight is really gained by saying that?)

I look forward to whatever further comments you wish to make on the book and will make a good-faith effort to meet them.

Again, all the best for 2012 and may the new year be a Vast Improvement over the old,

Michael

January 1, 2012
Greetings Michael:

I have read your manuscript, skimmed through the endnotes, and wrote numerous comments for myself on the margins. Will go back to your text in time, but since I am heading out of town, I want to share with you some thoughts before I leave.

Your many-stranded project should be of great interest to Goffman scholars, social historians, and a certain brand of general readers (the one undaunted by footnotes). Here are my thoughts on what I have read, along with a few suggestions and a list of glitches I spotted that you might want to review.

Your agenda is as varied and complex as the structure of your manuscript. It is part memoir, part appreciation, part historical commentary, part close textual analysis. The exercise offers you an opportunity to settle old accounts and intellectual scores. You have much to say about social action theory, the NYC avant-garde circles, Left wing intellectuals, and the follies of postmodernism. There is in depth treatment of Goffman and Rieff, sustained discussions of Burke and Parsons, extensive analysis of Cuddihy and Gouldner, and much much more.

The manuscript structure reflects this complex agenda, the need to share the insights harvested over the course of years. All themes and characters in the book are tied to Goffman and Rieff, but you are not afraid to follow the tangents that can take you far afield. It would be hard to weave all these themes and variations into a continuous narrative thread – hence the text’s three-partite division: a streamlined narrative (the first 150 pages), the appendices (the next 250 pages), and the extensive footnotes (the final 70 pages or so).

I didn’t mind moving back and forth between various parts, and it is my hope that no reviewer raises this as an issue, that the manuscript is published as is (more or less). But I would not be surprised if academic gatekeepers find the present arrangement cumbersome. There are problems with the way you solve the problem of narrative as you struggled to concatenate many strands of your thoughts into a whole.

It is not always clear why a particular set of materials appear in a given part of the text. Personal recollections

of Rieff and Goffman show up throughout the text; extensive discussions of their ideas can be found in all three parts; Murray Cuddihy's thesis and Kenneth Burke's works are treated at length in the main body of the text as well as in the appendices. Occasionally, you repeat your observations and re-cite the same passages in various parts of the text.

Given equal attention you give to Rieff and Goffman, it is not clear why the book's title singles out one of these two remarkable thinkers. I also wonder why the bulk of your memoir has to wait till chapter 3. It starts in earnest on page 69 (the table of content misidentifies the pages as 96). It would seem logical to begin with personal recollections and after that segue into analysis. But then, many vital reminiscences appear in the appendices, and they could be easily moved to the first part.

I was also wondering why you didn't include in the text your note to Goffman's *Frame Analysis* posted on our site (I have reread it and found it pertinent). It would be interesting to learn which of your suggestions EG accepted and which not. You offer only one example (the writing moving from left to right), stating in passim, "let that one example of a howler suffice" (p. 120). Some may see this stance as coy or self-serving.

It would make sense to offer your manuscript, or parts of it, to a publisher and then gauge the reaction. Ideally, the manuscript will sail in its present form. But if you encounter problems with reviewers, you might want to play with the book structure, aggregating the material into different parts, moving some of the stuff from the appendices to main body of the text. I read your recollections with great interest, but the interpretation gathered in the appendices may be more compelling to the academic publisher than some of the biographical minutiae.

I took note of what you chose to reveal of yourself (your origins, religious preferences, political preferences, etc.). A good deal can be gleaned from the text, but much more remains hidden. Given how closely you scrutinize the background of your main characters, this reticence to engage in self-reflection is glaring (even if understandable).

On page 210 you notice, "So much for nearly five years of work that produced over 500 dogged pages of "Philosophical Sociology." How true, and yet I wish you said more about that. Your memoir is also an exercise in autobiography, if not in autobiocritique, however oblique this tangent might be.

Here are a few specific queries I had while reading the text.

P. 26 Appendix on Sky lists no number as is the case with other appendices. By the way, many people who knew the Goffmans spell Sky's name as "Skye," but she signed her letters as "Sky" and that is how her name appears in court documents.

P. 28 The Sociology Department at U of C was set up not in 1889 but in 1892 (or so the department web site states).

P. 44 Elsewhere in the text you show how complex EG's attitude toward Freud was, but here you paint him as anti-Freudian. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was, I believe, a take on *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.

P. 52 "with a intricate" – "an intricate."

P. 56 I chuckled when I read your take on pragmatism as "the buoyant, dewy-eyed sort optimistically codified" outgrowth of the Enlightenment. Dewey, James, and Mead were critical of this intellectual current. For me, pragmatism splits the difference between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, merging the former concern for a rational inquiry and social progress with the latter's critique of rationalism and capitalist modernity.

P. 58 "the 'personal' comes to acclaimed as" – "to be acclaimed as."

P. 61 “the *shetl*-oriented” – “*shtetl*.” See also page 150, 154.

P. 76 Was EG “class clown” and clown-prince”? If so (“smart-aleck” might be a better term), not for long. In high school he was very serious, studious.

P. 92, “in the rococo style of giddy homosexuals” – you probably mean that some homosexuals sometimes exhibit such a style, but one can read this expression as referring to a generic feature of every member of this group.

P. 115 “Parson’s general action theory” – “Parsons’ theory”

P. 252 “Goffman’s love of music” – do you have any evidence beyond Brownstone’s memoir?

P. 110 You say that EG might have seen you as an ethnic outsider interested in his work– that observation needs unpacking.

P. 125 “nagging at him no end” – “to no end”?

P. 139 “The moral comes down to this” – “the morale”?

P. 174 You mention the advice to delete the reference to a political issue – which issue was that?

P. 174 You say that EG, like Wittgenstein, wanted merely to describe the world as it is. Description is hardly a neutral exercise, it always entails presuppositions.

P. 270 “In fairness to Sontag, even if should contradict” – “even if this should contradict”?

Appendix 6.17 is repeated twice, on page 271 and 272.

Story about a student stumbling over the word “penis” is repeated twice, on page 276 and once before (P. ?).

P. 282 “Felling Intellect” – “Feeling Intellect”

P. 285 “charism” – “charisma?”

P. 300 “an self appointed Anglican” – “a self-appointed”

p. 355 “It is not that Goffman did not...” this and the next paragraphs are repeated on subsequent pages.

Sherri Cavan posted on our site an important paper “When Erving Goffman was a Boy,”
http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/articles/cavan_eg_boyhood.pdf. You might want to check it out.

At the 2010 ASA meeting I presented a paper on Goffman and Sky, which was posted on the EGA site,
http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/articles/ds_insanity.html. I sent you the link at the time, not sure if you have seen the piece. I reflect on the Potemkin Portable Village, Erving’s link to Russian culture, and my own interest in his life and work in the extended version of my paper on Goffman’s self-ethnography,
http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/articles/ds_eg_selfethno.html.

Re: “alienated face labor” and “ideological surplus meaning” – I play with the terms in my article “Marxist Paradigm and Academic Freedom.” Social Research 47 (1980): 361-82,
http://cdclv.unlv.edu/archives/articles/shalin_mpa.pdf.

Once again, Michael, congratulation on finishing your magnificent project. Thanks for sharing the manuscript and singling me out in your dedication. Let's hope the book sails far and wide.

Kindly,
Dmitri

1.11.12

Hello, Dmitri. I hope this finds you well somewhere out on the road.

Attached are my comments on your very useful critique of my Goffman memoir, along with a catalog of corrections made. I've also attached Renee Fox's comments on the ms., giving you another vantage point for judgment on the project.

I don't wish to over-burden you with this back-and-forth, but you may find it of interest to see how different, well-informed people react to this project.

And now it's back to work, trimming the hedges, filling in the holes, and shoveling out the muck.

Best to you,
Michael

January 15, 2012
Greetings Michael:

I am back home bracing for the onslaught of the program review, but I want to acknowledge your detailed feedback on my feedback and share a few thoughts before the spring semester washes ashore.

Your manuscript is in a remarkably good shape when it comes to clarity, style, and grammar. The editorial glitches I spotted are minor, and some are not glitches at all as much as a reflection of the fact that I picked my English second-hand.

The structural problems you faced in arranging your materials stemmed from the nature of the project. Alternative solutions would raise questions of their own, so it would be better to let your authorial intuition regarding the arrangement stand. But you are likely to face queries, so other options may have to be explored. You need not rearrange the whole thing, should the change be required, but re-balance the materials in the first and second parts of the manuscript, changing slightly the diction as you shuttle your disquisitions and asides between the opening statement and appendixes.

It makes sense to start the book with your discovery of Goffman, just as you do in the text. Yet following this introductory statement come long substantive discussions, after which you resume your biographical narrative. I thought this narrative could precede the analytical overview that takes so much room in the first 60 pages of the manuscript.

I understand the importance of playing Goffman against Rieff, but since you devote equal amount of space to each, privileging one heavy-weight over the other is problematic, structurally and intellectually. Cutting the Rieff section down to size may be prudent, especially if you chose to devote a separate treatise to the man, but that would stall a key engine of your narrative.

Your letter to Goffman, which merits an Appendix, is no showboating. It contains well-argued criticism, even

if it is a touch overbearing. Given the power asymmetry inherent in a student-teacher relationship, your having fun with the prof is more than understandable.

The issue of betraying EG's trust is a vexing one, but the argument supporting a more detailed account of EG accepted in your criticism is strong, given the time that elapsed since EG's death and considerable interest in the making of this textual milestone. But exploring this tangent would be impossible if you didn't keep the contemporaneous record.

Your reticence about bringing yourself into the spotlight is justified, but there is plenty of you in the text already, much of it for the good. Being a touch more explicit about your own possible biases would not imbalance the narrative as much as show your awareness of the manner in which your perspective informs the discussion. For one thing, it would undercut a dubious notion that one could play a camera. A fly on the wall would register one thing, an ant quite another, and a butterfly's perspective on the same transaction is bound to be something else.

I am not certain how to draw a line between an intellectual memoir and a personal one. The two work best in conjunction. Your analysis would not have as much power shorn of the biographical detail, it seems to me.

I do not see pragmatists as priding themselves on discovering "the royal road to genuinely rational social progress on all fronts." James, Dewey and Mead went out of their way to highlight the fallibilistic nature of political programs, the staggering cost of progress, the unanticipated consequences built into rational endeavors (see my *Pragmatism & Democracy*, e.g. chapter on postmodernism and pragmatist inquiry). As for Parsons' liberal credentials, they are solid, albeit not spotless. His personal style in dealing with his colleagues, students and rivals (like Pitirim Sorokin) is pertinent here. Parsons did have a high regard for Mead, stating that it was an oversight on his part to ignore him in *TSSA*. He never quite joined forces with Mead and pragmatism, however, suggesting that he did not have time for that. And his Kantian predilections are conspicuously at odds with the pragmatist opposition to Kant's cognitivist bias, which Parsons shares to a degree. As for my soft spot for pragmatist liberalism, your take on it is as good as anyone else's.

I am curious why Renee frowned on your use of the EGA materials. Is it the quality of the interviews, the issues of privacy, the volume of citations? You may have some insights into that.

I fail to see the problem with your reference to EG and Rieff as "maverick." The word carries a positive connotation nowadays, and it seems to fit the characters in question.

The case of "Westphalian sandwich" is a telling one, telling about the workings of the memory, which is better at capturing the gist than details of the past transactions. I would bring it up with Sam and explore at some length.

It should not be hard to accommodate Renee by casting your observation about Rieff and his son as something that occurred at the time, even though you couldn't prove the association.

The Jewish tangent in EG's and Rieff's corpus and habits of the heart provide much fodder for analysis and criticism, and rightly so. It is possible, as Renee Fox suggests that your perspective on the subject crosses the line in some places, perhaps evincing a bias (think of your take on Bershad's forgetfulness about his role in your dissertation). I would be inclined to listen to Renee on this score, taking as much of her suggestion under advice as you find prudent. You need not agree with her on every point.

With kind wishes,
Dmitri

January 15, 2012

Hello, Dmitri. Once again I am obliged to you for your thoughtful and helpful comments on my EG project. I'll respond in brief *apres le deluge*, i.e., before you are engulfed in the flood tide of adminstratie (to coin a nonce-term) that is the Departmental Chair's lot.

I hope you don't think I mind your suggested emendations of potential "glitches" in my writing. Quite to the contrary, I appreciate your attentiveness. You have a superb command of both formal and colloquial English (as is evident in your writings and in your conversations with interview subjects), and any minor slippages are few and far between. Of course, none of us are immune from same, Homer nods, and so on. When writing and editing, I regularly find myself consulting my several e-dictionaries, usage manuals, thesauri, and the web to check on idioms, diction, spelling, punctuation, and such. Too often I find I have committed some gaffe or oversight (e.g., regarding "shtetl") and I'm relieved to correct these flaws before adding to the glut of careless language misuse that one too often encounters today, especially on the web.

After re-reading the entire ms., I'm now doing a tripartite prose edit of the three partitions of my text and will then tackle some of the structural issues and read some of the more sensitive sections with an eye attuned for avoiding giving possible offense. I would not say that I have a "bias" with respect to specifically "Jewish" characteristics; I'd prefer admitting to an abiding curiosity about modern Jewish intellectual consciousness, as encountered in some of my most memorable teachers. (For what it's worth, my original analogy about the collective forgetfulness of my old Penn-mates was to "the incredible shrinking man," from the movie of that title.)

I have to concede that the "I am a camera" trope is more misleading than not in this case and as a general proposition, although Isherwood put it to good use in his deadpan style of recording rather extraordinary events and characters in his early "Berlin diaries" books. But then, I'm no "Ishyvood" (as the Germans called him at the time).

I think Renee might have had a sense that I was "appropriating" other people's remembrances by quoting liberally from the EGA materials. That's one reason I wanted to run my ms. before you in case I had overstepped my authorial "rights" in this connection. If you think I have, let me know.

I did query Sam Heilman about the Westphalian ham vignette. He did not object to me quoting it and seemed to accept my reasoning for doing so, even if he thought that some readers may find it on the "catty" side. I'll still use it, but without citing RCF as the source. (Rieff recurred to the subject of food taboos in his writings, including one occasion in which he turned down a dish of horse meat at the Harvard Faculty Club, although I think he honored the prohibitions more in the breach than not, at least when it came to such delicacies as lobster. And he was, after all, the son of a kosher butcher.)

Regarding Pragmatism: You are more steeped in this literature than I am, and it's been quite a while since I seriously re-read much of their writings. I am inclined to be most partial to Wm. James for his very human combination of intellectual boldness and vulnerability as an inquiring spirit. (As I'm sure you know, he was devoted to Emerson, as recorded in his address on RWE's centennial commemoration.) I tend to think that the early pragmatists captured a great deal of what sets Americans apart from Europeans in a worldview sense -- in a way, they can seem all-too-*amerikanische* to a native-born American theorist, in something of the way that Durkheim is so very French that French thinkers find the need to challenge or repudiate him (as the po-moistes certainly do). I happen to believe that Sartre's hyper-individualism is a reaction to a common conception of Durkheim's supposedly overweening "sociologism."

On a related point, I won't enter into a further defense of Parsons here. Suffice it to share this eye-opening quote that I sent to Renee Fox as a cheerful note to end on in the comments I made on her memoir. I came across the following passage from the normally splenetic Gouldner on a web search during my Goffman researches. It

does not make up for all the damage that Gouldner did to Parsons's standing in the field, but Gouldner was at least man enough to acknowledge him as a man of high honor, integrity, and personal modesty. To wit:

Talcott Parsons was a very special man and played a very special role. It is a mark of his achievement that most of us who became sociologists after World War II felt constrained to define our own intellectual position in relation to his own work. We also noted the very special way he walked through the world. Although a thinker of great stature, he was a diffident, tentative, indeed humble man, accessible to young people whom he did not know, and quite approachable by all at public meetings.... I knew him as a thoughtful and kind man who, despite a legion of responsibilities, still found time to chat with visitors at Harvard. He never forgot to fill his guests' glasses. I remember him, too, at the meetings of the American Sociological Society in St. Louis in 1961, steadfastly and successfully resisting efforts to impose a racially discriminatory use of hotel facilities upon our convention. Unlike some intellectuals, who demand great personal license in exchange for their brilliance, he moved quietly among us trying to be a good man rather than pretending to be a god.

– Alvin W. Gouldner, "Talcott Parsons, 1902–1979," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 8, 1979, pp. 299-301 (as cited by James J. Chriss, "Alvin W. Gouldner and the Tragic Vision in Sociology," *Social Thought and Research*, Vol. 23, 1&2, 2000, p. 202.)

Once again, many thanks for your thoughts,

Michael

January 15, 2012
Greetings Michael:

I have no problem with your citing EGA materials. If that is Renee's concern, you don't have to worry. Questions can be raised about the length and balance in your handling these materials, but that is a different issue.

It is fair to inquire whether the cliquishness among Jewish intellectuals engenders exclusionary practices with respect to non-Jews. To get a handle on this issue, one would have to take a long view and consider all students EG and Rieff had taught over the course of their careers. Other variables may explain systemic memory lapses on the part of Penn profs. Figuring out the weight of each variable is hard.

Nice quote from Gouldner – see, he could be a Mensch. I heard some funny stories from Edward Tiryakian about Parsons and Sorokin, his Harvard mentors whom Edward had a chance to observe at close range. We need to diversify perspectives on Parsons' persona and organizational savvy by collecting inputs from different participants in his Harvard seminar.

Cheers,
Dmitri

March 30, 2012

Hi, Dmitri. I'm still slogging away at refining my Memoir ms., a task that goes slower than ever, it seems. I sometimes feel like a boxer who has taken a few too many blows to the head and is barely managing to stand up and keep on slugging, but in an increasingly lethargic and inchoate fashion.

Regarding your two papers, “EG’s “Insanity of Place” and “Goffman’s Self-Ethnographies”, I cite both of them by title and URL, but neither comes with an official date. Could you supply dates for each? It looks careless on my part not to do so, especially when the citations lack page-number references to specific passages quoted.

I take issue with some of your judgments as to “IOP” (as you can probably discern from what I have already written on the subject), but I don’t have a problem citing arguments or pointing to sources that I may disagree with. Also, I noted some infelicities of language in your paper on that essay. I would be happy to make some suggested corrections and counterarguments, but I don’t want to suck up the time and energy to do so at present. Nor do I wish to seem like some schoolmarmish arbiter clucking over someone else’s writing.

I had some thoughts in response to your paper on Marxist-oriented sociology, too, but that can wait for a later time as well.

I’ve read Cavan’s piece on EG’s boyhood. It adds quite a lot of granularity to the socioeconomic milieu of that time and place. I could (and possibly will) quibble with some of what she writes, but her essay usefully fleshes out a number of points that are otherwise rather abstract seen from this long distance away. Most of all, I like her point about the likely influence that vaudeville and slapstick had on the young Erving’s sensibility. This adds a dimension to my prior perception about the influence of movies (especially silents) on Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective, a topic I discuss in the Introduction to the Two Seminars book. (I doubt that Cavan and I would see eye-to-eye on **what much of “the sociological imagination” consists of, so I’m not terribly wounded by** her reproach that I am sorely lacking in that elusive quality of mind. A “Gouldnerian” I must certainly ain’t.)

Hoping this finds you in good spirits and faring well,

Michael

March 30, 2012

Greetings Michael:

Yes, someday you will stumble across the finish line. That is not a pleasant experience but it will do.

My first take on Goffman and “The Insanity of Place” was posted in the Comments/dialogues section of the EGA where it is marked July 23, 2009, http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/comments/sc_ds_insanity.html. Next came the paper on Goffman as a pioneer self-ethnography presented at the American Sociological Association’s annual meeting in Atlanta, August 14, 201, http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/articles/ds_insanity.html. The one on Goffman’s self-ethnography is a revised and extended version of this paper, which I updated at the end of 2010 or early 2011, http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/articles/ds_eg_selfethno.html. You can refer to any of these postings.

Thanks for offering feedback on my paper’s infelicities. I am sure there are many, and it is important to weed them out, but I am not certain you want to waste your time combing through this piece, which is on a backburner anyhow. Maybe when you are done with your revisions.

I am glad you found Cavan’s paper pertinent. I think it is a fine piece. It will be published in a collection edited by Charles Edgley in a year or two. As for quibbles you may have with Sherri or myself, that is par for the course. I am trying to remember what “IOP” stands for but couldn’t. Again, whatever differences we have should be instructive.

I am still attending to the DOS Program review, with the outside reviewers scheduled to come in a few weeks. After that I will have more time on my hand and can start winding down the online forum on biography and biocritique. Hope to bring it to a close this summer with the notes on the history of auto/biographical discourse

I have been compiling for a while.

I trust you persevere, complete the manuscript, and get this monkey off your back before long. Then, on to new projects.

With good wishes,

Dmitri

March 31, 2012

Hi, Dmitri -- Thanks for the date references for your papers. (Now if only I could get those elongated URLs to curl around the right margin of the page and not be automatically and annoyingly converted to hyperlinks that barely show up as text.)

“IOP” simply stands for “Insanity of Place.” You can blame such shorthand locutions on the inanity of saving space (and typing time) by reducing recurrently used phrases to an initialism (a practice that a whole generation of Tweetsters has now made virtually mandatory). Still, I really shouldn't do that in connection with such a searingly personal essay.

At least I don't do those clownish emoticons (at least not very often<|;~).

To resort to a Britishism: TTFN (“Ta-ta for now”),

Michael

May 14, 2012

Hello, Dmitri: In case you haven't seen the article linked to below... it's a levelheaded and eminently practical set of pointers from a former departmental Chair on navigating the many pitfalls of the job. (By her account, Renee Fox's tenure at as Chair of the Soc. Dept. at Penn exposed her to many of the afflictions mentioned, such as the “balkanization” problem that resulted from her attempts to “democratize” the workings of the department.) Come to think of it, the position rather reminds me of the torture contraption that Kafka described in “The Penal Colony,” which was used to inflict a thousand cuts by tattoo-like needles.

But I imagine that the academic term is about to end, and I hope that you are able to contrive a relatively leisurely summer, at least as a respite from administrative duties. (And, insofar as relevant, keep in mind the mock-Latin phrase that Barry Goldwater popularized: *Illegitimi non carbonundrum*, or, “Don't let the bastards grind you down.”)

Meanwhile, I inch ahead on my EG manuscript, feeling like a character in one of those New Yorker cartoons of some tattered soul crawling on hands and knees through a burning desert. As in the old country song “Cool Water,” I keep envisioning an end to the protracted ordeal, but can't help suspecting that it is only a mirage.

Best wishes for a restful summer.

Michael

http://chronicle.com/article/A-Letter-to-a-New-Chair/131831/?sid=wb&utm_source=wb&utm_medium=en

May 14, 2012

Greetings Michael:

Thanks for the link. I will check it out, even though I look forward to next year when my term as a chair expires and I won't have to grapple with such issues. Meanwhile, the program review my department faced is more or less over, pending the final report of the outside reviewers.

I can see how hard it is to finish your project. You should also brace yourself for the postpartum letdown once the baby is delivered to the publisher. But that kind of pain should be manageable.

With kind wishes,
Dmitri

P.S. Here is the link to my old song, a dialogue with God, on the burdens of living,
<http://youtu.be/rrGWJ0kZ0OI>. I thought it was lost, but it has been reprocessed from a boom box tape and is now on the web.

May 14, 2012

Hi, Dmitri, a.k.a. LostCause098 (I wonder what 098 stands for). I gave your song a listen and liked it. (I will give it an official "Like" later on, but need to sign up with YouTube first). I do wish that you had written out the lyrics, as some of them are hard to make out (as I found true of some of your other songs on the web), and of course I wanted to ponder them. I've seen other songs on YouTube that include lyrics in a box just below the video screen (they can be collapsed).

I used to write songs myself (maybe 50 in all), particularly when I was in Vietnam. Unsurprisingly, the bulk of them are about the war, although I think of most of them more as elegies than as "protest songs" (like the one I wrote after Martin L. King Jr. was killed, titled "Memphis Morning"). I still have the old reel-to-reel tapes from some 44 years ago, but have never gotten around to trying to get them transferred to disk or remastered. Unfortunately, while I can carry a tune and stay on pitch, I do not have a good singing voice and am almost pathological about singing in front of others. Still, it would be cool to have the originals available as I first recorded them, going on half a century ago. (God, am I getting old or what!)

Back in the day, I had a 12-string guitar, too, a Yamaha that I bought in Singapore, when I was living in Thailand. (It took two days and about \$40 worth of bribes to get it through customs with the help of an "expeditor.") It was a fine instrument, but then my brother (who manically fashioned himself "the next Bob Dylan" at the time) decided he needed it more than I did, "borrowed" it without asking, and promptly had it stolen from his car. I still have an old sunburst Gibson that I twice took to Asia and back, but the neck is slightly crooked and there's a split down the middle in the back. It has since been superseded by a Martin D-28 that I bought myself for my 62nd birthday. A classic ax; it was the best two grand I've ever spent on a "luxury item" for myself. (I've attached a picture of my proud beauty.) After all these years, I'm still not much of a player, but I do like to plink and plunk along as best I can.

I wonder if you know of the Italian singer by the name of Beppe Gambetta, who hails from Verona. He specializes in American "roots" music, among other folksy genres, and he sings in English with scarcely an accent. (He's got an interesting musical bio, as found on wikipedia.) If you've got 5-1/2 minutes to spare to give a listen, here he sings a terrific Bob Dylan song I heard on the radio not long ago. The song is "Romance in Durango," one of Dylan's few Mexican-influenced songs (about half in Spanish yet!) and also one of the few that Dylan ever recorded in a duet with a woman. (But this version is much better.) The story-line is not that novel, but the song, though a tragedy, has a rousing feel to it. Well worth a listen.

And now I'll let you (and me) get back to work.
Michael

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Me47C0pybTc>

May 14, 2012

Michael,

Good to hear my musings ring the bell. A friend of mine who had helped record my songs in the mid-90s urged me to let his son place my stuff on the web. I resisted for a while since this material works best as private art intended for people close to me, but eventually agreed, realizing that this is not just my work. So now I sport a channel on YouTube with a selection of my songs, <http://www.youtube.com/user/LostCause098>. Not sure what 098 stands for but suspect that "LostCause" (the title of one of my CDs) must be a popular moniker and additional markings were needed.

The words are hard to parse sometimes. My accent and delivery are to blame. The lack of a digital version and a proper mixing muddled the sound in some cases. The song lyrics can be found on the web, http://cdclv.unlv.edu/pragmatism/ds_lc_lyrics.pdf.

You mentioned you played in the rock band but I did not recall you bringing up your songs. Would be neat to hear them, as they are sure to tell the listener something about the time and the man, I like to think in line with my biocritical hermeneutics. I know my musings have an autobiographical dimension, underscored by the photos from my childhood and youth. See if you can remaster the tapes and fashion a digital version of the songs. I am sure I am not the only one who would like to hear them. My web sample has a piece titled "MIA Blues" that was written with the soldiers like you in mind, <http://youtu.be/O76VebVn288>.

Sorry to hear about the demise of your guitar, but it sounds and looks like you've got a good replacement. My 12 string guitar, Takamine, is a middling quality instrument. Cannot say I like its intonation and action. Have to check how it works nowadays. I haven't played or sung since the mid-90s when I wrote and recorded this stuff. Would like to buy a quality six string guitar, and possibly another 12 stinger.

I liked the song you passed on to me, the voice in particular. The guy has a winning way, and he should have quite a career, especially if he writes his own stuff.

Cheers,
Dmitri

May 15, 2012

Hi, Dmitri, I gave a listen to your "MIA Blues" and appreciated how you commiserated with the US soldiers who were drafted to fight that exceptionally difficult and agonizing war --- radical anomie exemplified. God knows it wasn't easy on so many of them. Of the several million US military who served in the VN war, a great many (if by no means all) performed dutifully and honorably, including my cousin William "Bing" Emerson, a Marine captain who was shot down and killed during a helicopter rescue mission in the midst of a fierce main-force battle (for which he was awarded a Silver Star).

However, I'd like to clarify that I wasn't with the military in Vietnam. In 1966-68, I was a "community development worker" (almost like Obama!) with International Voluntary Services (now defunct), which was a model for, and precursor of, the Peace Corps. It was formed by a group of so-called Peace Churches (Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethern), but was secular as well as non-political (to the extent that any such organization can be). IVS billed itself as fostering low-level "people-to-people" work in the field, which entailed learning the language and living on the modest scale of the common populace. Volunteers served two year tours (as I did). IVS was in the former Indochina (VN, Laos, Cambodia) from early on (around 1956), and was largely funded through the USAID program (which led to much internal controversy as time went on). The group grew increasingly politicized (anti-war) and was eventually booted out of Vietnam in 1972 or so. I worked in a rural

area of the Mekong Delta province of Sadec, dealing mainly with folks belonging to the Hoa Hao (“Harmony”) Buddhist sect. My most intense experience was during the Tet Offensive of 1968, when I spent almost a month doing emergency refugee-relief work. (By the way, it was not exactly a risk-free undertaking: seven IVS volunteers died in VN, including one murder, and two were captured during the Tet Offensive, then spent four years in a Hanoi POW prison -- for no good reason whatever, except as political bargaining chips.

I was first informed about IVS by a Vietnamese schoolmate of mine named Nguyen Trong Hien at the U. of Utah back in the early 1960s. Hien, a staunch patriot, told me that IVS had a high reputation among the Vietnamese, and he recommended that I sign up with it as opposed to joining the army or being drafted. (IVSers had draft deferments based on their presumed usefulness for government objectives in VN). Hien’s the oldest friend I’m still in regular contact with, going on some 50 years now. He barely got out of VN the day before the Fall, and now lives with his wife in Princeton, NJ, working in IT. In fact, he has just self-published a book, titled Village Teacher, through Amazon’s publishing agency, using the (ungainly) nom de plume Neihtn. It’s set in late 19th century VN and involves a interracial love affair that gets caught up in the convoluted palace and colonial politics of those days. I’ve just received a copy and will review it on the Amazon site, at which point I’ll send you a link.

Given your interest in BCH, and my own notorious autobiographical reticence, I thought you might be interested in reading a 2-page summary of my life and times after high school (attached). I wrote it for the 50th anniversary of my high school class of 1961, Sheridan (Wyoming) High School. It comes with a bonus picture of my early days as a rock-n-roller, when I was a young 18 and in my natural prime. (If you’ve ever seen the George Lucas film “American Graffiti,” you have a good picture of what my teenage milieu was like.) Read it at your leisure.

Michael

May 15, 2012

Greetings Michael:

I recall that your duties in Vietnam did not include soldiering, but you were in harm’s way, so the sentiments expressed in “MIA Blues” must be familiar to you and your buddies who found themselves in that far-away land.

Thanks for the photo. Not sure where you are in it and where your brother is, but I could tell that the band made a serious bid to be taken seriously as a musical phenomenon.

It is amazing how much one can pack into a two page gloss on one’s life. I found your summary thoughtful, understated, moving in places, even though the emotional track to your life’s vicissitudes has grown frail (maybe your music can fill the gap). Wonder how your classmate responded to your recollections. Perhaps someday you will expand this outline into an autobiocritical study of your life and times, with the sojourns in Utah and Penn folded into the narrative and the intellectual ammunition acquired there used as fodder for you self-construction.

Thanks for sharing with me glimpses of your past.

Kindly,
Dmitri

May 15, 2012

DNS: I'm the guy behind the drums. The band was called The Walkers, led by a guy called Burch Ray (on the right); my brother was in the second band, The Infernos.

One old high school classmate emailed me (I couldn't remember her), saying that a lot of my old classmates had commented favorably on my mini-bio (which was the second-longest in the entire Memory Book, exceeded only by that of a federal judge).

MD

May 15, 2012

Thanks for the clarification, Michael:

I can see you wisecracking through high school, then taking the path less traveled. Your life is exemplary in a way that most lives, include that of a federal judge, are not. *Bios philosophicus* you chose (or was chosen for) has many illustrious predecessors whose search for a meaningful life brought them a measure of tranquility.

All best,
Dmitri

June 13, 2012

Hello, Dmitri. As promised, here is a notice of my friend's novel on Vietnam and my review of it on Amazon. At my turtle-like pace, it has taken me a couple of weeks to read and review the book. I'm not sure if that helps or hurts my own struggles with editing (which have gone all-too slowly), but at least it feels like a brief reprieve from it.

If you happen to know any Vietnamese in your area, you might mention this book to them. I'm doing my best to help my friend drum up sales, because I recognize how hard it can be nowadays to grab people's attention. This age of Google has turned into one in which information and merchandising go hand-in-hand. (Even in my own e-mails!)

I hope you and yours are well and that you will be able to have a relatively unharried summer. (Is there a Las Vegasian version of Cape Cod?)

All the best,
Michael

My Vietnamese friend of half a century, Nguyen Trong Hien, has just self-published an excellent novel titled *Village Teacher* under the pen name Neihtn. It is a historical romance set in the last years of the 19th century in a Vietnam convulsed by cultural tumult and political upheaval, along with the increasing encroachments of the French colonialists and the Catholicism they sought to spread against fierce resistance. The novel is not a polemic, however; its treatment of the many forces struggling against one another in the Vietnam of that era is eminently fairminded and not at all recriminatory. In fact, the love story at the center of the novel is that of a half-French, half-Vietnamese woman, named Giang, and the title character, named Tâm.

You can find the book at Amazon.com, available in both a paperback and a Kindle e-reader edition. (The author used Amazon's book-publishing service, createspace to turn his manuscript into a book.) The paperback edition is very well made, with a striking cover: a photograph of a fierce-looking temple guardian. I have contributed a fairly long review of the book on the Amazon.com website under my e-mail handle, AnhMaiDel.

[Amazon.com: village teacher by neihtn: Books](#)

The book has a very Vietnamese feel to it, echoing certain themes of the classic Vietnamese verse epic, The Tale of Kieu. I can enthusiastically recommend it for all those interested in Vietnam's great struggles at the dawn of the 20th-century as well as those who are fascinated (as I was) by the novel's account of the transition from the old Chinese-based, ideographic writing system, chu Nom, to the modern, roman-alphabet-based Quoc Ngu, introduced by Jesuit missionaries. (Much of the plot deftly turns on this very development.) Others will enjoy its engaging, biracial love story set within a turbulent time and place, with many treacherous plots and schemes afoot in places both high and low.

Some IVS-VN veterans may recall Hien, inasmuch as he briefly taught Vietnamese to new volunteers around 1969. He had just returned to Vietnam, having received an M.A. in engineering from the University of Utah. (Hien and I first met as undergraduates at the U.U. back in the early 1960s.) Hien and his wife have lived in the U.S. since 1974.*

* IVS is International Voluntary Services, the NGO I was with in South Vietnam, 1966-1968..

June 14, 2012

Greetings Michael:

Thanks for the link. If I come across would-be readers, I will pass a word about the book, although I cannot think of any such off hand.

Hope you can now go back to your editing, refreshed and energized, and get this beast off your back.

Kindly,
Dmitri

June 14, 2012

Hi, Dmitri. I thought you might get a chuckle, or maybe even a chortle, out of this spat over Durkheim and Parsons I kicked up over an article on Durkheim-as-hipster [sic] in the Chronicle of Higher Education. The volleying of brickbats has already reached the point of diminishing returns so I'm not going to respond further. Really, the cattiness of the Theoretician Class seemingly knows no bounds.

Michael

http://chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/defending-durkheim-the-hipster/48247?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

Defending Durkheim (the Hipster)

June 19, 2012, 12:01 pm

A few days back my Brainstorm colleague Laurie Essig drew an analogy between contemporary sociologist Mark Regnerus and Holy Trinity sociologist Émile Durkheim (as in the triune god of early social theory, Marx-Weber-Durkheim).

"I suppose," she wrote, "every generation of sociology is doomed to have its Durkheim, and Mark Regnerus is quickly becoming ours."

It is obvious that Professor Essig in that short piece was mostly concerned with questions having nothing to do with Durkheim, but I have to ask: why "*doomed*"? Durkheim stands amongst the most unyieldingly original—

and peculiar–minds in the entire history of social theory. Some of us await the return of a Durkheim to the lost paradise of social theory as we await a (the?) Messiah!

I do understand why Essig challenged Regnerus’s findings. But, for the life of me, I don’t understand why she likened him to one of the founders of modern sociology.

Professor Essig also insinuates that Durkheim was a conservative of the Talcott Parsons variety. Yet, the great French sociologist was, after all, a *Dreyfusard*, an opponent of inherited wealth, and a thinker who could argue passionately in defense of social deviants. More than a few, for what it’s worth, would label him a liberal. True, he had some conservative impulses as well. But why is that necessarily a bad thing? Karl Marx, again and again, tarred the bourgeoisie as frighteningly revolutionary and hellbent on overturning *everything*. “Conservative” and “liberal” are not always helpful categories when studying social theory.

Of course, it is not unusual for Durkheim to be labeled as a conservative—or a fascist, a positivist, an anti-individualist, a totalitarian, and so forth. “Vulgar Durkheimianism,” as Susan Stedman Jones once termed it, has aided this theorist’s reception for decades.

I too, admittedly, was once inclined to be vulgar. My early theory hero (or “Theoro”) was Max Weber, not his French contemporary. Two chance occurrences forced me to rethink my position. The first was a stray remark made by a beloved professor in grad school. During a lecture he commented that Durkheim was, by far, the strangest social theorist that he had ever read. “That guy,” he sighed, “is truly weird.”

That was interesting because this professor was one of the strangest professors *I* had ever read. According to NYU lore, he was often evicted from his own office by rookie security personnel who concluded on the basis of his dress and demeanor that he was a deranged street person.

His learned assessment always left in my mind the impression that I was missing something about the master. My hunches were confirmed when I came across a most remarkable book, *Émile Durkheim and the Reformation of Sociology*, by Stjepan Mestrovic.*

Mestrovic’s excellent and erudite screed was something of an assault on the Theory Establishment and its willfully lazy assessment of Durkheim’s work. Post-Mestrovic there was warrant to totally rethink his *oeuvre*. As I phrased it back in 2005 a new Durkheim was emerging:

No longer the square positivist to Marx’s groovy revolutionary, no longer the tedious champion of social order, integration, and values that his Anglo-American interpreters [Read, Talcott Parsons] often made him out to be, this Durkheim appears as something of a French-style theoretical hipster. As much a philosopher as a sociologist, this Durkheim invokes the unconscious, the irrational, the ineluctable damage done to the individual by the advance of civilization, the cryptic logic of the collective representation.

It is the notion of the “collective representation,” incidentally which lies at the heart of Durkheim’s thought. My own interest/obsession with Durkheim is based on his “theory of misrecognition,” or the idea that human thought and action are motivated by factors beyond our comprehension. Such theories, I have argued, have a lengthy theoretical genealogy and are identifiable everywhere from the Hebrew Bible to the work of the late Pierre Bourdieu.

Durkheim’s sociology, Mestrovic argued “was never apprehended correctly, and was never given a fair hearing.” I write this little comment in the hopes that this generation of sociology grad students will rectify that unfortunate situation.

*Whose last name contains an array of accents that my software cannot produce.

This entry was posted in [Uncategorized](#) and tagged [Emile Durkheim](#), [Laurie Essig](#), [Mark Regnerus](#), [Pierre Bourdieu](#), [Stjepan Mestrovic](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

6.22.12

http://chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/defending-durkheim-the-hipster/48247?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

anhmaidel ★ 3 days ago

- The author writes that the "conservative" and "liberal" labels are not always useful in characterizing social theorists. Very true. And yet preceding that sentence he dismisses Talcott Parsons as simply a "conservative," based on his "tedious champion[ing] of social order, integration, and values." (Presumably, then, the author is a champion of social disorder, disintegration, and amorality?)
- That represents a profound misunderstanding of Parsons's great attempt to synthesize both Durkheim and Weber (along with others) in a general theory of action that codified the major tenets of liberal modernism (with a distinctly American flavor, to be sure). Further, since when did social order, integration, and values become an unholy Trinity monopolized by supposed "conservatives"? As Robert Nisbet pointed out, the prime categories (or "unit-ideas") of sociology may have their roots in conservative European thought, but they are by no means confined to any one ideological agenda, certainly not in Parsons (who never considered himself a conservative, in either political or theoretical terms). The author recognizes that this is true of Marx, in certain respects, as it certainly was of Weber and Durkheim, but defaults to a "willfully lazy," simplistic stereotype when it comes to Parsons, who remains one of the greatest social theorists American has yet produced, in part because of his profound assimilation of his great European predecessors.
- To think of Durkheim, the great rationalist, as "weird" in the way depicted is to make of him a champion of anomie instead of moral order, very much along the lines of the profoundly anti-Durkheimian post-modernists (and for that matter, the Existentialists who preceded them). That, in a word, is bunk.

jacquesberlinerblau ★ 2 days ago in reply to anhmaidel

Dear anhmaidel,

Before lecturing us as to what Durkheim's work was really about, I would urge you to familiarize yourself with his writings on collective representations (see the edited volume by W.S.F. Pickering for a detailed analysis).

I do not think that Parsons hit the right themes in his translation of Durkheim's work in SSA. On the contrary, a thoroughgoing de-Parsonification of Durkheim's work was precisely what the theory establishment needed to experience in the 80s and 90s. The postmodernists who you bemoan--with all of their inanities--strike me as coming much closer to what Durkheim may have been driving at than the languid chop-a-block breakdown offered by Parsons.

I will grant you that, for a few decades, Parsons ruled social theory. Let's put it this way: Parsons was to one generation of sociology graduate students what Foucault was to another. They are both interesting theorists, but not THAT interesting...

anhmaidel ★ 1 day ago in reply to jacquesberlinerblau

- Your condescension notwithstanding, I will (mostly) resist giving in to the urge to indulge in a hissing contest, that favorite, vicarious version of a blood sport among the academicians. Instead, I will readdress the points I made that you evaded, and then be done with it.
- First, you seem to have retreated somewhat from your resort to argument-by-labeling in relegating the liberal Parsons to the pariah status of "conservative." (In connection with serious theory, such labels only make sense by stipulating "in relation to whom or what.") Of course, one must concede that Parsons's initials can be occultly seen as somehow anticipating the Tea Party.

- Second, do you seriously maintain that Durkheim (as opposed to Parsons) was a theorist unconcerned with order, integration, and values? If so, do you seriously mean to imply that Durkheim was perforce on the anomic side of disorder, disintegration, and amorality (or immorality)? Are you yourself?
- Third, I did not “bemoan” the post-modernists, but rather plainly stated that their thinking is of resolutely antinomian cast, in a way that Durkheim’s most certainly was not. And that extends to the epistemological and quasi-metaphysical dimensions of Durkheim’s thought as well. Your description of Parsons’s intricate account of the deficiencies of Durkheim’s sociological epistemology as a “languid chop-a-block breakdown” is a mere reflex of slapdash cleverity; it does no justice to the philosophical subtlety and theoretical vigor that Parsons brought to bear in drawing out Durkheim’s alternately positivistic and idealistic missteps.
- Fourth, regarding “collective representation” in relation to moral order, integration, and values: consider Durkheim’s treatment of crime (and punishment) as one of the primary symbolic stabilizers of social order, precisely because of its great preventive force as a negative example of what deviating from fundamental social norms can entail.
- Finally, collective representation (and the conscience collective it mediates) is one of the enduring themes of Erving Goffman’s Durkheim-infused work. In my nearly-completed book on Goffman, I cite his classroom remarks and textual citations to underscore his admiration for Parsons’s treatment of both Weber and Durkheim in *The Structure of Social Action*. While increasingly critical of Parsons, Goffman yet continued to praise his account of the ritual-expressive dimensions of socio-symbolic action in Durkheim’s work as the best still extant on the subject. Accordingly, Parsons (along with his theoretical soul mate, Kenneth Burke) arguably served as something of a sociological midwife for Goffman’s original elaboration of “the presentation of self in everyday life,” as well as his other writings on interpersonal rituals. Goffman may have derided Parsons at times, but he at least understood that a sociological theorist worth his salt does not simply overthrow all that has come before on the sole basis of belonging to some new generation. From Professor B’s odd remark as to what “the theory establishment needed to experience in the 80s and 90s,” (suggesting a form of deboning) can one infer that he is of the camp that upholds a kind of tabula rasa of the theoretical mind? (Parsons, by way of contrast, described himself in epistemological terms as a (mostly) “unreconstructed Kantian.” He was, after all, a student of Karl Jaspers, who was not only a noted scholar of Kant but a personal friend and colleague of Max Weber to boot.)

June 23, 2012

Greetings Michael:

I read the exchange, an exemplary academic transaction as it is. You have held your ground, and then some. More than that, you did so without losing your cool – no mean achievement.

You know I don’t dig Parsons’ work that followed SST, but I agree that the man was a born theorist and a key figure in this department. The debate over the conservative-liberal allegiance becomes interesting when we descend from the theoretical heights to the mundane particulars. This is where true liberality and respect for tradition prove themselves. But then, things tend to be so muddled at this level; squeezing them into neat categories is a thankless task.

My son is in town, we are heading for Utah tomorrow morning. So I better get to bed.

With kind wishes,
Dmitri

December 25, 2012

Greetings Michael:

Thank you for the card and well wishes. I hope the New Year will be kind to you and bring to a closure your important project, or at least move it in the right direction.

Not much to report on my end, on intellectual ground at any rate. My chair duties leave little time for more edifying pursuits. But the end is in sight, as I should be stepping down at the end of this academic year and returning to my usual routine.

Janet sends her best wishes to you.

Kindly,
Dmitri

December 25, 2012

Hello, Dmitri, nice to hear from you. I've been largely silent, mainly because I haven't had much to report on. Over the past year, I think I have improved my EG project marginally while correcting some of its more objectionable flaws, but without being able to do all that much about the structural issues. I have a few more tweaks to go, but I aim to set it aside quite soon so I can get on with other things.

Renee Fox suggested that I add a Prologue to draw the reader in and give some sense of "where I'm coming from." I accepted her idea and have almost finished writing it. I'll copy you on it and on my letter to Renee in a few days. I've added a few autobiographical details about my background, but I'm not sure that they really help frame the text all that much.

In the meantime, I woke up yesterday with another of my recurrent savage bouts of gout, this time concentrated in the little finger on my left hand. (Typing this is quite painful; it almost makes me want to write something along the lines of one of those experimental novels that entirely forgo one of the vowels. But it would probably overtax my ingenuity to type using only the right hand side of the keyboard.) I am taking about 5 pills a day to help ward off these attacks, but they still persist in what seems to be a maliciously random fashion. After repeatedly attacking both my feet and knees, the rogue crystals that produce the inflammation in the joints seem to have decided to besiege other vulnerable extremities.

It must be a relief to look forward to relinquishing the Chairmanship of your dept. It used to be that Chairs became a kind of fiefdom, with lordly authority dispensed from the top, but nowadays the position is probably more akin to a middle-management conflict arbitrator and chief budget negotiator, squeezed by insistent pressures from both on high and from below. I'm sure you have handled all the tensions and quandaries of the job as well as anyone could have.

This Christmas day finds Seattle weighed down by leaden skies from which a cold rain periodically pelts down -- a most unlovely day. Still, one thinks of all the (mostly) happy kids who get to be the center of a benign and giving universe for a short time. All the bright lights and decorations are cheerful, too, although they hardly can compete with the gaudy glitter that lights up the skies of Las Vegas year round.

Again, here's wishing you and yours all the best in 2013,
Michael

December 25, 2012
Michael,

Some structural issues in your Goffman manuscript are likely to remain unresolved, but the text must be getting to a point when you can show it to prospective publishers, if not the whole thing then sample chapters. You may get more (un)helpful advice to focus your further efforts. The important thing is to settle on a genre, with a prologue suiting some audiences better than others.

Sorry to hear about your gout. I hear it can be debilitating, and it must be doubly painful when it affects your work. That this malaise is known to have afflicted many a lustrous intellectuals is hardly a solace. Wonder if your strumming is hampered as well.

Chair's duties have been particularly onerous this year. Aside from the budgetary woes, outside reviews, promotion and tenure calendars, tangled paperwork for visiting scholars, and what not, I have to deal with disciplinary issues that have been ignored for years and are now in my lap. My administrative imagination, what little of it I have, is taxed. I manage to do a good deal of reading (have been savoring Cicero's correspondence lately), but the blizzard of memoranda saps my will to write on things close to my heart.

Laden skies in Seattle – I know from experience in my hometown how depressing such weather could be, but overcast days around here cheer me up. Just remind yourself that some of us ended up in the depressingly sunny Vegas. Maybe that will help you get through a rainy day in Seattle.

With kindest wishes, Dmitri

December 27, 2012

Hi, Dmitri,

My finger is still giving me troubles, but I'm not yet reduced to typing in barely comprehensible shorthand, like all those Twitterer twits and their tweets and chirps and God knows what else. (Spare me.) The rogue finger feels like it's suffered a bad sprain, but I know better from previous gout attacks.

As for strumming: sad so say, I've barely picked up my guitar over the past two years, even though my Martin D-28 is a jewel. A retired cousin of mine who was just taking up the guitar came for a visit, and when I got out my guitar to show him a few things I realized how rusty I had become. I was sorely embarrassed to find that my playing really hasn't improved over the decades, mainly because I haven't made a habit of practicing. But one of these years, I may get back to it and try to write a few more songs. I do attempt a poem every so often, usually when some horribly sad thing happens to people I know, like the suicide-by-hanging of my elderly uncle (the last of my mother's siblings to go) and the death of my cousin who crashed the commuter plane he piloted on Martha's Vineyard a few years back.

I would imagine that dealing with internal disciplinary matters must be among the most draining of your duties. From the outside, such affairs can be the stuff of vulgar curiosity and gossip, but having to confront and resolve them must be anything but a picnic.

Sociologically speaking, I would think that your experience as Chair would heighten your sensitivity to the distinction in modalities of action, such as those that distinguish power from authority, and both from influence, let alone coercion and its extreme form of violence. Of course, these modes overlap and meld in practice (witness the Pope), but that is all the more reason to try to separate them analytically. Parsons attempted this with his analyses of "generalized symbolic modes of interchange," and Hannah Arendt also paid attention to apprising the differences. However, most contemporary intellectuals seem content to conflate everything into the catch-all category of Power, a gross imprecision that Foucault exploited to maximum effect. (His perfervid account of society as essentially one big prisonhouse simply leaps over the fact of criminality and its deleterious effects; but then, the French radical left has long made a exemplary idol out of the perversely anointed "St.")

(Jean) Genet, and there's no much lower you can go than that. I sometimes think that Sartre's entire social philosophy can be boiled down to the rallying cry "smack the bourgeoisie.")

Cicero must be a good "medicine for melancholy" when coping with such "political" matters; I imagine a good helping of the Stoics wouldn't hurt either. One of the fascinating things about reading the ancient Greeks and Romans is how understandable they still are to us, some two millennia after their time. Despite all the apparent differences in cultural ethos and mores, material culture, political and social development, state of technology, and such, they still recognizably inhabit much the "same" world that we do. "Human nature" may be more malleable over historical time than some think, but there still remains some core features of humanity that don't seem to change much in fundamentals. (Reading the old Chinese philosophers gives a somewhat different impression, owing to marked differences in cultural inflection and such, but military thinkers are still profitably reading Sun Tzu and even Confucius has enjoyed something of a revival in his present-day native land, although what he would think of its One-party-state, Communist Capitalism is a dicey question.)

I wish I could import some of your "depressingly sunny" Las Vegas weather up here for a few weeks. I get it that day after day of blazing, shimmering heat can easily become vexing, but I still feel a twinge of envy when my eyes pass over the bright yellow or orange strips depicting your area on the national weather map. For Seattle, they might just as well pick the color gray and let it go at that. (Hawaii is another bright spot, out there on its lonesome in the Pacific vastness.)

My latest prospect for relocation is the Palm Springs area, where housing is still quite inexpensive. An L.A. friend has bought some properties in the vicinity and recommends it, even if it is on the isolated side. On the whole, I'd rather not live in California again, site of an ongoing, if slow-moving, fiscal train wreck (and the high and escalating taxes to go with it), but I'm at a point where climate dictates my options as much as anything else. But maybe this is just another episode of "California Dreamin' on such a winter's day."

Michael

December 28, 2012

Michael,

Just sent out the end of the year memo to my colleagues (check the attachment if you want to see the kind of issues a chair has to deal with these days), and now I can move on to other things.

You didn't touch the guitar in two years, I don't recall playing my 12 string Takamine since the mid-90s when I recorded my songs. I can imagine what my strumming would sound like after all these years. In fact, I have been thinking of purchasing a high quality 6 string acoustic guitar, even visited a music store, but what I saw there seemed overpriced and of a middling quality.

Hope you will get your grove back someday. What you have lost in guitar picking you made up in writing skills, as your prose flows gracefully and effortlessly. Keep it up, good things might happen.

Stoics are on my reading list in connection with a long-term project, titled "Quest for Self-Identity: Explorations in the History of Auto/biographical Discourse." The key figures I interrogate include Socrates and Jesus, Cicero and Seneca, St. Anthony and St. Augustine, Peter Abelard and Francesco Petrarca, Michel Montaigne and Jean-Jacque Rousseau, plus a couple of Russian intellectuals, including my teacher Igor Kon. This is a rather hopeless undertaking, given the vast amount of literature, the diversity of languages involved, and limited time resources at my disposal. Still, it is lots of fun.

If you relocate to California, it might be easier for you to visit Vegas. By then, you might recover from the culture shock you had suffered when you visited our shores last year.

Cheers,
Dmitri

December 29, 2012

Hi again, Dmitri -- reading your State of the Department Report makes it seem that Academia today is a combination of a large corporation and the bureaucratically elephantine military, what with all the plans, projections, exercises, and multiple layers of review and supervision, each layer no doubt eager to enforce its own pressing agenda and priorities. (The expression "like herding cats" comes to mind.) And inevitably, of course, there is The Diversity Task Force. (Do they count the Russian-born as adding to diversity? Or only a selected few favored categories? That "foreign factor" didn't seem to help Willy De Craemer much with the hierarchs at Penn, his Belgian Jesuit background and long experience in Congo seemingly held against him more than anything.) Still, it's interesting that the UNLV sociology department is the second-largest academic dept. there, speaking well of its quality and attractiveness to students. Of course, the sociologically "interesting" milieu of Las Vegas no doubt contributes to interest in the subject in those parts, as well it should.

"Making do with less" seems to be the enforced motto that you have had to work under lately. The Big Squeeze. Beyond that, people outside the academic world tend to think that being a university professor-cum-administrator is a mostly cushy job, but they don't realize the toll that administrative burdens can exact, particularly when scholars want to expend most of their energies on their teaching and research. Anyway, until next spring you can comfort yourself with the Biblical expression, "that, too, shall pass."

I don't have any compelling suggestions about excellent guitars to buy, but you might want to check out the magazine *Acoustic Guitar*, which is rife with guitar ads, many of them for the smaller luthiers and craft shops. I bought my Martin D-28 at Guitar Center, which operates comparatively huge musical-instrument stores in malls. That was for my 65th birthday back in 2008. It cost around \$2,000 (with hard case) whereas a local guitar shop was asking for maybe 25% more.

On and off, I muse about taking up the mandolin, which is a beautifully expressive instrument. However, I really dislike stringing even a 6-string let alone fussing with those picky little mandolin strings. Besides that, the mandolin seems to bring out the virtuoso among its players (many of the bluegrass pickers are phenomenal) and I know I would never attain that level. Maybe I'll opt for the ukulele instead, Jake Shimabukuro notwithstanding. (For an amazing idea of what a uke can do, give a listen to his rendition of "While my Guitar Gently Weeps" on YouTube. It makes my hand hurt just to see his fast-fire fingering and hand-stretching.)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puSkP3uym5k>.

You've picked a fascinating set of writers to mull over for your Quest for Identity project. I have always been fairly good at writing and consider it both a way of self-exploration and of articulating otherwise loose or inchoate thoughts. I'm definitely of the school that holds "I don't know what I think until I write it." Besides, I find it enjoyable in and of itself, though it can get to be a slog with long texts, as I well know. Your approach ought to help rescue the overworked and overheated concept of "discourse" from those who either metaphysicalize it (by any other name) or manage to write in such a convoluted and strained jargonistic fashion as to mangle and strangle it, in effect taking its name in vain. (Many academic writers seem to think that slathering thick post-modernist obscurantism all over their prose amounts to "doing theory," but I beg to differ.)

I really didn't suffer from all that much "culture shock" on visiting "Vegas" (which I distinguish from the city of Las Vegas taking the latter as more of an actual, as distinct from "virtual," place), certainly not in comparison with the prissy, finger-wagging sociologists who attended the ASA conference there. I thought the Riviera was a throwback to an earlier era -- rather shopworn and passe in its dotage, to be sure, but it must have seemed pretty snazzy back in the day when Sinatra & Co. were ruling the roost. And I enjoyed my later stay at the more

luxurious Mandalay Bay, although I was a bit nonplussed when I first checked in to see all the tourists (and their restless kids) in their summer shorts and loud shirts and even swim suits milling around in the stately inlaid-marble lobby of the place. The one spectacle that I couldn't deal with was Circus, Circus and its hordes of over-stimulated kiddos. With its carny-like atmosphere and cheap, kitschy prizes, it reminded me of nothing so much as the carnivals that used to come to town with the annual rodeo in Sheridan, Wyoming, that we always attended. In fact, the cheesy games and trinkety toys and shoddy stuffed animals and sleazy barkers hadn't changed much in the ensuing 50 years. Creepy. (But I confess, I found it exciting enough back in the day.) For all that, I would enjoy visiting LV again, if not to gamble than just to take in the spectacle. Vegas, for long, has been like nowhere else in America, and I can appreciate that such is part of our yeasty "diversity."

Jonathan Imber recently published a short piece on "meritocracy," which he sent to me. I responded with a few observations that you might find of interest (if only for their perversity of unenlightened outlook). I'll attach it, even though my comments were more off the top of my head than fully considered, and no doubt quite off the mark from where you are coming from.

Michael

December 31, 2012

Hi Michael:

No, I wouldn't qualify as a diversity candidate – too white, male, and old for that. There are bigger programs at UNLV (psychology has some 1,200 majors), but we are the second largest doctoral program, in part because we only admit Ph.D. students in our grad program. Still it is something to brag about, and to use as leverage in the bureaucratic con game. There is no way to avoid bureaucracy in the institutions of this size, which is not all bad. Things could be a lot nastier when everything depends on charisma and impression management.

Your Martin guitar seems reasonably priced. I have seen more expensive instruments which sounded mediocre to me. I listened to the ukulele version of George Harrison – endearing indeed, although I would prefer a regular guitar rendition. "While my guitar gently weeps" happens to be one of my Beatles' favorite tunes. Heard it first in Russia, it sounded searing and solemn. I was disappointed when I had enough English to make out the words, which seem to be out of tune with the music's majesty. Perhaps the song was meant to exploit the gap.

Autobiographical discourse is where I start, but the point of biocritical hermeneutics is to juxtapose verbal self-construction with behavioral-performative and somatic-affective traces. The word-body-action nexus is the locus of self-identity for me, as we continuously articulate and body forth it into being. I can understand postmodernist fascination with discourse but the obscurity postmodernists cultivate strikes me as fatuous. I am a sucker for clarity, even at the expense of profundity, especially where one claims to have spotted such. My allegiance is to pragmatist re/construction, not postmodernist de/construction. Still, I welcome all enlightenment, whatever the source, and postmodernists have their moments of clarity and insight (for instance, Foucault's late work on asceticism and care of self).

Vegas can be fun, especially if you are here for a short visit, better still if you escape the city into the mountains. A forty minute drive, and you are in another world few visitors know anything about. When you are here next time, I will take you to some of my favorite haunts.

Thanks for the notes on Imber. I look forward to reading them once the end of the year season has passed.

All best,
Dmitri

January 31, 2013

Hi Michael:

I have been asked to edit a special issue of *Symbolic Interaction* on Erving Goffman, which probably will come out in February 2014. Would you be interested in contributing a paper to it? I hope you will. The length is up to 8000 words, and it should be ready for review by May or earlier. The specific theme is pretty much up to you, although it might be a good idea to confer about the possibilities, as I suspect you have quite a few and some can be a better fit than other.

Along with my stuff there will be a paper by Sherri Cavan on EG's youth. I am contacting Daniel Albas and Mary Jo Deegan and see if they have ready materials for this issue. These are the people who attended the Vegas session on Goffman, if you recall.

Hope this note finds you in good spirits.

Kindly,
Dmitri

January 31, 2013

Hello, Dmitri.

I would be pleased to contribute something to your special journal project on Goffman. I will need a bit of time to ponder a suitable topic, although I would prefer to attempt something fresh rather than mining stuff from what I have already written. (I'm too sick of that to paw through it yet again like some woebegone, derelict scavenger.) Having read my memoir ms., perhaps you might suggest some subjects or themes that you think I might be capable of handling and that would appeal to the readers of the journal.

One thing I have thought about off and on is charting out what I take to be the programmatic element in EG's thinking, that is, the movement of his thought from one concentration or idea-complex to another (e.g., what led him into game theory, how stigma ties in with "impression management" and that in turn to mental disorder and hospitalization). But that may be far too ambitious a topic for a short article -- more like a book project that would take a lot of re-reading and thinking-through to get right. Part of the rationale for doing this would be to contest the persistent charge that EG lacks any "systematic" dimension (albeit not in the Parsonian sense). My sense is that there is something of a thematic coherence linking EG's various interests, beginning with communication systems and processes that he treated in his doctoral dissertation. In part, this reflects his abiding fascination with technique, of how things are put together and function as a kind of "apparatus." This is distinctly found in his treatment of "dramaturgy" and its companion realm of radio talk, which he explicitly referred to as a "technical" variation of talk in everyday life. I also think that his M.A. thesis has been unduly overlooked by many commentators; to me his use of the TAT screens prefigures much in his later thinking about projection and the presentation of self. It also shows how he took a standard methodological tool from psychiatry and turned it to his own, more extrinsic-oriented uses. (I discuss this at length in the Two Seminars volume.)

Along these lines, I would be particularly interested in reading Daniel Albas's paper if it is on the topic he talked about in Las Vegas. Like Albas, I'm inclined to think that Goffman absorbed quite a lot from his early immersion in chemistry both as a boy and in college. (That includes his youthful "bomb" experiments, like the one "Pooky" set off on graduation day at St. John's High School.) Goffman had a way of borrowing "models" from sundry sources (including literary and dramatic ones, of course), and I think that chemistry gave him one specific model of "analysis," abutting a number of others. (In the Seminars book, I described this as a methodological interplay of modeling and matrixing.) Yet all of this is overlaid with the strong early influence

of the pattern-analysis of cultural anthropology on his thought. Somehow, he managed to synthesize many diverse strands of thought while managing to contrive his own distinctive and memorable style of thinking.

I'm going to make one last, quick pass through my remembrance ms., then stop obsessing over it. One of these months, I thought I might send you the Seminars text. No one has seen it yet, and it could no doubt benefit from outside eyes (although I am not asking to burden you further with any editorial work). The ms. comes in at over 600 pages, though, and so it might be best to wait until summer when you will be less encumbered with academic duties.

Aside from the dragginess induced by cold, wet, gray (and recently all-day foggy!) weather hereabouts, I'm plugging along OK. I have taken up Renee Fox's suggestion of adding a prologue to my EG book and am on the verge of finishing that today (he hopes). It's about 20 pages long, and I'll send a copy of it to you. For purposes of framing, and in keeping with your urgings, I've added a few autobiographical tidbits to the prologue for what they are worth. Which may not be much, but it may help some readers get a better sense of my standpoint on various matters and why it tends to cut against the grain of prevailing academic opinion. (I'm much more of the Old School Liberal type rather than the revamped "progressive" one that rules the roost today.)

Thanks of thinking of me and I look forward to any suggestions you might have for a suitable article.

Best regards,
Michael

January 31, 2013
Michael,

Glad to hear you are on board with this venture.

Papers collected for the special issue seem to combine biographical-historical matters with substantive concerns. I will talk about the interplay between EG's life and work. Mary Jo Deegan may discuss EG's evolving views on gender and her encounters with Goffman. Daniel Albas can combine his observations on EG at Winnipeg with the interviews he gathered with his relatives and talk about the transgressive elements in his thought. Is there a way for you to bring up your personal observations on Goffman at Penn and enliven them with a substantive discussion of his ideas (or the other way around)?

On substantive level, you are interested in the interfaces of stigma, impression management, mental disorder, and game theory – can you integrate some of these themes with your fine observations on Goffman's MO at Penn? This is probably not what you have in mind, but if you could pull something like that while glossing your larger projects, it would be neat.

I will be sending to the editors an outline of the issue with paper titles. The latter can be updated later, but some tentative headings are needed. So think about a preliminary title, something along these lines perhaps: "The Continuity and Change in Goffman's Research Agenda: Reflections of a Former Student." This will give you ample room to explore the tangents you like and balance the presentation as practical. Let me know what you think.

Send me your manuscripts when they are ready. I will enjoy reading and commenting on them, even if not right away. Things are crazy in the department at the moment, as some faculty is getting job offers elsewhere, some are transitioning to administrative jobs, while I am struggling to shore up the morale and keep the show on the road.

Once again, welcome on board. I think we shall have an exciting issue devoted to Goffman.

All best,
Dmitri

February 4, 2013
Hello again, Dmitri.

I've sent you (by mail) the prologue that I mentioned, along with a cover letter to Renee Fox. I had to make a hard copy for Renee and decided that would be suitable for you too.

A few thoughts have occurred to me about the EG article you asked me to submit. If I make it along the lines you suggested I would be inclined to title it "Patterns of Continuity in Goffman's Research Program -- Reflections of a Former Student." The slight difference from your proposed title reflects my own emphasis on continuity and conceptual linkage in EG's research interests (although I realize that "change" is usually privileged as a matter of course among today's academics). Also, "program" fits my conception a bit better than "agenda," if only as a matter of connotative overtones. But there's really nothing objectionable about your title, except for the initial "The" before "Continuity," which is unidiomatic in a title like that.

It was Gary Alan Fine (I think) who wrote that Goffman rarely backtracked on or retreaded matters he had previously covered, but my understanding of his work is fundamentally different. There was a constant process of refinement, conceptual fine-tuning, terminological extension, and so forth, but I see Goffman's thinking as much more conceptually interwoven than disjunctive. There was a shift in emphasis when Goffman turned to sociolinguistics, but even that can be linked to his earliest work in communicative-expressive conduct. There is nothing particularly "ideological" about this approach to Goffman (with the possible exception of his latter-day feminism, where he adopted the stance of an outright advocate).

I don't know how much I would want to go in plowing over some of the same biographical ground on EG I have already covered in my two manuscripts, although that would fit the biohermeneutical tilt you mention. I wonder if there would be any merit in trying to chart out specific modalities of interaction, with a stress on the "symbolic" (expressively instrumental) aspect (interrogative versus instructional, say, even if the two can overlap, as in a psychiatric session). But that might turn out to be too commonsensical to pay off all that much. In any event, I assume that readers of this particular journal would want the topic to fit in broadly with their special interests in SI.

Anyway, as I said, the continuity theme may be too daunting a topic to take up in fairly short time and for a journal article. I guess the only way to find out is to give it a try and see what the results are. I do like exploring EG's early works for portents of what came later. And there still remains the mystery of a certain "leap" in EG's thought (and style) between his Ph.D. dissertation and the dramaturgical framework of *PSEL*, the latter a far more audacious and original work, with Goffman's signature theoretical flair fully developed. (But one gets a preview of it in "Cooling the Mark Out," my own personal favorite of his essays, "cynically" cheeky though it be.)

A few other points on the more mechanical side of production.

What is the deadline for submitting proposed working titles (in case I should happen to shift topic)?

It might spare your contributors time and effort to be apprised of the format of papers to be followed by the journal (citation style, endnotes, and the like). That way one could write "to style" instead of having to re-format a finished paper. I gather that most journals are quite strict about following a certain style, but their styles also differ.

On a related note, it would be efficient to consolidate EG's works in a single bibliography that could be drawn on by all contributors without having to repeat much of the same information over and over in every paper. However, that might present coordination problems of its own and the journal might balk.

Michael

February 11, 2013

Hi Michael:

Your package has arrived, and here is my hasty feedback before I wean myself back to the administrative minutia.

Your letter to Renée gives me a better understanding of what must have bothered her in your manuscript. Your points are well-taken, your self-critique commands respect, and the ease with which your prose is flowing belies the immense intellectual labor that must have gone into it.

Your loyalty to Parsons is admirable, too. Whatever quibbles I have with his particular contributions are kind of beside the point. The man was a towering figure in the field, and for good reasons, even if his fame rubbed off on him and others in ways which made some wince. It would be interesting to know how Rene responds to your revisions.

I don't think you should worry too much about the purity of the genre into which your manuscript falls. It is clearly hybrid – a biography, a memoir, a tribute, an analytical tour de force. I see this as strength (for the most part), even if editors and reviewers might think otherwise.

You cite Renée's on the opening page, but such a lengthy quote introducing your endeavor might work better as a promotional blurb for the book. Perhaps you could paraphrase the passage, possibly quoting a line or two from Rene, but chiefly intimating how she had opened your eyes to the overarching meaning of what your pen was writing.

Also, you might want to give me some thought to changing the order of your exposition. After a brief paragraph situating your project in the intellectual space, you can talk about your pathway to Penn, special interest you took in the theoretical currents swirling in the department, your early realization that the seminars you took with the likes of Goffman and Rieff were special and that someday you might write about them. Next comes an interlude about the professional detour you took and byways that brought you back to the core issues of sociological theory. After that you describe the long-term grappling with your archives and notes, writing two book-length narratives, and finally realizing – with the help of your former mentor – where you were heading. This is where Renée's feedback would come into play. Rhetorically, this might work better and be easier on the reader. It's just a thought.

On the other hand, as I read the text further, I begin to wonder if an extensive biographical essay might be a touch too long for the prologue. It creates a (mis)impression that the reader is in for an intellectual autobiography. Your manuscript is, in part, that, but I am not sure if that is the impression you want to convey at this point rather than getting right to the core of your endeavor – intellectual projects of Goffman and Rieff. All the info here is relevant and important; some of it belongs right there, but some might come out stronger in other parts of the text, including the postscript where you can refocus on your own intellectual journey, this time in a more analytical mode.

Please be forewarned that I may be wrong on that point. Indeed, as I read the text, I see more reasons for leaving the particulars of your own biography where they are.

P. xvi – “Hermeneutics of fidelity” or hermeneutics of trust (as a counterpart to suspicion)?

P. xvi – Does progressivism valorize novelty and hold the past in contempt? I would be less assertive in this score. Dewey, Mead, Rorty respected the past, it seems to me, and were willing to use it as a resource. Their progressive animus was against the smug belief of the powerful that they got on top solely through their own efforts while those left behind were mostly bums who deserved their lot. Progressive pragmatists were ready to cast a critical gaze at the verities of both liberal and conservative thought, whose schemes could readily lead astray.

P. xviii – “allows itself become” – “to become”?

P. xix – “his time at Berkeley. but I” – “at Berkeley, but I”

P. xix – “so much as it a portrait” – “so much as it is a portrait”

P. xix – “he did so much so codify” – “so much to codify”?

P. xx – Not sure you need to highlight the deficiencies of your earlier treatment of EG’s Jewishness.

P. xx – Do you mean to say you are “essentializing” Goffman’s ethnicity? Maybe a different word is in order here (gloss, hypothesize, venture an interpretation).

OK, that’s all for now.

Best of luck,
Dmitri

February 12, 2013

Dmitri -- thanks for your thoughtful comments on the prologue. It will take me a day or two to digest them and mull over them before I get back to you on the subject.

In the meantime, I thought I’d send you a link to a Washington Post story on one of V. Putin’s latest exploits, the mortifying public sacking (on national TV) of the official responsible for building one of the Olympics facilities. The piece is written with wry, knowing wit, but it makes clear that Vlad the Impaler is not only a thug but takes a ruthless pride in displaying his bully-boy thuggery for all his compatriots to see.

http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-07/world/36962447_1_russian-president-vladimir-putin-olympic-post

Assuming you have any free time for entertainments: I wonder if you know of the English singer-songwriter-guitarist Richard Thompson, who was a founder of the great English folk-rock group Fairport Convention with his former wife, Linda, back in the day. He’s an amazingly talented guy with a knack for writing highly melodic songs that usually come with some unusual musical and lyrical twists. There’s quite a few of his songs by him on YouTube, even if the sound and visual quality tends to be murky and choppy on many of them.

I especially like his “From Galway to Graceland” (about an Irish lady who over-identifies with Elvis to ultimately ruinous effect), “The Dimming of the Day” (about his aching need for the love of his heartmate -- he duets with Bonnie Raitt on a killer YouTube version), and “Down Where the Drunkards Roll” (a sympathetic heartbreaker about the down-and-outers of life and their ways of compensating via the fog of alcohol and demented fantasies of more exalted lives). He also wrote the superb “Vincent White Lightning ‘52” about a young Southern hoodlum and his cherished motorcycle. (The bluegrass singer Del McCoury did a knockout

version of the song.) Among other interesting things about him, he has an OBE, is a big fan of the Burning Man Festival, and is a convert to the mystically-oriented school of Sufi Islam. A real treat for the ear and mind.

I could spend the better part of a day just sampling music from the web, though I usually make myself desist. When I hear people as good as Thompson it makes me want to get back to my guitar.

Back before long,
Michael

February 13, 2013
Thanks, Michael:

I will give it a listen.

All best,
Dmitri

February 15, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Here are some comments on your comments on the prologue. I'm hoping sans typos this time around.

Have an enchanting, or at least enjoyable, weekend. And my best to Janet, still fondly remembered from my brief sojourn to Sin (actually, more like Vice) City.

Michael

Hello, Dmitri,

Thanks once again for taking the trouble to comment on my writing. I confess that your suggested revisions about some autobiographical highlights and their placement puts me in a bit of a quandary (not least because you were the one who urged me to elaborate on them to begin with!). I will definitely consider making some of the changes you recommend, but I think I'll probably have to re-read the whole text before making any major revisions, keeping your points in mind. If anything, my inclination would be to snip out the self-referential bits, which have more to do with my overall choice of sociology and theory rather than with my preoccupation with Goffman (and Rieff) per se. (I do discuss the latter in earlier parts of the main text.) I apologize for the slipshod typos, a result in part of editing onscreen and with a tired mind at that. I've fixed them. The last point about "essentializing," however, was governed by the earlier phrase "not meant to." Still, I think it best to avoid that trendy academic term, so I'll probably substitute a word like "typify" or "reduce." (I try to keep in mind Peter Gay's insistence on rejecting the notion of psychoanalysis as a "Jewish science," as spelled out in his book *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis*.) I'll probably cut the mea culpa too.

Renée responded in a letter by calling the Prologue an "outstanding Introduction/Essay." On the basis of it she judged that the text had reached the point of being ready to be published. She had no objection to my citing the passage from her earlier letter about the scope and singularity of the book; in fact, she thanked me for giving her words a "privileged place" and "for having so respectfully taken into account" her earlier comments and criticisms. (She's now editing her own book on Doctors Without Borders, which had been giving her difficulties.) I'm not going to ask Renée (or you, for that matter) for a blurb, although I gather that publishers are apt to press an author to provide illustrious names to flog the product for them. She (and you) have already contributed quite enough time and effort to my project and it's all rather unseemly to traffic in praise-mongering for oneself (leave it to the egomaniacal likes of Norman Mailer).

Regarding a “hermeneutics of fidelity” set off against a hermeneutics suspicion: To my mind, the issue is not one of “trust” but of being faithful to the meaning of a text as an author apparently meant it to mean, based on as close and scrupulous a reading as one can give it. This was what Rieff taught in his “unpacking” seminars. One rule he insisted on was that the text must be read strictly in-and-of itself, without resort to “extrinsic” considerations or glosses, such as biographical or political surmises. (Biblical and Talmudic interpretation is the model, rather along the lines of Karl Barth’s purifying “dogmatic theology,” which sought to get at the true doctrinal words of God by separating the theological wheat from the extraneous chaff.)

Now, there are obviously some issues that arise with such an approach, given that sociohistorical and psychological or biohermeneutic dimensions are bound to be woven into even the greatest of texts. One thinks of the revelations about Max Weber’s erotic torments, of the study *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, or the Peter Gay study of Freud, mentioned above, not to mention the entire *EGA* project.) Moreover, as a student of Kenneth Burke, I am by no means averse to interpreting texts in all sorts of ways, intrinsic and extrinsic alike. (Rieff himself allowed that an author’s works will leave traces of unconscious or unintended trajectories of meaning, even those in conflict with the overall thrust of the work.)

There is also what is known in literary theory as “the intentional fallacy.” i.e., the idea that it is folly (because epistemically impossible) to attempt to read the actual original intentions lurking “behind” an author’s text. (Echoes of this are found in the controversies over ostensibly 1 “originalist” interpretations of the U.S. Constitution.) But as I counter-argued on behalf of my textual reconstruction in “Notes on the Text” at the beginning of the *Two Seminars* book: In this context, the so-called “intentional fallacy” (that is, trying to plumb what an author originally intended a text to mean) is not a fallacy at all but a horizon of aspiration.

[Footnote:] I take it, then, that such a project of textual reconstruction, geared as it is to a *fiduciary* hermeneutics of fealty to an original source, is the antithesis of “deconstruction,” insofar as the latter is predicated sheerly on the ingenuity and intentionalities of the mantically “misreading” *critic*. Thus, to the extent that I have imbued the text attributed to Goffman with my own hankering, agendas, and “prejudices,” and thereby perforce “deconstructed” it, I will have failed in what I set out to do. Indeed, that would be the index of my failure. Still and all, I think that “fidelity” is a proper standard for one mode of reading or “unpacking,” without explicitly prohibiting or censuring all others. It is an especially edifying edict for contemporary students who are apt to “privilege” their own responses, interests, and opinions, overriding the text in front of them itself. (I know well the temptation; reading over some of my old college class papers makes me chagrined at how callow and superficial they could be, especially when riddled with detritus of the political agitations of the time.) I should have been more precise about my criticism of “progressivism.” I wasn’t really quarreling with the pragmatists so much as with what I take to be the many strands of “crypto Marxism” and other supposedly radical trends of thought that so exhilarate today’s academics, fixated as they are by race, class, and gender (and, of course, sex). Part of the problem here is semantic. To me, the term “progressive” (now widely used as a substitute for “liberal”) has dank associations with the Communist-led and Soviet-manipulated Popular Front movement of the 1930s, an appropriation of the much more benign (and homegrown) signification of the term in the era of Theodore Roosevelt, the suffragettes, the Social Gospel movement, and Dewey’s pragmatism. I do believe that pragmatism is, and has always been, predominantly liberal-progressivist in orientation (Pierce notwithstanding), and that this is built into its very ground-presuppositions, which pragmatism generally deems not in need of much philosophical or ideological inspection. Indeed, Rorty eventually came around to abandoning the entire philosophical enterprise, although not without adding that an America that disregarded his prophetic warnings about current trends was hurtling towards “fascism.”

Relatedly, I should have made it clearer that I associate the Western “bourgeois” era with the rise and institutionalization of liberalism (in the broad historical sense), with its valorization of individualism, democracy, property rights, free markets, social mobility, and other hallowed “American values.” (However unmet in practice, the gaps between “theory and praxis” are vastly less than those of rival Communist states.) To be sure, one can always indict aspects of any socioeconomic class, very much including the “middle class” we hear so much about in today’s pandering political rhetoric (rather shamelessly so to my ears).

But my basic objection is directed at the reification, of “the bourgeoisie” as the implacable and devilish enemy of all things good and right and true, as long-entrenched in the far-leftist view of the world. As has long been understood, this is almost entirely an “intra-bourgeois” polemic (made murkier in Marxism by the equivocal status of the intellectuals, including Marx and Engel themselves) in an otherwise class-determinist scheme. The French intelligentsia are apparently never going to get over this rabid “anti-bourgeois” pyrogenic, but I would just as soon let them seethe and stew in their unending rancor rather than us.

2

That goes for the “black bourgeoisie” as well. Martin Luther King, Jr. was certainly a radical in a real sense (and an indispensable one at that), but he was also clearly a product of a solid middleclass upbringing. (That he was a staunchly religious leader confounds and vexes the strident New Atheists to no end.) In fact, it has recently been made known that MLK was a Republican in his younger days and was even on the verge of voting for Nixon over Kennedy in 1960, until Kennedy adroitly played him into changing his mind.

Your characterization of the self-congratulatory smugness of what Mills called “the power elite” borders on caricature, at least with respect to the national political class. What is called Liberalism today in its more high-toned environs is rife with denigration of the middle class (and large segments of the “working class” too, select minorities excepted), although with plenty of hypocrisy to go with it (as in the case of the Hollywood crowd). For this, among other reasons, you can call me a disabused liberal.

It is of note how many recent U.S. presidents (of both parties) have come from relatively modest, lower- to middle-class backgrounds: Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Clinton, and Obama. And some of the more upscale origins, notably FDR, have been among the most robust champions of “the little guy.” (JFK’s placing is more equivocal, despite his continuing prestige, owing to his family’s *nouveau riche* and Irish-ethnic background, coupled with his own somewhat diffident liberalism and political timidity.) In this respect, the two Bushes were more of an anomaly than not in overtly plumping for their own (upper) class interests while in power. (I’ll give you that the current Republican Party en bloc is unblushingly class-protective on this score, even in the face of Obama’s calculated end-runs around them.)

But this discussion is off the present point. As I learned while working for law firms, it’s always best to confine a single communication to a single subject. Accordingly, I’ll wait for another day to go into my evolving thoughts on the subject of the prospective Goffman article. For now, I’ll just say that I expect to focus and simplify the topic, bearing on a relatively small corpus of EG’s early writings. And, as I say, I’ll keep in mind your latest comments (for which I thank you) in having one last go at what sometimes feels like my breech-baby of a book.

Michael

February 17, 2013

Hi Michael:

Thank you for your feedback on my feedback. I didn’t think my hasty remarks merited such an attentive response, but I take it as a mark of your intellectual generosity.

Renée’s cite in your prologue is fine. I thought that rhetorically, it might work better after you introduced your project, described your life’s journey to it, and glossed the difficulties the manuscript caused you. A long quote introducing the book may be harder to follow without the proper context, even though its meaning comes to the fore as one keeps reading. Rene and you see things otherwise, and I trust your judgment.

The reference to “trust” does indeed miss your intention while the term “hermeneutics of fidelity” suites well the meaning you strive to you get across. My quibble is occasioned by the fact that I come from a tradition that does not privilege authorial self-understanding, that treats the stated intent as one hermeneutic resource among many. The latter also include the author’s actions and emotions, textual meanings misaligned with the professed goals, contemporary and subsequent audiences’ responses to the text, appropriations and misappropriations of paradigmatic texts, and other ways of reading the sense into and out of the product under interpretation – all the things I associate with pragmatist hermeneutics. Being faithful to a symbolic product’s meaning – be this an artwork, a scripture, or a constitution – means more than one thing, and the fidelity to its meaning requires second-guessing authorial intentions.

My take on progressivism comes from the same pragmatist source, as you know. I take issue with the liberals who are reluctant to amend their premises when their policies fail to produce intended outcomes. Progressive pragmatists are committed to certain principles, notably to socializing opportunity, but they are not wedded to any particular policy, always remaining alert to the unanticipated consequences that necessitate reconsideration of the underlying assumptions. I don’t think Romney, Ryan, Rove and the conservative forces they champion cultivate such an attitude. Of course, there are strands of conservative thought that cannot be painted with the wide brush I used in my hurried and perhaps careless remarks.

Hope you move speedily to complete your labors.

All best,
Dmitri

February 18, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. A few more responses to your last message on this holiday day before getting back to business. I don’t take fundamental issue with your account of the dense complexity that interpretation can entail, or the use of multiple sources and resources in aid of it. To cite Kenneth Burke’s omnibus critical maxim (which I have conscripted to refer to Goffman’s analytical practice as well): “use all that is there to use.” What really counts in the end is the depth, fullness, and clarity of illumination that ultimately results, with the proviso that it be predicated not on some ulterior agenda but on a will-to-truth. And that, to me, begins with the close and scrupulous reading of an author’s text as prior requisite to an exposition, critique, or “explanation” of it. (The latter particularly applies to attempts to apply a schematic theoretical framework such as psychoanalysis to a work, as distinct from allowing it to “breathe” on its own.)

Ricoeur attributed the “hermeneutics of suspicion” to Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud alike. He referred to their attempts to “disenchant” thought of its ingrained “illusions” or “false consciousness,” a project that can be traced back all the way to Plato and his famous shadowy cave. A “hermeneutics of trust” might aptly apply to the work of Ricoeur himself, precisely because of his exceptionally astute hermeneutics of fidelity in approaching the texts of other authors, such as Freud. (To say as much is to betray a trust in truth, if not absolute certainty, notwithstanding that the presumed possibility of truth-finding and -telling is what many of the post-modernists condemn as itself the biggest illusion of all. I would add that the first two figures Ricoeur cites were among the greatest *critics* (excoriators actually) of existing civilization, whereas their positive prescriptions for the future have proven disastrously ruinous. Freud, at least, encouraged an accommodation with civilization, for all its churning discontents.)

Rieff argued for a “deep subjectivity” in coming to an apprehension of a text. He variously described close reading as akin to the intensity of a musician mastering a complex score or some love-struck soul reading (and re-reading) a love letter. What matters is not so much the stated intent of the author as what a text means “in and of itself” in something of the way that phenomenologists approach the “thing itself” (without the spoilsport Kantian caveats). Rieff was particularly adamant against textual misreadings begot by the undue politicization of interpretation, such as recurrent charges that Joseph Conrad was a bloody racist-imperialist apologist in his

great work *Heart of Darkness*. (We read that book in Rieff's class on social theory, and I concur with Rieff that to read Conrad thusly is to get him quite backwards.) On a wholesale basis, as you well know, such reductionist misreading can extend to an entire ideological regimen in which Gadamer's "prejudicial" presuppositions are institutionally enforced in conjunction with a Nietzschean will to "philosophize [and more] with a hammer" against all rival contenders, even within the fold itself.

I think you recognize that my project of textual reconstruction demanded commitment to as strict a criterion of faithfulness as I could muster in trying to capture Goffman's words as exactly as possible from the abbreviated residues of my class notes. I'm attaching the introductory "A Note on the Texts" to give you an idea of my sense of the matter in that context. (If pressed for time, you might want to read just the first few pages where I retrospectively set out the conceptual framework I tried to adhere to, followed by a more detailed description of editorial procedures.)

We could go on back and forth at length about progressivism and pragmatism (neither of which I reject out of hand, despite my skeptical reservations), but the press of other duties counsels otherwise. I would cite John Dewey's theory of education as one area in which pragmatism has not lived up to its own billing in at least one sour instance. One year around 1963 I attended the "progressive" Antioch College (now defunct) in Ohio, a college ostensibly devoted to Deweyan educational principles. (My time there included one worthless quarter of "work-study," which turned out to be tedious drudgery, at minimum wage, conforming IBM punch cards for a sociology database project.) By then Antioch was dominated by "Red Diaper babies" and was in a constant state of ideological turmoil that I found repellant, as well as educationally stunting. (Watching TV news in a commons room, students would cheer footage of a U.S. warplane being shot down over Vietnam.) To be sure, this was more of an agitprop parody-pragmatism than anything Dewey ever envisioned or stood for.

As time went on (after I left to return to UU), the intimidating Black Panthers came to prevail at Antioch, openly flaunting handguns on campus, and the whole Antioch endeavor eventually collapsed of its own anarchic impulses overseen by cravenly anti-authority authorities. I thoroughly hated the experience, but am grateful that it at least gave me a bitter taste of non-stop agitation and America-hatred that left me ever after allergic to doctrinaire left-wing radicalism. (Thankfully, I was already out of college and in Vietnam when the New Left arose.)

I think it is a little unfair to conflate working politicians with political thinkers, especially in an age in which politics on all sides has turned into a form of zero-sum partisan engineering more than anything else. (Obama & Co. have proven themselves pretty adroit at this themselves, as witness the last election.) I don't share your faith in the self-correcting, "reality-based" outlook of contemporary liberals. For that matter, I don't care much for the ingrained shibboleths of either major party in a time (to quote myself) when the trouble with our current political alignments is that liberals are too apt to be illiberal, conservatives un-conservative, and radicals radical for the sake of radicalism itself.

In a few days, I'll summarize my emerging sense of the EG article. Until then, as Roy Rogers sang, "Happy trails to you, until we meet again...."

Michael

February 18, 2013

Michael,

Text is the starting point, I agree. If we do not read it fairly, if we use the text as an excuse for our own ego trips, we evince a hermeneutical style that tells the world something about our character. But honest readers may disagree on what the text says. Interrogating the text beyond its authorial intent doesn't mean subscribing to the hermeneutics of suspicion (how about the hermeneutics of curiosity?)

The case in point is Tacitus's *Agricola*, a famous panegyric glorifying his father-in-law, a Roman general who subdued recalcitrant Brits and managed to die in his own bed in the reign of Domitian when any popular courtier ran the risk of being brought down by the jealous emperor. Why, then, over the course of time readers and scholars have disagreed on what Tacitus had in mind writing this text and what it actually says? The text is an encomium to the Roman arms and superior organization that crashed the fiercely independent Brits. Yet, when you read the speeches Tacitus put in the mouth of Agricola and his opponents, you realize that liberty and self-determination he valorizes are the Republican values Tacitus foregrounds in his *Annals*. Romans pride themselves on bringing civilization to barbarians and pacifying them by the force of arms, but the enemies' skepticism makes the Roman cause look like crass imperialism.

The same ambiguity surrounds Agricola's character and his political stance. Tacitus heaps praises on the man's *obsequium ac modestia* which he juxtaposes to the open dissent of Thrasea and Helvidius. Should we take Tacitus at his word when he touts Agricola's obsequiousness and denigrates the Republican virtues of those who defied the tyrant?

Readers have grappled with this text over millennia, discerning ever new layers of sense in it – what did Tacitus intend to say through it, was he fully in control of its meaning, should we infer the intent from the text or interpret the text through the stated intent?

Not every text is open to conflicting interpretations, but the most interesting ones like the U.S. Constitution and Holy Scripture are. I am partial to the hermeneutics that leaves ample room for honest difference of opinion.

Pragmatists are people prone to mistakes and hubris like all humans. If they succeed, it is not on account of their superior paradigm but because they did not allow any theory to efface practical experience.

Well, after this interlude, we may go back to work.

All best,
Dmitri

March 14, 2013
Hi, Dmitri,

As we discussed, my first idea for my contribution to the SI/EG project was to try to chart out conceptual continuities over the span of Goffman's thinking career. Unlike some other commentators (such as Gary Alan Fine), I see far more consistency and continuity — indeed, something of a programmatic research design — at work across Goffman's writings, albeit with a constant process of conceptual amplification and refinement, and with some tangents along the way. (I think the *Two Seminars* book bolsters my case, inasmuch as Goffman goes into the intellectual background and evolution of some of his enduring theoretical concerns in ways he hardly ever did elsewhere, except in passing or by tacit acknowledgment.)

However, when I sat down and began plotting out such connections it soon became apparent that this was far too ambitious a topic to take on for a journal article and in such a relatively short time. Among other things, to do it right would entail re-reading Goffman's entire output, which I am just not up to doing right now and wouldn't have the time for anyway.

Accordingly, my revised plan is to give a close thematic reading of his M.A. thesis with some quick glances at other early writings that pertain to aspects of it. I'll grant that it is unfair to a writer to be too persnickety about his earliest writings, especially unpublished grad-school work, but my aim is to uncover and articulate the germinal form of many of Goffman's salient ideas and preoccupations as foreshadowed in the M.A. thesis, tied

in some measure to aspects of his biography. The primary focus, however, is the working of EG's mind (and imagination); his analysis of the middle-class living room is already quite "Goffmanian," and involves an imaginative Gestalt-switch on top of that.

I have already adumbrated bits of this in several long notes in my two EG manuscripts, but a more detailed textual examination and analysis seems in order. My working title is "Portents of Things to Come — Goffman's Master's Thesis." ("Portents" may seem a bit too magico-religious, but it does have befitting overtones of the out-of-the-ordinary.)

For instance, I find Goffman's M.A. thesis fascinating for its application of standard TAT protocols from psychiatry, but with the analysis shifted to a quite different axis of interpretation, namely, "characteristic responses to depicted experience" rather than idiosyncratic disclosures of inner emotional states or attitudes. At one point he declaims that he rejected the underlying Freudian psychological assumptions behind conventional TAT analysis, assessing that theory of personality as one that "can neither be proven nor taken for granted here." So already we see the intertwining of Freudian influences on his thought and his rejection of, and rivalry with, its leading tenets.

Goffman's own protocol of TAT interpretation foreshadows in some ways his elaboration of "the organization of experience" in Frame Analysis and his own use of drama as a thematic organizing scheme or "scaffold," holding reality off at second-remove by using an extended metaphor as a kind of conceptual medium (or "paintbox," he might say). This kind of distantiated framing also occurs in EG's pictorial analyses in *Gender Advertisements*, a kind of TAT analysis by extension, drawing on commercial and reportorial depictions as "collective representations" of a sort. (Behind all this, I have conjectured, is a highly cinematic sensibility.)

At any rate, that seems to be a more focused and manageable topic than the original one, yet one that is also suitable for expansion in due course in case I were to write more extensively on EG's early work. I don't want to make too much of the M.A. thesis or belabor it, but I do think it is worthwhile both in showing how Goffman turned a rather uninspired recapitulation of a previous study into something distinctively his own, while also rebutting the persistent charge that his thinking was consistently "un-methodological." (His critique of previous TAT analysis is really quite incisive.)

Another thing: I know of no other sustained commentary on this work. In his study of EG, Philip Manning merely mentioned it in passing in a 2 ½ page overview of the Service Station Dealer study; Tom Burns merely alluded to it in noting, correctly, that it showed Goffman making a rather clear break from his mentor, W. Lloyd Warner regarding social-stratification issues. (What Warner might have thought of that I can only conjecture.) Incidentally, I have ordered a copy of Warner and William Henry's 1948 study of soap opera fans, which Goffman initially planned to reprise for his thesis. I will also try to read (or re-read) some of the other sources cited, particularly the two works on the philosophy of science.

I have prepared a rough outline of what I would like to cover, along with a note from the Introduction to *Two Goffman Seminars*. (Word file attached.) That should give you an idea of how I intend to approach this topic. Another useful thing is that I already have my previous writings on the subject to draw on, so you will be at least guaranteed some material by early May.

I recognize that this might recommend shifting the placement of my contribution to an earlier slot rather than bringing up the rear, as in the outline you sent me.

Does this strike you as in keeping with the aims of your commemorative project? Other than that, I do have a few petty questions about formatting to ask you, but that can wait.

Best regards,
Michael

March 14, 2013

Hi Michael:

Your thoughts on where you are heading with your paper make sense. Starting with the M.A. thesis, you will show how certain themes/approaches came to light early on in Goffman intellectual career and then hint at how these themes would reverberate in his later work. The emphasis, though, is on the early formulations, specifically on the M.A. thesis, rather than on a sustained discussion of how these insights were reproduced and reworked.

I think your initial title will work fine for this blueprint. Just highlight some of the EG's earlier ideas/emphasis/methods in his later works and seminars you took. See how the writing goes, and if a narrower title is called for, you can supply it once the whole piece is ready.

A synopsis you sent me focuses on the M.A. thesis, its internal structure and methodological innovations. It does not dwell much on the continuities. This promises to be a fine technical paper on the genesis of Goffman's conceptual apparatus and incipient intellectual orientation.

Still, I hope you touch upon your personal experience with Goffman, so that the paper has an affinity with the broader theme of the journal issue and the biographical component of other contributions. Goffman's seminars at Penn should give you a chance to spotlight how the early themes came through in mature Goffman. Maybe you can reprise some of EG's habits as a teacher/scholar and tie them to his broader intellectual stance. Perhaps you can draw on the EGA materials for your discussion of EG's early scholarly interests (e.g., interviews with Esther Besbris).

Clearly, you might find these tacks disingenuous. Such are my wishes as a guest editor, but I will let you follow your imagination wherever it leads you and hope that *SI* editors and readers appreciate the quality of your work however it evolves.

With good wishes,
Dmitri

March 15, 2013

Hello again, Dmitri,

Thanks for the go-ahead. I had intended to review the seminars texts for salient points to include in my interpretation of Goffman's M.A. thesis. In the seminar on methods, he discussed at considerable length the whole pictorialization and representation complex (the posing frame, role structure of pictures, spatial symbolism, gestural configurations, attitudinal displays, etc., and I will draw on that. A lot of this material was discussed or touched on in *Gender Advertisements*, but the stress in the seminar was more on methods and techniques of visual "unpacking." If anything, there is too much ancillary material available to use without losing focus on the thesis in and of itself.

I will also try to leaven the piece with some biographically relevant points, for example, the tie-in of his account of living room decor and decorum with "Symbols of Class Status" (taken as indicative of upwardly-mobile striving) his knowledgeable appraisal of vintage furniture, his evident interest in "how the other half lives." (The thesis was designed to expand the scope of Warner's study of soap-opera fans by extending it to a higher-status sample. Note, too, that his M.A. thesis dealt with a all-female sample, whereas his service-station dealer sample was all men. And the "dirty work" he discussed in the latter study was distinctly different from

the more genteel and semi-pristine environs of upper-middle-class domesticity, marred as it was, to his eye-opening surprise, by casual laxity of demeanor and decorum.)

Now for a few simple queries. (You may copy and paste what follows to simplify answering.)

Document format. I write in WordPerfect, finding MS Word highly exasperating to use. However, I can save the text in either Word or pdf. format. Which do you prefer?

Direct quotations: Is it allowable to correct an obvious error of punctuation silently?

Is it OK to add Oxford commas to quoted text silently? These are lacking in the M.A. thesis, but Goffman later became scrupulous about using them (as I try to be, too). But I don't want to litter the page with brackets. Or is this too precious to bother with?

Goffman used the nonstandard, abutted word-form "livingroom"; can or should I change that with a note to that effect?

Does one abbreviate EGA with or without italics? (The Chicago Manual of Style says that Archives are not italicized, but I have consistently used *EGA* with italics in my books.)

Do you have access to EG's opusculum, "A Note on Interviewing," *Human Organization*, 12, 1954, p. 32? I have seen this listed on a couple of bibliographies. It is of interest in this context inasmuch as Goffman mused on the interviewing process in several places in his writings, but this was closest to the early works of his where he extensively used the "method" of interviewing.

Finally, there is a delicate issue that an honest study of EG's M.A. thesis can hardly overlook. In one place, he recites a passage almost verbatim (but without attribution) from an essay by the literary theorist R. P. Blackmur, who is mentioned as contributing to his conception of "projection." (I have long realized this, and can document it, but do not have the exact passages at hand for the moment.) I don't want to make a big deal out of this (I will avoid using the P-word) because there are too many ambiguities in any such case and after so much time has gone by.

I realize that people can score points or make a stink by pointing out such things, but I certainly do not intend to court notoriety for either Goffman or myself on this point. Accordingly, I think the best procedure is to tuck this fact into an endnote, simply making note of it but without speculating on how it might have come about. (I know of one other such instance in EG's writings -- an unattributed passage taken from a well-known essay by George Orwell, but again I don't have the exact evidence at hand.) Personally, I consider this issue as non-trivial but not all that earth-shaking either.

Sorry to pester you with these minutiae, but it helps me to clear them up at the start so I can better concentrate on the main event.

Best regards,

Michael

March 15, 2013

Greetings Michael:

Sounds like a good plan. I think we are pretty much on the same page and I look forward to reading your paper once it comes together.

Here is a link to a special issue of *SI* that I edited some time ago, so you can see the reference format, *Self in Crisis: Identity and the Postmodern Condition*, http://cdclv.unlv.edu/pragmatism/shalin_si_93.pdf. I don't think it has changed.

Once you are finished with your paper, you can convert it to the WP file and send it to me. The WP word processor used to be, and still is, my favorite, although I found it practical to switch to the MSW package.

On the silent emendation of quotes, it is fine to do so with the EGA materials. If the quote is from a published source, it is better to reproduce the text of the original, adding [sic] where you feel it is called for. You can decide on how best to proceed with the text of Goffman's M.A.

The abbreviation "EGA" need not be italicized. When you cite an interview from this source, you can use the abbreviation as well, just add a full entrée in the bibliography:

Bios Sociologicus: The Erving Goffman Archives. Dmitri N. Shalin., ed. (UNLV: CDC Publications, 2009-2012), further abbreviated as "EGA."

You can do so once in the main bibliography, then use the abbreviation when you quote particular interviews or materials.

No, I have not seen "A Note on Interviewing."

So far as the idiosyncratic spelling of "livingroom," I would footnote the usage once and then use the EG verbiage.

It is fine to spotlight the unacknowledged usage that EG makes of Blackmur's material. A footnote should work here. If you can document the case and show more than one instance, then it is a proper to bring the matter to the attention of scholars while pinpointing the ambiguity of this practice in Goffman's case. I trust your judgment on that.

All best,
Dmitri

March 17, 2013

Hi, Dmitri, and thanks for the clarifications.

I'm looking forward to reading the study of soap opera fans by Lloyd Warner and William Henry that I've ordered to see how far EG departs from it. It's a pretty tricky thing to replicate a study by one's mentor and then take off on your own tangent that not-so-subtly challenges his elaborate schematics of social class.

By way of thanks, I am sending a link to another YouTube song in case you have the time or inclination to listen to it. (No quizzes!) I thought you might like to give it a listen at one of those times when you're feeling morose about your adopted city and feel the need to flee to the cooling air and relative peace and rustle of the mountains.

The song is "Sin City," written by Gram Parsons and Chris Hillman (both were in the Byrds back in the day), and is here sung by an inspired pairing, the talented country twanger Dwight Yoakam and the big-throated chanteuse kd lang. The lyrics are rather cryptically apocalyptical and it is not clear whether it actually pertains to Las Vegas or not. (Some say it has to do with the corruption-prone music scene in L.A.) But one can read it as Vegas-themed, presuming the "earthquake" mentioned refers to atomic weapons testing. I tend to think that

the “friend” who came to town to warn of its impending doom is probably meant to be a Jesus-figure. Anyway, it’s a pretty compelling song.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw0gdKJ5mpw>

As someone interested in both music and biohermeneutics, you might find that Gram Parsons provides a rather striking, indeed almost Gothic, life-history. He grew up in South Carolina, the son of a wealthy landowner nicknamed “Coon Dog” and an equally alcoholic mother. The dad killed himself a couple of days before one Christmas, the mom, remarried to an adulterer, later died of cirrhosis on the day Gram graduated from high school. Gram studied theology at Harvard one semester before dropping out and pursuing music, forging a then-unique blend of country, rock, and folk. He eventually wound up with the Flying Burrito Brothers and later toured with Emmy Lou Harris. He was also a buddy of Keith Richards and influenced some of the Stones's country-influenced material.

Parsons himself came to a bad end by ODing on drugs and booze in 1973, age 26, at a cheap motel near his beloved Joshua Tree National Monument in southern California. As his body was set to be shipped back to the south, two buddies snatched the corpse from LAX, then returned it to the Joshua Tree site and tried to torch it with gasoline, resulting in a huge fireball and leaving behind some half-charred remains. (It was a pretty anarchic time.) He is best known for the hauntingly poignant song “Hickory Wind” (recorded by the Byrds).

For something of a more elevated nature, you might check out Seattle's classical music station, KING-FM (at KING.org), particularly a program I listen to often at noontime on weekdays, Bach’s Lunch, featuring the music of JSB and his talented brood.

But enough of such distractions; I’ll try not to pester you with any further picayune points (at least until I get a solid draft article down).

Best regards,
Michael

March 17, 2013
Hi Michael:

Thanks for the heads-up on “Sin City.” Good voice, pleasant tune, a colorful life that makes things more interesting, but the genre is not mine. Country style music rarely appeals to me.

Here is a link to a podcast I would listen to when I am reading something light, or not so light,

http://djsarenatyler.podomatic.com/player/web/2013-02-18T11_11_43-08_00

The first cut on Sarena Tyler’s podcast exemplifies the mellow I dig (the rest of it is not up to snuff). There is a lot more music I enjoy in this genre, e.g., by DJ Morphyre who does the top 20 on the Housestation, which I tune to every Sunday. His two-hour program comes live and is not available in podcasts, though.

I doubt any of that would interest you, but still...

All best,
Dmitri

April 23, 2013
Hi Michael:

Just a word to say hello and to see how your Goffman paper is coming along. Hope to have it in a few days.

All best, Dmitri

April 23, 2013

Hello, Dmitri. I've been putting all my time and energy into researching and writing the article. Frankly, I'm having trouble with it, not for lack of things to say but for having too much. I've found it hard to integrate the contents of the oddball Warner-Henry study with EG's devastating critique and upending of it. Is your May 3 deadline hard-and-fast? If I can't make it, maybe you should drop me from the project. But I'll try my best. (I'm also skimping on some of the exact citations for now; it's much more important to get a workable text with the detailed bookkeeping end of it left for later.)

Also, I recently discovered that Greg Smith had a 2006 monograph out, titled *Erving Goffman*, which I misidentified with the 4-volume compilation of essays he co-edited on the subject. I've since bought it. There's a short discussion in it of EG's M.A. thesis (the main points of which track with my own perceptions). After noting a reference to an earlier essay of his, "Chrysalid Goffman" (in *Symbolic Interaction* 2003), devoted to the same topic, I contacted Smith and he has since sent me the essay. He also sent a recent paper scheduled for publishing that he co-authored with Yves Winkin on Goffman's struggle to circumvent his mentors' attempt to force him into pursuing a dissertation topic not to his liking, and finally managing to go off on a more "Goffmanian" direction. In my haste to write, I haven't taken the time to read either yet. But it's interesting to know that Winkin is still actively writing on Goffman. Maybe Greg Smith will have more news about that when he replies to my last message to him.

Regards,
Michael

April 23, 2013

Michael,

I can imagine the struggle, with so much to say, time and space limited, ever more sources to consult. Hope you persevere, focusing on what is working and leaving the rest for another day. Try to send me what you have by May 3. I will be sending the whole issue to the editors a week after that.

I found the SI manuscript guidelines and am sending it to you, so you have an idea of the general formatting conventions. Don't worry too much about that for the moment, try to get a narrative in pace.

Interesting news about Winkin – where is the article to be published?

Kindly,
Dmitri

April 23, 2013

DNS: Thanks for sending me the SI guidelines. For whatever reason, the previous link you sent me at the SI site did not work (perhaps some firewall?)

Here's what Greg Smith wrote me about the article I mentioned:

I attach two papers. The first, "Chrysalid Goffman", you know of. The second is a more recent paper, written with Yves Winkin, which develops the idea of Goffman struggling to emerge as "Goffman" against the backcloth of a hopelessly flawed proposal that his Chicago supervisors nevertheless thought perfectly adequate. It is to appear as:

Smith, G. & Winkin, Y. 2013 'Working the Chicago interstices: Warner and Goffman's intellectual formation', in: Bowden, G. & Low, J. (eds.), *The Chicago School Diaspora: Epistemology and Substance*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal, Canada.

(There is also a slightly longer version of the same paper published in French as: Smith, G. & Winkin, Y. 2012 'Lloyd Warner, premier mentor d'Erving Goffman', in: Cefaï, D & Perreau, L (eds.), *Goffman et l'ordre de l'interaction*, CURAPP-ESS/CEMS-IMM, Amiens, France, pp.79-107.)

MD

April 23, 2013

Thanks, Michael:

Winkin has a lot of good stuff to work with. He and Greg should be coming up with a fine paper.

Best,
Dmitri

April 24, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Sorry to pester you with a petty question, but after reading the *SI* Author Guidelines, I do have one that should be cleared up now in order to spare you from having to fuss over picayune editorial emendations.

The Guidelines strike me as needlessly hyper-pedantic, but I will comply with them. However, because I am mainly discussing just two monographs, the Warner-Henry study and EG's M.A. thesis, would it be allowable to reference them in the text (after the first citation and a notification) in the format "(p. 3)"? Alternatively, something like "(W-H:3)" or "(MA:3)" or even "(ibid. 3)"? Otherwise the text is going to be awfully clotted with those ugly elongated parenthetical insertions, and to no good effect other than observing scholastic punctilio. (They also bump up the word count, which I'm working hard to keep down by eliminating certain citations and footnotes, and streamlining the prose as best I can.)

I'm not sure what it means to put a "running head" on the separate cover page, but I suppose that is something you could easily add.

Thanks,
Michael

April 24, 2013

Hi Michael:

Yes, the guidelines are overly detailed. The citation in the body of the text probably has something to do with the citation count, which calls for the author's name to appear every time his or her specific work is cited.

As a compromise, I would suggest that you use the abbreviation for EG's thesis, which is unpublished, but list the author's name where you refer to a specific publication.

As for the running head, it probably refers to the way the article will be headlined on each page (e.g. "Patterns of Continuity in Goffman").

Here is a link to an article recently published in SI that you can check for the formatting and related issues, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/symb.47/pdf>.

Hope this helps,
Dmitri

April 24, 2013
Michael,

One more thought on the reference format. It makes sense to list the EGA interviews and materials at the end of the paper in the following order: the author's name, the interview title, the source (EGA), then the URL. Here is an example:

Besbris, Esther, "When Erving Was an Infant My Mother Nursed Us Both So We Were Bosom Buddies," EGA, http://www.unlv.edu/centers/cdclv/archives/interactionism/goffman/besbris_09.html.

And the EGA can be referred to once in the reference section in the following way:

EGA, *Bios Sociologicus: The Erving Goffman Archives*. Dmitri N. Shalin, ed. (UNLV: CDC Publications, 2009-2012), <http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/index.html>.

Best,
Dmitri

April 14, 2013
Michael,

I am struggling with how best to cite the source without repeating the full title endlessly. Perhaps this should do:

Dmitri N. Shalin, ed. 2009-2012. *Bios Sociologicus: The Erving Goffman Archives*. (UNLV: CDC Publications, 2009-2012), <http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/index.html>. Further abbreviated as "EGA."

After that, you can refer to an interview in the reference section, indicating the year a particular interview was collected:

Besbris, Esther, 2009. "When Erving Was an Infant My Mother Nursed Us Both So We Were Bosom Buddies," EGA, http://www.unlv.edu/centers/cdclv/archives/interactionism/goffman/besbris_09.html.

The reference to the interview in the text may look like this (Besbris 2009).

To make it easier on the reader, one can add in the reference section one more entrée for the EGA: EGA, Erving Goffman Archives, see Shalin 2009-2012.

Does it make sense?

Best,
Dmitri

May 1, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. I confess that I've been having a hellish time trying to get said well the main things I want to convey about EG's MA thesis, struggling with too-copious notes and all the while coping with the cumbersome and ugly citation format required. It seems clear that I won't meet your Friday deadline, although I've been putting all my time and energy into finishing this project. (It's become a 2 1/2-pack-of-Marlboros-a-day saga.)

I have written about 2,800 words as an overview of main points (much drawn from what I sent you from my EG book) and covering at considerable length the Warner-Henry study. As of now I have around 4,500 words on EG's turnabout, emphasizing a series of Gestalt-switches as his study progressed. Much as I hate to, I may have to resort to making this discussion more schematic than not, like one of those hateful PowerPoint presentations.

I wonder if I should send you the first part (which no doubt could stand some trimming, or even slashing), while doing my utmost to finish the rest before your own submission deadline of next week. I hate to disappoint you, but writing has become something of an ordeal for me in my dotage.

Alternatively, you could just de-select me from the project if that suits you.

Please advise,
Michael

May 1, 2013
Greetings Michael:

I know how it feels when things fail to jell and the time is running out. Send me what you have and I will see if any suggestion comes to mind. Perhaps there is a way to narrow your focus.

If nothing else works, you can try a different tack. You have terrific materials on your interactions with Goffman, his seminar, the Penn environs, etc., which would be perfect for this project. Maybe you can find a tangent and expand it for this occasion. You may find this idea distasteful for one reason or another, but that's a thought.

Cheers,
Dmitri

May 2, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Attached are two drafts of what I have written so far on the MA thesis. I'm not sure that this is what you had in mind for the special EG issue, because there is virtually nothing of biohermeneutics here (although I planned to add some material on that as I went along).

Also, there is a rather high ratio of synopsis to analysis. Having just read Greg Smith's two discussions of the MA thesis (which largely tracks my own overall perspective on it), I wanted to take a rather different tack by charting out a series of what amounted to Gestalt-switches in EG's study as it progressed. He also used the TAT as something of a supra-model in an imaginatively reflexive way for "projecting" the turnabout in his thesis. (Notably, Goffman was still musing on many of the topics raised in the MA in the two 1970s classes.) I also wanted to get into his way of using convergent modeling procedures as a kind of "meta-methodology" (not necessarily beholden to the substance of the theories borrowed from) with some especially intriguing points about his drawing from literary theory and the philosophy of science. But getting all that down has become too forbidding at this point.

So I guess I'll punt and resort to sending you an abridged version of two chapters from *Encountering Goffman* (3 and 4) on EG at Penn and his pedagogy. That can be done pretty speedily, I think, with better control over

word count and much less hassle with citations. I'll probably just stick to the chapters without extracting material from various appendices. Having already read the draft, you will also be better prepared to edit.

I don't know if this will reduce or enhance the chances of getting the book published, but what the hell, it's better to be published somewhere than not to be published at all.

I should be able to send you something at least by Saturday if not before. Depending on time constraints, I'll probably send you the text first, then the other academic folderol separately.

Michael

May 2, 2013

Hi Michael:

I am scanning your work on Goffman's MA thesis and find it as trenchant and insightful as anything of yours I had a chance to read. You shouldn't have too much difficulty placing this paper in a sociology journal, especially focused on the history of the discipline. But the study as it has evolved so far does not align with the rest of the articles that are focused on the interfaces of Goffman's life and work.

I think it is wise to change the tack for any number of reasons, with "punting" being the least salient. Offering a preview of your work with Goffman at Penn will prime interest in your forthcoming books, grab attention of scholars within this discipline and beyond, and tie in perfectly with the main theme of the special issue. I can think of other reasons but these ones should do.

So please take the material on EG's seminar you have already written and rework it as you see fit. If you can, please allude to or draw in some fashion on the EGA that would be good.

I am excited about the prospect of having your piece in this publication.

With best wishes,
Dmitri

May 2, 2013

OK, Dmitri. I'm going at it hell for leather, as they say. I think I'll present an overview of EG's "place" at Penn, then segue into my own classroom experience of him, mentioning that of Fine, Heilman, and Zerubavel from EGA, possibly less from Penn professors. I'm chopping out a lot of peripheral stuff (about Lidz's tenure battle, for instance) in order to stick to the main portrayal of EG as teacher-mentor, with perhaps much less about my personal interactions with EG or my impressions and interpretations of his conduct. In sum, keep the focus on Penn and pedagogy, less on some of my own preoccupations.

Thanks for your patience and understanding,
Michael

May 2, 2013

This is going to be a great paper, Michael!

I think you will not be disappointed with the short and long term results your article is likely to produce.

All best,
Dmitri

P.S. it might be better to give the years 2008-2012 for *Bios Sociologicus* as a source, since a bunch of interviews and memoirs in the EGA go back to 2008.

May 3, 2013
Greetings Michael:

Didn't sleep well last night, thinking about the SI issue. Given your new tack, I thought, your paper might bear this title: "Goffman at Penn: A Tribute from a Former Student." This would give you a broad leeway on what to include.

I understand that your main focus will be on EG's seminar, but you can touch upon Goffman's place at the sociology department and the university, his personal habits or any other matters as well. You will see what works best as your narrative evolves.

All best,
Dmitri

May 3rd, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. -- I don't blame you a bit for feeling anxious, but at least I can tell you this: I think my piece will fly (if not soar). I have tentatively titled it "Goffman at Penn in the Early 1970s — Academic Star, Teacher, Profane Jester."

I have basically abridged much of what I've written on EG's place at Penn, his mode of teaching, his classroom presentation of self, his way of acting-out the "profane jester." I may add some bits about his style of mentoring, too, and some details about his carrying of self, but I have not gone into as many of my impressions and conjectures about Goffman's biography and character as you might like. (It's too hard to excerpt what I've written along those lines.) I also cite quite a few sources from EGA, mostly Penn-related.

The draft text now stands at 8,700 words, not counting the abstract and bibliography. But it should be relatively easy for me to prune it down even further, maybe by one entire section. But after a hard day's work on the ms., I'm kind of exhausted for now, and don't trust my ability to edit, so I'll pick that up tomorrow and, as promised, should have a text for you by tomorrow afternoon, or Sunday at the latest. Depending on time and energy-level, I'll probably send just the main text, then add the abstract and references list soon after (being sure to have spare room for them in the total word count. I'll keep it under 8,000 words, promise.)

It should be fairly easy to edit -- more by deletion of extraneous or tangential passages than anything else, although I've already tried to trim as many of those as I could. I've also kept the footnotes reasonably short and pointed, despite my propensity to go off on tangents.

Sorry for adding to the strain. but you ought to be able to rest a little easier now.

.
Best regards,
Michael

May 3, 2013
Michael,

This sounds terrific. Can't wait to read your paper, which I will place after Sherri's piece on EG's formative years.

As for the word count, I am ready to allot you an extra one or two thousand words. I will defend the overage by the unique nature of your paper and the centrality of your work to the EGA project.

As for the timeline – if you send me your draft in two-three days, that should be fine. I am engaged in heavy editing of some papers in our collection (which are a bit raw in their first incarnation) and will be doing more of that stuff in the next few days.

Cheers,
Dmitri

P.S. “Goffman at Penn in the Early 1970s:” is fine, although I favor more general “Goffman at Penn:” This is your call.

May 4, 2013

Hello, Dmitri, just a quick note to let you know that things are proceeding well, with no major hang-ups to report. I should finish the final edit tomorrow (Sunday) and then go to work on the (very brief) abstract and the (more onerous) citations list, which will probably take me at least a day to finish.

When I'm done with all that and get it sent off, I'll be glad to volunteer to do any mechanical, reference-related “grunt work” that I could handle from afar regarding other papers. (As a former paralegal, I'm used to having to do tedious and menial work that nevertheless demands meticulous care and attention to established protocols.)

I rather like what I've done; although it will not be fresh to you, it is still more streamlined than before, and even then I think you will find it easy to snip out passages that seem inessential or off-the-mark.

Be of cheer, the end is (almost) near,
Michael

May 5, 2013

Hi, Dmitri -- the text is finished, coming in at just over 9,000 words. (I imagine you could cut some whole paragraphs without inflicting much damage, e.g. a couple on Ray Birdwhistell). I think all of the in-text references are in proper format, but I'll do a final check after I convert the document into MS-Word. (That conversion can sometimes lead to tricky formatting issues, so I'm going to wait until early tomorrow when I'm fresh and my eyes are not bleary.)

I guess the only thing to ask is this: whether you want me to write and include the abstract before sending the document on (by late tomorrow afternoon) of just the text (earlier).

The reference list is going to take more time (probably most of a day) because of all the picky little details. It would also add a lot to the word count. Of course, I can't send the cover page until I have the final word count.

I don't suppose it's possible to refer just to “Name, Date, EGA” when citing EGA interviews without the full web address ([http\\www....](http://www....)) Sigh. For now, I'll go with the format you suggested for each separate interview.

Hope things are progressing smoothly on your end,

Best,
Michael

May 5, 2013
Hi Michael:

You can send me the paper when it is all ready, along with the references. The word count should work fine, I think.

There is a lot of work with individual papers, with the contributors still responding to my suggestions and/or working on formatting. It should all fall into place shortly.

All best, Dmitri

May 6, 2013

Dmitri -- Looking over the "manuscript requirements," I see the instruction to "keep all author-identifying material" out of the ms. file. But I frame the whole discussion in terms of my book project and recurrently cite from it, while also discussing my dealings with EG and other Penn figures. In other words, to remain anonymous would gut the piece (besides undercutting the whole EGA/biohermeneutic theme of the special issue.

I'm going to proceed on the assumption that my article was meant as an exception to the rule. (Besides, who knows who I am anyway? It's not like I'm trying to forge a career out of this.)

Academic rigmarole! Grrrrrrrrrr.

But: full speed ahead.
Michael

May 5, 2013
Hi Michael:

Yes, it is a nuisance. Not sure how thorough you should be with this guideline to authors. Do what you can. I am sending you my paper that covers Goffman's treatment of mental illness. You can copy the references to EGA interviews that I there.

All best,
Dmitri

May 5, 2013
Hello, Dmitri. At last I'm finished.

Whew. (Converting files from WordPerfect and hewing to the journal's format proved to be a bit taxing.) The whole shebang came in at 8,888 words all told (by Word's count), which makes it seem a bit spooky if you go in for numerology (which somehow I doubt you do).

There are only a few minor glitches I know of to repair.

I don't have the correct title for the reference to the EGA interview with Carol Brooks Gardner. (My paper copy lacks one except for the generic "Gardner Remembers Goffman.") The EGA link goes to the UNLV library, which I can't access. So you might want to add that (it will add a bit to the word count).

I repeated authors' names in the References list instead of using a line symbol as you have done (I'm not sure of the formatting for that, but it should be easy to exchange). I have tried to be scrupulous about hewing to the house style, but the References list could probably stand a lookover. Having your References to work from was a big help. I used it as my template, simply adding and deleting entries. Many thanks. (Someday you might want to post the entire listing of interview citations in a Word file on EGA for easy extraction.)

I could not get Word to make a page or section break at the end of the References, and couldn't figure out how to do a workaround, so I'm sending that in a separate file. You'll have to add it. The cover letter is also in a separate file so I'll send both in a separate mailing.

The Guidelines instruct not to use cite references within endnotes, but I found that impractical in several instances, so I occasionally "overlooked" the rule.

As for editing: do as you see fit. You can cut anything you want or make minor stylistic changes without consulting me. I only ask that you not change my substantive meaning. I kept a lid on my penchant for tweaking the Illuminati a bit, but I don't think you'll find much that will ruffle readers' feathers unduly.

I hope my essay is appropriate for the special issue on EG. However, to publish it you will have to persuade the Powers-that-be that an inherently biographically-based paper cannot be absent of personal references, including to the writings my paper is based on. So this may be a Special Case, but one that still is in keeping with your "biohermeneutics" theme. If they want, they can delete my name or black it out when they send it out for review. In any case, I wasn't trying to be self-promoting or to indulge in the common, career-boosting stratagem of citation-mongering (which is a scholarly paint-by-the-numbers exercise to begin with IMHO).

Sorry for the delay in getting this to you, but I think taking more time on my end has probably saved you quite a lot of extra effort on yours. Let me know if there's more I can do to get the paper to your liking.

So what can I say but, "the scientists may say, it'll all blow away ... but you've got your recruit in his green mohair suit, so just show your ID at the door."

Michael

Attachment: Goffman at Penn Essay.doc (with Abstract)

May 7, 2013

Dmitri: here's the cover page and References for Goffman at Penn.

I hope you're not completely exhausted by this rushed process. Now, I suppose, all the contributors will get to "hurry up and wait" as the review process grinds on.

MD

May 7, 2013

Dmitri -- a further thought about hiding my name and citations to my writings in my essay: you could put in a proxy name (Shlomo Schmuck or some such) for a reviewer's copy, using a simple find and replace operation. (The references to my submissions to EGA would have to be deleted or masked.)

People in the know (the kind apt to review the EG articles) might not be fooled but that's one way to meet the letter of the law. Of course I'm a complete unknown to most people in the field, have no career to carve out or boost, and have not used my essay to toot my own horn.

Just a thought.
Michael

May 7, 2013
Hi Michael:

I just made home from the last class of this semester. Thank you for the paper. This must be a big load off your chest. I will read it soon, check the formatting, and get back to you.

Gardner's memoir is titled thus: "I Don't Have Words Enough to Describe Goffman's Generosity."

All best, Dmitri

May 8, 2013

DNS: I added this sentence to the end of endnote 9 regarding Carol Brooks Gardner's memoir: "The title given her remembrance of him (2008) says it all: "I Don't Have Words Enough to Describe Goffman's Generosity."

I updated the References to include the Gardner title. It meant enjamming "EGA" against the URL, but adding a space messes up the spacing of the list. Note: for some reason the References page number begins at 0. I'm not used to Word, so I think it best for you to fix that when you append the References after the Endnotes.

New word count: 8,893.

I can send you the updated files, but it's probably quickest and easiest for your just to do it manually.

MD

May 8, 2013
Hi Michael:

I read your paper – it is what I was hoping for. The article will be an excellent contribution to the special issue on EG.

I have done light editing (see attachment). You can disregard it and restore your original text wherever you don't agree with my suggestions. First a few general points.

You identify the 1970s as the period at Penn you cover, but that is the bulk of EG's stay there. He came to Penn at the end of the 1960s, and he was on the payroll for a year and a half in the early 80s – I am not sure if pinpointing the decade is particularly helpful here. "Goffman at Penn" does not obligate you to cover the entire period or dwell on all relevant tangents. Consider dropping the reference to the 1970. This is your call.

Also, I wonder if the suffix of your paper title could be adjusted a bit: **Goffman at Penn: Celebrity, Teacher, Mentor, Jester**. You decide.

I wouldn't start the abstract with the reference to your books. That info will appear later on, no one will miss it. Advertising the fact from the get-go may strike a wrong note. I would skip the first sentence of the abstract. Perhaps you could tone down your abstract, which currently sounds a bit sensational and damning. It can be misunderstood as an attempt to settle scores with a nasty prof. In fact, your paper offers a balanced take on Goffman. As you set up your agenda, you can highlight the areas/topics you plan to cover and allude to the contradictions in EG's character. The narrative will do the rest.

You cite your own books in several places, but it is not clear why a particular segment is singled out, for your book touches upon all the relevant materials in the paper. Less is more in this case. My suggestion is to minimize such references, indicating specific reasons why they are relevant when you make the reference. I am not even sure it is a good idea for you to say the book is done and waiting for the publisher. Presenting it as the work in progress and near completion (you still tinker with it) might be a better way to stir up interest. It is a very effective strategy to cite EG's pronouncement or identify particularly colorful events (as you did on page 9), indicating the date where possible. That is in keeping with the tradition of field research. This will show SI readers that you were diligent in keeping detailed notes, that your presentation is more than a belated reconstruction of what had happened long ago. I don't think you have stressed enough that you had kept detailed notation while taking EG's seminars. I would stress this fact more forcefully in the intro. And why not mention that EG asked you to read *Frame Analysis*, with the link to the relevant EGA page?

The paper does not have much of an ending, which is OK. But I feel that a cogent paragraph (not a formal rehash of your insights) is called for here. Like what you say in the last part of the footnote 10. Some such broad aperçu would work well.

SI editors discourage footnotes. A lot of materials in your footnotes can be transferred to the main text (e.g., footnotes 1 and 6, parts of footnote 9, and more). With minor modifications, you should be able to move some of your footnotes to the main text.

You are a fine writer and need no advice from me. One thing I found peculiar is your tendency to place parts of your narrative in parenthesis. The latter are generally used to indicate an aside, a point in sotto voce, a confidential whisper. But when you have several such asides on one page, the effect of confidentiality is supplanted with a different one. Here are a few examples:

...then formally correlated with other data-sets, or otherwise put to good use. (In truth, there was almost nothing that escaped his attentive eye.)”

...thereby being elevated to the status of a footnotability. (A rare few had virtually their entire papers conscripted into sections of the published texts.)

...cannily discounting his gaucheries in the very act of enunciating them. (Double-binding the frame was one of his habitual gambits.) Beyond such frame-gaming, however, his classroom discussion of rank epithets used as address and reference terms seemed designed mostly to add a gratuitous, spuriously charged “alienation effect” to the proceedings. (This might be thought of as a consciously “anti-Parsonian” act of...

I have taken the liberty of eliminating the parentheses while leaving the text intact where the point works without them. You can ignore my suggestions and go back to the original.

I spotted some problems with the references. Fine 2009 (is this his EGA interview?) is not in the reference section. MacCannel 1995 cited in the text should be MacCannel 1992, as in the reference section. I did add the reference to Gardner's interview and tinkered with the references at the end of the text.

Please look up my edits, make changes, and send me the final draft.

Thanks again for a fine memoir.

Kindly,
Dmitri

May 9, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. I'm glad my Goffman piece is (mostly) to your liking and suitable for the project. At this point I'm a bit woozy from trying to rush this final edit, but I think I've met each of the points you raised. I've occasionally been bollixed up by the peculiarities of MS-Word and can only hope I haven't made some egregious errors in trying to fix the ms.

The changes are as follows.

I agree with you about "the 70s" being superfluous in the title.

Revised title: I resist the word "celebrity" as being much too tarnished by contemporary pop culture. (Goffman was no Kardashian!) I have settled on this: "Goffman at Penn: Star Presence, Teacher-Mentor, Profaning Jester." That gives balance and rhythm to the subtitle while covering the main thrust of the article. "Star Presence" alludes to Goffman's equivocal standing at Penn as compared to his fame in the profession at large. "Teacher-Mentor" fits together as a unit. "Profaning Jester" connects with the point about EG's didactic use of stigmatizing language and with the closing note of the "sacred and profane" (which I have adopted), as standalone "Jester" does not. I also wanted to capture some of the duplexity of Goffman's way of "cutting a figure." But if you hate it, I'll settle for your suggested title (but please without the "celebrity," which EG genuinely skirted as a public figure).

I was in a bit of a dilemma about mentioning my two works on EG, trying to be at once punctilious about scholarly citation protocols yet without overly drawing attention to myself. I added a phrase in the Introduction saying that classroom quotes are from the first book and do not cite them later in the text. I also toned down references to them as unpublished books, not wanting to give the impression I was hawking "advertisements for myself."

But I did add a sentence about editing the *FA* draft in the Intro (with the EGA reference cited); I suppose it might give me a little extra credibility with the cognoscenti. I gave a date reference (1972) to the quotations from EG (now on p. 11), adding a line about his occasional cutting remarks about political figures like Nixon. (Bound to pique interest, no?)

I also revised the Abstract to be more flatly descriptive and without unduly negative overtones (as I had originally intended it to be). However, I changed some of your wording. Most of this material is actually not based on my classroom notes but on my encounters with EG and further research on him.

I've accepted your suggestion about the ending, using note 10. I've transplanted into the text all but two endnotes, even though I confess that ruffles my sense of textual continuity and compactness.

I do have a propensity for over-using parentheses, although I still see many of my uses of them as OK for parenthetical remarks or augmentations of the main point. I've only replaced two instances of those you deleted.

Sorry about the bobbles in referencing Fine 2009 (from EGA) and MacCannell (1992). Fixed.

Also sorry to see my joke about "constipated paradigm squat" go, but I understand.

I made a few other tiny changes to wording here and there, but nothing substantive. As before, you have my permission to make further ones (or cuts) you deem best.

Unless I'm badly mistaken, that's it. But if not, let me know and I'll give it another go-round.

Best regards, Michael

May 9, 2013

Michael,

Things look good. Your new title is just right. If it means a lot to you, you can restore the reference to "constipated paradigm," but I thought it will be off-putting to a number of readers.

Will go over your paper and let you know if I see any further problems.

Thanks again for your valiant effort and prompt response.

Best,
Dmitri

May 10, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Don't worry about incising my off-color "constipation" joke. I meant it mainly as a Swift kick in the behind to all of those who take the notion of a "paradigm shift" with utter gravity, and who lust to pull off one themselves for the greater glory of the field, intellectual progress in general, and, of course, their uber-precious careers. A true original, such as Goffman, is more apt to create a new *sui generis* "paradigm," a fresh way of seeing, no matter how much emergent out of theorists who have gone before. (In his case, more like a sustained series of Gestalt-switches.)

After you get the whole mess shipped off, I hope that you will grant yourself a well-deserved respite (as I plan to do. (After all, even God gave himself a day of rest after His six prodigious days of Creation. (Oops! There I go again with another superfluous parenthetical. (Sorry!)))) (Delaney 5/10/13:12:58 PDT).

When all is said and done, then, off to the mountains with you!

Cheers,
Michael

May 16, 2013

Hi Michael:

I went over the final draft of your paper, and all is well. Congratulations on finishing this unexpected assignment and doing it with such panache and flare.

Attached is the version that I will be sending to the *SI* editors shortly. I fixed what seemed like a few typos and made a couple of minor edits. Let me know if you see anything untoward.

Now I have to finish editing a couple more papers, and the project moves to the next stage.

All best,
Dmitri

May 17, 2013

Hello, Dmitri. Overall, the piece looks in good shape and it flows pretty well, I think.

I do have a few emendations, some merely stylistic suggestions, others corrections.

P. 4. You were right to substitute for “riotous-prone,” but using “riot-prone” instead is a bit too heavy-handed for what I meant, because I wanted to capture the whole unruly, flaky, and drug-besotted atmosphere of Berkeley at the time, not just the sporadic riots. How about “turbulent” or “tumultuous” instead?

P. 11. “Notwithstanding that, ...” I can see that my original locution could be a miscue, but it links to the subsequent clause as one confluent passage. The revision with a comma added after “that” doesn't work right. Perhaps, “Yet even though Goffman was....”

P. 11. To be clearer and fuller, the parenthetical might read “Not really true, but indicative of his disinclination to be pressured into others’ urgent causes against his will.) Your call. (But thanks for adding the parens!)

P. 19, bottom. The heading “Profane Jester” is orphaned at the bottom of the page.

P. 19. To me it reads better to say “little of the chicanery” or, alternatively, “of the sort of frame-gaming”

Pp. 22-23. Repeats the passage on “I suspect that Goffman put a damper” and the reference to Carol Gardner. I would keep the passage on p. 22, delete it at p.23, and join the resulting two paragraphs on p. 23, after “dispel.”

If it matters, which I doubt, the references to my Ph.D. dissertation in both the text (p. 27) and the References is a giveaway to my secret identity, but then I'm not much of a Super-hero to begin with.

I still think that two parenthetical expressions are best bracketed with parentheses, namely, “His classroom appearance ... nattier” (p. 26) and “Rieff said the same about Goffman.” (p. 28). To my sensibility, the passages read too jarringly abrupt without the indication of a slight shift to a related, but tangential plane. But you're the Editor, so I'll let my authorial vanity be overridden on these points as your discretion .

The Guidelines stipulate that References follow Endnotes, whereas they are now in the reverse order. (If it matters.)

Thanks for letting my reference to “patrimonial” stand, especially after Greg Smith was heedlessly pressured into changing the word “patrimony” in the title of his collection of essays on Goffman. I also appreciate that you let my neologism “spritzkreig” pass muster, as it captures much of the assaultive style of Lenny Bruce (of whom, unlike Goffman, I am not an admirer).

That's it.

After going through these various hassles regarding publication formats, I've been boning up on academic publishing. I hope I will be able to say that one or two of my books are “forthcoming” by the time 2014 rolls around.

You've put in an immense amount of work on this project. I thank you for inviting me to participate and for your care in editing.

Now I'm off with the rest of the suckers to buy some Powerball tickets (\$600 million jackpot)!

Michael

May 17, 2013

Hi Michael:

Your emendations make sense, and I have changed your final draft accordingly.

Once you win the jackpot, you might consider endowing the Goffman Archives.

Cheers,
Dmitri

May 19, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. I haven't been in touch because I thought you could use a reprieve from your correspondence with your collaborators on the EG project. The whole process is more protracted and complicated than one might expect, but as Kurt Vonnegut used to say, so it goes. SI's Patricia Hulme and I exchanged a number of emails on various nitpicky points, but I didn't see any need to bother you with them.

This is to let you know that I have officially submitted the ms. of my piece on Goffman to SI. There were some typos in the *SI* version, mostly run-together words (probably a result of scanning), and I changed the abstract slightly so it would read more smoothly and grammatically. All of these changes were accepted.

How have you been? I took a quick peek at the UNLV site and I see that you are still listed as Chair of the Sociology Department. Have you not lain your burdens down yet?

In the course of writing that paper on Goffman's M.A. thesis, I got in touch with Greg Smith in England, requesting he send me his article on the subject (in *SI*, as it happens). He did so, and I thought it a sound interpretation, one that tracked my own assessment of the thesis in major respects, although I still think I can add to an appreciation of EG's tactical wiles by looking at the thesis close-up. I had made a passing reference to Smith's suppression of the word "patrimony" in the original title of his collection of essays on EG. That led me to a few more observations on certain feminist shibboleths of the day. Apparently that irked Smith, as he never replied to a subsequent message. PC rules, I guess. Oh well.

An old Vietnamese friend of mine -- we go back some 50 years to my time at U. Utah -- recently visited the Red Rock area in Arizona, driving down there from Las Vegas. (Two different worlds.) Hien is an accomplished photographer and took a couple of impressive pictures of the place known as Horseshoe Bend. That strikes me as another place for a restful respite from the blare of LV and the pressures of academic life. If you care to take a quick look, here's a link to his website.

<http://neihtn.wordpress.com/2013/06/17/red-rock-country-horseshoe-bend/>

After boning up on the grim realities of academic publishing nowadays, I've decided to make a final pass through my original Two Seminars ms. in order to cut out as much peripheral material as I can, the idea being to make the book shorter, hence more salable. I'll return to the Remembrance in due course, but the first book takes precedence over the second, and will if anything expedite finding a publisher for the latter. Besides, my mind is just too numb from being immersed in the Remembrance for too long.

I hope that our editorial collaboration on this journal venture has not been too taxing and vexing on your end of it. I remain grateful to you for asking me to contribute to the project. I may only be a tiny bubble in the greater sociological flute, but it's nice to have a chance to add to the effervescence.

All the best,
Michael

P.S. Although I'm not much of a fan of Latino pop music, I liked the song you sent me a while back. The singer has an enticingly sultry voice, backed up by a vivid beat, although I didn't care for the muzzy background music; it reminded me too much of the dreaded genre of Disco.

June 19, 2013
Dear Dr. Delaney:

Your manuscript entitled "Goffman at Penn: Star Presence, Teacher-Mentor, Profaning Jester*" by Delaney, Michael, has been successfully submitted online and is presently being given full consideration for publication in Symbolic Interaction.

Co-authors: Please contact the Editorial Office as soon as possible if you disagree with being listed as a co-author for this manuscript.

Your manuscript ID is SI-13-06-0069.

Please mention the above manuscript ID in all future correspondence or when calling the office for questions. If there are any changes in your street address or e-mail address, please log in to ScholarOne Manuscripts at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/si> and edit your user information as appropriate.

You can also view the status of your manuscript at any time by checking your Author Center after logging in to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/si>.

Thank you for submitting your manuscript to Symbolic Interaction.

Sincerely,
Symbolic Interaction Editorial Office

June 19, 2013
Greetings Michael:

I am still chairing the department but the end is near. I will hand over my duties on July 1, with all the welcome ramifications.

Editing the special issue has taken its toll. The process has been intense, but now that I finished transferring the photos and made sure all papers are filed, I can breathe easier.

Glad to hear you have answered Patricia's queries and are done with this part of the review process. Yours is an elegant, thoughtful piece that will be duly noted, I am sure. Thanks for taking the job seriously. Hope you will be done with the book manuscript(s) very very soon. I am sure the material is ready for review, as ready as it could be.

Enjoyed the pictures your friend took – fine work indeed. Wish more photos were posted, at higher resolution, and in an enlarged format.

I don't care for disco music either. The opening track of the podcast I sent you sounded different (it has been

removed from the web, unfortunately), the rest I didn't care for. Here are a couple more links to the music I would listen to, although the sound is less than thrilling. Better tracks can be heard live on the web but most are not available in the podcast form.

<https://soundcloud.com/#silverrocket1970/deep-house-glenn-underground-a>
<http://bamalovesoul.com/2013/03/30/osunlade-another-day-at-the-office-download>

With kind wishes,
Dmitri

June 22, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Nothing to do with sociology in this, but just wanted to bring up a few musical matters. For some reason, the link to the first song you sent took me to a comedy routine. The second was the song you intended (I think) by a black guy with a straw through his nose. I have to admit that his song was a bit too "far-out" for my tastes. (I'm a strong melody man myself.)

I find it curious that your own compositions are so different from the kind of music you seem to enjoy most now. If I had to place them, I'd probably classify them more in the (American-style) folk genre than anything else, even though one of them was a homage to Kurt Cobain. (Parenthetically, if you ever visit the Experience Music Project museum in Seattle, you can look over a lot of memorabilia devoted to Jimi Hendrix and Cobain. The Cobain exhibit includes the pathetic splintered remains of several smashed-up guitars, enshrined, peculiarly enough, in vitrines, like some fabulous jewel or ancient Egyptian pharaoh artifact. It's almost a metaphor of our "no-brow," anything-goes times.)

At our age, our musical tastes are pretty well set, so I'm not out to convert you to mine (That song "Sin City" is still running through my head.)

I grew up on Country & Western (as befits a ranch kid), got into rock 'n' roll (and drums) when it first came along (I well remember the great excitement aroused over Elvis's first records on the Sun label), then took up folk (and the guitar) when I was about 17. I still listen to country, but I like most kinds of music ranging from pop to bluegrass to blues and R&B, on up to jazz and classical. I don't pay any attention to rock anymore, however, except to the extent that it's unevadable. Given all that, it's understandable that I'm a big fan of the exceptionally versatile and talented Linda Rondstadt. She even put out a couple of albums in Spanish, dedicated to her part-Mexican father, and another of lush pop standards arranged by Sinatra's old arranger, Nelson Riddle.)

Here's a link to a hit duet she did in concert with the pop-soul singer Aaron Neville, "Don't Know Much." He has a voice as sweet and smooth as maple syrup, beautifully complemented by Ronstadt's edgier voicings, especially her swoops on the high notes. Their harmony is electrifying, and they seemed to get into each other personally in a big way -- I got the impression that they likely had a world-class tumble in bed after the show. (Quite unlike the kiss Dwight Yoakam planted on an abashed k.d. lang at the end of "Sin City," but far better than lip-smacking with that geeky-wonky Jerry Brown.)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FK8KxNpHEAo> (no hillbilly, I promise!)

I don't think I mentioned this to you, but my father was a composer and professor of composition at various schools and universities. He wrote classical-style music mostly, including a symphony or two, but also a lot of pieces based on old-time American folk songs (often with revised lyrics by my mother). He used to pal around with Aaron Copland and his crowd, but was one of those talents who showed great promise early on, but never quite managed to make it. (Like two of his sons, I guess.) I gather that he was quite frustrated, even tormented at times, didn't like teaching, and drank a lot (which eventually killed him). He and my mother divorced in 1946, when I was a mere three, and I only knew him during the one week that he took his three boys on a trip to

visit some relatives in B.C., Canada, when I was maybe 8. In that respect, my relation to him was somewhat comparable to that of yours to your own absentee father.

Anyway, my brother has donated his papers to the Eastman Kodak School of Music. The link below is to these archives, which gives an overview of his life and career. For the record, I should add that he was in fact given a prize by the Pulitzer people in 1933, but that was before they had established an official Pulitzer Prize for music, ten years later.

So, there's another factoid in my fairly uncommon, complicated "biohermeneutic."

Sorry to be so chatty, but I felt like sharing this with you after your labors on a completely different plane.

Best wishes on your coming retirement, for which you've surely earned a respite.

Michael

<http://www.esm.rochester.edu/sibley/specialc/findaids/pdf/Robert%20M.%20Delaney%20Collection.pdf>

June 22, 2013

Hi Michael:

Not sure what the problem with the web link is. It leads where it should when I click on it.

Yes, this is different kind of music than the folk rock I experimented with. It works better as background noise for reading. It isn't likely to grab your attention any more than I am to be swayed by the crooning of Linda and Aaron, fine though it is. Here is one more session with the kind of sound that speaks to me: <http://www.house-mixes.com/profile/djguidop/play/deep-space-deep-house-essential-vol-3>

Sorry to hear about your father's plight. His craft must have rubbed off on you. If there is any music on the web composed by your dad, send me the link. Your story does appear to mirror the experience I had with my absentee biological father, who reputedly had some musical talent. Without formal musical education, I taught myself to play piano, composed a few pieces in a classical style (including a piece I arrogantly called "piano concerto"), then moved on to folk guitar.

These days, I am just a consumer of music, more likely to write an essay than play guitar. Attached is a piece about Obama's troubled presidency I had recently penned.

All best,
Dmitri

June 23, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. About the music you linked to: I have to confess that listening to the monotonous drum beat for very long would quickly drive me up the wall. I usually listen to jazz or classical when reading, with the sound turned down low, so it's more like hearing background burble than actually listening to music. If something especially good starts playing, I will pause reading and turn up the sound for a more intent listen. (Bach or Vivaldi usually is enough to do the trick.)

To my knowledge there isn't any of my dad's music available on the web. In fact, I have only heard a very few passages of it myself. One was played on the piano by a very old friend and musical colleague of his, when my mother and I visited him back East. It was an excerpt from his Pulitzer-winning piece on John Brown (the civil war figure), based on the writings of Steven Vincent Benet. I am hardly schooled enough in classical music to describe it well, but it struck me as rousing dynamic, complexly harmonic, and very American. For some reason, it made me think of some of the more earth-shaking passages in Melville's *Moby Dick*.

My mother did have a few old privately-made recordings of his music, made on either very thick vinyl or some kind of tin composite, but they were too scratchy to be able to appreciate the music much. For all I know, my brother may have been able to get some of the recordings remastered and restored by digital means. He himself is a musician who has his own home studio. But he and I are long since estranged and have been totally out of contact for two decades. (He, of manic-depressive inclination is currently during a stretch in the Montana State Prison for a parole violation after a conviction for stalking. Not for the first time either. That may give you a clue as to why I resonate as I do to "Insanity of Place.")

Incidentally, when my mother married my dad in the mid-1930s, it was something of a scandal for someone from an old-line New England WASP family to marry a mere Irishman, even though he came from a cultured family. (Of course he was of Protestant stock too; being a Catholic would have been even more monstrous.) Among Boston-area families in those days, marrying Irish was only about a step or two up from marrying a black man.

As to your piece on Obama: I do think that the socialism you laud basically goes against the historical American grain, despite its brief run in the three early decades of the 20th century. I agree with you that America was sorely in need of reformist "progressivism" in that era, although its exponential extension of statism has its own fearsome aspects in ours. Our version of capitalism may indeed be in need of curbing its recurrent overreach (the banking scandals, excessive CEO pay, etc.), but I personally am more inclined to give it two cheers, to cite the much-maligned "neo-conservative," the late Irving Kristol. (Why is it today that progressives are so loath to come to grips with the arguments of serious intellectual conservatives like Kristol, as distinct from defaulting to blowhard, airhead demagogues like the clownish Glenn Beck, religious fanatics, and that ilk? Can it be that these easy targets are a way to deflect confronting actual arguments as opposed to polemical straw men?)

The "gritty experimentalism" of the pragmatic temper you mention seems to me to be at odds with the doctrinaire, lockstep mentality of so many of today's progressives, unless you count various sexual and counter-cultural transgressions. Besides, and I don't think that pragmatists have any lock on seeing politics as the continuing effort to accommodate competing values ("contradictions"?) or "ideological ambivalence." (Cf. Tocqueville, Toennies, Nisbet, et al. In fact, on a social level, such tensions are built into an overarching scheme such as Parsons's, as in his pattern-variable scheme, although Parsons invariably sought to bridge them.)

My beef with Obama -- and I should note that I voted for him twice -- is that he is largely in over his head. He's fine at juggling competing options as a kind of intellectual exercise (much as in a law-school seminar), but *he doesn't get things done*. Even the signature achievement of his first term, Obamacare, was farmed out to two partisan Congressional hacks, Reid and Pelosi, involving the most corrupt political horsetrading in memory.

Frankly, I think Bill Clinton fits your profile of an incremental but still principled and dogged liberal quite a bit more than Obama. True, Clinton's two biggest successes could both be construed as "conservative," i.e., welfare reform and not only stemming but actually reversing the floodtide of national debt. And both were accomplished with a characteristically Clintonian combination of "opportunism and triangulation," very much including the self-serving kind. But accomplished nonetheless. (His foreign policy record is decidedly feebler, especially on terrorism.) Obama is equally inclined to narcissistic preening and glib idealizing, but he seems to lack a steel will of the sort that the physically crippled FDR wielded with such finesse. (Witness the sneering disdain on Comrade Vladimir's face during his recent meeting with Obama. It reminded me of the time Khrushchev actually brought JFK to tears of being utterly outfoxed after their summit meeting.) Moreover, unlike LBJ, say, Obama is notoriously indifferent when it comes to the nitty-gritty of legislating.

Obama came into office with virtually no experience in the two spheres that have dominated his presidency, economics and defense. I'll give him credit for learning on the job about military and intelligence matters (always discomfiting to today's progressives). I imagine that coming into professional conduct with people from

those areas sobered him up a lot, given his penchant for vain self-congratulation. Sending your compatriots off to war will do that, as will daily intelligence briefings when you're in the catbird seat.

But on issues like Syria he has been a dithering, fence-sitting speechifier, even granting the wrenching dilemmas on offer there. To me, his willingness to simply wash his hands of Iraq is one of the most feckless and reckless acts of foreign policy during his time in office. He may have been right about objecting to Bush's intervention in Iraq, even though Obama has himself said, post-Iraq, that the specter that keeps him up most at night is that of terrorists getting WMD. (Even Putin acknowledged on "60 Minutes" that he "knew" Saddam had them.) But his retreat from there is now haunting our entire Middle East policy, as Iran (and its utterly cynical ally, Putin's Russia) rushes into the breach of the ensuing vacuum of Syria. This is pragmatic? This is "direct action" (of the kind that Clinton notoriously resisted taking during the Rwanda massacres)?

I always want our presidents to succeed overall, if not always in getting through specific policies. And I want Obama to, too. But his second term is bringing to the fore many of the weaknesses that his ardent followers, including many in the media, have simply chosen to overlook or excuse or whitewash up to now. Despite Obama's own vacillating opportunism on issues like gay rights, such issues will work themselves out in their own way in due course. Far better, I think, if he would concentrate on the issues of overriding national interest. Too bad he didn't give more heed to Clinton's raucous war cry, "It's the economy, Stupid."

June 23, 2013

Sorry, Dmitri, that last message got sent off by mistake in mid-correction. Oh well, it was getting way too garrulous anyway.

Still, however we disagree on politics (hence, morality) I find that you can discuss such topics without devolving into unbridled rancor and the ginned-up "outrage" that so often accompanies disagreement these days. Would that one could say the same of many a stunted, closed-minded warrior of the interbred tribes of Homo academicus and progressivimus.

Tomorrow, back to the grind.

All the best, especially in your soon-to-be ex-Chairmanship,
Michael

June 24, 2013

Hi Michael:

Taste in musical a personal thing. One cannot expect to pass it along readily. I have a few hundred CDs with classical music and jazz, mostly compilations I made to suit my different moods. I like to vary the sound, so as not to get bored with any idiom.

I am not into isms of any kind, be this progressivism, liberalism, or conservatism. What the flesh and blood humans make of those matters, and it is always a challenge to figure out which consequence stems from a given creed and which is to be debited to a particular practitioner.

However nice Obama plays with the Republicans, he is certain to be spurned, derided, and laughed at. He will be damned whatever tactics he uses. He maybe over his head, but given the dogged opposition to everything he proposes, Obama's record isn't bad.

Cheers,
Dmitri

June 30, 2013

Brought to Vegas thanks to Steve Wynn (Wynn Resorts, Ltd.)

June 30, 2013

Thanks, Michael:

At 117 degrees, I could use some cooling. My air conditioning is working again, so I can thrive..

Best,
Dmitri

July 16, 2013

Well, Dr. Shalin, I see that you've now been relieved of duty -- relieved, that is, in the sense of being released, let free, untethered from your post. I'm sure you've done as well as anyone could have in the same position, given all the pressures from within and without your department.

I had been merrily doing a final, light edit of my Two Goffman Seminars manuscript, up to page 195, tweaking a few phrasings, eliminating a number of unneeded parentheses (thanks to you), and weeding out some extraneous tangents. Only it gradually dawned on me that the text I was working on was missing some content I had added in a previous edit. What in God's name had happened?

Turns out, I had been working on a "master document" that was supposed to be embedded as a "sub-document" in yet a more comprehensive "master master document" encompassing the entire text. I had gotten mixed up about the complex nesting and had failed to update the full text version. Luckily, I had a copy of the earlier draft on a thumbdrive and have been able to work with that. Only a number of changes that I had made in the "sub-doc" were now missing in the mega-master-doc. So now I'm faced with the tedious process of comparing the two versions as I edit. Oh, the work that one can make for oneself by not paying close enough attention.

I also have been having trouble seeing clearly, so I went to the old optometrist I used to go to (not trusting the health cooperative I've been saddled with under Medicare). He diagnosed me with a growing problem of cataracts as well as what is called an epiretinal membrane or macular pucker, after the scar tissue puckers up near the macula, the part of the retina that provides for sharp vision. It is treated by surgery that is called a vitrectomy, which involves peeling the scar tissue off, then adding a salt solution in place of the original vitreous fluid. (Kind of like getting one's teeth cleaned, you might say.)

Both eyes are affected, one considerably more severe than the other. I have scheduled a consultation this Friday with the eye surgeon recommended by my optometrist, but I'm already pretty convinced that I'll have to go under the knife, as neither of these conditions can be remedied by eyeglasses. It's worrisome, but I depend on my eyes so much that I can't see much of an alternative. Meanwhile, I plug along trying to read the semi-blurred text in front of my face.

I do hope that you've allowed yourself some "R and R" now that you've been divested of your Chair duties. I had kind of hoped to get away to, maybe, Hawaii for a week of vacation myself, but that looks unlikely for the near future. At least the weather has turned balmy here, with 80-degree temperatures, which I find entirely comfortable (unlike, say, the blistering heat down around your parts).

All the best,
Michael

July 17, 2013

Hi Michael:

Yes, I'm free at last. June 30 was my last day as chair. I sent a farewell note to my troops, got a warm feedback, and am now catching up on things. Have to revise for publication a paper I presented at the conference on George Herbert Mead's 150th anniversary, see what to do about a paper scheduled for the ASA meeting, write a long-delayed conclusion to the Russian autobio forum, then put together a book I promised a publisher.

Having backup files pays off, as your work on Goffman seminars shows. Sorry to hear about your eyesight problems and hope the operation, if that is what you elect to do, works. My eyesight is fading too, though symptoms are intermittent – vision that gets blurry when there is too much light and too little. After a good night sleep or a nice hike things drift back into focus, making me wonder if my brain tells me “stop reading for hours on end without a break.” We shall see (or not).

I am overdue for R & R. The next month's trip to the annual sociology meeting in NYC is a good prospect. My mother's health must hold for this outing to take place.

If you can finish a manuscript, get it to the publisher, then take a vacation, that would be grand. Your long labor and painful deliverance entitle you to good rest, better still some adventure.

Kindly,
Dmitri

July 30, 2013

Hello, Dmitri. Here's another collection of striking pictures from the Red Rock area by my Vietnamese friend, Hien. BTW, you can click on each picture to enlarge it, then click on it once more to enlarge it even further.

I'm finishing up a response to Robert Dingwall's email with suggestions from him and two reviewers about my Goffman essay for SI. I should be done by this afternoon and will copy you on my response.

I hope your mother is doing well, along with you and the rest of your family, despite the blistering heat down your way. Up here, it's still pretty nice and sunny, although the temperature has dropped from the 80s to the 70s. In the morning, I sit in front of my living room picture window facing east and try to soak up as much sun as I can. In my advanced years, heat becomes ever more a balm.

A week on, there is still no resolution of the bureaucratic hassle over getting authorization for eye surgery from my Medicare provider. A foretaste of Reid-Pelosi care to come?

All the best,
Michael

July 30, 2013

Thanks, Michael:

The pictures didn't seem to come through.

Glad to know you will be done soon updating your article and sorry to hear about the Medicare complications.

Not sure if Obama's healthcare plan is to blame. It seems to work well in Massachusetts.

Here is my take on Obama's presidency posted in the Communitarian Network Open Forum, <http://yourmoveforum.org/open-forum>. You have seen a version of this piece already.

It's quite a bit cooler here, just 102 degrees.

Best,
Dmitri

July 30, 2013

DNS: Silly me, I forgot to paste the link to the pictures. Here it is:

<http://neihtn.wordpress.com/2013/07/02/red-rock-country-valley-of-fire/>

MD

August 2, 2013

Dear Robert Dingwall,

Attached is my response to your recent email suggesting some lines of revision of my article on Goffman for the special issue of SI devoted to him. I wrote it in WordPerfect, then saved it in MS-Word format, which gave me some troubles with a Read-Only setting, etc. If you have any problem opening the file let me know and I'll try another workaround.

Sincerely,
Michael Delaney

August 2, 2013

Hello, Dmitri. Well, as you can tell I'm "a day late and a dollar short" (as they say out in Montana) in responding to Robert Dingwall. Actually, four days short, if you want to get picky about it, but I wanted to make a convincing case for not doing a thorough revision of my essay, despite suggestions from Dingwall and the two reviewers. Frankly, I detect something of a centripetal pull of two distinct notions of what the special EG issue is supposed to be about. My preference is to defer to you.

I tried to be diplomatic, although I found the second reviewer's comments to be on the overbearing side. He seems to be one of those know-it-all, controlling, jauntily condescending types all too typical of the contemporary American academic -- in more pithy terms, a horse's ass. (Given his rather kneejerk response to what I wrote, setting himself up as a protector of the sacred SI turf, I've come to think of him as "R2-D2" after the robot in Star Wars.)

After sending off my response, I did a quick search of my Goffman database and found that EG had much more to say about the "SI" label and labeling tendencies in sociology more generally in his revealing interview with Verhoeven. To him, that tendency of thought lacked the kind of "substance" he sought to find in structure, function, organization, behavioral "technique," and the like. I'm inclined to think that his work on stigma and his sensitivity to labeling theory also made him prone to resist being boxed in by too-facile, reified labels. More power to him, I say.

Anyway, I hope Dingwall is willing to bend some on this, as the press of other matters continues.

Best to you,
Michael

August 2, 2013
Hi Michael:

I read your report to Dingwall where you state your considered opinions and offer respectful disagreements. Anonymous reviewers tend to be overbearing, insisting that the authors write a paper they would have written had they had the wits about them. What matters are the editor's guidelines, not the reviewers' wishes. In his comment Dingwall probably wanted to show that he was not a potted plant, that he takes his job seriously. At the same time, he stressed the importance of your paper, the fact that it had been accepted, and not that it requires a lot of revisions.

I had comments and suggestions on my intro paper from two reviewers and two editors, to which I responded respectfully, indicating where I had made changes and where I begged to differ. I doubt Dingwall would make issue with my revisions, as long as I've been respectful of the process.

Your thorough epistle strikes a somewhat different tone, in that you find some of the reviewers a touch inane and stress not so much where you are willing to make minor adjustments but where you won't budge. On substance, your points are well taken and solidly grounded, and I hope Dingwall will focus on that rather than on whatever aspersions you might have cast on the review process.

You can wait for the editor's response, where he is likely to strike a balance between defending himself and the integrity of the review process while continuing to encourage you to send in the revised manuscript. Or you can take a different tack.

Revise your paper as you see fit, click on the link Dingwall sent you, http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/si?URL_MASK=bk3cQPn73GRs4BXwncd7, then attach your revised paper, along with a short note on where you tried to accommodate the commentators and where you disagreed. I have a feeling this would pretty much end the review process.

Sorry you have to deal with the academic rituals again. This might show you how lucky you have been by settling into the gentleman scholar career.

Kindly,
Dmitri

August 2, 2013

Hi, Dmitri, thanks for your measured response. I'll wait to hear back from Dingwall before deciding on my next move. I don't want to seem obstreperous, but I do think that I gave him a pretty substantial case for hewing to the original agenda.

You're right about the irksomeness of the academic ritual of "peer review" and all the rest of the scholastic foofaraw, where egos and vanities clash in the night, like an alley-cat version of Hegel's black cats who prowl and hiss in the midnight hour.

By comparison, when Jonathan Imber asked me if I had anything I might consider submitting to the journal Society that he edits, I sent him off the essay I had written to commemorate David Riesman soon after his death. Jonathan lopped off one entire section (on the familiar topic of inner- vs. other-direction), then made maybe six minor edits of the text for wording, style, and length. I accepted the major deletion and made a few counter-

arguments for why my original text should stand in a few precious instances. Jonathan acceded to my points, and that was that.

If memory serves, the whole process, from start to finished publication, took less than six months. It is true that Society has more of a generalist “intellectual journal” format than a specialist scholarly one with all the finicky apparatus, and Jonathan takes it upon himself to do most of the reviewing and editing, which must mean an awful lot of work on his part. Still...

If Dingwall still wants me accentuate the *SI* theme over the more biographical one, I suppose that he ought to suggest to me what I should cut from the original. Well, we shall see.

Best,
Michael

August 2, 2013
Michael,

My feeling is that Robert likes your paper and is willing to accept it pretty much as it is, with whatever changes you are willing to make along with the rationale for sticking to your guns on other issues. That is why I suggested that you file your revised manuscript in whichever form you wish. This way, if he wishes to take issue with you, he can; or else, he will let things stand and consider the review process finished.

All best,
Dmitri

August 4, 2013
Hi Michael:

Dingwall is beginning to send notices of acceptance to authors who revised their manuscript. As I expected, he does not expect authors to answer all the reviewers' points (see below an excerpt from his note). I am sure the same will be the case with your paper.

All best,
Dmitri

With a special issue of this kind, we do not necessarily expect that every reviewer comment will be checked off and I don't think the reviewers approached the task in that spirit. It is, I think, more a matter of inviting authors to think about how interested and sympathetic readers have responded to their draft - as I observed to Dmitri in another context, this is really mainstream symbolic interactionism: you find out what you said from other people's reactions to it! I think your amendments are fine and we will now take the paper forward.

August 3, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. I suppose Dingwall is trying to be a good mediator by taking into account and disseminating various points of view of the different parties involved in the review process. He has written that it may take him two weeks to get back to my retort, as he's off to an ASA meeting in NYC. As I kind of expected, it's the old “hurry up and wait” routine. But OK, I can live with that.

Perhaps the major problem I see with trying to refocus on Goffman in relation to symbolic interactionism per se is that it would be difficult to shoehorn such a dilation into the existing article without distending it into

something it was never intended to be, while making it all that much longer unless I lopped off parts of the original.

In any case, I intend to submit any corrected or revised version of the paper to the one-shot link he provided, rather than go through the hassle of the more cumbersome process he described. I'll give this issue some more thought, but my offer to survey EG's explicit references to SI, Mead, et al. still stands.

Keep cool,

August 3, 2013
Michael,

I think you are right, and Dingwall is trying to be conscientious and mediatory. He also wants to offer his own advice, so you know he read your paper closely and has something intelligent to say. He will accept whatever you write, as he did with other contributors.

I do not think the paper size is an issue at this point. Add a few paragraphs on the EG-SI link, as you see it. Or decline to do so, if you do not wish to take the SI editor on what interests him.

As for Robert's taking his time to respond, he has to manage several pending journal issues at a time, find reviewers for new papers, write responses to authors, etc. This is a big time job. He probably feels he needs to write a detailed reply to your dissertation on EG, SI, Burke, etc. And he is leaving shortly for NYC to attend an ASA meeting. I am supposed to give a talk there as well, but my mother fell and broke her arm, so my trip is less than certain.

All best,
Dmitri

August 3, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. I couldn't resist passing on this local story from the *Seattle Times*. It makes me wonder how many gallons or liters or shots of "Stoli" would it take to fill up an ocean for this plaything to cruise through? How many rivers of vodka, how many ruined livers, just so Yuri can have his fun?

File under "Wretched Excess."

Michael

http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2021652428_serene_yacht.xml.html?cmpid=2628

August 22, 2013
Thanks, Michael:

I have been following the controversy related to gay rights in Russia and vodka boycott in the U.S. Will check out the link you sent me.

I hope you are poised to send in your final draft to SI in response to Robert Dingwall's friendly letter and invitation.

All best,
Dmitri

August 22, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. I'll send you the (slightly) revised paper tomorrow. I only have five pages to go, but I don't trust my eyes at this point.

I've been aware of the anti-Stolichnaya campaign, but I wonder if it might not be misplaced, given that it's made in Latvia and Yuri S., its international distributor, has clashed with the Russian powers-that-be. (As usual, Putin is the real villain in this story.) But then, I never really liked the taste of "Stoli" all the much, and besides I don't think Yuri needs any of my dollars to propel his mega-yacht o'er the seven seas. Nice purple color, though.

Michael

August 22, 2013

Michael:

Good to know you are finishing your revisions.

Here is a *NYT* op-ed on the subject that makes a similar point,

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/21/opinion/boycotting-vodka-wont-help-russias-gays.html?ref=opinion&_r=2&

All best,

Dmitri

August 24, 2013

Hi Michael:

Congratulations on finishing your revisions. You can email your final draft as an attachment to Patricia Hulme <...>. I am sure the drat will be accepted as is, and then you can move to other projects.

All best,

Dmitri

August 24, 2013

Emendations to "Goffman at Penn" by Michael Delaney (Sent to Patricia Hulme at Dmitri's suggestion)

To: Robert Dingwall, Dmitri N. Shalin, Patricia Hulme

Re: Manuscript ID SI-13-06-0069 entitled "Goffman at Penn: Star Presence, Teacher-Mentor, Profaning Jester" by Michael Delaney

Thanks,

Michael:

That should do. I am certain your piece will find many readers. Let's hope it will ease the burden of finding a publisher for your manuscripts.

Kindly,

Dmitri

September 5, 2013

Hi Michael:

I got a word from Robert Dingwall who tells me that your paper is accepted and you should be getting a formal notice shortly. Apparently, Patricia was away and could not enter your paper into the ScholarOne system. She is coming back in a couple of day, and after that you would get the formal notice of acceptance.

All best,
Dmitri

September 5, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Thanks for the heads-up about the paper. Frankly, I'm relieved that I don't have to go over the damned thing again.

I've been working steadily on my Last & Final Edit of the Two Seminars manuscript. I like most of it, but I imagine a sharp-eyed editor would find more than a little to cut, particularly some of my more extended interpolations and extrapolations. But for me, at this point, that is more a matter of plastic surgery than of the more consequential kind.

Speaking of which: I am due for my two eye surgeries this coming Monday and a follow-up exam the next day. The clinic requires that I have a driver-escort to accompany me during my time there. I had originally intended just to stay in a hotel overnight (for the princely sum of \$300), but that was ruled out. Not having any friends or family available for the task, I mulled over the possibilities and finally hit on the idea of offering any of the neighbors on our collective email list \$150 if they would drive and escort me, which would probably take up half a day. That way I wouldn't impose or put moral pressure on any particular individual.

Four of my nearby neighbors offered to drive me gratis, for which I am most grateful. I will replay them with one of those bounteous gift baskets that contain all sorts of treats (cheese, crackers, chocolates, and such) of the kind that one never thinks to treat oneself to. It will come out to less than the hotel room and I won't have to stay in some anonymous (and cruelly "moke-free") room, instead of being at home with at least a radio to listen to, a guitar to play (if I'm up to it), some ale and smokes on hand, and my own bed. (Two neighbors are bringing over dinner for me on Monday and Tuesday in case I am too "out of it" to cope.)

I'm anxious about the operations, of course, but looking forward to getting my increasingly blurry vision cleared up.

Are you "back in the saddle" yet at UNLV, if only as a mere Professor?

Best to you,
Michael

September 5, 2013

Michael,

How nice of your neighbors. You would rather not impose on anyone, I imagine, but what can you do. I am sure there will be ways to repay the good deed.

My academic life is saner but life in general is not. My mother needs 24 hour care after she fell and broke her arm. She is prone to falling now and every the solution to this predicament is dreadful.

Hope your operation goes well and you come back to your writing expeditiously.

Kindly,
Dmitri

September 9, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Sorry for the "chain letter" effect in reporting on this morning's surgeries, but I don't want to over-strain my one seeing eye at the moment.

I was sorry to hear about your mother's condition. Falls at her age are really treacherous (as happened to my mother too). We had full-time care for her, but towards the end her mental and physical condition were becoming unmanageable with home care. But all the options are indeed grim. Perhaps her prognosis will improve once she is on the mend.

Best wishes,
Michael

September 9, 2013

Dear Neighbors,

The two eye surgeries I mentioned I was undergoing in previous emails were performed this morning. Everything went well. The whole session took about three hours, with the prep time taking about twice as long as the actual surgeries. The masterful ophthalmologist Dr. Robert Francis of Group Health in Bellevue performed a cataract procedure in a couple of minutes, then a vitrectomy on the same eye which took maybe 20. The latter operation involves peeling off scar tissue ("macular pucker") the forms around the macula, the small spot at the back of the eye that provides for sharp vision, then draining out the vitreous fluid and permanently replacing it with a saline solution. It sounds worse than it was in the doing. And the nurse even provided me a much-needed, but hitherto verboten, cup of coffee after it was done.

I was sedated but not "under" as I thought I would have to be, so I was conscious during the whole procedure. It was disconcerting at first but not painful, except for a quick needle stick or two. I could see the Dr. fishing around inside the eye for stray strands of tissue and plucking them out with what looked like miniature tweezers, accompanied by a kind of strobe-light show in my eyes -- something like having a lava lamp installed in them. All the while, the good doc was chatting with his nurse. He obviously takes the procedures in stride, even though he is one of the very few doctors who ever performs these two procedures together in one session.

Joyce Mork-O'Brien kindly drove me to Bellevue in the early morning. Tina Viers has volunteered to drive me tomorrow for a follow-up exam at a Seattle clinic next to Swedish hospital. I am most grateful to them for that. And Frances and Cindy have offered to provide me dinner tonight and tomorrow as I recuperate. I am most grateful to The Cadre for their support. (A small token of appreciation is due to arrive on Thursday, so that's something to look forward to, troops.)

I will have to wear an eye patch for a day or so and take some eye drops for a while, but otherwise "no worries," as they say (I hate that expression, don't you?). I'll just pretend that SeaFair has been extended for a time this year.

The other eye will need the same procedures in the near (but as-yet unscheduled) future. But I'm looking forward to having my vision cleared up once and for all.

Michael Delaney (Temporarily One-Eyed Jack)
3229 25th Ave. S.



Yo-ho-ho.

September 9, 2013

Greetings Michael:

Thanks for your word of encouragement on my home front. Things look grim at the moment, with every option related to my mother is certain to spawn complications.

I hope your mood keeps steady and your operation goes well.

With kind wishes,
Dmitri

September 11, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. I cannot know all the factors impinging on your mother's condition and her situation vis-a-vis the rest of the family, degree of comfort living in the U.S. and so on. But one thought did occur to me. Have you looked into the possibility of an ethnic Russian nursing home in the U.S., say, one close enough to LV such that regular visits would be practicable? I realize that one has to be very careful in choosing such a place - there was a recent evacuation of one in Brooklyn after a fire, I recall, and there is no shortage of horror stories about nursing homes in general, both here and in Russia. In my Mom's case, her condition was getting so care-intensive that we were seriously considering the option of a full-care nursing home, but she died before we had to reach that agonizing decision point.

It's just a thought to ponder for what it's worth, which is probably not much.

Below is a brief version of my present monocular condition, taken from a bulletin I sent out to my helping neighbors. Sorry to be so chatty about this, but I find it much easier to write (by touch-typing) than to read, let alone try to do any careful editing work.

Dear Concerned Neighbors (aka The Cadre),

I had a post-op eye exam today. Everything looks OK. Well, in a manner of speaking.

Last night the eye patch I was supposed to wear somehow came off when I was asleep, probably clawed off by my desperate hands. I thought I would see with crystal clarity with the cataract gone, but I was startled to find that such was not the case. Reason: The eye is now filled with saline solution instead of vitreous fluid. To relieve pressure on it as the retina adjusts, the doctor included a gas bubble that floats on the top of the solution. I can actually see the bottom line of it -- it's like having a bifocal only with the bottom part taking up almost all of the glass. I can't really see things out of the eye yet, just wobbly blurs, like an impressionist painter trying to be an expressionist for a change and making a complete botch of it. It's very much like seeing underwater in a turbulent sea with seaweed and unknown stuff floating by. As I told the doctor, I feel like the marathon swimmer Diana Nyad (luckily, no jellyfish stings or shark attacks as yet).

It also makes reading nearly impossible, inconveniently enough -- just as I was completing the final draft of one of my two books-in-progress. Watching TV is also weird -- like watching a 3-D movie without the special glasses. And my depth perception is way off. Consequently, last night I was reduced to listening to the radio (old pop hits and jazz) and some obscure CDs, accompanied by a few wee drams of The Famous Grouse, which is a peaty Scottish medicinal potion concocted in the grand old tradition of my Celtic ancestors. (Listening one-eyed to Hawaiian music while sipping Scotch is a real multicultural experience I can tell you.)

The gas bubble will gradually dissolve as it sinks lower in the eye (I will know when, because I can see its outline). That will take about a week. By then I should be able to see better and be able to drive, although how my change in vision will comport with my old prescription glasses is yet to be seen, as it were. (Tune in next week as our riveting story continues....)

....

Again, thanks to one and all; your help is much appreciated.

Mike

September 11, 2013

Greetings Michael:

So you are making headways in your recovery, albeit not as fast as you would like. That's par for the course, I understand. It usually takes longer than the optimistic projections doctors give you. But as long as the progress is steady, you will draw hope from the fact and see yourself back in the saddle soon.

Thanks you for your kind concern for my mother. She already has a PCA who speaks her language. Things would be worse in a nursing home facility. The problem is that out of 168 hours a week, I have about 20 hours of help coming from this quarter. The rest devolves on the family.

Be well and keep your spirit high,
Dmitri

September 20, 2013

Hello, Dmitri. Here's the message I received from Patricia Hulme re: my Goffman essay. I'm assuming that the version she used is Goffman_at_Penn_Final.docx, dated August 23, 2013. Somehow the expedient of sending it

directly to her led to some additional hassles, but such is the way of the world. (The best-laid plans of mice and men, and all that....)

My eyesight is still on the bleary side and the small gas bubble in the right eye has yet to dissolve completely, leaving this distracting little black dot to bounce around on the bottom when I move my eyes. The persistent problem is that my glasses are no longer in sync with my vision. The left eye has compensated somewhat, but the right-eye vision no longer corresponds with the prescription. And it makes little sense to get new glasses, inasmuch as I will be having surgery on the left eye before too long. So I remain in a kind of visual limbo. But I can see well enough to read the computer screen and the TV, as well as to drive (carefully). Haven't been able to get back to editing yet, though.

I hope your mother is doing as well as possible and that your new school year will be rewarding. Did you give the paper you mentioned at the ASA meeting? Jonathan Imber mentioned that he had met you there and enjoyed making your acquaintance.

The best to you,
Michael

September 20, 2013
Dear Michael

Your submission was stuck in Scholar One system but I have managed to get it going again by uploading the ms Dmitri sent to me on 19th September. To upload the ms and get it moving I had to get into the system as you. To do this I had to change your password. Your login details on Scholar One are as follows:

Best wishes
Patricia
Patricia Hulme
Managing Editor
Symbolic Interaction
<...>

September 20, 2013
Greetings Michael:

Yes, your final draft is finally uploaded to the SI server. You should be able to check it by entering the SI system and using your new password. Patricia is now working with the manuscripts, getting them ready for production.

The recovery from your surgery is slow, but it sounds like things are within the normal range. It is a great nuisance, to be sure, and one can only hope the process picks up pace with the passage of time. No news on home front, although mother feels a bit better and starts getting up more often, which adds to the risk of falling.

On the work front, some aggravations with the CDC. I had a talk with my dean who praised the work of the Center for Democratic Culture, then told me that the administration is redefining the meaning of "center." It now means not just being self-sufficient (we have always raised our own funds), but procuring at least 1 million dollars in extramural funding. Looks like the center might be shut down along with its databases. Now I have to write to the higher-ups and explain why destroying the brand that has produced much work and generated

good publicity for UNLV is not a bright idea.

All best,
Dmitri

October 19, 2013
Greetings Michael:

I have been thinking of you – are you on the way to recovery, getting back into the saddle after the operation?

You might have gotten the proofs of your EG article by now, just in time to get your eyes strained again.

Hope you are doing well,
Dmitri

October 19, 2013

Hi, Dmitri and thanks for thinking of me. My post-op right eye has healed by now, with long-distance vision at 20/20 (better than it's been for ages) but close vision is still blurry. I tried to get the optometrist to provide me with a temporary set of glasses for the interim, but he didn't respond. Meaning that I have basically stopped work on editing. I can read adequately on my computer if I enlarge the text to 16 point type (as I'm doing now), but that is too distracting for close editing, which is best done on a hard copy in any case. And I was so close to being finished too.

So essentially I haven't got any real work done for the past six weeks. Nor have I received the proof the EG article, but when I do I'll turn it around as soon as I can. I have corresponded with Robt. Dingwall a bit, though mostly about our experiences with eye operations. (By the way, my total cost under Medicare came to under \$300, with Medicare picking up over \$6,000 of the total cost, including \$855 for anesthesia. I calculated that I paid about 4.5% of the total cost, i.e., a pittance, mostly thanks to my fellow taxpayers. Thank you.)

My next dual eye operation is set for Oct. 28, but the procedure and the healing should be easier as I have the reverse condition of the other eye: a worse cataract, but less severe macular scarring. After that, I should be able to get by with only reading glasses, which doesn't bother me, since I've worn glasses since I was about 14.

In the meantime, I had to make two trips to the Urgent Health clinic on a fine autumn weekend two weeks ago. A cyst on my jaw line ruptured (presumably because I pressed my fingers against it while watching some videos on the web); it got infected and I was told that I better have the abscess looked at, as there are some very sensitive glands in that area. It is just now healing with the help of large amounts of pus squeezed out (ugh) and a steady regimen of antibiotics.

In short, just one damn thing after another.

As it happened I thought about you this very morning after hearing a new song by Linda Thompson, former wife of Richard Thompson, both of whom used to be the lead singers with Fairport Convention, a Celtic-styled folk-rock group from England. After their marriage split up, she went for many years not being able to sing at all, presumably owing to the psychic trauma of the breakup. (The same fate, sadly, has recently befallen the gifted Linda Rondstadt, now suffering from dreaded Parkinson's disease). Anyway, Richard accompanied Linda on the new song and I was reminded of what a masterful guitarist he is. He plays one of those guitars with a teardrop-shaped sound hole above instead of under the strings, which produces a distinctively sharp, robust sound. I find those guitars unattractive looking, but they sound terrific. If you're still in the market for one, that might pay looking into.

I'll refrain from commenting on the recent clown show debacle in our nation's capital, except to say that I share the same tangled sense of fury, dismay, anxiety, embarrassment, etc. felt by most of my countrymen. And it's still not resolved! It has become all too evident how great countries, even near the peak of their powers, can undermine themselves (economically, politically, socially, culturally) from within, quite apart from any outside threats or pressures. It amounts to a kind of inverted, X-ray-like Parsonian LIGA paradigm, and it scares the hell out of me. No doubt Mr. Putin is getting many a merry cackle out of the sorry spectacle, adding insult to injury and making it all the worse.

Otherwise, cheers to you,
Michael

October 19, 2013
Michael,

Sounds like a lot more needs to be done before you are fully operational. I hope Medicare keeps coming through for you. The program did not work for my mother when I took her to the emergency room after she broke her arm. Doctors confirmed the fracture but insisted that they cannot keep her overnight because it was inoperable. I had to take her home, armed with a mild sedative, which did not help.

Did you get the preliminary edits from Pat Hume? After that, the paper goes to the printers who produce the proofs, etc. You should be getting something soon I imagine, although Pat is on vacation right now.

Yes, what a debacle in DC. Republicans asked Obama nicely to stop the Affordable Care Act, rescind the taxes on sales of medical equipment, authorize the Keystone oil pipeline, and a few other sensible things. And what did Obama do? He arrogantly turned them down, forcing the House to shut down the government. Things look better now, but what is going to happen in a few months if Obama refuses to compromise on budgets?

My daughter is taking Russian language classes and we exchange songs from that part of the world. Here is couple I sent her,

<http://ololo.fm/search/%D0%9C%D0%B8%D1%85%D0%B0%D0%B8%D0%BB+%D0%91%D0%B0%D1%88%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2/%D0%A1%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B8>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsWU0ffYVa8&list=PL9F2259C693D7DAED>

Please get well, Michael.

All best,
Dmitri

October 20, 2013

Hi again, Dmitri, and thanks for your kind thoughts. I have to admit having this interstitial visual condition tends to get wearisome after a time. I'm looking forward to getting back to a more normal and more productive situation, even as low as my usual rate of productivity is. And to think that in grad school I used to be able to crank out 80-page term papers in one all-nighter session.

Nothing has come from Pat at SI as yet, but once it does I'll turn it around ASAP.

The two songs you linked to were interesting. I especially liked the one by Michael Bashakov, although I kept mishearing the word "sambadi" as an accented "somebody." It's interesting that the one by Snizza had such a

Brazilian flavor to it. Such cross-cultural influence reminds me of Hawaiian music, much of which is pop-insipid but some of it quite wonderful. In general it is syncretic, with influences as various as American Country & Western, pop standards, and Jamaican reggae overlaid on more native airs. The Hawaiian language itself seems to be quite “melodic” and vowel-heavy. I listen to a Hawaiian music show on the radio here every Saturday. I like the more traditional stuff best, enjoying the group harmonies, male falsetto virtuosity, and the slack-guitar playing. Many of the best songs, quite understandably, are about specific locations in the islands and the reverence and love-of-place they inspire.

I think it’s great that your daughter is learning Russian. I feel the same way about the children of Vietnamese-American friends knowing Vietnamese. Perhaps that is partly because I used to be fairly proficient in that tonal language and have found it rewarding have lived in (even dreamed in) a language that is so very different from my native tongue in every aspect except for the French-created Roman-letter orthography (which is remarkably accurate, by the way, thanks to the linguistic acuity of Alexander of Rhodes).

Your mother’s encounter with Medicare is disheartening. You’d think that medical people would see fit to bend the rules a bit in such cases, especially with an elderly person in such a painful and anxious situation. As E. Digby Baltzell used to say, one of the negative aspects of bureaucracy inheres in its very rationalistic “fairness” in treating all cases alike -- by the rulebook. He also noted that a degree of corruption (bribes, favoritism, and such) or willingness to submit to emotional appeal can sometimes be more humane than a strict paint-by-the-numbers approach to service work. (For all his personal probity, Digby was rather fond of such Hughes-like sociological paradoxes or ironies.)

Correct me if I’m wrong, but I think I detected a slight hint of a tinge of scorn and partisan derision in your reaction to the recent events in DC. Well, fair is fair, so I’ll let it go with the “Pragmaticist” observation that both “conservatism” and “liberalism,” to me, ought to apply to means as well as ends, and we’ve seen all too little of that in recent years from most factions and figures in our national politics (including the steamroller, backroom-dealing passage of the ACA).

For well-known reasons, Russians are well known for their sardonic political humor. Along those lines I found one uncommon nugget of wit in the typical dross of readers’ responses to press articles on the web. This one was directed to a recent Washington Post column by Chas. Krauthammer, who argued that it was past time for the Washington Redskins football team to change their historically racist-tainted name. (Second only to the shutdown, gridlock, etc., that’s the biggest brouhaha roiling DC these days.) Here’s what one wit added:

“Breaking news: The Washington Redskins are changing their name because of all the negativity, shame, humiliation, dissent, polarity, adversity, defiance, hatred, animosity, contempt, discrimination, division, violence, counter-productivity, ill-spirit, un-Godliness, and hostility associated with their name. From now on they will be known simply as the Redskins.”

Har!
Take care,
Michael

October 20, 2013
Michael,

The recurrent word you hear is indeed “somebody.” The story told by the writer/singer is of a man he once overheard playing the guitar and singing “V Leningrade” (“in Leningrad”) whose name he did not know and whom he calls with a rhyming English word “somebody.” The singer (his name is “Bashakov”) kept looking for this man ever since and finally caught up with this pure-hearted bard by looking in the mirror. And how disappointing this discovery was – somebody turned out to be no one else but himself, just another wannabe. A

well wrought story. There are a few other decent songs of him on YouTube, unfortunately pirated from the live shows and henceforth poorly recorded.

The second song written and sung by “Nizza5” stands out for a different reason. It has a certain mood amplified by wording that is hard to grasp for the one unfamiliar with the language.

Yes, you rightly detected a tinge of sarcasm in my rendition of the CDC debacle. I am always looking for different sides of the story, but this one defies evenhandedness. The Republicans’ willingness to shut the government and push the nation into default unless they scuttled the law they dislike seemed boneheaded. We shall see what transpires.

All best,
Dmitri

October 21, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Just to be clear, I quite agree with you as to where the fault lies in the absurdist melodrama just played out in DC. Setting aside the wisdom or practicality of “Obamacare” (an issue that the right-wingers allowed to be ignored by trampling on their own message, even as its rollout was bollixed at the opening gate), I think that the president's arguments were sound “on the merits,” both substantively and procedurally, and that the oppositionists were, as you say, indeed “boneheaded,” an epithet to which I would add “idiots.” In such a case, “even-handedness” is indeed the blinkered reaction of the ideologically-deformed fool, as even many conservative-to-moderate Republican pols and pundits have soberly acknowledged. As they say: meh.

It seems that Marx’s “correction” of Hegel was only half-right: the second time around turned out to be tragicomic farce, slapstick opera buffa of a very low degree.

The web page with the Nizza5 song made a gallant effort to translate the lyrics, but they were so wildly off, except for a few lyrical passages, that they resembled the poetic effusions of an addled Beat poet coming off an opium high.

Cordially,
Michael

October 21, 2013

Michael,

Yes, we are in agreement on the merit of threatening to shut down the government to get one’s way. On the merit of Obamacare, the jury is out. But with 18 million kids without regular access to doctors, something had to be done. I doubt Republicans are losing much sleep about this fact.

As for the web site debacle – this is quite a comeuppance for cool tech guys in the WH. Oddly this, this might help the cause in the long run.

Cheers,
Dmitri

P.S. One more Russian song I am partial to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVbb0RM8ccU>

October 31, 2013

Hi, Dmitri.

I had my second dual eye operation on the 28th, with a follow-up exam the next day. The second operation was a bit different than the first on my right eye, because I had worse cataracts in the left eye, but less severe macular scarring. Accordingly, it was less intense than the first one, although at one point there was some dull grinding noises emanating from within my eyeball that were a tad unnerving -- disconcerting, but no pain. After the operation this time, my eye felt "itchy and scratchy" (to riff off "The Simpsons" cat and mouse games) and somewhat sore, but I didn't have to put up with a gas bubble and the eye seems to be healing faster than the previous time. It is also very red, as if some palooka had socked me in the eye or I had been on a marathon binge. (I notice store clerks looking at me suspiciously.)

I initially had to wear an eye patch, which, being full of small air-holes, was unfortunately less like that of a dashing pirate captain or suave man-of-the-world, than an enormous fly's eye or the eyepiece of a Borg automaton from "Star Trek." Now I only have an occasional stray black particle drifting in front of my face, like the dot of a letter "i" that has somehow escaped its plinth. Whereas before, there was a chorus line of multiple black dots lined up and dancing in front of my face, as though I were gazing at a flea circus.

I've not received word or anything else from Patricia Hulme re the EG ms., but I can see well enough with non-prescription reading glasses to get by with any editing chores on it.

Hope all is well with you and your family, very much including Babushka,
Mike

October 31, 2013

Greetings Michael:

The ordeal continues. Doesn't sound like this time the experience is less unnerving. I hope the outcome will be no worse, and god willing, better than after the first operation. I understand that your neighbors were kind to you in the past, maybe they will continue to assist if need arises. Having somebody around after such tribulations helps.

Patricia Hume was on vacation and is expected back anytime now. She has a lot to do. Let me know if you do not hear from her in the next two weeks.

With kind wishes,
Dmitri

November 4, 2013

Hi, Dmitri,

No news of note to report, but here's a photo to rest your eyes on, taken by my friend Hien. Nature, at its best, can be soothing to the spirit and the senses, and certainly a respite from contemplating the vagaries of human nature.

Michael

<http://neihtn.wordpress.com/2013/10/26/weekly-photo-challenge-horizon/>

November 4, 2013

Thank you, Michael.

Took me a bit to figure out this visage. Patricia is working on EG papers waiting for their turn. Your piece should come out soon. Meanwhile, attached are the proofs of my intro.

All best,
Dmitri

November 5, 2013

Hi, Dmitri. Would you please re-send the link to your Introduction. I deleted your last e-mail inadvertently and it is "in the wind," as the cops say of fleeing fugitives.

Thanks,

Michael

November 5, 2013

Hi Michael:

Here is the link to the *SI* issue on Goffman, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/%28ISSN%291533-8665/homepage/forthcoming_special_issue.htm

Not sure you can access the articles from this page. I sent you my intro as a PDF file -- did you get it?

Best,
Dmitri

November 5, 2013

Hello, Dmitri, There is no link to your Intro at the Wiley website. I got your PDF file attachment but mistakenly deleted the e-mail. If it's not too much trouble, please re-send the PDF. Sorry for the hassle.

Michael

November 6, 2013

Hello, Dmitri. Yours is a fine, dense paper in which you have compressed a great deal of intriguing information from sundry sources, made into a coherent and persuasive whole. I'm still not sure if this is the Introduction to the special issue of *SI* or the lead-off essay, but no great matter.

I could quibble over a few slightly unidiomatic phrasings of yours, but it's not really worth bothering with. Instead, several minor observations for what they're worth.

A couple of clarifications might be in order.

(1) When you note Liz Bott-Spillius's attraction to a seasoned undergraduate student at the U. Chicago, it seems at first blush like you are referring to Goffman himself, but the subsequent context seems to rule that out, given that their romance had cooled by then. And you already recorded their earlier relationship, implying that it was a major faction in EG's decision to enroll at Chicago.

(2) In your reference to Thomas Scheff's airplane incident, you write that EG was loudly talking about someone losing his bowels. But I checked the transcript, and Scheff made clear that he had thrown up in an air-sickness bag. (There's quite a difference between the two evacuations on the scale of embarrassment, after all.)

(3) When you mention Joan Huber's first look at EG, you mention a "presidential address" by someone (whose name I didn't recognize) but without situating it -- presumably it was at an ASA meeting.

A few other thoughts. You were right to cite Lenore Weitzman's paper on gender stereotyping as a key inspiration for EG's later analyses of gender, particularly in *Gender Advertisements*. He was quite specific about this precedent in his lectures, if less so in his writings. I would add a somewhat retrograde thought. EG made the point that all societies are "sexist"; certainly there are and were far worse examples of gender inequality and bias in countries other than the U.S. even in the 1950s, and even as our much-bewailed bourgeois-capitalist-democratic society has sprung by leaps and bounds to equalize or even reverse the relative standing of the sexes, and now even sexual orientations and "identities." What's a poor, benighted, average white straight male to do? Personally, I think that piling on about EG's earlier "sexism" exudes not only anachronism but a certain air of superiority redolent of the idol of contemporaneity, but that's just unreconstructed me, I suppose. (To me, "sexism" is one of those flabby "sponge terms" that C. Wright Mills wrote about.)

In any event, EG's "turn" on gender issues is quite in keeping with his rather brilliant pincers strategy in *Stigma*: to normalize or normify the "deviants" and de-normify the non-stigmatized "normal" who are, in effect, made the villains or at least "faulty persons" of the piece in their invidious to oblivious depredations. In short, he put the onus of decency and other-regard on the other foot. (Of course he did much the same to the standing of patients and staff in a mental hospital.) It's funny, though, how commentators tend to pass over in silence his trenchant comments on stigma communities and activists as to the possibly hopeless quest for achieving true "authenticity." (But by Sartre's lights, who really could, aside from himself, some implacable revolutionary killers, or, by stark contrast, the odious degenerate embodied by "St. Genet," a kind of hideous Francis Bacon painting come to life?)

By and large, EG was disdainful of experimental psychology and its use of trickery-like methods of data-elicitation and the exploitation of students' naive trust in their own experiential expectations; and yet this adds another layer to his own "breaching experiments" even as he chastised Garfinkel & Co. for running them on unsuspecting "marks." In class, he also made the observation that, as a rule, one teases down, not up, unless some sort of tacit indulgence is granted by the social "upper." As so often, he seems to have observed his own "rule" only fitfully or perhaps more accurately, opportunistically. Part of the frame-game, after all, is to see how far you can push the envelope, how much you can get away with.

I hadn't known that Tom Goffman had died. The only reference I found on the web was to the death of someone by that name with the dates 1953-2010, but no other information. It was good that you and he were able to communicate more about his father, and for you to glean more from a uniquely intimate insider's point of view.

Finally, are contributors to the *SI* journal entitled to a complimentary copy of the special issue when it comes out?

I had an eye exam yesterday and was told that it would take another four weeks until the effects of the eye surgery had healed enough to get an exact prescription for glasses. So it looks like I will be limping along with my drugstore reading glasses for another month. It's vexing, but I will try to get back to work anyway, as it's too frustrating not to.

Best to you,
Michael

November 6, 2013
Greetings Michael:

Thanks for a good word and feedback on my paper. Indeed, my English is semi-idiomatic, there is a lot to second-guess about it.

Not sure about your first point. In the U of C section, I refer to "Sky who increasingly attracted Goffman." Bott-Spillius is brought up in the context of a cooling off of her interest in Goffman. Perhaps I miss something. I have already spotted the embarrassing infelicity related to Scheff's episode and alerted the SI editors to it. The final draft should be changed accordingly.

William (Si) J. Good, the ASA president, is the person mentioned in the episode involving Joan Huber. I could have been more explicit here.

Interesting comments on gender, breaching, and my anachronistic and decontextualized take on EG in this connection. There will be a follow-up publication on the EG issue, in the electronic format and possibly in a traditional one. It would be nice to have your comments, on my and other contributions, to be included. Please give it a thought.

I sure hope to get a hold of the entire journal issue, for myself and each contributor. It will be, and partially is, available online, but not everyone can readily access it. I will see to it that you get the full Monty.

Yes, Tom Goffman died under obscure circumstances that the family is not eager to talk about (an "accident" is cited). And it is a stroke of luck that I had a chance to exchange thoughts with him on his family.

Yet another eye surgery? I thought you have paid your dues. Please don't lose heart and keep soldering on – we need your keen eye trained on this inane world of ours.

Kindly,
Dmitri

November 7, 2013

Hello again, Dmitri. Aside from the point about Scheff (which might well have unduly embarrassed him), the other clarifications I mentioned are too picayune to worry about. And, by the way, I find your command of English most impressive, so don't sweat the small stuff. Even the magisterial writer-in-English Conrad nodded every now and again.

After rechecking your paper, I think the point I made about Liz Bott was itself a bit off, although it might have been clearer had you mentioned that her relationship with EG had cooled before citing her new love interest at Chicago. I have gotten the sense that she is a bit reticent to go too deeply into her past love life, and that is surely her prerogative.

I would be willing to comment on some of the other papers, even allowing for the fact that I am now very much an outsider to the academic world and its currently prevailing norms about what can or should and cannot or should not be said. (With gay liberation cresting, the newest fad or fixation seems to be the cause of transsexualism. One has to wonder: what's next? Already one hears exploratory murmurs seeping out from the "pedophile community.")

I don't mean to single you out about the gender business, which I'm personally inclined to find more tedious than not as a sociological or political issue. (Although I'm not a feminist, I'm hardly a misogynist either, even if I find the "privileging" of females over males these days quite overdone.) But I do get peeved when

commentators scour another author's work of, say, a half-century ago with a single-minded determination to impose a certain now-fashionable narrative on his work. It's like looking on a past era with a figurative eye patch on, or wearing polarized glasses. Do such readers bring anything like the same intensity to searching out counter-examples of sympathy or solidarity with women or other categories of people? (In Goffman, they are there, for those who would look.)

There is also a corresponding disinclination to note Goffman's many derisive comments about the manliness complex, as most extensively detailed in "Where the Action Is." (To my mind, Thomas Scheff provides a serious misreading of that essay on behalf of his feminized agenda.) For instance, Goffman took many a jab at "macho" pretensions, as with Norman Mailer's self-styled he-man cultus. Goffman's orientation may have had an androcentric tilt up until the 1970s, but as he himself obliquely admitted many of his concerns were more female-typed than "manly," particularly in terms of the prevailing, more-fixed gender ethos of the 1950s. His more mocking comments about masculinity are also undercut to some extent, to my way of thinking, by his own reluctance to stand up and be counted as a man when it really mattered -- in WW II. (How convenient it is for contemporary feminists to overlook the fact that women have never faced the "equal opportunity" of conscription in this country, although I salute the ones who signed up for wartime duty anyway.)

Well, I could natter on, but enough said already. I guess my biggest objection is to what I take to be the undue "ideologization" of sociology at present, with all the conformity-inducing, careerist incentives for it now in place. (Meanwhile, imperious, neo-positivistic Biologism increasingly rules the roost that sociology once proudly perched on.) As for me, I still believe that any social science worthy of the name needs to keep a certain moral and cognitive distance from any given social movement, quite as Goffman maintained. Such a stance does not preclude having convictions or participating in social or political affairs, but it does argue for keeping the line between such allegiances or activity and scholarship intact. (Somehow, though, I doubt that such groups as the Women's Nebraska Collective would agree.)

Despite all the efforts to politicize his work, or to fit him into the Procrustean bed of current "political" obsessions, Goffman remains for me an example of a sociological thinker whose work is all the better and more long-lasting for his having resisted succumbing to the ideological blandishments of his day, even while making, through dedication to his work above all, his own estimable moral and intellectual contributions to the age. Isn't that, in the end, what science as a vocation is supposed to be about?

Michael

November 15, 2013

Greetings Michael:

I hope you have gotten the edited manuscript by now. If not, I will start inquiring.

My gaffe about Scheff has been corrected. The paper posted on the web in the prepublication format spares me and Tom embarrassment.

Thanks for a good word about my English, which will remain an acquired taste and work in progress. Liz Bott is indeed a private person, she had trepidations about going into further details, but in a long exchange I had with her about her life she brought up important facts and offered trenchant insights.

I would be careful tying gay liberation to pedophilia. This is what Putin tried to do when he pushed through his anti-gay laws. Pedophilia is no more a problem in the gay community than in the strait one. I would decouple these issues, which tend to be conflated by those who wish to drive gays back into the closet.

Anachronism is a problem when we observe yesteryear's habits of the heart; addressing the injustices of the

past might result in discrimination against people who had nothing to do with those injustices; but given the abuse women suffered over the millennia, I don't find privileging them is not altogether insidious. EG was an equal opportunity offender when it came dishing out his sarcasm. Men and women got his ire (remember Mr. Preedy at the beach?), but he did valorize the cult of masculinity, owned up to his casual sexism, and tried to mend his ways. Toward the end of his intellectual career he claimed that women were his best students.

Weber thought that social scientists should keep their work free of values yet plunged head-on into politics. He also claimed that knowledge is objective insofar as it is grounded in preconceptions, in our a priori commitments. Some kind of contradiction? While EG stayed above the ideological fray, he did not hesitate to pull his weight in the university politics, sometimes in a heavy handed manner, as when he blackballed worthy colleagues whose theoretical commitments he didn't share and promoted others whose work he liked even though it did not meet the established norms.

Well, enough of nattering.

Take care,
Dmitri

November 17, 2013
Hello, Dmitri.

Patricia Hulme e-mailed me on Nov. 11 with 5 points in need of correction. They had to do with minor technical faults (wrong citation dates, a missing reference, etc.), so I didn't bother copying you when I send her my corrections on the same day. I've not heard anything from her since, although I gather that there is one last stage of review of the galley before everything is set to go.

There's not too much point in ping-ponging points over our disparate points of view on various matters of moment, but I will clarify that I didn't exactly "tie" pedophilia to gays so much as to the ongoing sexual revolution, of which gays have been an increasingly vocal part, for better or worse. (I'm fine with gay marriage, legitimately enacted, judging it to be part of the "better.") That revolution includes the current fixation on transsexualism, which affects a tiny, but growing, splinter of the population. I am given to understand that this condition is not to be conflated with homosexuality, although things obviously get murky in these matters.

My somewhat Rieffian point was simply to pose the issue of what limits on sexuality are yet to be obliterated and with what ramifications. Martha Nussbaum has already instructed us that disgust, shame, and the like are no pillars of any "objective" basis for a "public-based" morality. I wonder what she would make of the notorious case from Washington state concerning a horse farm that set up an equine brothel for its clientele. One of the affronted horses, on being attacked from behind, kicked a would-be suitor to death -- a justifiable homicide if ever there was. At very least it could be said to demonstrate far more horse sense than Nussbaum seems able to muster.

Rieff intimated that we are slipping into an increasing, theoretically sanctioned intrusion of violence into the sexual sphere, despite Freud's best efforts to contain the boundless impulses of the "id." Suffice it to say that the semi-hard-porn S&M trilogy starting with "Fifty Shades of Grey" has become an international best-seller, a close-at-hand manual on the nightstands of perfectly respectable and proper ladies eager for a nasty taste of the old slap and tickle. Populist Foucaudianism! A "pillow-book" for our times!

As the hippies said in the 60s, "let it all hang out!" One might conjecture that we will henceforth cycle through a bemused tolerance of the full panoply of acts and "persuasions" detailed in the Krafft-Ebing playbook of Psychopathia Sexualis before we are done. One can already get anything one would want on the worldwide

web, it being the greatest disseminator of porn to the masses, young and old, the world has ever known. What with the barrage of eroticized signs and messages sent out by mass-media entertainments, celebrity “role models,” and advertisements, no wonder that the onset of puberty among the young keeps receding.

Whatever one might think of these developments, it is noteworthy that they have emerged in some of the most “bourgeois” countries on Earth, including our own, in sharp contrast to those ostensibly “revolutionary” nations that live under the Red flag in the name of the proletariat-dominated but “classless” society. I presume you had an inkling of that long-run contrast when you decided to “vote with your feet” in 1976, even a mere year after the inglorious end of the awful Vietnam war.

Well, I could go on at length about this and other points you raised, but I don’t want to try your patience with my untimely lucubrations, so I’ll leave it at that.

Best to you,
Michael

November 17, 2013
Hi Michael:

After Patricia’s queries, you should be getting a note from Wiley asking you to sign the publication contract, after which you will receive the proofs. You may be hearing from the publisher in the coming week.

I see room for disagreement on the issues of gender, sexuality, and pornography where some of my friends don’t. Thus, I thought gay couples should have the rights similar to those their straight counterparts enjoy, but also felt that the term “partnership” or its cognate could distinguish their unions from the traditional marriage. Such a move would pay homage to the longstanding matrimonial tradition, spare aggravations to clerics reluctant to officiate at the religiously problematic ceremonies, and acknowledge the fact that over 80 percent of gay couples do not bother with childbearing and rearing. But my stance, admittedly open to criticism, failed to convince those close to me.

Your willingness to stand by Rieff’s conservatism in the age of cynicism and opportunism is admirable and intellectually stimulating, even though I cannot join your vigil – on political and biographical grounds.

With kind wishes,
Dmitri

November 18, 2013

Hi, Dmitri, once again. I’m sure you’ll become aware of this article on Alice Goffman’s work, but let me be among the first,

http://chronicle.com/article/The-American-Police-State/142965/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

The writer seems to have a good sense of Erving’s public and sociological persona. The headline is objectionably reductionist however.

It seems that Alice Goffman has followed her father’s Chicago-styled footsteps in her *Asylums*-like “privileging” of one category of actor over another in her treatment of what amounts to a semi-pro criminal class, apparently with a bit of Stockholm syndrome thrown in. I wonder what her study would have looked like had she expanded her fieldwork to include the cops, social workers, parole officers, lawyers, judges, etc. who have to deal with the focal group of her sympathies. Ethnography, like psychoanalysis, is almost always a one-

sided narrative, a bubble world, which complicates its status as “scientific,” although I would dispute the opinion that it is merely “journalistic.” Still, in its partiality, there is an element of “sympathy for the devil.”

For what it’s worth (not much nowadays), I agree with you, on pragmatic grounds, that “civil unions” would have been a useful half-way stage towards full marriage equality for LGs (if not necessarily Bs and Ts). But, like abortion, once it becomes an either/or, zero-sum proposition of “human rights,” it leads to an endless tumult of conflicting traditionalist vs. modernist moralities. Scalia’s cagey dissent in the Supreme Court latest ruling on gay marriage nailed the programmatic agenda behind that essentially ideological (i.e., extra-judicial) decision. I am hardly a vigilant keeper of the Rieffian flame regarding sexual deviations from the “norm” (whatever that might be these days), but my question remains: where does it all end, and what does that portend, especially for the well-being of future generations? I often get the sinking feeling that ours is not a good culture in which to raise up children, which is, after all, a fundamental marker of what constitutes a viable “civilization,” discontents and all. But we seem damned to progress in all things in all ways, so what the hell? Enjoy it while you can!

Michael

November 18, 2013

Thank you, Michael:

The CHE piece, quietly partisan and marked by a few inaccuracies, is revealing. It will push the publicity-shy Alice into the limelight in a way that can change her life.

Being a “fly on the wall” is a tricky posture her father practiced deftly, albeit with mixed results. I hope his daughter does not neglect safety.

All best,
Dmitri

December 10, 2013

Hello Dmitri.

I’ve been hard at work editing, since my eyes have improved enough to read at the computer (with drugstore-bought reading glasses). Hence, I haven’t bothered you with any of my off-key soliloquies, especially at a time when I imagine you are busy with grading papers and other end-of-term tasks.

I’ve been sent a PDF file for my article on EG. I have spotted a few minor mistakes and omitted words that need mending. I will send in corrections tomorrow.

However, there’s one thing that may cause a problem, namely, citing retrieval dates for things pulled off the web. I didn’t keep track of these dates, although I do have dated printouts of the various postings from the EGA site that I could use for that purpose. They do not tell me what format to use in inserting these or where they should go. And it will take me some time to retrieve and add this information (on a 48 hour deadline). I suppose the only other alternative is simply to fake it, although that is not a good thing to do with starchy scholarly protocols.

What a citation-crazed age we live in, what with all the silly, philistine number-counting that goes on! It would be a bad joke were not our citation-hungry scribes so damnably serious about it.

A few potential corrections are so niggling that I'm not sure they're worth bothering with. For instance, I used the neologism "*noirisms*" with only the "noir" in italics, but that was changed to italicizing the whole term. Also a direct quotation in indented text has single quotation marks instead of the conventional double marks. (But I realize that this comports with British English standards.) Also, in the abstract, the quotation marks are not the usual "curly" kind that are found elsewhere in the text. Should I bother?

For some reason they lost my mailing address, but that's easily fixable.

The Wiley webpage includes a link to a "Supporting document" to download, adding that it is IMPORTANT! However, the link merely takes me to a form for recommending the journal to a library. If that is all the link amounts to, then that's that, but if not....?

I see by the weather map that you're having a bit of a cold snap down Vegas way. As we are here, with temperatures barely rising to a daytime 30. It feels like snow is imminent, but there has been none yet in the city proper. A few years back we had a major snowstorm that brought the city to a complete halt and that closed all the major transportation routes down (air, highways, rail), except for boats. It lasted a week and was soothingly silent and peaceful.

Let me know your recommendations on the points above and I'll try to rectify these items ASAP.

I had one last post-op exam with my eye surgeon and, except for a few lingering effects, he said that I was "good to go," with no further things to be concerned about.

All the best,
Micahel

December 10, 2013
Greetings Michael:

Good, things are moving along. I have checked every single EGA cite in my two articles, and they checked out. I did so by clicking on the web-ready items in the reference section. The last time I did so was yesterday, December 9, 2013. You can mention this date as well. But I would be glad to check those items for you if you send me the proofs. No need to strain your eyes.

Make sure to ask the proofer to send you an updated version of the proofs once your corrections are inputted. I found extra problems in the updated text.

On the quotation style and italics, I would draw the proofer attention to the issues you mention but let them decide which format comports with the publisher's guidelines. On the IMPORTANT supplementary document urging your institution to subscribe to SI – ignore it.

Yes, it has been cold around here, bitterly so by local standards. But warmer weather will be here in a day or two, or so we have been told. More chance for outdoor tennis.

And the winter break is in sight – yeah!

Kindly,
Dmitri

December 11, 2013

Hi Dmitri, Call me a muttonhead, but I'm confused about this "retrieval date" business. Is it supposed to refer to the dates that I actually consulted the posting in question, or is it merely to signify that the reference used accurately reflects the state of the article as of the date I submit my own essay for publication?

My understanding is that this convention was adopted because of the capability for revising previously posted articles or for links that may no longer work or some other contingent issue owing to internet technology.

As a practical matter: If I use the date you mentioned for all the EGA articles I cite, is that good enough for this purpose? Otherwise, I'll have to claw through my file of printouts for the date I printed out each EGA posting -- which seems rather pointless. I mean, who cares?

Sheepish in Seattle,
Michael

December 11, 2013
Hi Michael:

No need to go back and see when you accessed the file in the past.

The rationales vary as to the need to indicate the last date the author retrieved the web file, but the solution is the same: click on the link in the proofs, see if it is live, then indicate the date -- same for all links in the reference section. Just mention once the generic date of access in your note to the proofer -- do not do this separately for each reference.

Since you use pretty much the same EGA files as I did, you can indicate the date when I last accessed them last -- December 9, 2013. Again, I can do this for you, gladly.

Best,
Dmitri

December 12, 2013

Dmitri -- I don't want to bother you with trivia, but here for the record are my corrections. There were no "live" links in the reference section but I provided the date you mentioned. I can further provide a list of names of the people I cited from the EGA, if that will help.

Forgive me, but I'm still mildly flummoxed by this whole retrieval date business.

Stupid in Seattle,
Michael

December 11, 2013
Michael:

I went to your manuscript and found that all your EGA interviews and materials you cite have a web link attached, e.g.

Bershady, Harold J. 2009. "Erving Turned to Me and Said, 'You Know, Elijah Anderson Is Really a Professional Sociologist, He Is Not a Professional Black.'" EGA,
http://www.unlv.edu/centers/cdclv/archives/interactionism/goffman/bershady_09.html.

I checked – and all of the files in your paper are current and live (the file is on the web and accessible). The only file that is not accessible is Carol Gardner's interview (she asked me to pull it out). Just delete the URL and leave it at that. This is what I did.

So please send to the proofer this date of the last retrieval: "December 11, 2013". Otherwise, your corrections are fine.

Cheers,
Dmitri

December 12, 2013

Hi Dmitri. The following is self-explanatory. I think some confusion arose between us because you were looking at the web-based document, whereas I was using a downloaded PDF file.

Mr. Tangudu's English seems a bit shaky for a copy editor or proofreader, but maybe he has a sharp eye for detail. And it's on me that I misread the now-corrected query. So it goes...

Still Stupid in Seattle,
Michael

December 12, 2013

Dear Prasad Tangudu:

Your correction for AQ4 is fine. I misread the original query.

Following the instructions to me of Dmitri Shalin, editor of the special edition, please delete the URL in the reference for Gardner, Carol, as this link has been eliminated from the Archives website I cited.

The updated retrieval date for EGA web articles should now be: December 11, 2013.

Sorry for the inconvenience.

Sincerely,
Michael Delaney

December 12, 2013

Dear Dr. Michael Delaney,

Thank you for sending the corrections for your article SYMB 88. During incorporating the corrections in your article, we noticed the following query was unanswered.

For AQ4. Please provide publisher location for Galliher (1995).

Reply: Galliher date: 1995; replace "xxx" after name of the editor, G. A. Fine.

However, we have replaced 'xxx' with 'Chicago, IL'. Please could you confirm whether it is fine.

As per the SYMB journal requirements the Abstract font should be in "Optima-MediumItalic" font. This is the reason where the quotation marks appears in straight inside the abstract.

On page 9, line 43: The text is already inside a quote, As per the Journal style single quotation marks only used inside a quote.

Hope this is fine. Looking forward to hear from you.

Regards,
Prasad
For John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

December 12, 2013
OK, Michael:

So the issue has been resolved. Now you can relax.

Hope your eyesight is improving.

December 16, 2013
Dear Prasad Tangudu:

I have found two more items in need of correction. On p. 7 and p. 17, the term “United States” should be preceded by “the.” I presume there may have been an auto-replacement for my use of “America.”

Other than that, the article looks fine.

Thank you,
Michael Delaney

December 16, 2013
Dear Dr. Michael Delaney,

Attached is the revised proof of your article “**Goffman at Penn: Star Presence, Teacher-Mentor, Profaning Jester**” slated to appear in the Symbolic Interaction: (**symb_88_Rev_EV.pdf**)

Please review this revised proof and supply any final corrections to me no later than **17th December**. If I don’t hear from you by this date with any corrections I will assume you approve the article as is.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you.

Regards,
Prasad
For John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

December 20, 2013
Hi Michael:

Thanks for the card. The greeting from me and Janet is enclosed, along with the holiday reading about the sad fortunes of one of his mentors.

All best, Dmitri

December 21, 2013

Hello Dmitri -- what a splendid card! Great textures (and I'm a devotee of bamboo too). I'll send a copy of it to my Vietnamese photographer friend.

I have just bought myself a 55-inch high-definition, 3-D TV, and am in the midst of a series of frustrating misadventures in getting it set up and working properly. (The life of the contemporary American consumer is not always as cushy as it's made out to be.) Consequently, I'll put off reading the essay you sent for the moment, but will get to it soon. Meanwhile, the huge black screen stares back at me like the imperturbable face of 'Hal' in "2001: A Space Odyssey."

Over the holiday interregnum, I was hoping to send you a completed copy of my Two Goffman Seminars ms., but I've still got a bit of fine-tuning and pruning to do on it, so that will spill over into the new year. To me, the hardest part of editing is to weed out stuff that I like, but that tends to be tangential to the main topic. I'm almost done going through all the endnotes now, then will tackle the overlong front matter and commentary.

On Monday, I get to go to the dentist and have two cavities filled. I joked with my dentist, Paul Hasegawa, that I only wish it could be two days later on Christmas Day, as I so enjoy visiting his merry establishment. (He's quite the joker himself.) But at least by then I should (may) have my TV issues resolved. Next, I get to set up a home wi-fi router and a couple other components -- there are times when I wish I had a savvy teenager around to configure all this technical stuff.

Enjoy your holiday hiatus, and my best to Janet,

Michael

December 21, 2013

Michael,

We share more than the interest in EG and music. I like the austere beauty of bamboo, and when I make cards for family and friend, I sometime go for this theme.

Good luck with your new toy and old teeth.

Cheers,
Dmitri

December 27, 2013

Hi Dmitri. Whenever you have some free time you might want to look over my responses to your paper on EG's treatment of mental illness. As usual, you provoke my thoughts, even if some of them might prove un congenial to you.

My Vietnamese photographer friend wrote to say: "The Christmas card with the bamboo is quite original and impressive." I couldn't agree more.

Cordially,
Michael

December 29, 2013
Greetings Michael:

Thank you for your thoughtful and thought-provoking comments on my paper about EG and mental illness. Along with your earlier reflections on Goffman's attitude toward gender and feminism, your feedback should be of much interest to EGA users. Please consider adding those to the Goffman archives, either as standalone comments or as part of our ongoing exchange.

I cannot do justice to your wide-ranging exploration and critique in this note. Let me address a few points you raise that concern EG's views on mental illness and weaknesses in my attempt to reconstruct his argument.

First, a quick aside – “The Felicity's Conditions” which is in your assessment “not noticeably biographical” actually feeds on reality. The evidence is circumstantial, but anonymous “John,” “Marsha,” and “children” EG uses as fodder to make his theoretical points are none other than John Irwin and Marsha Rosenbaum, along with their brood, all of whom Erving knew and some of whom he more than admired. Idiosyncratic details encrypted in these tidbits seem too well aligned with real life circumstances to result from mere chance. EG-the-prankster lives up to his creed even in this esoteric treatise.

Goffman deploys the terms like “place,” “territories,” “regions,” “rabbit wholes” to designate physical spaces earmarked for a special use – performing for an audience, enacting a set script, rearranging the props, licking one's wounds, venting frustration against the powerful, and so on. In certain contexts, the terms “place” and “territory” reference a power hierarchy and affirm the need to patrol the borders against the intruders. Thus, Goffman talks about the recalcitrant family member who “does not keep his place” and refuses to “contain himself in the spheres and territories allotted to him,” with the term “place” doing the double duty as a social and physical marker. The family hierarchy and division of labor are at stake here as much as unwanted proximity and encroachment on the space allotted to others. Social control is never totally absent when it comes to managing socially arranged space.

The situation is complicated by institutional players brought into the family fray and engaged in collusive realignments. In his earlier work, Goffman inveighed against family members colluding with doctors and lawyers to isolate the hapless victim steadily sucked into the “funnel of betrayal.” In Goffman's last major work on the subject, it is the psychotic who colludes with the doctors and keeps “responsible others” at bay in a bid to dodge the institutionalization. Just like you, I always thought Goffman endorsed deinstitutionalization, but once I started researching the subject, I couldn't find a single statement to that effect. Instead, I came across what seemed like a resigned acceptance of the warehousing system. Whatever his earlier policy commitments, it was unlikely that Goffman followed them without reservations after April 27, 1964.

EG has a pungent line in IP about the antics the Hippies use to annoy the authorities, which he juxtaposes to the situational improprieties favored by genuine psychos. I wasn't lucid enough about the breaks in Goffman's logic at this point, so let me try to clear the muddle a bit and show where I was coming from and what I was getting at.

In *Asylums*, Goffman goes out of his way to normalize crazy behavior and undermine the notion of mental illness – cage rattling, smearing the hospital staff with feces, catatonically staring into space, banging one's head against the wall – all these symptoms can be observed in normal people under certain circumstances, EG assures us, the outrageous acts being all the more understandable given the injustice inmates suffer in prison-like conditions. By contrast, in IP Goffman finds something inherently pathological in what seems like routine actions – endowing a nonprofit organization, inviting colleagues for a drink, rebelling against the stifling family hierarchy and shedding oppressive gender roles. This is a sleight of hand, so far as I can see, although the switcheroo is not meant to be noticed. It is against this backdrop that one should judge Goffman's reference to

the militant activists and their shenanigans, the reference now carrying a completely different burden of proof.

Whereas *Asylums* strains to convince the reader that inmates' situational improprieties are indistinguishable from what we observe on the outside, "The Insanity of Place" invokes the oddball behavior of demonstrators to buttress the point about the qualitatively different performances of the certifiably insane. The effortlessness with which protesters move between the outrageous and the mundane vouches for the staged nature of their antics; no such transition is acknowledged as a possibility in the case of mentally disturbed – even though Goffman claimed that much in his earlier works. As I tried to show, the reversal of logic reflects Goffman's agenda in the aftermath of his wife's suicide, and it is this about-face that invites a biocritical examination.

"Whatever it misses as a scholarly analysis, "The Insanity of Place" makes up for as a riveting piece of self-ethnography, and a moving attempt at *apologia pro vita sua*." This point is central to the biocritical agenda. Sociological imagination feeds on experience and reflects biographical circumstances just as our auto/biographical reconstruction strives to be objective, factually credible, and feeds on prevailing conventions. There is tension between these two agendas, and as one begins to morph into the other the problems begin to crop up.

Goffman is a wearer of many hats, and it is not always clear whether he impersonates a scholar, a memoirist, or all purpose writer at large. For a scholar, Goffman can be surprisingly careless. He grossly misstates the number of voluntarily admitted patients in a facility like St. Elizabeth's; fails to provide a "rough sample" of behaviors along the normal-abnormal continuum; doesn't distinguish between the "organic," "psychogenic," and "situational" factors behind "psychotic conduct"; and glosses over his debt to Veblen, Simmel, Sutherland, and other scholars (although he goes out of his way to cite his students in his latter works). For a memoirist, Goffman is surprisingly unreflexive. He makes no effort to place himself into his wife's shoes, medicalizes routine actions he disapproves of, and is oblivious to the symptoms of a failed marriage his union with Sky exemplifies. The standards he applies to each case are different. While omissions and misinterpretations are valuable data points in a memoir, carelessness about the data and overwrought arguments undermine the work of a scholar.

Much of the power his writing exerts on the reader reflects Goffman's ability to work into his narrative minute interactional details he witnessed in everyday life. Welcome in autobiographical prose, his literary sensibilities and deft use of anecdotes can trip him in a scholarly explanation, which is supposed to be methodologically grounded and open to replication. Mixing autobiography with scholarship yielded mixed results in IP where the two genres get into each other's way. If Goffman didn't leave behind a school and an acknowledged successor, it is in part because he failed to translate his artistic sensibilities into a reusable method and kept tossing old paradigm as soon as he fell in love with the new one. A more systematic conceptualization and operational definition might have helped his colleagues, but these would have damaged the finesse and elegance of his expression. We can see this in a rival school – ethnomethodology. (If ethnomethodology is a method in search of a theory, then Goffman's dramaturgy is a theory in search of a method). So let us be grateful for the enlightenment this idiosyncratic scholar brought our way, which shouldn't blind us to his conceptual myopias and intellectual failings. You said so yourself on more than one occasion.

My uneasiness about Goffman's tendency to slip personal details into his work makes you justifiably wonder if I am fully attuned to the premises of my own theory. Shouldn't a biocritic rejoice at a chance to glean the biographical tangents in a human product? If Goffman is at fault revealing too much private information, am I not fueling the fire by adding more potentially stigmatizing details? Quite a conundrum.

Biocritical hermeneutics raises a host of ethical issues, some of which I discuss in my papers "On Memoir Ethics and the Validity of Biointerviews", http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/articles/ds_ethics_12.pdf. "In Search of a Narrative Identity," http://cdclv.unlv.edu/pragmatism/shalin_id_11.pdf, and "Theses on Biocritical Hermeneutics," http://cdclv.unlv.edu/archives/articles/shalin_bh_theses.html. Alas, these works are in Russian. They were penned for the benefit of users of the International Biography Initiative,

<http://cdclv.unlv.edu/programs/bios.html>, a project I set up with my Russian colleagues to promote a dialogue cross the Atlantic and explore the ways Russian sociologists responded to the Khrushchev's Thaw and Gorbachev's Glasnost. In the course of this dialogue, I tried to show that Russian social scientists grappling with the past tend to be selective in their self-construction, oversampling episodes attesting to their dissident credentials and undersampling those inconsistent with their perestroika self-images. As I reminded my colleagues about their membership in the Communist Party and the price they paid for joining this club, I faced a backlash which strained my relationship with some of the most illustrious scholars in Russia. I've stirred a similar resentment when I began the Goffman Archives, which started as a spinoff of the IBI.

The objections raised in each case differ in specifics, but the general thread is the same. What credentials do I have to question the leading luminaries in the field, and to second-guess the most cited sociologist this side of the Atlantic? Is it prudent to postpone a biocritical examination until its subject passes away or undertake it while the person in question could answer the biocritique? How far can you delve into other people backstage regions without causing pain to the relatives and perturbing the third parties? Shouldn't someone rummaging through other people's archives start by making public my own? And isn't autobiocritique a prerequisite for applying the method of reverse editing to fellow humans?

You face such questions whenever you treat a scholarly work not just as a set of logical propositions but as a bunch of perlocutionary acts, a historical monument that tells more about the person who wrote the work and the time when it was conceived than the author intended. I cannot begin to answer these questions in my brief commentary. Let me just say that I share with Goffman his skepticism about the "touching tendency to keep a part of the world safe from sociology." Readers familiar with the Russian can find more thoughts on the subject in my "Theses on Biocritical Hermeneutics."

* * *

Our knowledge about mental illness and possible cures is indeed rudimentary, as EG and you learned from personal experience. I can imagine the harrowing times you faced as you struggled to be your brother's keeper. It's one thing to theorize mental illness, the other to live it. Whatever the etiology in the case you describe so eloquently in your note, it is prudent to be mindful that each explanation is bound to be partial.

Finally, I want to thank you for a good word about my style, on which you commented on more than one occasion. Coming from a wordsmith like you, it is meaningful. My style's key function is to draw as little attention to itself as possible, get out of the way of the point I am trying to make. This style is well suited for showcasing the poverty of one's thought; it also comes handy if you are inclined to sidestep real world complexities. Not sure how I've stumbled on it. Maybe it has to do with the fact that I acquired English as a second language, or my native Russian sensibilities could have tricked me into it. The funny thing is the rhetorical ticks I picked up come across in my scholarly prose as much as in my song lyrics.

Hope our common interests will occasion more exchanges in years to come.

Happy New Year!
Dmitri

January 1, 2014

Hello Dmitri. I appreciate your taking the time and effort to respond at such length to my musings and with such a considered and considerate tone. Frankly, I thought I might have displeased or affronted you by zooming in a bit too close to certain personal matters, but of course I only intended this to be a private dialogue between us.

As for my comments on gender and feminism being “of interest” to readers of the EGA, I rather tend to think that they would be more inclined to set upon me with fury and skin me alive for my anathemas, crying taunts of “apologist flunky of the patriarchy,” “running dog of sexism,” “masculinist minion,” etc., etc.

What you say about “place” as bearing on “power hierarchy” and social control with norms of boundary-setting and rules of inclusion/exclusion is sound, if perhaps too insistently chastising. (What about “authority”?) But then I am more of the “old school” of sociology in desisting from over-moralizing such things as first order of business -- putting the deontological cart before the sociological horse, as it were. Injecting peremptory judgmental weighings in such a way tends to undercut a more analytical, dare I say “objective,” approach, particularly when pronouncing on social arrangements and mores of a near, but distinctly different era. But nowadays, in the age of Queer Studies and the Culturology of Pornography, I suppose that even to talk of behavior in terms of “deviance” and the like has become something of a sociological taboo. Saying so, I should also admit to a certain “traditionalist” standpoint myself, if tradition be allowed to extend only so far as half a century or so ago.

Having said that, I’ll grant you that EG must have been terribly hard to live with at times, especially once the bloom of his first marriage (with their exciting card-counting capers and such) had faded off the rose. I can also sympathize with Skye’s frustrated aspirations and her feelings of confinement and of being stifled. It seems to me that EG’s “doubleness” enters here, his penchant for giving himself license that he would not grant to others, exacerbated by his propensity for impulsive oneupsmanship. Thus, his mocking of public (and liberal) proprieties at large, while yet also wishing to revel in his own charmed circle of domestic life. I’m inclined to think that marriage ideally served him as an anchor of sorts, a site of stability in calming his own effervescent mind and relentless observationism. But of course that was destined for the evagination of domesticity traced out in IoP, an inversion of Freud’s “family romance” into a “family tragedy,” at least the first time around. (His second marriage seems to have mellowed him considerably.)

I think of “place” in terms of such things as the role-bundle that might be expected of individual family members, say, of a teenager in a household. Or one could look back in more historical terms. Consider, for instance, the fascination that British and American audiences have with the strictly stratified social scenes depicted in such 19th century English Country House costume dramas as the BBC’s “Upstairs/Downstairs.” They *really* knew their places back in them there days. Another interesting comparison is with Gaston Bachelard’s phenomenological “poetics of space.” Anyway, like its rich companion-concept of “backstage,” it’s a notion worth exploring in its various ramifications.

Social rebellion and various forms of “acting-out” are apt to have formal congruences with mentally disordered conduct, but that does not translate into being “equivalent.” Your example of the feces-smearing mental patient puts the point most graphically. At the same time, the “routine actions” you cite that EG took as symptomatic of Skye’s mental disorder (thereby, for once, following in the “forensic” style of Freudian ps-a) are something more than just that. For, seen as symptomatic, they are considered “out of character,” or excessive or efflorescent or blatantly norm-breaking or hectic or, in a word, “manic.” Take political activism: like John Lennon said, “We all want to change the world.” But Lennon was also cagily aware of how some affluent, middle-class American college student striking a pose as a bloodthirsty Maoist Red Guard crosses over the line into a kind of ridiculous and contemptibly hypocritical hubris. (And the Red Guards did become increasingly deranged as their reign of terror proceeded.) Drawing the line between the “normal” and the “abnormal” depends heavily on such considerations of modality and proportionality, I suggest, and this is where psychology justifiably enters the picture. However, this gets complicated in today’s “anything goes” atmosphere, where exhibitionism and transgressive inversions of sundry kinds tend to be lauded, not condemned, most of all by the hyper-sophisticates.

As you say, there is something of an “about-face” from *Asylums* to IoP, but I’m not so sure if it is a sleight-of-hand so much as a change in point of view --- from that of the mental patient as a sufferer of institutionalism to that of the “next-to’s” who have to bear the burden of their havoc-making within the supposedly sheltered

confines of the home. In any case, reading IoP made me feel very much like a “secret-sharer” in Joseph Conrad’s fraught sense of the term.

As a writer and adept rhetorician, Goffman's sociological standing has something of a *Verstehen* problem: he convinces us with his astute and piquant choice of details while at the same time leaving us with a queasy feeling of, in some sense, having been “had.” He learned a lot from those con-artist role-models of his. Parenthetically, I have no objection to the term “sociological imagination,” but I resist framing it with the definite article, “the,” because of its close association with C. Wright Mills and his particular approach to sociology. I’ll grant Mills some points in his favor, but his version of “the s.i.” falls pretty short of being precisely that, in my estimation. (Kenneth Burke is a far more estimable candidate for the honor, despite not even being a sociologist at all.)

I believe that there is a lot more methodological savvy in Goffman than meets the eye, though he was almost magician-like in concealing his analytical techniques and conceptual-verbal strategies. However, I do not think that he ever intended in his work to strive for “replication” in the usual sense of the term. With a thinker of his sort, or of any true original mind, that is not an apposite standard, however much bewailed by the more conventional run of sociologists. For some kinds of empirical or experimental study, even ethnographies to a certain extent, replication can serve a confirmatory purpose, but one I take to be more befitting to the physical and laboratory sciences.

I’m aware of your reservations about “biocritical” invasions of privacy, and I am hardly in a position to censure you, inasmuch as I myself have committed the same vis-a-vis EG. Goffman often contended that sociologists should study the work, not the person who produced it, but that is too preclusive. To me, your line of inquiry is perfectly legitimate and worthy, even if I would not like “the sociology of sociology” to become as inbred (and self-delegitimizing) as anthropology came to be for a time. Besides, as you note, his works are peppered with his details from his own life -- it may be that the study of “everyday life” entails an appreciable measure of trading on one’s own life-experiences. I also wouldn’t be surprised if some facts in your possession about EG (and Skye) will be kept *in camera*. I gathered from Yves Winkin a long time ago that there were harrowing details of Skye’s behavior that he felt were too awful to be made public (which if so would color the account of her as mainly the afflicted party in her marriage). Such qualms may account for Winkin’s seeming reluctance to publish his book. By the way, I don’t hold that an autobiocritique is requisite for pursuing your project, although some material of that sort might help illuminate, say, one’s interest in a given subject. (I didn’t manage to do much along those lines in my own remembrance of EG.)

I can scarcely imagine the wrath you must have faced by your Russian colleagues when it came to setting the record straight on their pre-thaw USSR postures. I’m reminded of how H-G Gadamer and Heidegger coyly papered over the state of German academia and philosophy, not to mention their own activities and affiliations, during the Nazi period.

About deinstitutionalization: At the beginning of IoP (p. 336), Goffman flatly stated that the price paid in personal degradation and dehumanization for mental hospitalization was nothing short of “grotesque,” suggesting instead a community containment policy. And if that would produce great social perturbation and hardship, well, that’s just too bad because the patient’s condition is such that he merely “the symptom carrier for a sick set-up” -- i.e., society itself. A typical Goffman throwaway line, but not really of much help. (And most un-Durkheimian to boot.)

You have a lucid and fluid writing style that I commend, in part because I admire someone who can write so well in a second language, and one as tricky and inconsistent as English at that. Actually, you seem to have two primary registers: one dense and scholarly, studded with plums of academic parlance (to which I do not object), the other more conversational and freestyle, with a good eye for the telling detail, nice turns of phrase, idiomatic flourishes, and touches of poesy. At all events, it hardly smacks of “intellectual poverty,” quite the converse. I find your asides in the EGA interviews to be useful flashes of intuition and insight, in consonance with your

interlocutors, even when they are someone with whom you might find yourself in ideological disagreement (such as V. Shlapentokh).

This has gone on more than long enough. Don't feel the need to respond in kind; I already feel that I may have burdened you with taking too much of your holiday time away in responding to my ponderings.

All the best to you and your family in 2014,

Michael

January 2, 2014

Hi Michael:

Moralizing is a danger one faces with biocritical hermeneutics (BH). What "objectivity" means in this context, how to weight conflicting accounts, and whether to pass judgment on the characters under study is a vexing problem. By and large, these characters are not candidates for sainthood, and I am not a devil's advocate, yet once I have dispensed with my duty to be fair to all parties involved, I venture opinions of my own that are inflected by my own biases (or rather premises, if bias is understood as unacknowledged premise).

I understand your unwillingness to publicize your views on feminism, gender, and such. There are other issues in our discussions about BH, EG and EGA that bear on methodological and theoretical matters and that could be added to EGA, if you care to do so.

Hope 2014 will be the year when your life's work on EG, PR, KB, and other formative figures of the last century characters will reach the general public.

All best, well,
Dmitri

January 0, 2014

Hi Dmitri. Below is a link to a thoughtful article on obituaries of thinkers as a kind of literary-journalistic genre of intellectual history. The piece raises a number of points worth thinking on with regard to your biohermeneutic project.

One thought that occurs to me is how much a retrospective of a life tends to focus on what are taken to be particularly "telling" episodes or Kenneth Burke's "representative anecdotes." Of course, this is true of journalistic narratives (especially on TV) and biographies in general, and is certainly the stuff of dramas as well as of gossip and anecdotal recitals of all kinds. It's very much a part of the art and rhetoric of narrative. Needless to say, Goffman was a master at selecting, distilling, and giving a piquant topspin to "episodes" and particles of behavior, albeit within a more analytical than narrative framework.

But there is also the vulnerability to contend with of what might be called (after Philip Rieff), the "ficta fallacy," the tendency to make a biographical narrative over-consistent or over-dramatized at the expense of a more complicated or nuanced portrait. To fictionalize, in short, as in the dubious case of novelistic quasi-documentaries. That is a particular temptation in an age in which symbolics and narrativity often come to prevail over a dedication to factuality and truth. (Yes, I know, it's endlessly complicated. But see Geertz, Rorty, the po-mo crowd, et al., although less so as an overriding epistemic standard in Kenneth Burke, given his appreciation for the worldly and materialistic dimension in Aristotle, Marx, Freud, Darwin, etc. not to mention his own robust appetites for food, drink, and sex.)

Naturally, a writer is not going to leave out the exciting or extraordinary parts of a life (like Norman Mailer's near-fatal stabbing of his wife, which is prominently featured in reviews of a new bio of him). But such episodes can take on an aspect of being symbolically over-determined or disproportionate. (An entire, albeit short, book was written on the equivocal incident in which Wittgenstein jabbed -- symbolically? -- at Karl Popper with a fireplace poker.) I suppose it eventually comes down to the amount of information available to the writer, the depth of his informed acquaintance with, or affinity for, the subject, and the perspicacity of his judgment. As for the latter capability: If I knew German, I would coin a word along the lines of *Verstehfahigkeit*. The best intellectual biographies might also be compared with the aims, if not the convoluted epistemological apparatus, of phenomenology (as distinct from the impositional Tendenz of psychoanalysis). It may be as well that intuitively penetrating obituaries of thinkers are often written in the immediate aftermath of their death by their confreres, while the writer is in the grip of an impassioned grief that seeks to capture the quiddity of the lost one for posterity.

In any case, here's the link, <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/over-our-dead-bodies>

As of Tuesday morning, I have come down with the flu, despite having gotten a flu shot a few months back. It leaves me in a fuzzy, shambling state of mind as I dawdle and snuffle at my desk, a box of tissues at the ready. It's not all that severe, but still a crummy way to start off the new year. And it's yet another in a long series of irritating disruptions of my work schedule.

Here's hoping you & yours will be spared.

Michael

January 12, 2014

Greeting Michael:

Thank you for the link to the article -- good read. It's such a pleasure to follow a clear-headed argument.

Self-sampling is the bane of auto/biographical narrative. Over- and undersampling of particular episodes is one problem, but there are bigger issues, epistemological and ontological.

We can't count before we made a thing accountable, until we have committed to an accounting schema, however surreptitiously. But the schema we choose might not be the one historical agents employed in their time. Even when their framing devices are legible, they may not record what matters most to the biocritic.

Moreover, the universe of bioevents available for sampling is radically incomplete and perennially indeterminate. This is not a deck of cards where each item is clearly marked, the act of drawing has no effect on the stack of bioevents, and pulling out one item leaves the rest untrammelled. In biocritique, the sampling act constitutes the population of biofacts rather than the other way around. And when a new generation comes to grapple with biographical realities of the bygone era, it brings along new categories that past agents wouldn't just fail to record but also couldn't fully comprehend.

There is more to be said, but I have to attend to the task of divvying up the puny merit pool among the hordes of meritocrats. This is what you get when you allow yourself to be pressed into chairing a personnel committee. And I thought I was through with chairing things for a while.

So you are struggling with the flu. As they say, take lots of fluids, and read good novels.

All best,
Dmitri

January 19, 2014

Hi Dmitri. I don't know if the special EG issue of SI is out yet or not, but Sam Heilman somehow got access to a copy of my article on Goffman. (Sam is a sly operator that way. Perhaps someone slipped him an advance copy, inasmuch as I cited him a couple of times in the piece.)

Not to toot my own horn, but I thought you would like to know what a fellow student and former mentee of Goffman's at Penn thought of my piece. Sam probably knew Goffman better and had more dealings with him outside class than I did, so his words can serve as a kind of validation of what I wrote. Perhaps that will relieve your mind a bit if you harbor any residual qualms about including a sociological Never-Was as a contributor to your project.

My flu is still lingering, damn it all, and the medicine I've been taking for it doesn't play well with my various other meds from the viewpoint of my stomach, so I'm just going to let it play itself out, keeping company with my dear friends Dr. Phlegm and Mr. Mucus.

Seattle is in an utter uproar of euphoria over the Seahawks football game against the San Francisco 49ers later on this afternoon. The game will decide which NFL team gets to go to the SuperBowl, the Valhalla of American football (or of America itself, if you would believe some of the more fanatic boosters). Even from my brief visit to Las Vegas, watching the local news-cum-sportscasts, I know that you live in a sports-crazed town. To me, the intensity of the devotees can be rather unnerving, but then I've never been much of a crowd person.

Best to you,
Michael

January 16, 2014

Dear Mike,

I have just finished reading your wonderfully composed and written piece on Goffman at Penn in Dimitri's journal. I found it compelling and wonderfully evocative. It brought back memories and really did so in an insightful way. I am in awe of what you've done. If you ever get to the New York area please let me know. I'd love to see you again.

Warm regards,
Sam

Samuel Heilman
Distinguished Professor of Sociology
Harold Proshansky Chair in Jewish Studies
C. U. N. Y.

January 19, 2014

Greetings Michael:

As a matter of courtesy, I sent a notice to EGA contributors about the forthcoming journal issue on EG, which is now available to SI subscribers in the Early View section,

[http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/%28ISSN%291533-](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/%28ISSN%291533-8665/homepage/forthcoming_special_issue.htm)

[8665/homepage/forthcoming_special_issue.htm](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/%28ISSN%291533-8665/homepage/forthcoming_special_issue.htm). Sam, an EGA contributor, got my notice. Since he is fellow alum alive to your situation, I made a point of sending him your article. I didn't need his approbation to judge

the value of your paper, but it's thrilling to know he liked your paper a lot. I am sure it will find many more grateful readers.

The response to the forthcoming publication has been remarkably good. In fact, I have been encouraged to submit a proposal for a follow-up book on EG and EGA. It's a long shot, but if the publisher likes the idea and there is enough interest among EG's students, colleagues, and friends – why not? I will let you know how things develop and see if you want to join this follow-up project, assuming it gets off the ground.

More realistically, if somewhat awkwardly, Robert Dingwall asked me to think about doing a video clip for YouTube plugging the *SI* issue and Goffman archives. He says such promos do wonders to drum up interest in the publication. I wouldn't bother, but I feel I should check with the contributors to see who might be willing to do a short video along these lines. Not sure if the idea has any appeal to you, but here is one more way to promote your larger body of writings about Goffman.

If patented meds don't revive you, plow yourself with liquids, cranberry juice in particular, and don't neglect good novels. Music may help too.

Try to get well,
Dmitri

January 20, 2014
Hi Dmitri. Thanks for the update.

The prospect of a further book project on EG is interesting, although how much more of my extant writings on him I would want to relinquish beyond my own book project is something I would have to weigh carefully. Has a publisher expressed interest in such a project, or is that prospect just conjectural at this point?

Robert Dingwall has quite the entrepreneurial spirit, doesn't he? But maybe something like YouTubing is what it takes to create "buzz" in this day and age. My lack of skills in the public self-presentation department is such that I would not be a good candidate for making such a video. However, I think that you would make a fine choice. You are well-spoken, nimble in conversation, and have your own engrossing back story, given your training in Russia and eventual immigration, and your eventual interest in both biohermeneutics in general and Goffman specifically. I could envision you doing this in a semi-scripted interview format with one of your close collaborators on the EGA project. Given the paucity of "visuals" of Goffman, you might use some of the early photos of him from the Averbach materials in sketching out the arc of his life-history.

Worth a thought or two.

It's interesting that there still seems to be such a high level of fascination with Goffman (deservedly so, in my estimation), even after the polluted deluge of post-modernism. Of course, people like the still-stalwart practitioner of Marxist taxidermy, Frederic Jameson, try to assimilate him to their ideological standard (even while chastising him for not fully exorcising the revenant of "the bourgeois self"), but I think he's just too singular and slippery to be so easily hooked and netted and hung up on the wall like a trophy fish.

All the best,
Michael

P.S. As you may have heard, Seattle squeaked out a win over the San Francisco 49ers in the Championship football game yesterday, so the Seahawks will soon be off to face the Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl, that holy of holies.

Say what you will about the Seahawks, I contend that they have the most striking helmet logo in the entire football league. So go!:

January 20, 2014

Hi Michael:

I haven't made contact with a publisher. A third party thinks one publishing house might be interested and offered to take my proposal there. Not sure how serious this proposal is. This is not a pressing matter.

I don't follow sports, with the exception of tennis. So the fate of the Seahawks and their prospects in the Super Bowl are news to me. I hope your team wins and gives a boost to your immune system.

Best,
Dmitri

January 31, 2014

Hi Dmitri. Here's a link to a book review that describes experiencing madness and being institutionalized for it. The writer makes some excellent points about the mental hospital as a "contained world" that gives the afflicted a measure of sanctuary and relief from their torments. The point about sharing solidarity with fellow inmates qua fellow sufferers also rings true to me. It certainly provides a counterpoint to the ostensibly patient-centered account of asylums that Goffman presented. In fact, the writer expressly disdains the "community care" concept that Goffman came to champion, although she attributes the de-institutionalization movement in political terms of Reaganite and Thatcherite libertarianism instead of, say, the anti-psychiatric movement led by Thomas Szasz and other "anti-authoritarian" trends from the 1960s on.

The book reviewed might also be worth looking into. Seeing madness for what it is "from within," let alone coping with it, would seem to be a most daunting thing to do.

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n03/jenny-diski/i-havent-been-nearly-mad-enough>

I still have some lingering effects of the flu and haven't been feeling up to par. But I'm determined to get back to work next week, after the delirium of the Super Bowl is over. (Seattle can still be as unbelievably parochial as it was when I first moved out here in 1980. Nevertheless, as a citizen of our island-like city-state it is officially incumbent upon me to convey the message: go Hawks.)

You mentioned before that you were serving on a merit-compensation committee. Sounds to me, as the expression has it, like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. I hope you've only been singed and not too badly scorched.

Cheers,
Michael

January 31, 2014

Hi Michael:

Thanks for the heads-up on a book review. It looks interesting, I will check it out. There is a book on deinstitutionalization that has just been published by E. Fuller Torrey, *American Psychosis: How the Federal Government Destroyed the Mental Illness Treatment System*. The author pans the government for closing state hospitals and blames the academics for supporting the deinstitutionalization movement.

I was pressed into service as chair of the PC committee that had to squeeze 6 years of academic productivity into one year of merit money, a distasteful exercise to say the least. Somebody had to do it.

Let's hope the best team that wins on Sunday will be the one you a partial to.

All best,
Dmitri

February 27, 2014

Hello Dmitri. Thanks for sending me the link to the *SI* special issue. I'm glad that Wiley is making the articles accessible for free on the web. That will allow me to send my piece off to a few semi-interested friends and relatives without further ado.

You mentioned before that you would have hard copies of the journal to distribute to contributors. Is that still in the cards? I much prefer reading long articles in print to on my computer -- I absorb them better and it's easier to take notes that way.

I would be interested in hearing what kinds of feedback you get from readers. I'd also appreciate knowing if someone involved decides to go on YouTube to flog the issue. I'm just not a "social media" type of guy, but I understand how other people lap it up like a cat with its milk.

I'm still feeling under par, but carrying on in a semi-lethargic state.

Best to you,
Michael

February 27, 2014

Hi Michael:

Sorry to hear you are still under the weather. Spring is coming, maybe this will revive you.

I will send you the hard copy of the journal once I get my hands on it.

The comments that have reached me so far have been flattering, which makes sharing them awkward. I am not sure, also, how much of their musing my correspondents wished to share. Still, as the issue is not just my work, below you will find a few snippets, minus some over-exuberant remarks.

All best, Dmitri

February 27, 2014

What a wonderful introduction and what a wonderful project! I like so much how the biographical and cultural converge in Goffman's writing (all of our writings.)

I have a few comments/questions.

I find myself confused about the Auerbachs and the Goffmans. I am not sure until later when I figure it out (and maybe I figured it out wrong) that the Auerbachs must be Goffman's mother's family. It would really help if you clarify that early in the piece.

Second, as a child of a mother who came to America in 1908 from a shtetl outside Kiev when she was a child escaping the pogroms with her mother, her father being already in America . . . I am disgruntled when all I read is that EG's family came in the "early 20th century." PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE fill in the details. My Grandmother's experience (and my mother's and hence mine) were completely different from my step-maternal-grandfather who came from St. Petersburg, worked as a jeweler for the czar, came through South America, and came EARLIER. The specificity really does matter.

Now Who gave Goffman that "C" in Qual. Methods? It is interesting to know.

Please also re-review the Simmel epigraph.

I really like how you have explored his life. I have no trouble with your interps or explanations.

Now, let me add my own little story. Sometime after my presentation at ASA on "The Door Ceremony," an empirical piece that depended on both Simmel and Goffman for its theoretical basis, and its coverage on the front-page of the editorial section of the Sunday *New York Times*, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=FB0C14FD3A59137A93C3AA1783D85F478785F9>. I had the opportunity to join a group of qualitative researchers, including Goffman, at a meeting. I do not recall what meeting. Sorry. The conversation turned to being Jewish in America. When I told the group that I was the daughter of a Jewish woman who emigrated from Russia, Goffman said (and I do quote him now I think correctly, "So that explains why you are so smart."

Laurel Richarson

Given my interest in subjectivity, rhetoric, conversation (and more narrowly dialogue), social transactions, and philosophical accounts of human experience in its myriad forms, I have long been a student of EG's writings. Foucault once remarked: "In the end, for me there are three categories of philosophers: the philosophers that I don't know; the philosophers I know and of whom I have spoken [or written], and the philosophers I know and about whom I don't speak [or write]" ("The Return of Morality," possibly his last interview). Ever since my discovery, as a graduate student, of EG's essays and books, he has been a thinker upon whom I have drawn, but not one about whom I have written anything. He is, in other words, principally a resource, not a focus of interest - a lens through which I look, not an object*at*which I gaze. There are few, if any, theorists who are more valuable resources for developing a pragmatically inflected phenomenology of everyday life than EG. Hence, the EGA is especially welcome even by those of us who are not sociologists or social scientists, simply social theorists preoccupied with the intricately woven practices of our quotidian world. A debt of gratitude is owed to those who have made these resources available to the community of scholars and inquirers.

Vincent Colapietro

I have read your introduction with great interest. It is very well done. Some of your ideas concerning biocritical hermeneutics may be useful to the book on Gouldner I'm attempting to finish up right now (a new one titled *Confronting Gouldner*, to be published by Brill. . . . Anyway, good stuff all around. I'll get around to reading your Stigma piece later. Hey, you being Russian, do you know much about the history of Parsons' relation to Society studies at Harvard in the 1950s and beyond? I have heard from someone that Parsons' wife was the secretary (or perhaps director?) of a Soviet Studies center at Harvard?).

Jim Chriss

I'd say that a number of eminent sociologists of the previous generation were Jews trying to flee their old identity and achieve higher status thereby. Among many others, these included Edward Shils, David Riesman, and Robert Merton (who changed his name to accomplish that) – all 3 of them, incidentally, from Philadelphia. That stands in interesting contrast with the founding generation of American sociologists, who were you know often sons of Protestant ministers.

Shils was his usual snooty self vis-a-vis Erving. Once EG started to get famous, Shils would refer to him as a "little pup." And then at times he'd call him "the Simmel of the pickpockets."

Donald Levine

Thanks for sending your very impressive article on Goffman's biographical interface. Surely this is a new landmark for this field of scholarship. . . .

By coincidence, I wrote a piece recently which emphasizes the intellectual stream, "Goffman and Garfinkel in the Intellectual Life of the Twentieth Century." Thus in reciprocity to your fine offering, here is mine, <http://sociological-eye.blogspot.com/2013/10/goffman-and-garfinkel-in-intellectual.html>

Some comments:

pp. 20-1 discussion of Goffman writing *Gender Advertisements* as a feminist, compared to his formerly sexist position. An ironic thing about *Gender Advertisements* is that, even though it appeared at the time when feminists were criticizing use of the masculine pronoun and the word "man" to indicate all people, Goffman used them throughout the text in that way, until rather late in the book where he suddenly shifts to "he or she." I thought he was thumbing his nose at the feminists, even while showing some sympathy with their position. After all, he was not very interested in social change, and wrote about the visual materials in the book as if they represented eternal positions...

Randall Collins

I knew that a special issue you were editing was due out in *Symbolic Interaction* and, needless to say, I devoured your essay as soon as I found it... Since I didn't get to it in a timely manner, I'm happy to report that I found no errors of fact. Moreover, there is much in it to pique further interest in both Goffman and the EGA and all of us who have been influenced by Goffman are in your debt for this enormous service to the discipline...

In any event, I hope that the kind of "bio critical hermeneutics" you are championing one day becomes a standard practice in assessing theorists and theoretical work. I find myself regularly surprised at the linkages your work provides to understanding Goffman by the expedient of this method. I thought about even more connections as I pondered through your essay all the instances of irony and sarcasm that dominated Goffman's work and what it might mean. (I think Gary Fine and Dan Martin published something on this rhetorical device in Goffman's work--perhaps you're familiar with it.)

Chuck Edgley

Thank you for sharing your remarkable, many-layered essay with me, and congratulations on the special issue on Erving Goffman to which it is a preface. Your essay not only introduces readers to the Erving Goffman Archives, and the kind of collective enterprise you hope they will catalyze, but also to your conception of EG's

life as a quintessential example of your notion of *bio sociologicus* and, in addition, to the complex dynamics of participant observation-based ethnographic research...

I have now read Michael Delaney's excellent essay, "Goffman at Penn." I would like to talk with you about certain aspects of it.

Renée Fox

I have in the meantime reading Mike Delaney's excellent article which brings back so many memories.

Sam Heilman

Thanks very much, Dmitri. I appreciate your remembering me. Thanks for sending Michael's article. It brought back many memories!

Lee Ann Draud

I thought your piece on Goffman for *Symbolic Interaction* was excellent. You do an outstanding job of giving full credit to contributions while maintaining enough critical distance to show shortcomings and lapses.

I particularly liked the section on Goffman being so small. I always felt that he took this as an indelible stigma and that a lot of his interaction with others was his way of overcoming this stigma. I'm sure the Jewish immigrant background was important also but I'm not sure it was as much of an influence as his shortness of stature.

He remains an incredibly creative person full of contradictions and tensions and you are very successful in conveying that complexity. Keep up the good work.

Bill Gamson

Thanks for sending this. It reads beautifully, and is not only fascinating intellectually, but really enjoyable to read. You faced the difficult task of trying to hold the Cheshire Cat of Alice in Wonderland, which can disappear at will, in place. The interviews and stories are fantastic, as are your interpretations.

It was interesting to see that Goffman did not want to fight against the Nazis, staying in school during the war. My ex's father, also a son of Jewish immigrants from Russia, signed up. Got wounded and also got lost a few days during the battle of the Bulge, where capture was not an option. I wonder why Goffman wanted to stay out of the war.

When I was going to meet Goffman at his home in about 1980, my ex's father, who also taught at Penn, wondered if he might be related to Goffman, since his mother's maiden name was Hoffman, and the G and H sometimes got transposed. So he asked me to ask Goffman, but more info on where in Russia the families came from would have been necessary and I didn't know where my ex's father's family were from.

I liked your discussion of Goffman's alternative approach to the TAT, using observation, avoiding the schema.

And it is interesting to follow his anti-naturalist tendencies, where mental illness is a social construction (until it strikes home and he concedes a little that there may be some biology involved), where "One might as well say

there is no gender identity. There is only a schedule for portrayal of gender..." He disallows the possibility of natural construction in addition to social construction consistently. But then you show the disparity between his feminist talk and earlier writings.

I wish I could have been there to see him show up at Rieff's home with his friends. Rieff used to cite Handel putting on his best wig in order to compose music as an ideal for how he approached writing. He hated that Goffman would show up to department meetings in jeans. . . .

Gene Halton

Thanks for sending me your revealing and thoroughly fascinating account of Goffman the human being, as distinct from the observer cum theorist. Reading about relatives is always about more than any one of them in particular, suggesting that the idea of "sui generis" begins, as it were, at home. It reminds me that Rieff toward the end of his life talked often about his teachers (but hardly ever about his origins, except in cliché abstractions), not the teachers you would expect -- he reminisced about his elementary school teachers. I think he may have written about them in one of the first two volumes of his sacred/social order volumes. In any case, I want to say another thing about this that I truly hope you will not take offense to: our Goffmania and Rieffmania are symptoms of our time as much as their own time, which is to say, you and I in our interest and commitments to our teachers are in the positive sense, scholastists, a phenomenon that endures in all periods of history when it is very difficult to determine who presently "stands out" -- these two Jewish men on the cusp of post-modernity were clearly artists of thought that I find very little evidence existing in our time, but, as you appreciate, only those who come after us can be the judge of such things. I have no ambition as a theorist as Rieff had, and the Goffman knock-offs are now so plentiful it is difficult to imagine something really succeeding it. After all, Shakespeare had most of it pegged 500 years ago. Goffman recycled the mundane into the fascinating. Anyone who can do that is a magician.

Jonathan Imber

This is a belated note to say that I indeed enjoyed both of your papers. Over the years I have of course heard a lot of speculation about how Goffman's personal life and personal way of relating to people was related to his work, especially his early work and perhaps *Behavior in Public Places*, which we taught for a few years in the second semester -- the microsociology semester -- of the introductory course in sociology when I was at Penn. However, I found your analyses of these matters much subtler and much more compelling than anything else I have seen. I can see that they are the products of a great deal of research and thought. . . .

Victor Lidz

I recognized most of the material and as far as I know it's all true. One small thing: on page 8 you mention something about class which I thought was really linked to Angelica's research but I may be wrong. Yves Winkin has something about this in his new book.

You didn't mention (maybe I missed it) Goffman's fascination with antiques and you didn't say much about his involvement with the stock market. Didn't he make a lot of money from investments? There's also more from his Vegas days but space may have been limited for your contribution.

For what it's worth, I think it's important to emphasize how well read Goffman was. Freud, Durkheim and Parsons played a huge role in his thinking but just the sheer amount of knowledge is impressive. Like my former tutor Tony Giddens or Gary Fine - or Rieff then - with whom he probably had a love/hate relationship.

I do hope *SI* can find its way back to theory. We need the next generation of SIers to be great classical theorists as well as ethnographers. PhD programs with a couple of survey theory courses, a lot of powerpoint presentations and an enduring belief in quantification doesn't give me a lot of hope.

Phil Manning

[This project] represents, by itself, a wonderful piece of scholarship--the kind that I never do but always appreciate when reading an intellectual biography. In some ways, I came away very disillusioned with Goffman as a rather emotionally small man, who never really dealt with his own hang ups (hence the distrust of psychiatry because it might make him look at himself more critically) and the blatant status striving not only within academia but also in the broader class system--all at the expense of denying his origins. Not a new story, to be sure, but one that I would like to think that an academic icon would not reveal. I have always been critical of Goffman's work in one sense: the emphasis on strategic behavior over moral behavior (despite his constant reference to morality); the denial conceptually of the centrality of identity and core self in human action; the view of action and interaction as manipulation and false fronts; and the overly cognitive view of almost everything (even while he is considered one of the early sociologists to take emotions seriously, but emotions like embarrassment and shame, to the exclusion of all other emotions). Your essay gives me the biographical reasons for these holes in his conceptualization of social reality, at all levels. . . . I learned a great deal--perhaps stuff that I did not want to know, but that was, nonetheless, useful. It obviously was a labor of love for you, and took a lot of work, but the result is one of the best articles that I have read in a long time.

Jonathan Turner

...I think that Peter Manning wrote that all of Goffman's oeuvre could be synthesized to the two main themes of: (a) what happens when things go wrong in interaction, and (b) how can modern man get respect in mass society.

Did Scheff read your article? I think he would be especially sensitive to your attention to the emotions of shame, embarrassment, etc. both in Goffman's work and biography. I did not know about Sartre's influence.

I was also wondering... If "the Erving Goffman Archive allows us to collate various emplotments of Goffman's life and examine what a given framing tells us about the framed, the framer, and the framer's historical milieu," does the same obtain for the archivist? . . .

I've been using Goffman and the other labeling theorists in my Sociology of Mental Disorders class for a very long time, and this article sheds an interesting light on so many issues.

I now wonder if Lemert's "Paranoia and the Dynamics of Social Exclusion" was also prompted by similar "contingencies".

A great read!

Simon Gottschalk

February 28, 2014

Hello, Dmitri. Many thanks for sharing these shards of response with me. Keep 'em coming! It is especially nice to have such glowing words of praise bestowed on your biocritical accounts of Goffman by serious scholars of his work, including several people from Penn. (Now don't be modest.)

A few stray thoughts popped into my head as I was reading the comments.

I'm not sure if Parsons's wife, Helen, worked at a Russian center at Harvard. My (vague) memory is that a position like that was held by David Riesman's wife, Evelyn, maybe as a secretary. (She also wrote a children's book, which helps elucidate Riesman's interest in same in *The Lonely Crowd*.)

I'll wager that Shils and EG had something of what I called a "joshing relationship," with some wariness mixed with intellectual admiration on both sides. Rather along the lines of EG and Rieff, I would think, given the similarities of those two high-culture, formidably erudite, Anglophiles, Shils and Rieff. As you will recall, Shils siphoned off some grant money to EG, supposedly for a study of stratification, that went into his research on *PSEL*. Goffman went on to chide Shils in print for his unabashed admiration for the Queen of England in his piece on her coronation. I thought of that during Princess Di's funeral, when her brother made a wrathful attack on the royal family in their presence from the pulpit during his eulogy -- a repudiation that in effect emotionally amounted to an anti-coronation speech.

Nice to know that you have been in contact with Lee Ann Druad. Too bad she hasn't contributed to the EGA project. She was EG's assistant for 3 or more years and did an awful lot of work for him. Nice person too, very reliable and low-key (most un-Goffmanlike in person). I wrote to her via an address in Philadelphia I found on the web, asking it she would like to check over my reconstruction of his seminar lectures, but she never wrote back, so that was that.

On the "he" vs. "she" question: I think that EG was a traditionalist when it came to language usage, e.g., being punctilious about using the Oxford comma. On that basis, he held out using the impersonal "he" (as I still do) for a long time, but finally conceded the point of being ostensibly more inclusive as his feminist sympathies grew and he addressed the issue directly.

The name "Hoffman" in German refers to a kind of serf or small landowner living on a larger estate, according to a book on names by a man named Hoffman, who should know. He said that Russian lacked an initial "h" sound, so that Hoffman got transmuted to a "g" sound. However, there seem to be quite a few Russian names that begin with "h," e.g., Horowitz.

Is Yves Winkin's book finally out? I've not heard of it being published.

It's interesting to me, if quite understandable, how academics so often plug their own stuff in the course of commenting on other scholars' writing. A tic of the trade, I guess.

Anyway, it seems that you have provoked a lot of interest in both the subject of Goffman's work, indicating his continuing relevance for many social thinkers, and your biohermeneutic project, which extends intellectual history and the psychosociology of knowledge in interesting ways, without being a captive of any one confined frame of reference, as did many of the more psychoanalytically inclined (and reductive) intellectual biographers of years past.

I couldn't get on the web this morning and I was frantic trying to get back online. It took a long call to fix a modem issue and then some related computer problems. To me it's quite amazing how the web has become a kind of electronic umbilical cord to the wider world out there. I'm not one who has to be constantly connected to the e-world, but without it available I really do feel lost, as though the world was spinning on in its orbit without me.

A toast to your success!
Michael

February 28, 2014

Hi Michael:

It's good to see our project getting attention. More feedback is coming in almost every day. When time allows, I'll send you more excerpts from my *SI* related communications.

I salute the scholars awash in their own work who take time to write pages, literally, on other people's projects. These aren't just my biocritical sensibilities that keep the project going. EGA is an open source, collective project in the full sense of the word, with hundreds of people pitching in. Your contribution to this enterprise and the *SI* issue has been stellar, attested by the outstanding paper you wrote for the journal, the unflagging support of our joint effort, and the generous feedback you offer on my ongoing research.

I hope you will hear more about your work in the future, as people come to know your contribution to *SI* and get a sense of your larger project. You might want to send the link to your paper and the journal issue to the folks that might be interested in this line of research.

Very occasionally I send Lee Ann an update on the EGA but refrain from asking her to join the fray. Don't think she would like that.

I cannot think of Russian names that start with "H." "Horowitz" in Russian is "Goroviz," no exception here. This may or may not have to do with the fact that the letter "H" in Russian is used in obscenities describing a portion of the male anatomy. The Hoffman/Goffman link needs to be explored.

Winkin has coauthored a book with Leeds-Hurwitz that just came out: *Erving Goffman: A Critical Introduction to Media and Communication Theory*. It has a chapter with a biographical overview. This is a fine study that you want to check out.

Winkin and Greg Smith are writing EG's biography. As I gathered from my conversation with Greg, it should be out soon.

Hope you are back on line prowling the World Wide Web.

Kindly,
Dmitri

March 24, 2014

Hi Dmitri. I just received a pleasant e-mail from Gary Alan Fine, who said he appreciated my essay on EG.

For the record, Fine brought up a point that needs correcting at least in memory. I was wrong when I wrote that EG's first house in Philadelphia was in "West Philadelphia." He did live in a house near the Delaware River in the western part of the city, but "West Philadelphia" is the name of a specific area, and demographically quite distinct from the Society Hill area that EG actually lived in or near there.

It's a small point, but of such dinky details are unfortunate misconceptions born. Fine was plainly perturbed to think he had misremembered his own visit to EG's house. From Renee Fox's corrections and disputations of my own memory of Penn, I know how vexing it is to have a firm memory from many years ago unsettled by someone else's.

Lots of chastening news blowing in from the East these days, eh?

Hope you are prospering,

Best to you,
Michael

March 24, 2014
Greetings Michael:

I also got a word about few things that need to be corrected in my EG papers. That's good, par for the course.

Glad to hear Fine has contacted you, whether on his own or at your prompting. You might want to encourage your contacts to pen comments on the EGA, SI issue, etc. for the Comments/dialogues section of the archives. Most will pass, but some may convert their mailings into a statement EGA users appreciate.

Yes, the news from Russia is bad, with worse yet to come, I am afraid. It's depressing to think what a vengeful KGB operative obsessed with the mission of restoring the Soviet empire can do.

I am, as usual, drowning in the deadlines and unfinished projects.
All best,
Dmitri

April 17, 2014
Greetings Michael:

Just got this note from Robert Dingwall who passed me an email message praising the *SI* Goffman issue. Thought you might want to see it.

All bets, Dmitri

April 17, 2014
Hello Dmitri. Thanks for sending me that note of praise for the SI issue -- it's nice to see that your (and your contributors') work is appreciated. I'll bet that few people nowadays actually read a scholarly journal "cover to cover" given the ceaseless glut of writing that we all face today.

Not to nag, but will *SI* ever provide hard copies of that issue of the journal to its contributors? I haven't downloaded any of the other articles in hopes that some day I might see the journal in print form.

Despite all my best efforts, and those of the copy editors, my piece evidently contained a couple of typos, as a cousin of mine pointed out after reading it. Nothing was made incomprehensible, though, so I'm not going to be crying in my pillow about it at this stage.

I haven't been getting much work done as of late. My house has a series of fixes that badly need doing, such as leaking pipes, malfunctioning plumbing, old appliances going bad one by one, and the general chaos brought about my longtime neglect of household duties.

Two possible reads: The most recent issue of the *NY Review of Books* had an article on V. Shklovsky, which I found informative, given the history of personal tragedies and political contortions the man was put through. (Another disheartening Soviet survival story.) The latest *Society* journal (Imber's rag) has a long article on Solzhenitsyn's response to, and critique of, Heidegger's account of Being, Time, and Art, but I haven't gotten

around to reading it yet. Interestingly, the precis of it states that Solzhenitsyn "showed that the phenomena of daily life ground reality and even establish a foundation for moral judgment."

Did you ever send me your essay on the relation of Heidegger and Gadamer? I read Gadamer's *Heidegger's Ways* some years ago, which helped clarify some of Heidegger's more obscure pathways of thought, even though the essays were noticeably evasive about the entire Nazi period and the role of both men in it. In his notoriously obtuse way, Heidegger so postured himself as to be (at least inwardly) consumed with his thoughts on Heraclitus during much of the 1930s as, meanwhile, the whole civilized society of Germany was collapsing all around him. And along with it, his own moral, even metaphysical, compass, it would seem. From Plato on, philosophers and tyrants make the very worst of bedfellows, producing the worst of two worlds.

I wonder though: how many American sociologists ever read Heidegger. Not many, I'd wager. Very few seem exercised by any philosophical matters at all.

Anyway, spring is on the cusp of arriving -- up here it's one (sunny-day) step ahead and three (rainy-day) steps back, as much promise as actuality. I await it with impatience.

Best to you,
Michael

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/apr/24/reckless-founding-formalist>
<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12115-014-9756-3#>

April 17, 2014
Greetings Michael:

I have a hard copy of the SI issue and can send it to you. This is the address I have on file:

<...>

Here is the link to my article on Heidegger and Gadamer,
http://cdclv.unlv.edu//pragmatism/shalin_heidegger_gadamer.pdf. More on the bard of authentic Nazism is in my chapter on pragmatist hermeneutics (see attachment). As a pragmatist, I concur that theory mongers are found among the more fanatical adherents of tyranny. I will try to get a hold of both articles you mention. Heidegger and Gadamer are not on the reading list of sociology students and practitioners, with a few notable exceptions. Shklovsky is an interesting figure, a formalist who denied the relevance of biography in literary studies but discovered belatedly how his own biographical trajectory, informed by the soviet being and time, distorted the movement of his pen.

I envy you the coming of spring. The temperatures around here are in the 90's, the dreadful summer heat is almost here.

Hope you regain your footing and bring your EG project to a glorious completion.

Be well,
Dmitri

April 17, 2014
Hi again, Dmitri. Yes, that's my mailing address. Thanks for the articles and the promised issue of SI.

Much as I resist certain aspects of Pragmatism, I do applaud it overall for its genuinely democratic ethos, as translated into its philosophical formulations, despite a certain socialist-style elitism, scientism, and technocraticism that to me mars some of Dewey's more "utopian" thinking ("utopian" in something like Habermas's use of the term). In contrast, the radical political postures of some of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century (up to and including Foucault) are both scandalous and sickening, nihilism with a cerebral, but only ostensibly humanistic, face. It turns out, as Max Weber foresaw, that the hunger for "authenticity" is the cutting edge of the biggest intellectual hoaxes of the 20th century.

May cool breezes waft your way, banishing the shimmering desert heat. (And to think, in Hawaii, it's practically always 80-degrees-plus year-round in the daytime.)

Best,
Michael

April 24, 2014

Hi Dmitri. The EG issue of *SI* arrived in today's mail. Many thanks for sending it and I look forward to reading my co-contributors' articles.

All the best,
Michael

April 24, 2014
Enjoy, Michael.

Thanks again for being part of the venture.

Dmitri

April 28, 2014

Hi Dmitri. I've just copied you on an e-mail I sent to Evan Goldstein, editor of the great Arts & Letter Daily website. It's self-explanatory. I hope you don't think me cheeky for doing this, but A&Ldaily.com is truly a fine outlet for getting the message out to people of many different intellectual interests, among many of whom Goffman still resonates.

I happened to skim one of your old e-mails, the one responding to my comments on your paper on IoP. You mentioned that Goffman may well have borrowed the names "John" and "Marsha" in "Felicity's Condition" from actual people he knew (and perhaps wanted to satirize?). In addition, there is a well-known comedy record featuring those two names. It was created by the funnyman Stan Freeberg, who put out a lot of parody music records in the 1950s. The song in question, "John and Marsha," consists of two voices, a male and a female, simply saying each other's names over and over in various modulations, accompanied by some raucous laughter. (You can listen to it on Youtube.) That's what I thought of when I first read FC. Perhaps this adds yet another layer, albeit a thin one, to EG's use of the names.

Now I have to wonder who "Harry" was in "Strategic Interaction."

Best,
Michael

April 28, 2014

Dear Mr. Goldstein:

You might be interested in posting a link on A&Ldaily.com to the February 2014 issue of the academic journal *Symbolic Interaction*. It is a special issue devoted to a biographically-oriented essays on Erving Goffman, the famed sociologist of “everyday life” (and much else). Wiley, the publisher, has permitted free access to the entire contents, seven separate articles, including one by me, his former student, titled “Goffman at Penn: Star Presence, Teacher-Mentor, Profaning Jester.” However, my intent is not to aggrandize my own effort over that of the other contributors. (One enthusiastic scholarly reader has commented that he read this issue of the journal “from cover to cover,” as he rarely does scholarly journals.)

The special edition of the journal was curated by Dmitri N. Shalin of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Dr. Shalin also oversees the Erving Goffman Archives project, associated with UNLV, which contains abundant interviews and diverse other documents relating to Goffman -- an invaluable resource for scholars, especially given the continuing fascination with Goffman, the person, as well as his work. This effort is part of Dr. Shalin's larger project of a “biohermeneutics” of intellectual endeavors.

I realize that most of these pieces are quite lengthy for a website, but your readers might appreciate a link all the same. I know I would, having been an avid reader of A&L Daily for almost as long as it has been around. I do indeed read your splendid website daily.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/symb.2014.37.issue-1/issuetoc> (*Symbolic Interaction*, 37:1, Feb. 2014), <http://cdclv.unlv.edu/ega/index.html> (Erving Goffman Archives)

Yours very truly,
Michael Delaney
Seattle, Wash.

April 30, 2014

Dear Mr. Delaney,

Thanks for passing this along. We're generally interested in all things Erving Goffman, and while we may not end up being able to link the piece, we'll certainly read it with interest. Glad you've been enjoying the site, and please do continue to send us links if other pieces strike you as good for our site.

Best,
David

David Wescott
Assistant Editor
Arts & Letters Daily

April 28, 2014

Greetings Michael:

Sure, it is good to spread word about the *SI* issue on EG. In time, this publication will get a larger notice but your heads-up may speed things up.

God knows how many layers are there in Goffman, more than he himself realized or intended, no doubt. With academics excelling in cooking multilayer thought pies, the deciphering game is bound to go on.

I hope you have put behind your illnesses and press ahead with your magnum opus. The world is waiting.

Kindly,
Dmitri

April 30, 2014
DNS: FYI.

At least A&L daily people know that the EGA is on the (vastly sprawling) web map. Notable, too, that the site is "interested in all things" EG. Some 32 years after he died, the man sure has staying power doesn't he?

By comparison: When Robert Merton died in 2003, the one-time "King" of middle-range theory was given a noticeably wan send-off in the obituaries, overshadowed by the less sociologically significant, if more flamboyant, public figure Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who died one month later.

The temperature is forecast to get to 80 degrees in sun-filled Seattle today. As the ubiquitous ads for McDonald's hamburgers say, "I'm lovin' it."

~ Michael

May 1, 2014
Greetings Michael:

You had circumnavigated with grace some hidden obstacles in your note to A&L as you made the case for adding a link to the *SI* issue. Whether or not such will grace the A&L page in the end is not important.

You and I are committed to the cause; a few dozen Goffman scholars will devour the *SI* issue (some with a touch of annoyance); several hundred readers are likely to sample the *SI* papers and find them amusing – that's more than most academics can hope for. Both of us are fortunate doing work that gives us joy (some of us are even getting paid for it). Lucky us.

As for the EGA, the word will spread on its own.

Kindly,
Dmitri

June 20, 2014

Hi, Dmitri -- I just received this "invitation" to feature my Goffman essay on this Canadian website, hitherto unknown to me. Frankly, it strikes me as more of a scam than anything else. For a mere \$80, they will publish a summary and a link to the original source. Big deal. There is also a not-so-implicit appeal to vanity and the prospect of further "branding" oneself.

I wonder if the other contributors to the special *SI* issue have been similarly contacted. Or perhaps I was singled out because of being identified as an "independent scholar"?

At all events, this smells fishy to me and I'm not tempted to bite down on the hook.

How's your summer going down there in desert country where, as the saying goes, "it's hotter than the hinges of hell"?

Best to you,

Michael

Jun 19, 2014

Dear Dr. Delaney,

The Sociology Research editorial board has identified your recent publication, "Goffman at Penn: Star Presence, Teacher-Mentor, Profaning Jester" as being of special interest to the progress of the sociology field. We would like to feature your publication in our next edition of the Sociology Research series.

Sociology Research alerts the social science community to the latest journal articles considered to represent the best in sociology research. For today's edition, see here: www.sociologyresearch.org. Sociology Research is viewed over 14,000 times per month and has an audience of academics and researchers from a growing number of the top 20 major academic institutions.

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We operate within a narrow time frame to meet our aim of delivering premier publications and we therefore request that if you do wish to be featured you contact us as soon as possible.

If you have any questions please let us know.

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June 20, 2014

Hi Michael:

I agree, this sounds like a scam. Why would you pay money to this web site to promote your work? Your work is a credit to this outlet and its owners should pay you for the honor. Collecting \$80 for the right to list the author's work on the web – smart business if enough suckers sign up.

I am fine, reading for several new projects, each one getting in the way of the other.

Hope you are doing well,
Dmitri

August 24, 2014

Hello, Dmitri. I imagine that you've been to the ASA meeting in San F. Hope it wasn't a snooze. (At least they won't have glitzy-smoky, razzle-dazzle Las Vegas to kick around, although San Francisco is not without its own pungent features as a Sin City all its own.)

In the meantime, I gather that Alice Goffman's book has gotten a lot of "buzz." Someone sent me a copy of her C.V. (which I attach for your edification). It shows that she has been actively promoting the book, giving many speeches at major universities. Her web page even includes contacts for press coverage of her book and even more speaking engagements. She has already done an 8-minute interview on NPR (where else?), linked to on her U. Wisconsin-Madison web page.

<...>

I was also struck that Alice G. teaches a course titled "The Future of Social Life" (complete with no less than five teaching assistants!). Here is the course syllabus, stretching from neighborhood microsociology to women's rights and gay liberation to climate change and the future of war:

<http://ssc.wisc.edu/soc/courses/syllabi/210Goffman1314F.pdf>

I suppose one shouldn't mock such grandiosity in this age of self-puffery and ubiquitous branding, or what I have called "the age of impression marketing," but the audacity of her sweeping topicality still seems more than a little rich for one so young and so early in her career. Perhaps she has benefited from some carry-over star power from her famous father, although AG seems to lean at least as much in the direction of Foucault as she does that of EG. Her perspective on crime and punishment strikes me as a curious amalgam of the two.

In her NPR interview, AG recounted that she found readjusting to "normal" middle-class life taxing: she became afraid of large groups of white people and jumped at the sound of a popped balloon, as though suffering from PTSD. There is more than a few whiffs of the Patty Hearst saga in her account, although I do not doubt her sincerity or the accuracy of her reporting, as far as it goes. <...>

Speaking of Goffman books: Do you happen to know when Yves Winkin's ethnobiography of EG will be out (not the recent one on communication)? Jonathan Imber has offered me the chance to review it in the journal *Society* that he edits. Not being networked, I'm usually the last one to hear about such things. It will be interesting to see how much biographical lore Winkin was able to unearth that we don't already have a pretty good idea about, thanks to your EGA project. I do know that Winkin made the effort to travel to the major locales where EG grew up and did his research, from Dauphin to the Shetland Isles and onwards. Beyond that, he has been working on the book for the better part of 30 years (although I am hardly in a position to chastise anyone for such laggardness).

As for me: I'm almost, almost, almost done, but still working at clearing out some of the underbrush I've accumulated over the course of many drafts and re-drafts. Ah, but then Erving Goffman intimated that all intellectual work, let alone life itself, is but a "draft," so there you have it.

I hope you had a good, not-too-overwhelmed summer and send my best to you and yours,
Michael

August 27, 2014

Greetings Michael:

Good to hear from you. Couldn't answer earlier as my semester started and I had to clear up a mess with my teaching schedule (two classes were scheduled back to back due to a clerical error).

The publicity campaign surrounding AG is remarkable. <...> brought up her name with the *Chronicle's* editor which produced the first burst of publicity. Since then, [AG] has been featured in the *New York Times* and *New Yorker*, had live interviews on KNP and NYT, http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/06/27/book-review-podcast-the-french-intifada/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0, and, I understand, signed a movie contract to produce a full length feature based on her fieldwork. Plus the speaking engagements.

ASA had an author-meets-critics session devoted to her book that started at 8:30 a.m. <...> came a few minutes beforehand to discover the auditorium sitting some 150 people full. About as many people had to be turned away. Amazon.com has 48 comments from the readers posted about her work.

So AG is coming out in style, and this style is in sharp contrasts with that of EG. Hope she handles her celebrity wisely.

<...>

I don't know when Winkin's bio of Goffman might be published. He has been working on this project for decades, and now he is collaborating with Greg Smith, so the book may be out in a year or two. With luck, your books will beat the competition.

All best,
Dmitri

August 31, 2014

Hi Dmitri. I don't know if you're collecting reviews of Alice Goffman book, but if so here's one from today's *Washington Post*. It's mostly a synopsis, a rather bland one at that, and centered on the "social policy / social justice" aspect of young urban black criminality and incarceration. The reviewer is an anthropologist but neglects to say anything about the ethnological or methodological dimensions of the book. If anything, she seems to encourage a more personalist approach over an observational one, even granting that the "observational" and the "participational" are always blurred in studies of that sort. <...>

Although policing in such an environment is an uphill battle, presenting a set of refractory problems (as Jonathan Rubenstein's book *City Police* showed in gripping detail), it is disturbing to hear of the violent and intimidating tactics that the police seem to resort to as almost their default choice. Presumably, they operate on the principle of "fight fire with fire" or "out-tough the tough guys." In one of "Ruby's" most eye-opening incidents, the cops caught up with a known child molester and hauled him into the station during the night shift. The cop on duty at the jail put out a radio call to all the beat cops on patrol letting them know that there was a "snake-eyes" in custody. (As Rubenstein noted, both the police and jailbirds put child molesters at the top of their list of desplicables.) In serial order, one after another, the patrol cars descended on the jail, whereupon pairs of cops took turns beating the living bejeezus out of the sordid wretch.

I lived in Philadelphia from 1970 to 1974, when tough-guy cop Frank Rizzo was the police chief, then was elected the widely popular (among whites) elected mayor. Back then, the Philly cops were known to be aggressively heavy-handed, with Rizzo egging them on all the while. To get an idea of the fearful sentiments of the time: during his tenure as chief, the city built a new Police HQ building roughly in a "&" shape -- two spheres connected by a mid-section walkway. It was meant to symbolize a pair of handcuffs. Some civic symbol, huh?

Michael

[Book review: 'On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City,' by Alice Goffman - The Washington Post](#)

August 31, 2014

Greetings Michael:

Thanks for the review. I haven't read any yet.

Studies leave no doubt about the double standard with which men on the streets are treated depending on their race. Smoking or possessing pot will get you a jail sentence a lot more often if you are black. You are several times more likely to be stopped walking or driving while black, with or without probable cause. The police refuse to release or even compile data on shooting by their officers (other than "justified" shooting and killing), let alone break them down by race, because the numbers are unsettling.

Add to this the devastating loss of jobs in places like Detroit, wretched schools in the inner cities ghettos, the legal system that guarantees everybody the same rights but favors those with money to vindicate them, and it becomes clear why AG's work elicited such a strong response among the liberals. I count myself among them. Yet, as a pragmatist I have to see things in multiple perspectives where cause and effect trade places incessantly, virtue is in short supply on all fronts, and solutions are elusive.

My daughter, who taught for two years in one of the worst schools in Houston through Teach for America program, recounted many stories about her struggle to get the rude, menacing youngsters interested in learning. I tried to cheer her up, offered her a big picture; she went on to complete her term, but her liberal sensibilities had been bruised.

Hope you are enjoying the long weekend.

With kind wishes,
Dmitri

December 28, 2014

Greetings Michael:

As one year is coming to a close and another one is looming over the horizon, I send you this season greetings with the best wishes for life ahead. May the next year be healthful, profitable, intellectually exciting, and auspicious for your magnum opus.

All in all, this was a good year for me, the publication of the *SI* issue on EG being the highlight. The home front situation has not been good, as my mother's conditions continue to deteriorate and the demands her needs place on this household are growing.

I am working on a grant proposal, not a thrilling undertaking but the one I owe to several people and the department. Next academic year I will be on sabbatical leave, there is something to look forward to.

Take care and be well,
Dmitri

<...>