

7-28-2009

One of Erving's Writings Influenced Bob to Write a Basic Article on Higher Education

Adele Clark

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/goffman_archives



Part of the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology and Interaction Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Clark, A. (2009). One of Erving's Writings Influenced Bob to Write a Basic Article on Higher Education. In Dmitri N. Shalin, *Bios Sociologicus: The Erving Goffman Archives* 1-2.
Available at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/goffman_archives/12

This Correspondence is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Correspondence in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Correspondence has been accepted for inclusion in Bios Sociologicus: The Erving Goffman Archives by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

Remembering Erving Goffman

Adele Clark:

One of Erving's Writings Influenced Bob to Write a Basic Article on Higher Education

Adele Clark wrote this memoir at the request of Dmitri Shalin and approved its posting in the Erving Goffman Archives.

July 28

Dear Dimitri:

I wish Bob and I could add more significantly to the Goffman archive. But I'm afraid our contribution focuses on only a couple of items: a Goffman-inspired article and some comments about social life in Berkeley. I send them to you now.

One of Erving's writings influenced Bob to write a basic article on higher education. He adapted Erving's "cooling out the mark" concept (where losers accommodate to failure) and transposed it to an institutional setting -- junior or community colleges -- from an interpersonal one. Although Goffman based his formulation chiefly on the confidence game, where "facts" are deliberately misrepresented to the "mark" by operators, Bob thought the general notion of a cooling-out function can be applied as well to situations of failure in which those responsible act in good faith. Our good friend, and helpful colleague, Shelly Messenger, who knew well the work of Goffman, suggested the general relevance of the Goffman conception to this situation. "The Cooling-Out Function in Higher Education," (1960) has endured in the literature. A follow-up, written 20 years later, was called "The Cooling-Out Function Revisited (1980)."

Both can be found in, our recent book, On Higher Education: Selected Writings 1956-2006, Johns Hopkins, November 2008.

My contact with Erving was limited to a few social gatherings during the 8 years (1958-66) we lived in Berkeley. Faculty wives hesitated about inviting him to parties. We mainly entertained at home in those days. Did we want a guest who would be closely observing and analyzing the behavior of others? Was everything grist for his mill? Would we have to watch our step? Would he ruin the evening? We wondered. I recall that Bob and I invited the Goffmans to a party at our house. It turned out that Erving was very friendly, kind, and

mingled easily, if I remember correctly. I needn't have been concerned: a good time was had by all.

Regarding Schuyler: Gladys Lang incorrectly attributed a close relationship between us. Although Bob and I were friendly with many sociology faculty members -- his PHD was in Sociology -- he was not in the department. He was based in the Center for the Study of Higher Education, directed by T.R. MacConnell. Marty Trow was also based part-time in the Center and it was there that Bob and Marty collaborated on research on student typologies. Because I was occupied part-time with teaching science at Mills College in Oakland, I only occasionally saw Schuyler at social gatherings sponsored mainly by sociology faculty. Except for one Sunday morning.

Unexpectedly, she knocked at the door of our Santa Barbara Road house before noon. Distraught, she asked to visit with us for a while. We were surprised because we were not very close friends. After serving coffee and chatting about this and that, nothing intimate or emotional, she stayed for a brief time, thanked us, and left. We heard not too long afterward that she ended her life when she leaped from the San Rafael - Richmond Bridge into the bay.

Dimitri, reading the interviews posted on your online archive revived and considerably fleshed out my memories of the past. People became much more multidimensional. Those 8 years were very good ones for us. I'm glad the Langs suggested that you call. Please give them our regards in turn.

Your project is a success. I hope you continue to find it challenging and rewarding.

Regards, Adele