

2-15-2010

Dmitri Shalin Interview with Jane Allyn Piliavin about Erving Goffman entitled "Toward the End of the Party Erving Said to My Husband, "Why Are All These Smart People Doing Such Stupid Things?""

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Repository Citation

Piliavin, J. A. (2010). Dmitri Shalin Interview with Jane Allyn Piliavin about Erving Goffman entitled "Toward the End of the Party Erving Said to My Husband, "Why Are All These Smart People Doing Such Stupid Things?"". In Dmitri N. Shalin, *Bios Sociologicus: The Erving Goffman Archives* 1-43.
Available at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/goffman_archives/53

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Remembering Erving Goffman

Jane Allyn Piliavin: Toward the End of the Party Erving Said to My Husband, “Why Are All These Smart People Doing Such Stupid Things?”

This conversation with Dr. Jane Allyn Piliavin, Conway-Bascom Professor Emerita of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, was recorded over the phone on December 29, 2009. After Dmitri Shalin transcribed the interview, Dr. Piliavin edited the transcript and approved posting the present version on the web. Breaks in the conversation flow are indicated by ellipses. Supplementary information and additional materials inserted during the editing process appear in square brackets. Undecipherable words and unclear passages are identified in the text as “[?]”.

[Posted 02-15-10]

Piliavin: Hello.

Shalin: Greetings, Jane. This is Dmitri Shalin.

Piliavin: Yes, yes. Can you just hang on a minute?

Shalin: Sure.

Piliavin: I was expecting you to call. I was cleaning the cat box.

Shalin: Should I call you in five-ten minutes?

Piliavin: No, no. It’s like 30 seconds.

Shalin: No problem.

[**Pause**]

Piliavin: Better [**laughing**].

Shalin: Greetings, again. So it would be OK if I recorded our conversation and then send you the transcript?

Piliavin: That’s fine. Yes, of course.

Shalin: I understand that you met Erving in person as well as heard about him from your husband.

Piliavin: Oh, yes. I interacted with him on many occasions, more in a personal relationship than in a professional one. My husband [Irving Piliavin] was a good friend of his. I just looked through the interview with Neil Smelser that you sent in a package, and we should probably start there because my husband is mentioned in that transcript in regard to the poker game. My Irving and your Erving were assistant professors at the same time at Berkeley. My husband was in the School of Social Work but he did a lot of sociological type research. I didn't know him at that time; he was married to someone else at that point. But I have heard my husband tell one particular story about that poker game enough times that I could practically report it verbatim the way he told it to me. I found it interesting that Neil Smelser mentioned that Erving Goffman was not a good poker player. My husband was a very good poker player. He made a second income off it, basically. Once he got into a game and got to know people in the game, he consistently won more than he lost. In testimonial of this we took a cruise to Alaska once on the money that he was accumulating in his separate poker account. He won \$13,000 in a tournament once in Vegas. I mean, he was a very good poker player. They had this game, I don't know how serious it was, but it was not small potatoes. It was not a penny-ante game like the one that Neil Smelser talks about being in, because my husband did not find such games fun. He only found it fun when there was something real to lose.

There was one night they were playing, and one of the guys in the game was not, I think, a regular. His name is Freddy Lisker. He owned a sporting goods store in Berkeley, and he was by all accounts a very good poker player. He was in the game and he had to leave before most of the others. Almost all the others in the game were academics and they had these flexible schedules, but he had to get up in the morning and open up his store. So he had won and cashed in his chips and he left. There was a brief silence after Freddy left, and Erving Goffman in this reverent tone said, "He could have taken us for everything we were worth." From what you

know by now about Goffman, he did not say reverent things about most people.

Shalin: No-o!

Piliavin: [**Laughing**] He had a very sharp tongue. He was not impressed with most people at all. That, I think, is why my husband remembered that evening, because he had never actually heard Erving say anything like that before. I truly think this was one of the reasons he wanted to study gamblers in Vegas. It is because he was not good at it and he wanted actually to figure out how these people did those things he could not do.

Shalin: Was his purpose to improve his own skills or understand sociologically what was going on?

Piliavin: I guess, both. He knew that he was not going to improve his skills because, at least according to Neil Smelser, he leaked his feelings and he was not good at controlling his nonverbal expressions.

Shalin: He didn't have a poker face.

Piliavin: He didn't have a poker face. That's what Neil says, anyway. I knew Neil too. I was at Berkeley from 1962 till 1967. I just didn't happen to run into Goffman during that time. I heard my husband talking about him. He and I didn't get married until 1968, so I was not actually in the social circle that he had with his former wife. OK, that's my only story through my husband. No, I have one other. I went to University of Pennsylvania in 1967. Irv left his former wife and settled down with me in Philadelphia waiting for his divorce, and we got married in 1968 in December. He basically lived with me there from about November of '67 until Spring of 1970. I don't know when Erving went there but I think it was in '67.

Shalin: He came to Berkeley in 1958 and he left for Penn in 1968.

Piliavin: OK, '68. So he overlapped with us for the last two years

that we were at Penn. They struck up their friendship pretty much right away again.

Shalin: Erving and . . .

Piliavin: My Irving and Erving.

Shalin: Erving with an "E" and Irving with an "I."

Piliavin: Erving with an "E" and Irving with an "I" were there together from '68 till Spring of '70. I had been in his house in Philadelphia, he came to our house. He and Irv were pretty close at that time. Irv would pick the phone and, according to him, say, "Hello," and on the other end of line it would be, "Irving"? "Erving." That's how their conversations would begin on the phone.

There was a poker game at Penn but I don't think Erving ever played in it. It was a quite high stakes poker game that consisted mostly of psychologists (I was in the psychology department) and psychiatrists. I think it would have been too rich for Goffman's blood. I think by then he realized that he was not up to playing that kind of poker. I don't remember my Irv ever talking about Erving being in that game. I remember him coming to our house for dinner a number of times. He was a very good guest. He would clear the table after dinner.

Shalin: At your home?

Piliavin: Yes, we would have finished dinner, I would be out in the kitchen straightening up, and he would clean the dishes off the table and bring them into the kitchen. He tried to be helpful. He was single at that time. He had not met Gillian yet. I don't know when he met Gillian.

Shalin: I believe they were married in the late '70s.

Piliavin: They married, they had a baby, and he died.

Shalin: Right.

Piliavin: I met Gillian. I met the baby [who] is got to be either in her late twenties or late thirties now. [It turns out this memory is incorrect. My daughter assures me that it was too early for the baby to have been in existence. She (my daughter) was at the occasion where I met Gillian, and she is sure she was only about 7 years old at the time. That would put it in 1977 or 1978.]

Shalin: She is finishing her dissertation.

Piliavin: I know. The University of Wisconsin sociology department has just offered her a job.

Shalin: I thought she was interviewing at UCLA.

Piliavin: Maybe she is. I mean, she is obviously a hot property. She is unlikely to go to Wisconsin. I am still on all the mailing lists for the executive committee there. I know she interviewed there and they offered her a job. If she got an offer at UCLA, I suspect she will take it.

Shalin: I don't mean to interrupt you, just go ahead with your impression about Erving as a guest.

Piliavin: I am sorry I got distracted. He was just very relaxed, very laid back, not at all like the kind of person who comes out in people's remembrances of him as an academic who was very acerbic. I never saw that side of him at all. Just very very pleasant and very very friendly. But I know he was a shy person. He basically didn't like going to social gatherings, and so on. I think I was there but I didn't hear this; this is something my Irv told me. There had been a party – it may have been a party at our house – that included mostly psychologists. I'd been there a year longer than Irv had, so more of our friends were from the psychology department in which I was. Besides, he didn't like the School of Social Work, where his appointment was. He never socialized with them. So our friends were all psychologists. I suspect it was at our house. Erving had been mostly observing, as

he did at parties, sort of going into the woodwork and doing a lot of listening and not talking. Toward the end of the party he said to my husband, "Why are all these smart people doing such stupid things?" I think that was the normal academic Erving Goffman, just listening to people's conversations about the research they were doing, and not understanding why anybody would ever do that [laughing].

Shalin: Was he referring to their work or to their presentation of self?

Piliavin: To their work. That was of course the time when most social psychologists were doing laboratory research. The whole idea was to do a controlled simulation of reality rather than studying actual reality, and of course he thought that was pretty stupid. He thought you just had to go out and observe things and draw conclusions from what you saw, which of course was what he did. I remember going to his house once, a lovely old house in downtown Philadelphia, very high ceilings, colonial house, a beautiful house. He had a whole room that was full of filing cabinets. It was his filing system for ideas.

Shalin: That is very interesting!

Piliavin: It was a filing system that nobody else would have come up with. It was all based on his terminology. He would have all these file folders – and of course this was way before most people were using computers, this was at the latest Spring of 1970. It was file cabinet after file cabinet filled with brown manila folders with his terminology on them. I cannot remember the details of it, but I remember thinking, "Only Erving will ever be able to find anything in these filing cabinets" [laughing].

Shalin: What would those files contain?

Piliavin: Pieces of paper, clippings, magazine clippings, references to books he had read, lined pieces of paper with notes on them.

Shalin: Some field notes perhaps.

Piliavin: Yes, field notes, that sort of things. He had beautiful antique furniture and paintings. I remember he had at least one impressionist painting, that impressionist who was always doing pictures of horse races. One could look that up.

Shalin: I have this image but the name . . .

Piliavin: Anyway, he had one of those in the original. And he had Chippendale furniture, the original Chippendale furniture. I think his first wife had been wealthy.

Shalin: Yes, Angelica Schuyler Choate.

Piliavin: Yes, Angelica Schuyler Choate. I never met her, and I know she committed suicide, the only person ever to commit suicide off the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

Shalin: I have heard two persons have done so at this unusual location.

Piliavin: Well, she was the first, then. I do know that Erving had negative feelings about psychiatrists, which everybody knew about, later on at least or in part, after what happened to her. He had been worrying about her, and her psychiatrist essentially told him not to worry, that she was not suicidal. Are you still there?

Shalin: Oh, yes, I am listening with rapt attention.

Piliavin: I think somebody is trying to call me on this phone. Hang on.

Shalin: Sure, sure.

[**Pause**]

Piliavin: I think they gave up [**laughing**]. That's what my husband told me. I don't know if this was his impression or this is something that Erving had told him. He had believed that psychiatrist rather than his own gut feelings about what was going

on with her before she committed suicide. He never trusted psychiatrists after that.

Let me see. Before I talked to you I wrote myself a bunch of notes.

Shalin: Sure, anything that comes to mind in whichever order. As I listen to you, I take notes. Later on I would like to come back and probe a little more.

Piliavin: OK. My fondest memory of Erving. Let's put this in context. I was the first woman the psychology department at Penn had ever hired. I had received my Ph.D in 1962 and worked as a research psychologist at Cal between '62 and '67, so when I went to Penn I was five years out of my Ph.D. So after two years I had asked to be reviewed for tenure. Well, they turned me down. I have now been in this academic business all my life, and thinking back on what I had accomplished at that point, they were probably right. Of course it was pretty devastating. I had just gotten this news – maybe the day before, maybe just that very morning, and the phone rang, and I said, "Hello." It was Goffman, and he said, "Jane, what's wrong?" I mean, I had said one word.

Shalin: He knew nothing?

Piliavin: He knew nothing, no. I was in the psychology department, he was in the anthropology and communications departments.

Shalin: He just heard your voice and knew right away that something was not quite right.

Piliavin: Exactly. I told him what had happened, and he immediately said, "Oh, Jane, don't let it bother you. The first time I came up for tenure, I didn't get it either."

Shalin: Really?

Piliavin: Of course, I had not known that.

Shalin: Neither did I.

Piliavin: I mean, it might even not have been true. He might have been trying to make me feel better. That he understood the problem and had the sensitivity to know saying that would make me feel better is amazing. I have always cherished him for doing that.

Shalin: He was genuinely concerned and tried to cheer you up.

Piliavin: Yes, yes. He was being a friend. As I said, that was basically how I knew him. That was also how Irv, my husband, knew him. They never did research together. Irv had all of the books that Erving had written on his shelf, and he had read them all, but they did very different kinds of research. Irving did all kinds of complicated statistical stuff with big sets of data, although he had done some observational work as well. But I don't think they talked about research very much, although they might have. I am not privy to that.

We are going to jump pretty much to the end of his life at this point. I think it was the last year of his life.

Shalin: He died in November of 1982.

Piliavin: Well, this was, I think, early Spring or late Winter. My husband had engineered that Erving would come and give a talk in a very fancy series of talks.

Shalin: In the department of . . .

Piliavin: No, at the university level. This was big deal talk.

Shalin: At Penn?

Piliavin: At Wisconsin. At that point we had long since left.

Shalin: When did you leave Pennsylvania?

Piliavin: In 1970. They denied me tenure again next year, and

the writing was on the wall. So we went to the University of Wisconsin where both of us got . . . he got a full professorship, and I was in a rather weird situation with a strange appointment but it was tenured. I eventually ended up in the sociology department at Wisconsin, but the first six years I was not in the sociology department. Irv had engineered that Erving would come and give this talk, even though the amount of money that was associated with it was far below Erving's usual fee. This is when he was working on what would develop into his book *Gender Advertisements*. I went to the talk and it was mostly pictures, OK? The slides that he used ended up as pictures in that book.

Shalin: And the year of his talk?

Piliavin: I don't know. We could easily find out.

Shalin: Was it in the late '70s?

Piliavin: Either that or the early '80s. It was not the last time we saw him, because the last time we saw him Alice was a baby.

Shalin: She might have been born in '82.

Piliavin: It may have been in the early '80s or late '70s. I can easily go and find out, because the man who was the chair of the sociology department figures in this story. He would remember. You might want to talk to him.

Shalin: Who is this person?

Piliavin: Doug Maynard, who is the current chair of the sociology department at Wisconsin. Anyway, he agreed to come and give this talk but he laid down a bunch of rules. I don't want to see anybody, except Betsy Draine.

Shalin: Betsy . . . ?

Piliavin: Drain – D-r-a-i-n-e. She was in the English department I don't know why exactly he wanted to see Betsy Draine. She, again, might be someone you want to talk to. I don't know if she is still

there. "I don't want any parties. I want you to pick me up at the airport and take me to the airport. I just want to give my talk, spend the night and get out." We basically said, "OK, fine." However, we had a problem, "The time your plane is coming in, neither of us can get you." There was an assistant professor at the department of sociology by the name of Doug Maynard. He admires your work, he would be happy to pick you up at the airport." Erving said, "Oh, OK. That would be OK." Then he paused for a minute – this all of course is going over the phone – and said, "Oh, but how is he gonna recognize me. Just tell him I'm a short aging Jew." Which of course is very funny, because this guy idolized him and I am sure he would have known what he looked like [**laughing**]. So Doug Maynard went and picked him up at the airport and had at least a brief conversation while he was taking him to the hotel.

Now, the last time I saw Erving, it must have been shortly before he died, because that's when I met Gillian and Alice. I know my daughter was about 10 years old [Libby now says she could not have been older than 8. She remembers it clearly]. She was born in 1970, so it was '80 or '81. She was born late 1970, so probably the summer of '81. [Actually, with the readjustment, probably the summer of 1978 or 1979].

Shalin: And Alice was already there?

Piliavin: Yes, she was an infant. This is my memory. [Which turns out to be wrong.]

Shalin: I met Gillian at the 90th birthday party of Erving's sister, Frances Goffman Bay, and I learned that Alice was a few months old when Erving had died. Could your get-together have been in early '82?

Piliavin: That probably means that my daughter was 11 rather than 10. It was in Berkeley, on Solano Avenue, at a Chinese restaurant, where the food was extraordinarily hot. I ordered the stuff as mild as I could manage, and I ended up on the street with my daughter gasping for air. She will remember this. I mean, my

daughter will confirm this [**laughing**]. She might even have better memory [as to whether] Alice was there. With the baby there, she would have remembered. I know that Gillian was there. . . . I am almost certain that the baby was there, but I could be wrong. I may be confounding this with what I later learned about the baby. The reason I remember this is that Erving was eating all the hottest possible food with no consequences, and I was out there breathing deeply of the cool air [**laughing**] to make my mouth to calm down.

It is really too bad that Irv never got back to you on that. He had so many more detailed memoirs of Erving. I kept asking him to write down the stories about the poker game at Berkeley and the poker game he was in Madison, Wisconsin. He could have written a book of short stories about poker that would have sold like crazy and that he really had loved. But he just wasn't into that sort of things.

Shalin: Not everyone bothers to salvage such memories for posterity.

Piliavin: That is pretty much all I can come up with.

Shalin: This is golden, Jane. If you don't mind, I would like to go back and ask you about some things, and when you read through the transcript, more memories may come up. You wouldn't remember your first meeting with Erving?

Piliavin: No.

Shalin: Noting in particular.

Piliavin: Not in particular. Irv probably invited him over for a drink or something.

Shalin: At Berkeley?

Piliavin: No, that would not be at Berkeley. I read his stuff of course.

Shalin: So you knew his stuff.

Piliavin: Of course! I am a social psychologist.

Shalin: Right, right.

Piliavin: I studied with Leon Festinger.

Shalin: What impression did his writings make on you?

Piliavin: Um, I read *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* before anything else, probably when I was at Berkeley. I was at Berkeley between '62 and '67. Remember when that came out – it was in the '50s.

Shalin: The first edition was published 1956 in England, then the Anchor edition came out in 1959.

Piliavin: That's probably the one I read.

Shalin: Do you remember your impressions?

Piliavin: Well, no, not my original impression. I know what I think about it now – I think it is brilliant. I thought all his work is brilliant.

Shalin: We will touch upon this as well. How people discover Goffman is of interest, and so is the way their views change over time. He certainly caught your eye.

Piliavin: Yes. It was certainly not the kind of work that I did. As I said, I worked with Leon Festinger at the beginning of dissonance theory, and I was doing deception studies in the lab. I did one field study which eventually got published. There are no statistics in it at all; the only numbers there were about how long people were in their bomb shelters, how many of them were there, and so on. I really admire people who do that kind of work well, more so than before I did it myself.

Shalin: You felt intellectual affinities between your work and

Goffman's.

Piliavin: Right.

Shalin: Obviously, you did not meet Schuyler.

Piliavin: No. I didn't.

Shalin: You did hear about what had happened, I gather.

Piliavin: I also read the transcripts of Smelser's memoir.

Shalin: Did you see any other interviews?

Piliavin: No. What I did today was, I had been saying to myself, "I wonder what this envelope lying on Irv's desk is." I was trying to avoid doing something else having to do with money. And so I looked at it, and it was from Nevada. I thought that was odd – I didn't know that he knew anybody from UNLV. Expecting this to be something gambling related, I opened it up.

[**Laughter**]

Shalin: Perhaps some gambling debt.

Piliavin: Oh, no. My husband had done research on gambling. So I thought maybe somebody was asking his advice on some research. Then I opened it up, saw the letter and just called you immediately.

Shalin: Do you think Irv read my note to him and the materials I enclosed?

Piliavin: The envelope was ripped open. He must have seen what was inside. He left it on his desk rather than throwing it away, so it suggests that he was going to get back to you. [Libby apparently talked to him about it. She said that he thought he was going to have to write something and was putting it off.]

Shalin: Irv passed away precipitously.

Piliavin: He had been losing weight for about a year, but he had diabetes, and the doctor thought that might have been why he was losing weight. Then he started getting stomach pains, and that was in September. And on the 8th of October he was diagnosed with metastatic pancreatic cancer. On the 19th of November he died.

Shalin: I don't remember which other interviews I might have enclosed.

Piliavin: They were from people I didn't know.

Shalin: These are students of Erving or his colleagues.

Piliavin: Joseph Gusfield was not a student. He was older, I think. The name is familiar.

Shalin: He studied with Erving at the University of Chicago. Perhaps there was also an interview with Saul Mendlovitz?

Piliavin: No – Sherri Cavan, Carol Gardner, and Zerubavel.

Shalin: If you have a chance to look at these memoirs, you will see that people's memories differ sharply.

Piliavin: I am sure they do, because they were with him in different context and in different periods.

Shalin: That's what makes all these recollections interesting, and that is why your memories are so important. They cast new light on Erving's ways. Coming back to Schuyler, do you remember how you heard about her death?

Piliavin: Irv told me, my husband.

Shalin: Do you recall how he related to you the story?

Piliavin: I am sure that he told me that she was under the care of a psychiatrist, that she was an unhappy and disturbed person. I

don't think he went into any details. I probably filled in – people who commit suicide are usually depressed. I remember my husband saying she always had to do things differently. That's why everyone else jumped off the San Francisco Bay Bridge but she jumped off the other one.

Shalin: No further explanation about this unusual venue.

Piliavin: Nobody does this, nobody jumps off that bridge.

Shalin: No hunch as to why.

Piliavin: No. No, just because she was a different person and did things differently. Maybe that bridge had some meaning to her. I didn't know her.

Shalin: You said something I never heard before, that Erving conferred with Sky's psychiatrist who didn't take seriously Erving's concerns about his wife.

Piliavin: My husband told me that he had become increasingly concerned that she was suicidal and he called her psychiatrist with his concerns, and the psychiatrist basically blew him off, "No, no, no. She is not suicidal. Don't worry about it." And like the next day she jumped off the bridge.

Shalin: She committed suicide in April of '64, which means the interaction between Erving and Sky's psychiatrist could have been days before her death.

Piliavin: My husband knew him then.

Shalin: When did your husband come to Berkley?

Piliavin: 1959.

Shalin: OK, just about the time Erving moved there.

Piliavin: Yes, they were both assistant professors at the same time.

Shalin: Erving joined Berkeley in '58.

Piliavin: My Irv got his doctorate at Columbia University. I don't think he actually got his degree until '61, but he went to Berkeley. . . . I remember he told me he worked on his dissertation from like 10 at night and until 2 in the morning when the kids were asleep, while he was teaching from '59 till '61. I didn't meet him until '62; he had his degree by then.

Shalin: The story you relate, then, might go back to the early '64 when Erving grew increasingly concerned about Schuyler and her psychiatrist who did not take her conditions seriously enough.

Piliavin: That's what my husband told me.

Shalin: There is something on which I would like to hear your professional opinion. Are you familiar with Erving's book *Asylums*?

Piliavin: Oh, yes, of course.

Shalin: He paints there mental illness as a socially constructed phenomenon, with the victim sucked into the funnel of betrayal and warehoused in a metal institution.

Piliavin: I don't remember when that was published.

Shalin: It came out in 1961. Erving studied in St. Elizabeth's hospital, and according to people who knew him there, Jordan Scher one of them, Schuyler tried to commit suicide while Erving was doing his study at St. Elizabeth's.

Piliavin: Usually people don't succeed the first time, at least women don't.

Shalin: Right. According to some accounts, his early interest in mental illness was influenced by Schuyler's experience.

Piliavin: That is certainly possible.

Shalin: But then, after his wife committed suicide, he wrote an essay "The Insanity of Place." I don't know if you have seen it.

Piliavin: No, I've never seen it.

Shalin: This paper is written from a different vantage point. In *Asylums* Erving takes a patient's perspective, giving a moving account of degradation and indignities inmates suffer after being labeled insane. This latter paper is written from the standpoint of a person forced to live with a disturbed family member showing signs of psychosis. Mental illness is not just a social construct here but something that may have an organic component and reveal genuine marks of insanity.

Piliavin: Holy cow! I didn't read anything like that.

Shalin: That's my point. When I compared symptoms of mental illness described in this essay with various witness reports, I was startled to see how closely Erving's account dovetailed with the story of his wife. The "Insanity of Place" identifies psychosis with the sudden interest in voluntary work, and sure enough, Sky set up a private foundation for disadvantaged kid later on in her life. Erving cites the tendency of a psychotic to brag about one's illustrious ancestors, and that fits Schuyler's case, for she came from a very prominent family. And then the "insane" family member – that's the term Erving uses without any qualification – develops an undue interest in politics, political assassinations, and what not. And again, we know that Schuyler took close to heart Kennedy's assassination in 1963.

Piliavin: It's fascinating. Yes, I saw that.

Shalin: Do you have access to a computer?

Piliavin: Of course I do.

Shalin: I'll send you the link . . .

Piliavin: Do that.

Shalin: . . . to my exchange with Sherri Cavan on that subject. It is in the comments/dialogues section of the Goffman archives. Do you mind if I write down your email address?

Piliavin: No, that's fine. It's < . . . >.

Shalin: I got it. So what I did was create a chart which lists on one side the symptoms Erving describes and on the other the symptoms reported by those who knew both Sky and Goffman. I couldn't help thinking that "The Insanity of Place" is some sort of a message in the bottle. Clearly, Goffman encoded into this piece elements of his life. This is just one instance from Goffman's corpus which made me think that Goffman's work is crypto-autobiographical, starting with his first major publication "Symbols of Class Status" that he wrote while dating Schuyler, through *Presentation of Self* where he appears to generalize the experience of someone with an impostor complex, *Stigma* that lists the features of spoiled identity resembling his own . . .

Piliavin: "Short aging Jew" [laughing]

Shalin: . . . and then on to "The Insanity of Place" where he updates his account of mental illness following his wife's suicide, *Gender Advertisement* [which may be read as an effort to transcend his somewhat ambivalent attitude toward women scholars, and all the way to his presidential address where he alludes to the "art of becoming the pain in the ass"]. I don't want to push this argument too far at the moment but there is much to think about. What caught my ear was your husband's report that Erving was in contact with Sky's psychiatrist with whom he registered his concerns about her mental health but was not taken seriously.

Piliavin: Or sort of cooled out, as he [Goffman] would have said. I know that this is something my husband told me. I doubt very much that he would have made it up.

Shalin: No, of course not. It is extremely interesting what he had to say. Going back to Erving's interest in gambling, he researched

the subject closely, trained to be a dealer in Vegas, but didn't get the license, according to some accounts, because he was blacklisted in Reno where he played a lot.

Piliavin: Yes, I know.

Shalin: They were believed to be counting cards.

Piliavin: Yes, counting in black jack. My husband was thrown out of casinos in Vegas as well. In fact, during the year we were in Great Britain, he was barred from all the casinos in London.

Shalin: [**Laughing**] He must have been good at it. Could he count cards?

Piliavin: Oh, yes. He finally decided it was too much work and went back to poker. It was not fun.

Shalin: What you learned from your husband suggests that he didn't just study gambling as a sociologist; he also wanted to improve his skills.

Piliavin: I suspect so. I mean, he was a hell of a skier. He worked hard to be good at it. He was a kind of person who worked hard at being good at whatever he was interested in.

Shalin: Right, there might have been a confluence of interests that directed his attention. Some say that Sky was better at it than Erving, that they worked together a team.

Piliavin: Now, that could really get you blacklisted!

Shalin: I'll send you references to the relevant interviews.

Piliavin: My husband had been walked out of casinos.

Shalin: Your husband confirms that Erving didn't have a poker face.

Piliavin: He didn't.

Shalin: You mentioned a store owner who impressed Erving with his poker skills.

Piliavin: Freddy Lisker.

Shalin: And Erving paid homage to this guy's kills. He respected professionals in whatever area, even though he lacked skills himself.

Piliavin: He did so particularly because he wasn't good at it.

Shalin: I talked to Erving's sister and relatives and I learned that one of Erving's uncles was a bookie.

Piliavin: Aha!

Shalin: There was an interesting family dynamic there. To change the tangent, could you describe Erving's appearance? His height, the way he dressed, anything that is still in your memory.

Piliavin: He was very short. I am 5'9, and he was a lot shorter than me. . . . I would say 5'5 or 5'6. He skied quite well. He wasn't fat, he wasn't skinny, he was pretty well proportioned, he was a good athlete. I know he was a skier. He did kind of blend into the woodwork. He didn't really have many outstanding physical characteristics, which I thought probably made him a very good observer.

Shalin: . . . participant observer.

Piliavin: Observer. People wouldn't be paying attention to him very much. He wore sweaters a lot and the tweedy stuff. He dressed pretty well. I mean he did have money, but he didn't dress in any ostentatious kind of way. Good quality clothes but nothing classy. I tend not to notice things like that and could pretty easily be wrong. I have to be dragged kicking and screaming to shop. I'm just not interested in things like that [**laughing**]. I am a very atypical, shall we say, female person. The only time I shop is with my daughter. You kind of have to drag me. . . . I could be very wrong [about] the way he dressed.

Shalin: Anything about Erving's demeanor and self-presentation that you recall?

Piliavin: With me he was always Erving. He was very relaxed, he didn't like to go out to parties, pretty much stayed by himself or people he was close to. He was new to Philadelphia. You say he came in '68, I had been there since Fall of '67, and Irv came in like November of 67. He was studying with Latane at Columbia. He was on a post, post doc kind of thing. I think NSF was running it at the time; people in one academic applied to retrain in another field. That's how Irv and I got working on what we were best known for, studying how people reacted when someone collapsed in a subway car. He was in New York during the week and then he would come down and spend a weekend with me; then he moved in with me. I don't remember when he actually moved in with me – in the Winter '67-'68, probably then, just to save money. And then he would commute. My sense is Erving gravitated to Irv because he didn't know anybody else there. Here was someone from his past life he knew.

Shalin: Hew knew other people like Dell Hymes.

Piliavin: I don't know who that is.

Shalin: A linguist at Penn.

Piliavin: I guess he felt comfortable with Irv, and therefore came to feel comfortable with me.

Shalin: One reason I am interested in Erving's demeanor is because he knew the game of self-presentation so well that presenting himself in public might have posed a problem for him. He didn't want to come across as a phony.

Piliavin: That sounds reasonable. He just wasn't that way with us.

Shalin: With some people Erving was completely free of shtick, but with others. . . . Do you have any thoughts on Erving's Jewishness?

Piliavin: Well, he obviously wasn't religious; neither was my Irv; but I think he was quite intensely identified with being Jewish, like my husband was. I just wrote Irv's obituary and that's one of the things I said in there – that although he was not religious, he was pretty intensely Jewish. I think Erving was too, down underneath.

Shalin: Could you unpack this a bit? Was he culturally religious?

Piliavin: I don't know, maybe I just project it.

Shalin: Did he use Yiddishisms?

Piliavin: He did use Yiddishisms. He did. Of course he grew up in a small town in Canada where there were not a lot of Jews around. My husband's father grew up in Siberia. He didn't grow up with Yiddish. They wouldn't have shared that because my husband didn't know it.

Shalin: I hail from Russia as well.

Piliavin: I am hearing an accent, I just wasn't identifying it. Irv's father came in the 1910s. My husband was 81 when he died. His father came over to avoid being drafted by the Czar's army to fight against the Bolsheviks. His father, my husband's grandfather had been pressed into the army at the age of 10 and served 25 years in that capacity. He heard what it was like and he wasn't going to have that happen again.

Shalin: Erving's mother left Russia around 1914, Erving's father a few years later.

Shalin: So they had that in common.

Shalin: I have been trying to figure out how growing up in the family of Jewish immigrants might have affected Erving.

Piliavin: Oh, yes. Certainly the paranoia that Smelser mentioned – I find that characteristic of a lot of Jews. And with good reasons – they always had to look over their shoulder for the next

pogrom. They had to adapt to the constant threat. So it's not just a paranoia . . .

Shalin: Just because you are paranoid doesn't mean somebody out there is not trying to get you.

Piliavin: Yes.

[Laughter]

Shalin: What about Erving's politics – did you get any sense of it?

Piliavin: I have no sense of it at all.

Shalin: He never indicated any political preferences.

Piliavin: Not in my memory, no. We have been intensely liberal, Irv and I. I don't remember our ever talking politics with Goffman. I don't have the greatest memory in the world. That's why it is really too bad you could not talk to Irv who had a much better memory than I do.

Shalin: It is unlikely Irv had any letters from Erving.

Piliavin: I doubt it. He tended to throw everything away.

Shalin: He was not into keeping archives.

Piliavin: Yes, he emails, and he didn't keep emails from others . . . he was not at all sentimental about things.

Shalin: Somebody suggested that the Berkeley student movement was among the reasons Erving left California. It was not a good influence on Erving's son.

Piliavin: It is perfectly possible. My husband was one of the people who would be called in the middle of the night to come down and witness the police beating them in the heads. As I said, I did not know him very well at that point; we were colleagues. We didn't do a lot talking about politics. We were doing some research

together. But yes, at Berkeley he was very much involved with student organizations.

Shalin: But not Goffman.

Piliavin: No, I don't think so. I said that I read what Smelser wrote where he talks about Goffman sitting at that meeting and making sarcastic remarks about pretty much everything. That was news to me. I really had no knowledge of what political opinions Goffman had.

Shalin: Yes, but this is a personal kind of griping, not politics in the traditional sense. Erving didn't take anyone at face value. He kept a running commentary on everybody's shtick. It didn't matter to him whether you were a Marxist, a liberal, or a conservative – he was out there to expose your self-conceit. You didn't meet Erving's son, did you?

Piliavin: I may have. He was living in the house with Erving, so I might have. If I did, it didn't leave any major impression on me.

Shalin: From '64 on Erving was a single parent, raising Tom by himself.

Piliavin: I don't remember this.

Shalin: You said there were a few parties, mostly at your place.

Piliavin: I never went to a party at his place. I don't think he ever gave parties.

Shalin: But you visited his house once or twice.

Piliavin: Yes. I remember once. I remember commenting on the painting, I remember him showing us how he kept his [files]. We may have been there only once.

Shalin: You don't remember the occasion that brought you there.

Piliavin: No. It was just us. There was no one else.

Shalin: Gillian was not in the picture yet.

Piliavin: No, no. We left in the Spring of '70.

Shalin: From what you describe, I gather it was quite a house.

Piliavin: It was a great house. We could have killed for that house [laughing].

Shalin: And there were paintings in the house.

Piliavin: There was this one painting by . . .

Shalin: Was it Degas?

Piliavin: No, no. Wait a minute, I am going to google. I am sitting here and . . .

Shalin: [Laughing] You can enter "horseracing impressionism." I think it might be Degas. He used to paint ballet dancers, horse races. . . . Anyway, there was one genuine impressionist painting.

Piliavin: Yes.

Shalin: Any other art work.

Piliavin: In the dining room, I know he was showing off the Chippendale chairs that he got. I remember particularly how high the ceilings were and how short he was. I was thinking to myself, "You know, maybe this is the way he likes to stage himself against this fancy house." I remember thinking that.

Shalin: And the connection is that against this glorious stylish backdrop . . .

Piliavin: Yes, sort of, "This is who I am. I am a kind of a classy person" [laughing]. I think growing up the way he did, he kind of felt he had something to prove.

Shalin: I am interested in your observations on Erving's self-presentation, his way with men and women. I am following here the ancients' injunction to track the person's *vita activa*, *vita contemplativa*, and *vita voluptuosa*. That's to say, a full-blooded portrait must give you an idea of what the person said, what he did, and what his passions were. Erving's passions, his emotions, his food preferences . . . you mentioned Erving's liking spicy food and that caught my ear, because he died of cancer . . .

Piliavin: I know, stomach cancer.

Shalin: . . . and I'm wondering if his preference for hot food had anything to do with that.

Piliavin: Well, I remember thinking that when he died of that. He certainly was very fond of that kind of food.

Shalin: Coming back to Erving the man, he was a bachelor at the time.

Piliavin: During the time in Philadelphia it is conceivable that he was celibate because of his son. He was a teenager, right?

Shalin: Yes, Tom was in the fifth grade when his mother died. Erving raised him by himself all the way through medical school.

Piliavin: Oh, his son is a doctor.

Shalin: Yes. So no other observations or thoughts on this side of Erving's life.

Piliavin: He certainly never brought any women to our house. It was always just him. I don't know what's with his son – if he was in the fifth grade in '64, and we are talking about '68 when he was 15, old enough to be left home by himself. The kid could be left at home and Erving would come to see us.

Shalin: I am going back to Erving's filing system, which I find fascinating. Before Erving died he sealed his archives, with the

explanation that he wanted to be judged on the basis of his publications. He had every right to do so, even though I have always felt uneasy that someone who studied people's backstage life would be so averse to letting others peek behind the curtain in his case. He made a good deal about other people's archives . . .

Piliavin: Yes.

Shalin: . . . yet he cut access to his own. Notice that he did not destroy his archives. Some of it presumably exists. The vast filing system Erving created is all the more intriguing in this respect. No one ever saw a single page of his field notes, I understand, so it is remarkable that there might be a treasure chest of his notes preserved someplace. The archives you saw were in a separate room?

Piliavin: It was a separate room with floor-to-ceiling file cabinets and tall book shelves.

Shalin: It was like a study and library?

Piliavin: Yes. Yes. I don't remember if there was a desk in there.

Shalin: And Erving took time showing you this filing arrangement.

Piliavin: Yes! I don't know why.

Shalin: Was he saying anything along the way?

Piliavin: I don't remember. I am sorry, I wish my memory was better – it was Degas!

Shalin: I would think so. I recall Degas' horse track racing images.

Piliavin: It was a horse race, a bunch of horses at a racetrack.

Shalin: And the size of it?

Piliavin: It was a good size, three by four feet.

Shalin: So Erving took pain to show you around, explain the categories under which he filed his materials.

Piliavin: [I don't think he really showed us that in any detail. He just opened a few file drawers.]

Shalin: About that dinner with Erving and Gillian . . .

Piliavin: When we had Chinese food.

Shalin: . . . that was in Berkeley.

Piliavin: It was in Berkeley.

Shalin: All of you converged on Berkeley somehow. Do you remember what the occasion was?

Piliavin: I don't remember.

Shalin: And Erving remarried at the time.

Piliavin: I am pretty sure he was married because, as I said, I may wrongly remember that the baby was there. If it was '82, we might have been taking my son to college because that was the year he started at Berkeley.

Shalin: Given that Erving was quite sick by the Summer of '82, it would be unlikely that he travelled to California just a few months before his death.

Piliavin: It probably was the year before that. I have no idea why we would be in Berkeley. Maybe we didn't go there to see him, no.

Shalin: You don't recall going to Berkeley to see Erving specifically.

Piliavin: I doubt it. I didn't typically take children when I went to conferences. My daughter was with me; I think my son was. I don't know. My son's father lives in Berkeley. He could have been with him. I mean, I could easily ask him if he remembers it. [He

doesn't remember ever meeting Goffman. And he has an excellent memory.]

Shalin: I don't want to impose on you, but if you could check with him . . .

Piliavin: I know my daughter would remember. She and I had talked about it many times [**laughing**].

Shalin: Maybe she has memories of her own. What is her interest?

Piliavin: [She is] a lawyer.

Shalin: She didn't follow in your footsteps.

Piliavin: She majored in sociology, and she is not a happy lawyer. She frequently says she should have ended up in academia. . . . She wrote a very good undergraduate honors thesis on racism in the criminal justice system.

Shalin: Maybe it is not too late. You know, there is sociology of law.

Piliavin: She would very much like to get into teaching that. She could teach criminology and almost every sociology department in the country needs someone to teach criminology. But California is not the ideal place to be finding an academic job.

Shalin: Coming back to that meeting, you had a get-together at the restaurant, with your family, Erving, Gillian, and perhaps Alice present.

Piliavin: I am beginning to doubt if that was really the case. Maybe they were saying that she was pregnant.

Shalin: And you understood that Erving and Gillian were married.

Piliavin: I am sure they were married.

Shalin: And the time of the year – it might have been hard to pinpoint out there in California.

Piliavin: If we were in California, it was probably the Summer because we held jobs for the rest of the year.

Shalin: Your memory of that meal was that Erving was his usual jovial self.

Piliavin: Yes, the usual I-am-with-people-I-am-comfortable-with Erving. He did not, as far as I could ever tell, put on with us.

Shalin: No airs, no sarcasm.

Piliavin: No. Sometimes he would say snide things about other people like, "Why these smart people would do such stupid things."

Shalin: That was last time you met Erving.

Piliavin: Yes.

Shalin: How did you hear about Erving's death?

Piliavin: Since I was in a sociology department I suspect it became instant news in the department.

Shalin: He was the ASA president at the time.

Piliavin: Yes. He never got to give his address.

Shalin: There was no particular story line.

Piliavin: Just, you know, that he died of stomach cancer.

Shalin: You don't know if your husband was in touch with Erving after that meal.

Piliavin: I would have no idea.

Shalin: Going back to Erving's presentation at Wisconsin – did you attend it?

Piliavin: Yes, I went there.

Shalin: Any recollections about Erving as a public speaker?

Piliavin: It was a peculiar kind of talk because it was mostly just narration accompanying a lot of pictures. He was being basically very anthropological. He was trying to illustrate his ideas about gender relations, how gender relations are presented in mass media, going all the way back to paintings in the Middle Ages, relative positioning of men's and women's bodies, and things like that. It was one slide after another in which he was trying to make his argument for that. I don't remember much more. . . . It struck me as not terribly original. Like a lot of his stuff, as soon as you see it, it's kind of obvious. We didn't give him enough credit for being the one who actually pointed it out.

Shalin: The hardest thing to see is what everybody looks at and nobody notices.

Piliavin: Exactly. It took a while to digest what it was. It was typical of his work.

Shalin: Were there questions and answers?

Piliavin: I don't remember.

Shalin: And the audience reaction?

Piliavin: I have this visual memory of the large dark auditorium.

Shalin: How many people were there?

Piliavin: It was full. I mean he was famous.

Shalin: Sure, by then he was the most quoted sociologist of his generation, I believe. . . . Did you have any meals with him on that visit?

Piliavin: We ate dinner with him because he didn't want to see anyone else. What else could he have done. . . . I am assuming we did. All he wanted to do is to come in, give his talk, and leave and see Betsy Draine. I suppose it is possible he ate dinner with her. I am sorry I don't remember.

Shalin: And her last name is spelled D-r-a-i-n?

Piliavin: D-r-a-i-n, and I think, "e."

Shalin: You are not sure he actually saw her.

Piliavin: I know he saw her.

Shalin: He did.

Piliavin: He did, yes.

Shalin: You don't know if she is still there.

Piliavin: I don't even know if she is still alive, although I am pretty sure she was younger than we. . . . I am coming up with a lot of things under "Betsy Draine." She wrote something with [?]. She would have been that kind of English person.

Shalin: You didn't know her personally.

Piliavin: I met her on one occasion. She was on the faculty at Wisconsin. Let's see, I am putting her into . . . "B. Draine, Professor Emeritus, College of Letters and Sciences, English."

Shalin: Is there an email address?

Piliavin: Yes, < . . . >

Shalin: I will find Doug Maynard on the web.

Piliavin: His email address is < . . . > [**laughing**].

Shalin: I am most grateful for everything you can share, and I realize I am wearing you down.

Piliavin: It is fun to talk about something that's fun because I am still not in great emotional shape.

Shalin: I can imagine. It's been just a few weeks.

Piliavin: Month and a half.

Shalin: There must have been some kindred spirit in both of you. You have memories that take you back . . .

Piliavin: Yes.

Shalin: . . . and children.

Piliavin: Between the two of us we have four kids and two of them live in Southern California.

Shalin: You studied at Berkeley yourself?

Piliavin: No, I already had my Ph.D. by the time I went to Berkeley in 1962.

Shalin: So you wouldn't have much to do with people like Herbert Blumer . . .

Piliavin: No. I know who he is.

Shalin: . . . or Neil Smelser.

Piliavin: I knew Smelser because Irv knew him and my former husband was best friends with his little brother.

Shalin: Anybody else from the social sciences?

Piliavin: I knew Charlie Glock.

Shalin: Oh, he contributed a memoir about Erving.

Piliavin: He hired me with a fresh Ph.D. out of Stanford at Leon Festinger's suggestion. I never even had an interview.

Shalin: In the sociology department?

Piliavin: No, as a research psychologist to work on a research project.

Shalin: Anything that stands in your mind about Charlie Glock? Again you can edit out whatever you feel is appropriate when you go over the transcript.

Piliavin: Is he still alive?

Shalin: Yes, he sent me his memoir about Goffman and Blumer. I will send you the link.

Piliavin: I don't think I want to say anything about Charlie.

Shalin: Sure.

Piliavin: I don't have very positive feelings about the man.

Shalin: OK. I certainly understand. What about Neil Smelser?

Piliavin: I don't know him that well. I knew his brother whose first name I am now blocking on. He was a psychologist. He was a good friend of my husband at the time. I knew him better, but again, I don't remember him very well.

Shalin: Your memories of the psychology department at Penn are probably ambivalent.

Piliavin: I had some good friends there.

Shalin: Did you know people like Paul Rozin?

Piliavin: Oh, yes. I knew him quite well. I like him a lot.

Shalin: I have been communicating with him.

Piliavin: He does fascinating work. I love his work on disgust.

Shalin: His naturalistic orientation – we should observe before we lock ourselves into a theoretical schema – is akin to Goffman's.

Piliavin: Yes. I am not sure he was always that way. I think he came to that when he started studying odors and stuff. Yes, I was friends with him and his first wife.

Shalin: He was influenced by the work of, what's the name of this psychologist – Asch? He was doing research on conformism.

Piliavin: Solomon Asch.

Shalin: Yes.

Piliavin: No, he was not there. Asch worked at Duke or North Carolina.

Shalin: Paul might have done some collaborative work with him.

Piliavin: It's possible.

Shalin: Anyone else in psychology who might have known Erving?

Piliavin: I would like to be of help. I find this kind of historical work very interesting. I was contacted a couple of years ago by a Frenchman who was studying the history of the study of altruism.

Shalin: Do you remember his name?

Piliavin: His name is Phillipe. He is an economist, actually. I found it to be amusing to be part of history since none of us think of themselves as that old. But I suppose when one is dead one is certainly a reasonable candidate for archival work.

Shalin: I started with Erving, reached out to his colleagues and relatives, then realized that the project can use a broader historical context and began querying people about their teachers, scholars of that era, people's graduate school experiences, and so on. Any one of your mentors you care to commemorate? Who made a mark on your coming of age as an intellectual?

Piliavin: Well, two people are critical. The first one is Nowlis at the University of Rochester where I was an undergraduate.

Shalin: Pardon me, who is this?

Piliavin: Nowlis – N-o-w-l-i-s – Vincent. He refused to allow me to just become a housewife. I owe him my entire career. That man just nagged me and nagged me and nagged me until I broke my engagement and went to graduate school. When I told him that's what I was going to do, he said, "Oh, I hope it wasn't anything I said!?"

Shalin: [Laughing]

Piliavin: I said, "Of course it was something you said!!"

[Laughter]

Shalin: And thank you very much.

Piliavin: And thank you very much, yes. And then there is the man he sent me to work with – Leon Festinger, for four years, from 1958 until 1962.

Shalin: How was he as a teacher?

Piliavin: Well, I would say a lot of people would probably compare him to Erving in a sense that he didn't suffer fools gladly. People either loved him or hated him. I loved him. I think he may have been easier on female students, emotionally, a little bit. He pulled punches a little with us, like he didn't scream at us as he probably screamed at some people. I don't think he was any easier on us intellectually; he just had a different style with us. He taught me to

think. He was incredibly supportive of women, which was rare in those days. He once said to me that he wanted to develop the first really good female social psychologist, and years later I asked him if he thought he succeeded in that. He said, "I have you and I have Elaine."

Shalin: Elaine?

Piliavin: Elaine Hatfield. She was Elaine Walster for many years, and she is probably best known for her work under that name.

Shalin: Walfter?

Piliavin: Walster: W-a-l-s-t-e-r. She and I are almost the same age.

Shalin: And her name changed . . .

Piliavin: Then her name changed back to her maiden name "Hatfield." Walster was her married name.

Shalin: So Leon honored you as a distinguished social psychologist.

Piliavin: Well, I mean, to the extent that he was discriminating between social psychologists and female social psychologists. I doubt he would have thought of me as one of his best students because I never come up with any real paradigm changing research like some people did, Eliot Aronson, for example. He did more important things. I have had, I think, a reasonably successful career.

Shalin: What was he like in a classroom?

Piliavin: He hated teaching [**laughing**]. He was not doing any lecturing at all during the time I knew him. This was a concession made to him in terms of where his skills actually lay. His skills lay in mentoring graduate student, and at that he was brilliant. He was not a good lecturer, and he hated it. He would do almost anything to avoid teaching.

Shalin: And he was allowed to skip teaching?

Piliavin: He had grants a lot. I am sure he bought off his time. I liked that story why Goffman may have left Berkeley, that they would not allow him a half-time load without buying it off. And of course, the kind of work he did would not have been conducive to getting grants. But Leon did get grants, he got grants all the time.

Shalin: Which university was he in?

Piliavin: Stanford. So he never had to teach undergraduates. He enjoyed working with graduate students, he liked the challenge, he liked the one on one. He used a sort of Socratic Method. That's what I mean when I told you that he taught me how to think. Everybody was working on dissonance theory in those days. So you would go to him with some kind of idea about a new piece of research testing his theory, and the first thing out of his mouth would be, "OK, what is dissonant with what?" And then he would make you back up and go through a specific theoretical sequence of steps of why you were predicting what you were predicting. Specifically, why did you think something would create dissonance, how this dissonance could be reduced. He did not put up with sloppy causal thinking, and I always have been really grateful to him for that and was trying to do the same thing with my students. I also remember the best . . . I had one publication with him. My first year project – they did not do Masters' thesis in those days, at least not if you worked with Leon. Leon used to say that a Master's degree was only for someone who didn't have confidence in their abilities. That's how I got out of there in four years, I didn't do a Masters. I did the first year project, which turned into an article with him. I passed prelims, I did the dissertation, I was out of there in four years. But when I took the first draft of this article to him, I gave it to him, he put it away, he read it, then we had a meeting, I sat down and he said, "This is very good for a first draft." And then he never said another nice thing during the entire meeting. Everything else was criticism. I went away feeling really good, because of the way he started out. And I remember that and I always tried to do the same thing with my students, find something good to say first.

Shalin: Give positive reinforcement and then take up critical points.

Piliavin: Exactly, exactly. He taught me how to write succinctly, clearly. He taught me everything you needed to know to be an academic. He taught me how to teach grad students.

Shalin: And he let students to come up with the problem or suggested one?

Piliavin: He did both. Sometimes he would assign you something, but he encouraged us to come up with our own ideas. The fun thing to him was in thinking with his students. He had meetings, as I recall, every Tuesday night. I may have the day of the week wrong. It was an extension . . . are you familiar with the life of Kurt Lewin?

Shalin: His work, not his life.

Piliavin: OK, there is a beautiful biography of him, called *The Practical Theorist*.

Shalin: Interesting. I would like to see it. Biocritical studies I conduct focus on the interfaces of life and theory. The Goffman project is one example.

Piliavin: The way Lewin worked with his students was the way Festinger worked with his. He had a group called the *quasselstrippe*, which apparently in German means the unwinding of the string. They would seat around in a coffee house in Berlin, talk about ideas, and follow the implications of people's ideas. And that's exactly what we did at Leon's house, except that it was over the beer rather than coffee. Everybody would have a chance to be the person whose ideas were to be worked on a given night.

Shalin: Was he open to disagreement?

Piliavin: Oh, sure! Sure. You'd have to defend it [**laughing**].

Shalin: Some teachers are not so keen on disagreement.

Piliavin: Oh, no, no. He loved that. I remember one time sitting in the kitchen . . . no I went into the kitchen, probably to get another beer. We would have the meeting and then we would sit around and drink and have more informal discussions. I found him sitting on one kitchen counter, and Eliot Aronson who was at the time his most senior graduate student (this has to have been 1958-1959, my first year and Eliot's last year), they were sitting, looking at each other, their legs dangling off the kitchen counter, and they were screaming at each other at the top of their lungs, "You stupid bastard!!! You f---ing idiot!!"

Shalin: [Laughing]

Piliavin: And they had those big smiles on their faces. I came from a New England protestant family where shouting was not acceptable. Definitely not acceptable. These guys were Jews, OK? The emotions are part of the culture. I was totally shocked. I mean I didn't understand what was going on, and it took me quite a while to figure out what was going on, and that it was really what Leon liked. I tried to remake myself a little bit that way and never succeeded.

Shalin: Your upbringing wouldn't let you.

Piliavin: Yes. In fact, Leon once said to me – I think it was in the second year of my work with him, "You know, Jane, I almost gave up on you." Of course that took me aback. I said, "Why?!" He said, "Well, you hardly ever said anything. But when you did, it was usually intelligent."

Shalin: [Laughing]

Piliavin: And you know, I was not someone who was brought up to put myself forward. I did learn. I learned that if I had an idea to say it, because I remember many times the first few seminars with him sitting there, thinking about an idea and censoring it as not smart enough, then have someone else say it, and hear, "That's

very interesting!" Eventually I learned to stop thinking that what I was doing wasn't important.

Shalin: You learned to take the floor and stake your ground. Did Leon help you find your first job?

Piliavin: He got me my first job. He and Charlie Glock were at a cocktail party, and he [Glock] hired me sight unseen. Charlie was talking about a research project that he had, and he needed someone to run this research project. He was despairing to find the right person, and Leon apparently said to him, "I've got the girl for you."

Shalin: And you stayed in that position . . .

Piliavin: I stayed in that position for four years, then I had one year job at Mills College, '66-'67, and then I went to the University of Pennsylvania, '67-'70, in the psychology department. The only time in my life I had a tenure tack job in a psychology department because of my psychology degree.

Shalin: Did you keep up with Leon afterwards.

Piliavin: We were in some contact, not much. I kicked myself because I did not go to his memorial service.

Shalin: He died . . .

Piliavin: He died at the age of 69, he was born in 1919, that means if you add - '88.

Shalin: Well, Jane this is wonderful. Those things fascinate me for all sorts of reason. I dedicated to Igor Kon, my teacher, a volume *Pragmatism and Democracy* that is coming out. Your memories are so wonderfully suffused with your emotions and wisdom of time, as well as with the feelings of pain. This is precious. I am most grateful for your memories. I will transcribe our conversation and send you the transcript - is this the same address where I sent the package? Actually, I can attach the file now that I have your email address.

Piliavin: Yes, attach it as an email.

Shalin: That would be the easiest.

Piliavin: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

Shalin: And then you will look it up, delete, augment, add more memories. If you can check with your kids to see if they have any independent memories, that would be great.

Piliavin: All right. When Allyn was three to six, at the time I was in Philadelphia, he was very smart and aware little boy. He may have memories of Goffman from a child's perspective. If he was at that lunch . . . I remember it was sunny, but it could have been dinner because it was summer, that was on Solano Avenue in Berkeley, if he was there, he definitely would have memories. [I said earlier that he has no memories of Goffman.]

Shalin: And your daughter?

Piliavin: I know she was there. I took her out to the street with me when I had my burning mouth. I remember that very clearly. [The reason I revised my timeline is because she remembers it so well and she is sure she was no older than 8.]

Shalin: You might be surprised what is stuck in their memories

Piliavin: Aha.

Shalin: Thank you so much.

Piliavin: OK. You are welcome.

Shalin: Take care.

Piliavin: All right. Bye.