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Dmitri Shalin Interview with Magali Sarfatti-Larson about Erving Goffman entitled "Goffman Was One of the Most Memorable People I Have Met in the Academia Because He Was Not an Academic"

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Remembering Erving Goffman

Magali Sarfatti-Larson: Goffman Was One of the Most Memorable People I Have Met in the Academia Because He Was Not an Academic

This conversation with Dr. Magali Sarfatti-Larson, Professor Emeritus at Temple University, was recorded over the phone on December 9, 2009. After Dmitri Shalin transcribed the interview, Dr. Sarfatti-Larson 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 02-10-10]

Larson: Hello.

Shalin: Greetings, Magali, this is Dmitri again.

Larson: Hi, Dmitri. Let's see, I've got a cup of coffee here. . . .
. Let's see if I can hear you with the speaker phone on and you can hear me, OK?

Shalin: I hear you well.

Larson: Wait a minute, I'm going to try the speaker phone. That's nice. I don't have to use my hands.

Shalin: Sure.

Larson: Do you hear me now?

Shalin: Yes, I hear you well.

Larson: I hear you too. So, do you want to ask me things?

Shalin: First, let me ask you if it would be OK for me to record our conversation and then send you the transcript for your revisions, redacting, and. . . .

Larson: Yes, absolutely.

Shalin: Now, there is no right or wrong way to start. I could rattle a few questions that are of interest to me, and you can choose any tangent.

Larson: I can tell you how I met Erving.

Shalin: That would be good.

Larson: I saw him for the first time in Berkeley. It was a party at David Apter's house. He is the man who brought me to the United States. He gave me a research job and I came to the United States to work with him. So, I was not studying, I was only doing research. At Apter's house, there was this man sitting by himself on a couch. I didn't know who he was, but I am very polite, and we were in a group of people who spoke Spanish, and gesturally I opened towards him, trying to invite him to come in because he was alone. And he smiled, he understood immediately what that was about but he did not come. And then a friend arrived, and she said to him very warmly, "Hello!" I said, "Who's that man?" And she said, "It's Goffman." I knew she was taking a class with him because she was a graduate student. So, that was the first time I saw him and then shortly thereafter he left for Penn.

Some former students of his, especially John Irwin, and Jackie Wiseman and other people who knew him told me to see him on their behalf . . . When I first came to Penn, Frank Furstenberg invited us to dinner. I remember he invited an Italian physicist, Gino Segre and his then wife, and Erving, and us. We went to a Chinese place that they knew, and Erving behaved atrociously [**laughing**], making lewd jokes about a shrimp. I don't remember what he said, and then he asked me about wine, what wine I preferred. I said, "I don't know." He insisted, and I said, "Look, the only name I remember is a Burgundy, Nuits-St-Georges." And he said something lewd again, perhaps of the type "It's like saying, I only have sex in elevators." Yes, something of that sort. And I looked at him very surprised and said, "Erving, where I come from, you don't have to know about wine. If you know, it's OK, but it does not add anything." And he looked at me and said, "Touché."

Yes, we had that dinner, which may have been when I had come to interview, or maybe later. But of course, many friends of mine in San Francisco had been his students.

[Laughter]

Larson: After that, he liked me. He came very rarely to those crazy department meetings. He was much more in anthropology. He could do what he wanted because he was a Benjamin Franklin Professor. We went to the Italian market together, and I loved his company. He was fun, but he made me buy the cheapest things that were terrible. He had no car, so I took him . . . actually we did it once or twice, I don't remember. I was not enchanted because I was very poor. He made me buy these tomatoes, this box of tomatoes. I told him, "Erving, they don't look very good. They look completely overripe." He said, "Yes, a little bit, but look at the price." When I left him at this house, he said, "Leave the tomatoes here, you can pick them up later." But he picked all the best and he gave me all the bad ones **[laughing]**.

Shalin: Was it a joke or did he do it unself-consciously?

Larson: I don't know, but he did pick all the best ones **[laughing]**. Besides being cheap, they . . . anyhow, we bought them. I was not going to argue. He would show up at the department of sociology parties, and he was funny. He didn't like the atmosphere of the department, which ingratiated him with me a lot more. I didn't like it either. So, we had a very cordial relationship then. I could see that he liked me, among other things because I wasn't in awe of him. I thought he was extraordinary, but in my experience he was just as extraordinary as a human being, although my husband made a remarkable comment. . . . My husband knew who Erving Goffman was, he had heard about him, but he is an architect, he couldn't care less. He was asked, "Oh, you've met the great Erving Goffman, how was he?" Charlie thought for a while and said, "Precocious" **[laughing]**, which was very funny because Erving had acted like a bad child, saying lewd things, things that were not very funny. I don't know whom he wanted to shock.

What had happened then was that I came to Penn under false pretenses. When I arrived, my junior faculty colleagues told me that Renée Fox and her circle had not really wanted me there. Or in the beginning maybe she did, and later she didn't because her friends convinced her that my work was anti-Parsons or something like that. She had managed to pay me very little, the least possible that I would have accepted. All assistant professors were treated badly, except for those whom she had chosen. I continued receiving job offers, and I didn't know how to handle them well. I went to tell Renée and she said she would write in my file that I had a job offer from Northwestern and one from San Diego, repeated job offers from San Diego. But she did not do anything about my salary.

So, one evening Joe Gusfield was in town and Erving called me and said, "You know, you should really get to meet him because they want you to go there, he hasn't met you, and he would like to meet you." Gusfield wasn't there when I interviewed at San Diego during my early job search. "So why don't you come and we'll have dinner." We had a little baby, so my husband couldn't come since it was a last minute thing and we did not have a baby-sitter. Only I went.

It was a remarkable evening. I arrived early. Erving and I sat near his big window waiting for Joe who had gone to visit Philip Rieff. They were all from the old Chicago circle of friends. And Erving started talking about death. I cannot tell now, too much has happened since, but he impressed me because of the way he was cutting into a subject that is rarely talked about in America. I was impressed by his capacity of noticing subtle or deep things. I should have written things down, but I was too busy. I was an assistant professor with a small baby, and I didn't know that Erving was going to die so soon. He may have said things with feeling, about how we ignore the inevitability of death.

I moved to Temple because I was so unhappy at Penn. The University of California at San Diego continued wanting me to go, but I was not going to cross the country without tenure. I thought it was crazy. Some people there didn't want me. Bad feelings, you know. There were a lot of bad feelings about the people of the

sixties, people who were thought to be Marxists, people who were leftists. There really were a lot of bad feelings going on there. It was strange to me, because I came from Berkeley where those things were the norm [**laughing**]. It was strange for me to feel that people could be ostracized because of their political positions. Well, Erving certainly didn't do that, but I was unhappy at Penn.

Now, one of our great mutual friends was Aaron Cicourel. Aaron came to see Erving in the early '80s, and that is when I found out that Erving was very ill, that Erving was dying. Aaron came for dinner to our house; he had spent a day with him. I felt at the time that I didn't know him [Goffman] well enough to go see him. In the meantime, when Alvin Gouldner died, I went to the memorial and I came back with Erving on the train. He was cross with Merton. He said Merton was such a hypocrite.

Shalin: Why?

Larson: Merton had read very beautiful letters that he had received from Alvin, the exchanges that he had with Alvin. And Erving said, "Yes, but he wouldn't give him a job. He left Alvin hanging, he let him suffer to find a job and he wouldn't get him one. And that was Bob." I had gone up to Merton to tell him that it was very beautiful what he had done, that reading of letters, and then he pursued me to have me edit this correspondence. Why me? [**laughing**]

Shalin: Merton pursued you?

Larson: Yes. [He said], "You are the ideal person." Of course not! I knew nothing about New York's intellectual circles, I had never lived in New York, I was never a City College person – why me? I was a relatively recent arrival to America, there were so many things that I would not have understood. So, that's what Erving at the time said. He was rather angry at the hypocrisy of Merton.

I am so sorry we couldn't have been closer after I left Penn. He didn't encourage closeness, but in my view, in our encounters he

cut to the bone. He was very comfortable and comforting for me, because he was just like an Argentinean. There people talk on a much deeper level than here. Erving could do both things – be totally unbearable like at that [first] dinner we had with him where he wanted to shock people, or create an encounter on a level that is unusual in this country. I cannot do a “me and Erving Goffman” kind of thing, but I think he was one of the most memorable persons I have met in academia because he was not an academic. He was another thing. And I really have the impression that many of the young people who were coming up from obscurity tried to emulate that cultivated marginality of Erving’s, but they didn’t have the depth.

Shalin: This is remarkable, Magali. I am listening and taking notes – would it be OK for us to back up a bit? When did you come to the U.S.?

Larson: I came to the United States on November 2, 1964. It was an election day.

Shalin: From where?

Larson: I came from Paris.

Shalin: Were you born there?

Larson: No, I was born in Italy, and because my father was Jewish, we left for Uruguay in 1938. The language that is closest to me is Spanish, though I went to French school. Then after the war, in 1951, we went to France. But then, my father went back to Argentina because of his career. He had – not a checkered, but somewhat accidental career. We went back to Argentina, and that’s where I took a degree in sociology. . . . It was a very important phase of my life. It was a very interesting phase of my life. I met Cicourel briefly, but then we became friends in California, and I also met Irving Louis Horowitz who had come to teach there. Well, in 1961 I thought a lot about what I was going to do. My teacher from Argentina was at Berkeley at that time, and they had offered me a fellowship, but I was sick and had to abandon the idea. I couldn’t go. I went to a sanitarium in Haute Savoie. I think I talked about it

to Erving. But you shouldn't think that I am some hidden best friend of Erving Goffman [**laughing**].

Shalin: No, of course not.

Larson: I had four memorable encounters with him, and I think he liked me, and I really felt respected by him. I had the impression after that episode with the name of wines that he was trying to . . . I don't know how to say it in English, it is "désarçonner" in French – throw people off their saddles.

Shalin: I see, it's like taking someone out of their comfort zone.

Larson: That's right. He couldn't do that to me because I looked at him and said, "Hey, I don't have to know about wine" [**laughing**].

Shalin: And he appreciated your forthrightness. You were not intimidated.

Larson: No, it was a question of class. We talked about that when we went to the market together. He saw those Italian ladies with their black dresses and their pearl necklaces, wearing all the same thing and bossing their servants around. And I said, "No, not necessarily all like that. My mother was not like that." We talked about the kind of persona that we presented.

Shalin: The story of your life trajectory is fascinating. Who was your father?

Larson: My father was a banker. My father was a Jew, but a rich Jew from a family that was rich, pro-fascist. My grandmother was a big deal in Italian culture. I don't know if Erving knew that or not, but I'll tell you, he was not an American. He was a Canadian and very marginal himself, and he knew perfectly well things most Americans do not know about. He understood them perfectly well; you did not have to tell him. So that made me more comfortable.

Shalin: Did your father encourage your studies?

Larson: Yes, always. He always understood that I would study.

Shalin: He was supportive.

Larson: Yes, but my parents didn't like sociology. They thought it was superficial and ridiculous, they preferred history.

Shalin: Sociology was a kind of parvenu science.

Larson: Well, not only that. Let's face it, history is much more of a discipline, you know, with a methodology, [while] sociology is a lot more superficial [**laughing**]. I was talking with one of my best friends at a dinner . . . he said he knew you well. Do you know Doug [Porpora]?

Shalin: I don't think so.

Larson: What do you do, Dmitri?

Shalin: Well, I am in a sociology department at the University of Nevada, but my training was in philosophy.

Larson: That's why Doug knows your work very well.

Shalin: Oh, thank you. My work is on pragmatism, I am interested in sociology of emotions, and more recently I started something called "International Biography Initiative." It began as an interview project with intellectuals who came of age during the Khrushchev's Thaw and then expanded to this country. Erving Goffman emerged as an extraordinary figure.

Larson: You knew him?

Shalin: No, I never met him. I came to this country in 1976, enrolled at Columbia University where, incidentally, I worked for a while with Robert Merton, but our relationship didn't quite work out.

Larson: I would think not. He is one of the most egocentric persons I met in my life.

Shalin: Really?

Larson: Oh!

Shalin: That is a separate conversation. Let me backtrack, I just don't want to lose those tangents. Your mother, was she encouraging with your studies?

Larson: My mother was difficult.

Shalin: Oh.

Larson: [**Laughing**]. But, Dmitri, wait a minute, you are a friend of Maggie Archer, No? The British woman.

Shalin: I know about her, but I don't think I . . .

Larson: But I love Doug, and he is worth knowing. He is a wonderful person, philosophically oriented, and he did say, "Of course I know his writings on pragmatism and they are good."

Shalin: . . . And his last name is?

Larson: No, my mother encouraged me more or less, but you know, she wanted me to marry a very nice bourgeois person, which I did not.

Shalin: Do you recall when you first encountered Goffman's writings? Were you aware of Erving before you met him?

Larson: Yes, but I really . . . when I came to this country, David Apter brought me in, and I was writing within his program, although things had nothing to do with his perspective. I am not a functionalist, and I wrote books published by the Institute of International Studies. I cannot tell when I read Erving. Did I read Erving in order to teach him –*Presentation of Self and Frame Analysis* and *Stigma*? There are many things that I had not read.

Shalin: You mentioned the person who brought you here – it was David Apter?

Larson: Yes, a very good political scientist who finished his career at Yale.

Shalin: A-p-t-e-r?

Larson: Yes, he [Apter] was an Africanist, then he wanted to change to Latin America, that's why he brought me over. I accepted his [invitation] because he was also bringing some friends of mine from Argentina. It didn't work out because he really wanted . . . I don't know, it was bizarre. He wanted us to apply his theories to Latin America and to show that they were universal. We didn't see things like that.

[I remember that Apter told me about Goffman and his work. He told me that he had asked Erving to conduct a seminar for Peace Corps trainees who were going to Africa (Apter was in charge of their training) and Goffman told them an anecdote to start them on a discussion of race relations. It went like this: "You are stopped at a red light. A car comes behind you and hits you. You jump out of your car and then you see that the other driver is black." Or it may have been different: "You do not step on the brakes in time and you hit the car in front of you. . . ." But Apter did not go over the following discussion; he just wanted to point out how clever Goffman was in constructing situations – those powerful vignettes, like Neil Smelser called them].

Shalin: So, you came to Berkeley and you were there for a short while?

Larson: No, no. I was there for a long time. In 1964 I came with a J-1 visa and I was a research associate of the Institute of International Studies. The reason I didn't study is that, if I had started to study, they would have paid me only a third of my salary. I had enough of a French academic salary, so I really wanted to pay for a decent apartment. I didn't want to live like a graduate student.

Shalin: So you were a researcher at Berkeley rather than a student.

Larson: Yes, that was until I got married. Then Apter decided that we were not doing quite what he wanted. He decided to close this phase of the project, and rather than letting him fire me, I left. Of course, I had a problem with my visa, but I started teaching at San Francisco State. I had a lectureship at San Francisco State. And then I had met my husband, we got married at the beginning of '68. Then it was a difficult struggle to change my visa. For a while, I couldn't travel to Europe, all during 1968, 1969 and 1970 when it would have been most fascinating.

Shalin: Even after you married you had visa problems?

Larson: Yes, because of the J-1 visa, which is a technical personnel visa. The only thing that being married [changed] was that I had grounds to appeal. First of all, my request to change the visa was denied. Then we went to a lawyer who knew immigration, which is a totally empirical knowledge, very much a case-by-case and arbitrary process. You have to know people. The first lawyer we found didn't know anything, and we went by what is written, but that's not the way to do it. The second lawyer said, "First of all, we are going to Philip Burton's office." He was a famous San Francisco congressman, and got a private bill introduced for the relief of Charles Larson – not me but for my husband. These bills never pass for ordinary people, but then you come under the protection of Congress, and if you do not leave the country, they cannot kick you out.

Shalin: That's what happened?

Larson: Yes. I was under this private bill, which was immediately tabled. You know, they introduce them and then they table them, but they could not touch me. So we appealed, and that time the appeal was granted. So I received the green card.

Shalin: That was quite a milestone. As an immigrant, I can relate to your struggles. I came here as a Jewish refugee from the Soviet Union, which is a more streamlined procedure.

Larson: They wanted me to leave [the country] for two years. They didn't tell me where they wanted me to go. If I were a nuclear scientist, they would have kept me here immediately.

Shalin: If you were some Werner von Brown.

Larson: Yes. And then, there was a very funny scene, a scene that Erving would have loved. We went with the lawyer to Los Angeles for the appeal, and it seemed like the immigration inspector had not even read my file. Our lawyer was a nice, disorganized man who looked like an old scholar. He kept shuffling papers, but nothing was happening. I was thinking, "I don't care if I don't see this country again."

Shalin: [Laughing] You had enough with this bureaucracy.

Larson: I had enough with it, and I said, "Look, you are talking about how I was brought here to be taught, and now I have to go back god knows where. I have not been taught one thing. I audited one course for undergraduates at Berkeley, and it was so bad that I left. I didn't even finish the auditing in the summer. I wrote this and I wrote that, I published this article and that – I wasn't given anything; I was brought here so that I could give to this project, and I did. And now you tell me that I have to go back and spread the good word. I don't understand what you are saying. I don't care if I go back or not. I am doing it for my husband and his old mother who lives here."

Shalin: What happened in the end?

Larson: The inspector said, "All this is new." I was mad, "No, it is not. It is in the file if you had bothered to read it." Then, he said, "Well, I'll take this under consideration." And he went and found some precedent of people who were receivers and not givers. OK, this was already in 1970. At this point it was clear that we were married (we married in 1968). So, this was in the Spring of 1970. In October in 1970 I went to Berkeley to get a Ph.D. and I finished very fast. I was finished with everything by May of '74.

Shalin: You took graduate classes at Berkeley, right?

Larson: Yes, very few.

Shalin: And then you submitted and defended your thesis.

Larson: Yes, but they don't defend anything. They read it.

Shalin: They read it and then you do some revision if necessary.

Larson: Right. I didn't do revisions. I did a publication right away.

Shalin: Who was on your dissertation committee?

Larson: Art Stinchcombe. But he picked up and left for Holland. So I had to send him all the chapters by mail. We didn't have Internet at that time.

Shalin: He was your thesis advisor.

Larson: The committee was Bob Blauner and Neil Smelser. Neither of them did anything. And the outside person was a sociologist who was in the Architecture School.

Shalin: You said you read Goffman when you were preparing to teach his works, things like *Presentation of Self* . . .

Larson: Yes, I taught him many times, using sociology manuals and different books.

Shalin: Do you recall the impression he left on you?

Larson: Yes, he leaves an impression on everyone, of course. Well, I am saying something wrong. I had to read him for the Stinchcombe-Smelser theory/methods class. You see, I was exempted from that class, because I really didn't want to take it. I went to see Art Stinchcombe and said, "This paper you ask us to write at the end of the class – could I do it now?" He said, "You are going to do a 30 page paper now?" I said, "Yes. Would you let me try?" He said, "I'll talk to Neil and let you know." [After that] he said, "If you can do a 30 page paper now, do it."

Shalin: And you did?

Larson: Well, I asked the friends what would be a good book to tear apart. A friend of mine recommended Edward Banfield's *The Moral Bases of a Backward Society*. The most difficult part for me was the method – how was I going to tear something apart methodologically? How can I invent the method that was good? He gave me A plus, saying "you don't have to take the class." But I would go to the class and read for the class. So, part of the class was Goffman. We read *Presentation of Self*, and I think Smelser said something that was very true. He said, "These are ultimately vignettes, and their power is artistic and esthetic." Smelser also said that is why Goffman did not really have disciples that came anywhere close to his level.

Shalin: Interesting.

Larson: He said, "That's why none of Erving's students are as good," which is totally true.

Shalin: Was he saying it approvingly?

Larson: He would be approving, yes. These [Erving's "scenes" or scenarios] are the kinds of things where you say, "Of course this is the way it is." You say it not because Erving had a convincing methodology but because he was such a great writer and an artist. Essentially, what I am saying is that Goffman was not a sociologist at all. He was, in my view . . . he had a kind of imagination that a novelist has. I believe in the truth of those products more than in the truth of what we produce.

Shalin: And this is not just what Smelser said, this is your opinion.

Larson: No, no. Smelser said these are vignettes with tremendous power, power of the kind that artistic products have. He said something of that kind.

Shalin: By the way, Neil Smelser wrote a memoir on Goffman and Blumer for the Goffman Archives. Some day you might want to look it up, you might find it interesting.

Larson: Yes it would be. I would appreciate it if you send me all the cites.

Shalin: Sure. All the interviews and memoirs are posted on the web. You can access them if you use a computer.

Larson: Of course I do.

Shalin: I will send you the information.

Larson: I had it but I put it in one of the . . . You know, I knew one of the students of Erving, John Irwin.

Shalin: He contributed a memoir on Goffman, an excerpt from his autobiography.

Larson: He just idolized Goffman. He had discovered Goffman in jail. He says that, right?

Shalin: He indicates that he was in jail at some point.

Larson: In the '70s, they would ask him, "Dr. Irwin, you were in prison for political activities?" And he would say, "No, for armed robbery."

[Laughter]

Larson: So, the parents of his wife would say, "Does he always have to mention his record?" No, John was a bad kid, a bad Los Angeles kid.

Shalin: You came to Berkeley in '64, Erving left for Penn in 1968, so you overlapped for a few years.

Larson: Yes, but I was not his student, he hadn't had much to do with David Apter. I met him socially, I noticed him that evening. He was impossible not to notice, small as he was.

Shalin: That was the party at David Apter's house.

Larson: David Apter's house.

Shalin: You noticed him at this party.

Larson: Yes, he was sitting by himself.

Shalin: Outside or inside?

Larson: Inside.

Shalin: And you just made this graceful gesture by trying to include him in a conversation.

Larson: I moved my body to open the group to him, which he absolutely noticed, but he just laughed.

Shalin: He left?

Larson: No, he laughed. He smiled.

Shalin: So there wasn't much of an interaction at that time.

Larson: No. I asked my friend Blanca Muratorio "Who is he?" And she said, "Erving Goffman." She came later. He probably left early, I don't remember. I did not know him at Berkeley.

Shalin: That is pretty much the only encounter you had with him at Berkeley.

Larson: When did he leave – in '68?

Shalin: He left in '68, correct.

Larson: Yes, you must understand that I was teaching at San Francisco State, I had broken with Apter, because he was not very loyal or truthful. I started teaching at San Francisco State probably in '68, but I was living in San Francisco. I spent all my time before that at the Institute of Latin American Studies.

Shalin: You left for Penn in which year?

Larson: Well, I was hired in '74, but my child was just born. I left in January '75.

Shalin: Between '64 and '75 you were on the West coast.

Larson: Yes.

Shalin: And then moved to . . .

Larson: Philadelphia. I was assistant professor at Penn until '78. In January '78 I went to Temple as an associate professor with tenure promised. I didn't want to go through the tenure thing. I think this is one of the problems with American universities. Not only does it make people timid, it makes people do the opposite of what they were intended to do. It doesn't really protect academic freedom, it makes everybody very scared and very conforming and not producing very interesting work. It should be eliminated, you know. But I was not going through that political fight in a process dominated by Renée Fox.

Shalin: You were at Penn as an assistant professor but you decided to leave before the tenure decision.

Larson: Yes, I spent two years at Penn, of which one semester I spent at Harvard.

Shalin: So it was in Philadelphia that you had more sustained interaction with Goffman.

Larson: Yes.

Shalin: Do you remember your first encounter with Erving there?

Larson: Yes, we had that dinner, which may have been when I had come to interview, or maybe later. But of course, many friends of mine in San Francisco had been his students.

Shalin: Do you remember where your initial contact with Goffman in Philadelphia took place? It might have been when you came up for an interview.

Larson: It was in a Chinese restaurant, maybe at the time of my interview but maybe not.

Shalin: That might have been in 1975.

Larson: No, 1974 or '73. Yes, '73.

Shalin: That's when you came for an interview.

Larson: It might have been but I don't think so. It was more likely in '75. I don't know. Actually, when I came for an interview, I had dinner with Larry Gross.

Shalin: OK. It must have been '75. Some sort of occasion brought you all together.

Larson: Frank Furstenberg decided that we had to get together.

Shalin: And he brought together you, Erving and . . .

Larson: The Segres.

Shalin: Some four people.

Larson: There were seven people.

Shalin: You already knew Erving.

Larson: I had called him and he had said, "Let's get together."

Shalin: It was just a social call, and he remembered you.

Larson: No, he didn't know me yet. I told him I was a friend of Cicourel and John Irwin. As a matter of fact, I had met him again. He had come to present that book on gender in San Francisco.

Shalin: He gave that talk to a number of female sociologists.

Larson: Yes, and it was not very good. He had no idea what [those] images represent.

Shalin: So you attended that famous gathering.

Larson: Yes, I did, and I thought it was bad.

Shalin: It might have been at Sherri Cavan's house.

Larson: Possibly.

Shalin: What are your memories of Erving's talk?

Larson: I think Erving as usual said interesting things about the pictures. But he talked as if these were not pictures but real people. He had no training . . . he had no experience, it seemed, with reading icons, photographs or paintings. He took them at face value. I had written something with Sherri Cavan, now that I remember, when we had that constant struggle. She wanted to write about a film we both liked very much as if it was real life, and I wanted to write about the film. The film was "The Last Picture Show."

Shalin: When you heard this talk, you found it interesting but you had your doubts.

Larson: No, I had an intellectual problem with it – you don't treat a publicity picture where a woman had her mouth half-open as if it were a woman trying to provoke a man. It was a man trying to use a woman to provoke a man, because there is a photographer behind.

Shalin: It might have been staged.

Larson: Of course! The famous picture "*Gli Italiani si voltano*" [Italians turn (to look at women)] was staged. You know that picture?

Shalin: Sure, I followed this controversy. It has been much in the news. [The controversy I had in mind was actually about Robert Capa's "Falling Soldier" photo].

Larson: One of my best friends [Jenny Mansbridge] sent it to me, and Charlie, my husband, looked at it in one of his photography magazines, and he saw that the picture had been staged. The girl had been asked to do this, the Italians had then positioned and told, "Please, turn around." And the girl was not that pretty, so they wouldn't have turned around all that much. She wasn't that pretty or that undressed.

Shalin: Perhaps when you read the transcript, more memories about that meeting will come back.

Larson: No, I don't think so. I remember that he was charming. He was sitting on the floor and he was showing these things, and there was somebody there, I don't remember who it was, somebody in a design profession, who said, "Well, he really doesn't know much about art, does he?" Did he know a lot about art? [I think I remember it may have been my friend, an architect from Argentina, who went on to become a disaster relief specialist and work for the World Bank]

Shalin: He collected some art, he was eclectic in his interest, and yes, he took special interest in artists. Dean MacCannell just posted a memoir where he . . .

Larson: Oh, somebody asked me the other day if Dean MacCannell was still alive.

Shalin: Oh, yes. He was just editing the transcript of his interview.

Larson: Where is he?

Shalin: In California. I believe he is a professor of environmental design at the University of California, Davis.

Larson: Oh, he is still at Davis. My best friend is at Davis. I didn't know Dean MacCannell, but, you see, he was at Temple, and Ph.D. students remember him. Just the other night Doug Porpora's wife, Lynne Kotranski, also a Temple Ph.D. . . . it is silly, but I said I am going to Washington tomorrow morning, and she said, "What for?" I said, "I am going to see Fred Block [who is at Davis]" She said, "Did you ever ask Fred about Dean MacCannell?" I said, "Frankly, no" because I didn't know Dean MacCannell. Lynne wondered if he was still at Davis.

Shalin: He gave an extensive, very interesting interview. He and his wife Juliet knew Erving quite well . . .

Larson: Where, at Berkeley?

Shalin: Dean met Goffman at Berkeley but most of their interactions happened in Philadelphia when Dean was teaching at Temple. Then he went to California where he brought Erving for talks, and so on. Going back to that dinner at a restaurant when you might have called Erving . . .

Larson: No, that had been organized by Frank Furstenberg. Maybe Erving told Frank, "You should get everybody together," I don't know.

Shalin: So there were you, Goffman, Frank . . .

Larson: Frank's then wife, Gino Segre and his then wife Nina who divorced Gino to marry Frank Furstenberg (there were plenty of undercurrents there of which I was not aware), and then me, my husband, and Erving.

Shalin: That is when Erving came up with the line about wine.

Larson: Yes. And there also was that dinner with Joe Gusfield. That was funny too. . . . That was a separate dinner when my husband did not come because somebody had to stay with our baby.

Shalin: We'll get to this gathering shortly, but if we could stay with the first encounter – how did you read Erving's overtures? Was he just jovial, did he take an interest in you, how did you read him?

Larson: Well, it was . . . his wine comment was directed to me, but jokes in general were . . . I don't know, they had a little hysterical tinge to them. It was not necessary to make lewd jokes. I could not really understand him; he said something about getting down on the shrimps and everybody laughed. My husband said it had something to do with oral sex. I said, "Really? How bizarre." And Charlie said, "Yes, it's bizarre." And then somebody asked him, what he thought about Erving Goffman and he said, "Well, he is precocious." He acted like a naughty child.

Shalin: Enfant terrible.

Larson: Yes. So, Charlie said, "He is precocious."

Shalin: Earlier you used the word "atrocious" to describe Erving's behavior.

Larson: Yes, he talked loud, he was loud and lewd, commenting about eating the shrimp, I don't know, very annoying.

Shalin: I know it has been a long time, but from the vantage point of the present, how do you interpret his self-presentation?

Larson: He just wanted to put people off all the time. He wasn't forgettable, but I must tell you one thing – I have an elephant's memory. Nobody in the world has a memory like me. I could see there some details no one would have, but there are details I don't remember. I don't remember where the restaurant was, although I have a vague idea that it was near the Italian market. It was Chinese, and we were eating these big prawns. Maybe Erving brought wine, which is a common sort of thing in Philadelphia.

Shalin: He was known to be a connoisseur.

Larson: Yes, OK, all that. I don't know what to say, it is so Manitoba [**laughing**]. People who have drunk wine all their lives don't pretend. People I know in Europe are not like that.

Shalin: And when you said you were not that familiar with wines, he came back with the joke . . .

Larson: I remember only one name, I told him. And then he told me, I don't remember exactly what, but it was definitely something sexual about wine. And I told him, "Look, where I was born we don't have to know about wines to get more status." And it's true. I was born in a very affluent family, OK? We didn't have to know about wines. We didn't have to know about anything, only about art, essentially.

Shalin: And your response caught his eye.

Larson: He said, "Touché!" There is nothing in the world he did not understand about social status, the dynamics of impressing and not impressing. There is nothing in the world he didn't understand.

Shalin: Now, this is my hunch. Erving knew a thing or two about gamesmanship and status. He knew the rules of the game, and the question for him was how to follow the rules without falling into the traps he exposed so eloquently.

Larson: Well, I hope you talked to Aaron Cicourel.

Shalin: Oh, yes.

Larson: I adore Aaron, who is very different from Erving. And of course you couldn't talk to Eliot Freidson. But Aaron knew a lot about the first wife [of Goffman].

Shalin: Angelica Schuyler Goffman.

Larson: Well, you know about her. It is so bizarre to think about a total WASP aristocrat marrying Erving, the Jew from Manitoba. I would imagine that it was very difficult to be so short and to be the only Jew in Manitoba.

Shalin: How short was he?

Larson: Oh, he was very short. I'm very tall, so he looked even shorter to me. We must have been quite a sight together.

Shalin: The range I have come across is between 5'1 and 5'8.

Larson: I couldn't tell it in feet. He was probably five feet four.

Shalin: You didn't meet his wife.

Larson: Gillian?

Shalin: No, the first wife – Schuyler.

Larson: No, no.

Shalin: But you heard that she committed suicide.

Larson: Yes, she jumped off the Bay Bridge. Everybody knew that.

Shalin: Not the Bay Bridge, it was the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

Larson: Really? Apter told me that, or Apter's wife. But this had nothing to do with Erving; she was manic-depressive. I have heard from Aaron Cicourel that she was manic-depressive. I may have said, "Well, I would have never thought he was a nasty man whose wife committed suicide." And Aaron said, "No, he was not a nasty man at all. He was a tragic man, and she was manic-depressive."

Shalin: Aaron said he was a tragic man and she was manic-depressive.

Larson: That's what I heard, yes. I met his daughter, and she is adorable.

Shalin: Alice?

Larson: Yes, she is brilliant. She wrote such a nice article in the ASR. I may be mistaken, but she may not have been born when he died.

Shalin: I believe she was a few months old when this happened.

Larson: And she calls Bill Labov "dad." She is adorable. She is really cute, she is small, and she looks like Erving, in a way. She has a lovely round face and she is very very bright and gutsy.

Shalin: To do that kind of work, of course.

Larson: You read her article.

Shalin: I have not read it, but I made a copy and will savor it some day. . . .

Larson: Look at the places she had been in. It's unbelievable.

I'll tell you that dinner with Joe Gusfield was funny. I even remember how I was dressed.

Shalin: How did it come together?

Larson: Erving wanted to help me. He wanted Joe to be on my side. He knew that San Diego had offered me a job. When we got to talk about all that, I cannot tell you. Despite my memory, there is a lot I am forgetting. I have the impression I had been talking to him, otherwise why would he have called me?

Shalin: When were you considering a job at San Diego?

Larson: I was considering San Diego in the beginning. I knew nothing of how you get a job in the United States. I really didn't. I thought that people come to you and ask you to apply, which they did, but nothing was working out. The only thing I wanted was to stay in the Bay Area at that time, you know, but that wasn't possible. I applied to San Diego and to Irvine, and I got job offers from both of them.

Shalin: You said Erving might have wanted to help you in San Diego.

Larson: Yes. San Diego offered me that job three times.

Shalin: When was it?

Larson: It was '76.

Shalin: You were already on the East coast.

Larson: Yes. Erving thought that I should go. I told him, "Erving, I am not going across the country with my baby and my husband who has already had a hard enough time coming with me here if they don't give me tenure." And he told me . . . I don't know what he told me. Perhaps Joe Gusfield told him that he was curious about me. When I went to interview at San Diego, Joe was not there. So the people who were really advocating for me were Aaron Cicourel and Randy Collins. In the meantime, Jackie Wiseman had gone there, and I do not think she wanted me to get tenure there. I don't know why.

Shalin: You never taught at San Diego.

Larson: No, no.

Shalin: OK, I see the context of your get-together with Gusfield and Goffman.

Larson: And that was funny because it was not what you told me Gusfield had said. I came to this diner; it was very hot; I remember how I was dressed.

Shalin: How were you dressed?

Larson: Oh, I was very elegantly dressed, very cheaply [laughing]. I got a thrift store long skirt, which had one side button; it was overlapping [?]; it had long vertical stripes – dark blue and white. I had a blue tank top, and probably a shawl. I don't know. It was very hot, and I went to Erving's house and we waited for Joe. Erving had a ragged T-shirt and shorts and flip-flops

or sandals. That's the way he went to the restaurant called "The Fish Market." When Joe arrived, Erving took one or two bottles of wine in a paper bag and we walked across Rittenhouse Square. He must have looked like a bum from a bench because he had a ragged T-shirt and shorts and flip-flops and these bottles in a paper bag.

Shalin: He must have looked like a derelict.

Larson: Yes, a typical Philadelphia bum. So we went to the Fish Market. I don't remember at all what we talked about, but I was going to make a good impression. It was very much fun. And then Erving told Joe, "Joe, I hope you have an expense account because we don't pay our assistant professors much." "I would be delighted to invite Magali," said Joe. And Erving then said, and completely surprised me: "No, you won't. We have our pride here." So I had to pay for my dinner, even though I was very poor.

[**Laughter**]

Larson: And after that, Erving was talking about Philip Rieff and about going to pay him a visit. Is Philip Rieff alive?

Shalin: No, he died.

Larson: But in any case, Erving said, "Joe had gone to visit Philip Rieff, and now we are all going to Philip Rieff's house." I said, "Erving, please don't make me do that." "Yes, you have to meet him." I said, "Erving, I can meet him another time." I knew Rieff was nasty, vindictive, self-important, sort of a pompous ass in his form of behavior, if you pardon the expression. And then we all three walked to Rieff's house, which was nearby, and Erving [**laughing**] rang the bell and started yelling, "Philip, come here, come here! You've got to meet Dr. Larson who is an assistant professor." I was staying two or three yards behind Erving and Joe Gusfield because I knew Rieff was nasty and vindictive and I surely did not want him to think this attempted invasion of his house was my idea.

Shalin: How did Philip react?

Larson: Badly. And Erving said, "You are not going to invite us in?" And Philip Rieff said, "Not at this time." "Oh, you are such a shithead," or whatever Erving said.

Shalin: How do you read Erving's behavior in this situation? Was he trying to get a rise?

Larson: Yes, but also Philip Rieff was such a difficult man. I mean, I haven't seen anything faker than Philip Rieff. Actually, I think that he could say witty and memorable things. I remember Philip Rieff at a [sociology] department meeting talking about the "rancid sentimentality of our undergraduates." He was talking to the [faculty] and said, "All these people are going to teach deviance, race relations or something else to pander to the rancid sentimentality of our undergraduates." He used to start every sentence by saying "at All Saints, we" – you know that he spent a whole year at All Saints in Oxford. That's why it had become his frame of reference. Apart from that, Philip Rieff was the kind of person who would do the hermeneutics of Nietzsche [and use his texts] in English. So his students would agonize about the place of a comma in a text of Nietzsche in English. I know enough German to know that the sentence structure in German is inverse to that in English [**laughing**]. I don't know what the hell they were analyzing.

The person who took a rough measure of Philip Rieff was a black woman. I don't remember her name, but she wanted to take his seminar. So this black woman was interviewed by one or the other pretentious idiots whom Philip Rieff took up as graduate assistants, and they asked her if she spoke any other language. She said yes, and they asked, "Which one?" She said, "Swahili." They didn't know what to do, how to tell her that Swahili didn't qualify.

[**Laughter**]

Shalin: Did you have any other encounters with Rieff?

Larson: No, no! I never said anything to Philip Rieff. I knew he destroyed one or two graduate students because they didn't want to do what he wanted.

Shalin: What happened?

Larson: One of them was a good friend of mine, became a good friend of mine, who was not interested in Rieff's ideas of civilization and classics and in the most reactionary thinkers that you can imagine. Of course none of those works were in Swahili! Rieff had these two [?] dogs that he would bring around. These poor little dogs were with Philip when I encountered him one day when it had snowed. He had the two dogs that he called "Quincy and Darcy, Old Chap." And the poor Darcy had his penis out, and he was freezing on the icy ground, and Philip continued talking away with me while poor Darcy was yapping [**laughing**]. I am serious. I thought the man was such a total fake. And I am usually tolerant of fakes. He was an extraordinary fake.

Shalin: What was the ending to that encounter when Goffman brought you to Philip Rieff?

Larson: He didn't invite us in. We had to depart, and I think we might have gone to Erving's house for a little while, but remember I had a little baby, I wanted to go home.

Shalin: You said there were a couple of other encounters with Erving.

Larson: We went to the Italian market together once or twice.

Shalin: Just the two of you? What was the context, was it your idea?

Larson: No, no. He said he didn't have a car, and I would pick him up. During that time I spent a semester at Harvard, and then I left. I cannot say that I saw him often. That's all I remember.

Shalin: Do you remember when you went to Harvard?

Larson: No [**Laughing**]. Well, yes I remember. Tony was two . . . I arrived here in '75, and then . . . I think I have gone to Harvard in the Fall of '76. But then, in '77 I came back to Penn – for two semesters? Yes, and then in '78 I went to Temple.

Shalin: You mentioned your conversation with Erving about death. He died in 1982 at the age of 60 after he was diagnosed with cancer.

Larson: Stomach cancer.

Shalin: Yes, he could not deliver his presidential address.

Larson: My last conversation with Erving was when Alvin Gouldner died [Gouldner died on December 15, 1980] when we came back from the memorial together.

Shalin: Your observations about Gouldner and Merton are very interesting, but do you recall when you had that exchange on death with Erving?

Larson: Yes, the day we went to dinner with Joe Gusfield.

Shalin: Can you place this conversation in time?

Larson: If I arrived here in the Spring of '75 and started getting all these offers – it must have been the Fall of '75 when Joe was here.

Shalin: Well before Erving was facing death.

Larson: Oh, much before he died. But I had the impression that Erving thought about death often.

Shalin: How did you get this impression?

Larson: He talked about it. You ask me so many things that . . .

Shalin: I know, I know.

Larson: I think when he was a social persona he was irritating or precocious or lewd or outrageous, and there was a certain hysterical quality. By hysterical I mean that his presentation of self was not what he was. And then, when you were with him and we would have some exchange that I would consider sincere, that got a lot more depth [than what] academics are ever used to, he was a completely different person.

Shalin: The discussion was then truly intellectual, substantive.

Larson: No, I never had intellectual discussions with Erving. They were always personal. They were never intellectual; they were personal about life, in general and in particular, and about people.

Shalin: And when you went to that Italian market . . .

Larson: It was to buy cheap things. He was very stingy. That's what everybody said, and I think he was.

Shalin: It was not an act or self-mockery.

Larson: No. His outrageousness may have been self-mockery.

Shalin: Dean MacCannell published an interesting piece where he argued that what looked like Goffman acting in bad faith was his way of challenging the bad faith around him. That is, Goffman adopted a persona that Sartre identified with bad faith.

Larson: It is very possible, if Dean MacCannell knew him that well. That is totally congruent with what I have told you.

Shalin: You will be interested in Dean's ideas that I added to the Goffman Archives.

Larson: Yes, and you can post my [memoire] after I have seen it. The other thing you said, I just don't know if Sherri Cavan had that kind of vision of Goffman. I wonder, she never talked about him.

Shalin: You might want to check her recollections about her writing the dissertation with Goffman and their subsequent interactions. There are so many facets to Goffman. He brings different reactions in different people, and I am trying to put this mosaic together in a fractal geometry fashion.

Larson: He was the only American sociologist who actually achieved some fame outside of sociology.

Shalin: I have seen references to the fact that Goffman is the most cited American sociologist of the second half of the 20th century. He is well known in the fields of communications, film studies, anthropology, and so on.

Larson: I have memories of teaching *Presentation of Self* in a night class at Penn, and I took this class with resentment because I was paid so little that I had to make extra money. There was a Nigerian student, she was bizarre, she wrote on the annual evaluation that I knew nothing, that I was always making students talk.

[Laughter]

Shalin: As opposed to lecture nonstop for two hours.

Larson: That's right, because I didn't know anything. I remember she was so beautiful, and I felt bad about this evaluation.

Shalin: And you knew it was hers? Those are usually anonymous.

Larson: Yes, I knew it was hers. But she didn't like Goffman. She said, "Oh, that's not the way it is in my country."

Shalin: OK, she might have had a different perspective on Goffman. Where were you when Goffman was dying?

Larson: I was here. Nobody invited me, but I would have gone to his memorial. I should have gone to his funeral.

Shalin: Did you?

Larson: No. I should have.

Shalin: This encounter with Erving at Gouldner's memorial . . .

Larson: Yes, we met on the train. I took the train and there he was. He asked me to sit with him.

Shalin: It was a chance encounter.

Larson: Yes, we had not concerted.

Shalin: He just invited you to sit by him.

Larson: Yes.

Shalin: Any other memories from this train ride?

Larson: No, only that thing about Merton. . . .

Shalin: It was on the way back from Alvin Gouldner's memorial.

Larson: Yes.

Shalin: I see. Just to recap, he was incensed by Merton's comments.

Larson: Well, I said it was a beautiful thing that Merton had done, because those letters were quite beautiful. And he said, "Yes, but he never helped Alvin when he [needed] a job." Merton simply wouldn't recommend him or help him.

Shalin: Erving thought that Merton bore some responsibility for not helping Gouldner.

Larson: Yes, not even helping him to get one job.

Shalin: Was Gouldner considered for a position at Columbia?

Larson: I don't know.

Shalin: And the sense of Merton's presentation at the memorial was that he and Gouldner had a fine relationship.

Larson: That's right. And Erving said that was not true. Alvin had retained his admiration for Bob, but Bob never helped him get a job.

Shalin: You had an encounter with Merton – what's your personal impression?

Larson: Well, I never understood what was so great about him. He was charming. I liked her [Harriett] a lot more than I liked

him. They came to Temple after I prepared a paper close to some of his themes and in his honor, and he was supposed to have discussed our papers. I spent my entire sabbatical, which was dearly earned, writing this paper. Two months of my sabbatical [I was] writing this paper, which I never published.

Shalin: And the paper was on . . .

Larson: The paper was on the concept of progress in art and science. I must have it in some place.

Shalin: Did Merton visit Temple?

Larson: Merton was a Temple graduate, as you probably know, and they honored him as their first notable or distinguished alumnus. So we had to honor him. No, I did see him again two or three times in other places and I wrote to him and he to me. He was always with Harriett [Merton's wife] but also very warm to me and we exchanged some letters. I had trouble declining the honor of editing his correspondence with Gouldner, which was a crazy idea; the only thing I said it was beautiful what he had done.

Shalin: Bob wanted to publish this correspondence as a separate book?

Larson: I don't know. He wanted me to edit it . . . because I was one of those who told him it was a very moving homage. He knew I could write, but then I would have to leave whatever I was doing (I was writing my book on architecture) to work on that. I forgot when Alvin died. But I had a lot of things to do.

Shalin: Do you remember how you learned about Erving's illness?

Larson: Aaron Cicourel told me.

Shalin: You mentioned some dinner with Aaron.

Larson: It was a simple dinner. Aaron came to have dinner with us because he came to town to say goodbye to Erving.

Shalin: That must have been in 1982.

Larson: I'd think so.

Shalin: Erving died in November of 1982. Aaron recalls his visit to Philadelphia, but I think he had hard time getting through to Erving.

Larson: We had dinner after his having been in the hospital, and he had said [he had ?] hard time.

Shalin: Two of you met at that dinner.

Larson: No, my husband also.

Shalin: Three of you had a talk about Erving.

Larson: Yes, I don't remember very much. It's been a long time ago.

Shalin: Do you know Gillian?

Larson: Who?

Shalin: Erving's second wife.

Larson: No, I don't know her. She is a linguist, right?

Shalin: Yes, she is a social linguist.

Larson: I thought her name was Lakoff but it is Sankoff.

Shalin: Right.

Larson: She wasn't married to George Lakoff, do you know?

Shalin: I don't know. Someone mentioned that her marriage to Goffman was not her first.

Larson: That's right. I don't know anything about it.

Shalin: Did you ever meet Tom Goffman?

Larson: Who?

Shalin: Tom Goffman, Erving's son.

Larson: No, I didn't know he had a son. Was it his son with Angelica?

Shalin: Yes.

Larson: Oh, how old is he?

Shalin: He is about 57 now.

Larson: When did his mother die?

Shalin: Schuyler died in 1964.

Larson: Oh, the year I arrived in Berkeley.

Shalin: You did not know he existed.

Larson: No, or I have forgotten.

Shalin: How did you meet Alice?

Larson: She introduced herself to me the other night at a party for Loic Wacquant.

Shalin: I thought he is in California.

Larson: That's right, but he was here giving a lecture, and there was a reception at my friend Mike Katz's home. Alice came up to me and said that I had asked a good question after Loic's lecture. They decided to make it the last question, and Alice came to me and introduced herself. I said that I had so much wanted to attend her presentation, but that day I had to go to a memorial for a friend's death, so I couldn't attend her presentation but I was going to read her article, and I did.

Shalin: She must have known your work.

Larson: Maybe, I don't know. She seemed to know who I was. I had seen her at seminars and lectures.

Shalin: I think she is finishing her dissertation at Princeton.

Larson: Well, she'll get what she wants, and she is so charming. She is working with Mitch Duneier, she told me.

Shalin: Goffman's sister, Frances Goffman Bay, told me about Alice.

Larson: That lady is in Canada?

Shalin: She lived in Canada, [now she is in the U.S.]. She is a hall of famer actress in Canada.

Larson: No kidding!

Shalin: Frances told me a few interesting things about Erving's childhood. She is a consultant for the Goffman project.

Larson: What is her name?

Shalin: Frances Goffman Bay.

Larson: Bay.

Shalin: Bay: B-a-y. She was in the movies like "Happy Gilmore," she was in a TV series with that famous comedian. I am blocking on his name right now [Jerry Seinfeld].

Larson: Well, I would not have seen those movies.

Shalin: She regaled me with the stories about the family and Manitoba.

Larson: What did his father do?

Shalin: Erving's father owned a dry goods store.

Larson: In what town? Manitoba must have been such a desert place.

Shalin: Dauphin where the Goffman family lived had two dozen Jewish families or so. Then the family moved to Winnipeg.

Larson: Winnipeg is in Manitoba too?

Shalin: Yes, I think so.

Larson: I only went to Edmonton once.

Shalin: My pet theory is that Erving's writing is crypto-autobiographical. I think his personal experience of dating Schuyler is reflected in his early publication, "Symbols of Class Status."

Larson: Where is that?

Shalin: It was published in 1951 in the *British Journal of Sociology*. Schuyler was a fellow grad student at Chicago where she defended her M.A. thesis on upper class women in 1950.

Larson: I'll read it. I am curious now.

Shalin: My hypothesis is that Erving's sociological imagination was fed by his personal experience of rising from the obscurity of Canadian Manitoba to international stardom.

Larson: Well, I don't know anything about his marriage to Schuyler, but I knew about Montgomery Schuyler because I worked on architecture. This was one of the great New York families.

Shalin: Her family was prominent in Boston, and her father's family name is "Choate."

Larson: Montgomery Schuler wrote a history of architecture in America.

Shalin: I don't think they are related. Angelica's father owned a newspaper in Boston.

Larson: Yes, but where does Schuyler come from? Why would they call her "Schuyler"? It's not a name.

Shalin: I don't know. She preferred to be called "Sky." That's how she signed her letters. You mentioned the department of sociology at Penn, and I understand that Erving did not show up there often.

Larson: He was a Benjamin Franklin Professor, and he did not like the department too much. There were a lot of really nice assistant professors and none of them got tenure. I didn't want to go into one of those bruising fights, which made me very angry. It was then a rather mediocre department that was torn by the fact of It had been in the Wharton School, and then Renée Fox had brought it to the College of Arts and Sciences. The department had two factions at that time. It had criminology and demography, and demography was very good. Criminology probably was too; it was dominated by a man called Marvin Wolfgang. There was nobody of note in sociology. It has changed, but the department didn't jell really. It has become much better, but Renée Fox had trouble bringing that department together, and she tried very hard to place the sociology part under Talcott Parsons's influence.

Shalin: She was a chair for a while.

Larson: Yes. I cannot say it was well run or that there was much respect for due process.

Shalin: What was the problem?

Larson: Everything. The men were so afraid of hurting her feelings that they would let her do things they later opposed or criticized. It was not the place where Erving and Dell Hymes could have Excuse me, I'm gonna have to take this call.

Shalin: Sure, sure.

[Pause]

Larson: I'll have to go in a moment because it is getting

Shalin: Sure. Well, this is very interesting. Maybe we could

Larson: You can ask me when you go over it.

Shalin: You know Frank Frankfurter?

Larson: Furstenberg?

Shalin: I mean, Furstenberg.

Larson: Yes, yes.

Shalin: He may have retired.

Larson: Yes, he has retired. I think he lives on the West coast quite often.

Shalin: He knew Erving too.

Larson: Yes, sure. He knew Erving well.

Shalin: Can you think of anyone else I may talk to about Goffman?

Larson: What about Dell Hymes?

Shalin: He died just a week or so ago.

Larson: I am so sorry. Where was he?

Shalin: He was at the University of Virginia, that's where his last appointment was. His obituary stated that he had Alzheimer's.

Larson: Oh, how sad. There must be other people. Jackie Wiseman who is in San Diego was around Erving a lot.

Shalin: Jackie gave an extensive interview about working with Goffman. You didn't have much to do with Joe Gusfield.

Larson: No, just that time. You said he remembered that meeting.

Shalin: Yes, he spoke about it in his interview. You might want to compare your account with his.

Larson: He had said something that was not the way it happened. I forgot what he had said.

Shalin: You knew Aaron Cicourel.

Larson: Yes. He is my friend. He didn't have to help me in particular, but I am very very fond of him.

Shalin: You didn't have much to do with ethnomethodology in your own research.

Larson: No.

Shalin: Did you know Alvin Gouldner personally?

Larson: Yes, I was an editor of *Theory and Society*.

Shalin: It's a separate conversation, but I should let you go. We have already gone beyond what you probably had in mind. Magali, I am grateful for your memories.

Larson: I hope we can meet in person some time.

Shalin: I don't know if you plan to come to Atlanta for the annual sociology meeting.

Larson: No, I am going to Europe. I will come to Chicago because it is Randy's program, and I am a very old friend of Randy.

Shalin: Randy Collins?

Larson: Yes. Wouldn't Randy have known Erving?

Shalin: I think the two overlapped at the University of Pennsylvania. [In fact, they did not overlap at Penn].

Larson: Well, Randy thinks a world of Erving.

Shalin: Are you in touch with him?

Larson: Yes.

Shalin: You can mention to him this project. I tried to get in touch with him, but I think he was on a sabbatical leave and out of the country when I wrote to him.

Larson: He comes and goes a lot. I cannot think of many more people who would . . .

Shalin: Maybe sometime in the future we could touch base about the teachers whose classes you took at Berkeley, and also about Alvin Gouldner. I started with Goffman but then realized it is important to know his colleagues and friends and the academic world of that era. Meanwhile, thank you for humoring me.

Larson: Well, that was very interesting. I forgot about his gender presentation.

Shalin: When you read the transcript, perhaps more memories will come back to you.

Larson: You send it to me. Thank you very much. And best of luck to your mother.

Shalin: Where should I send you the transcripts?

Larson: Email.

Shalin: OK. I'll send it to you as an attachment.

Larson: We'll be in Europe most of January.

Shalin: And then you will be back.

Larson: Yes.

Shalin: Thank you so much.

Larson: Thank you. Bye-bye.

Shalin: Bye-bye.