8-27-2008

Dmitri Shalin Interview with Gary T. Marx about Erving Goffman entitled "Marx-Shalin Exchange on the Goffman Project"

Gary T. Marx
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Dmitri N. Shalin
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, shalin@unlv.nevada.edu

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

 Part of the Politics and Social Change Commons, and the Social Psychology and Interaction Commons

Marx-Shalin Exchange on the Goffman Project

The following email exchange between Dmitri Shalin and Gary T. Marx, Professor Emeritus of sociology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, took place between August 27, 2008, and October 16, 2008. The exchange was occasioned by Shalin's paper "Goffman's Biography and Interaction Order: A Study in Biocritical Hermeneutics." The original text is in **black**, Marx's comments are marked red, and Shalin's response is in blue.

1.

This paper examines the interfaces between Erving Goffman's biography and theory. It rests on the premise that Goffman's *Behavior in Public Places* can be profitably explored in light of Goffman's behavior in public places, and vice versa.

Nice link! Also think a bit about what and why he withheld, he wasn't like some of the others of the 60s generation a decade his juniors, who, as Berkeley teachers (and in soc. departments more broadly) let it all hang out and tried to be your buddies etc.

Apparently Goffman found the 1960s bothersome, especially as the spirit of the age transformed the Berkeley scene. You would think that the rule breaking and acting out should have fascinated him, yet he seemed to be put off by all the hustle and bustle.

You can find something of interest, intriguing yet not value it or want to be associated with it.

The tentative conclusion I have reached after examining available biographical accounts is that Goffman was a student of civility whose standards he flouted, that his demeanor was sometimes intentionally demeaning, his deference willfully deferred, and his incivility painfully obvious to those present. The argument is made that Goffman's infringements on the interaction order were strategic, systematic, theoretically significant, and worthy of close study by interactionist sociologists.

Beyond infringing, he also used it to manipulate scenes such as standing up at his desk when he was done with you. In a way that was gentle and honorific, I think when I was done with students I simply was more direct and maybe that was hurtful. I would say things like, I have some stuff I have to do so I can't talk any further. Knowing how to send and read the cues can offer a sense of power beyond any psychol fun and games. This also makes role

distance possible (even if sometimes only the one showing it is aware of it). –a kind of hidden last laugh.

No, I think the standing up to get you to leave, or walking toward the door are manipulative and indirect, at least relative to saying, "I can't talk anymore."

In standing up he demonstrates his awareness of the culture with respect to what that means and of the implied status difference in which the more dominant is more likely to initiate or end encounters. Maybe it is also the subtlety we appreciate and take as a sign of intelligence or sophistication.

Opening and closing rituals could be unnerving for all the parties involved. I am not sure if Goffman's habits in this context could be called "manipulative." This is one of the cases when different accounts and evaluations might shed light on the etiquette and conventions of the era.

They can also be re-assuring as comfortable rituals.

2.

Exploratory in nature, this study is designed to make the case for biocritical hermeneutics

I know why we use such terms, but this one is the kind that non-scholars would scoff at --is there a simpler term? Why not just biography?–

an offshoot of pragmatist sociology that focuses on the embodied social forms and biographical underpinnings of sociological inquiry (Shalin 2007).

The term should not be too jarring for a professional ear, but it can put off general readers. "I also use "biocritique" and "biocritical study," but that might not be much of an improvement.

Better I agree but still conjures up images of the body, biology and pharmacy and bodies and draws attention away from the social. Also not sure what the "critique", or "critical" add. Any good scholarship will be critical as in independent, but need not be critical as in negative, or getting at the presumed real stuff that is hidden by self-promoters.

It uses the resources of the *Intercyberlibrary* (see the reference section for URL), an online collection highlighting the works and avocational pursuits of interactionist sociologists. The library houses *The Erving Goffman Project* that features biographical materials on Goffman and promotes biographical methods in social science.

A lot of the materials there have nothing to do with Goffman per se, although may be broadly within areas he was concerned with. As such it is as much a genealogy of such work much beyond Goffman or biographical methods.

The International Biography Initiative site has dozens of articles on biographical methods in social science, some of them are first rate. Yet, most of those are in Russian. There is much interest in biographical research in contemporary Russian sociology. The Intercyberlibrary that houses the Erving Goffman Project serves as an online resource for the SI community. I hope to add there a selection of papers in English that deals with biomethods in sociology.

3.

The problem with self-construction is that it is subject to self-sampling error inherent in sampling by anecdote and validation through hearsay.

Is there a corrective for this? Are all self samples equally suspect, what are the means for more and less representative samples? Also, if you qualify it and notes its limits, does that let one off the hook?

The problem is similar in some respects (but dissimilar in other) to the sampling concerns in sociological research. We need to reckon with the possibility of oversampling some events and undersampling other. Things must be rendered "accountable" before we can be "counted" – before they count. Once we have opreationalized definitions, explained how to identify in situ an instance of each kind, we have to figure out which events of the designated kind are more or less prevalent. I am trying to problematize the very process that converts a flesh and blood event into a narrative fact, for our accounting practices are implicated in the accounts we render and the hard numbers based on these counted accounts. When we cover biofacts, we need to make room for singularity, but that does not preclude the search for patterns, even if these are patterns of indeterminacy. If I preach environmentalism but refuse to recycle my garbage, or pride myself on being calm under pressure yet blow my top from time to time, I display a nonidentity that must enter a biocritical account. How best to match our behavioral indicators, verbal symbols, and emotional indexes is the question involved in self-sampling.

I think we can also get unduly hung up on issues of sampling as representative. At least two meanings here –first is this common, second if uncommon is it none-the-less representative or typical of these uncommon events when they do occur? Of course their vary distinctiveness may mean that they stand alone. But they are no less interesting as a result.

Present in all biographical narratives, this difficulty is particularly evident in autobiographical reconstructions whose protagonists rummage through their own lives looking for episodes that express the author's evolving sense of agency. The reader is usually left uncertain as to how representative a given sample of anecdotes is, how the incongruent strands of enselfments hang together and whether they form a coherent whole.

4.

Rather, biocritical hermeneutics focuses on the patterns of uncertainty and structures of indeterminacy manifest in human conduct continuously adjusted to social pressures and revealing human agency as the inexorably stochastic process (Shalin 1986:22). An observation by Michel Montaigne, who explored his own life in a series of brilliant essays conceived as quasi-experiments, illuminates this perspective human agency:

5.

Biocritical investigation starts with the premise that we gain knowledge about ourselves and society when we examine systematically the (mis)alignment between our words, actions, and emotions, along with the work done to realign our word-body-action nexus.

Isn't this deviant case analysis of a sort? Several sorts of activity you note, but also efforts to misalign them when they would fit and to make them fit when they shouldn't.

It is impossible to decide without knowing the context. On many occasions holding back one's honest opinion and stifling one's immediate reactions is a good form, as is withholding information to protect third parties and going back on one's promise extracted under duress. Legal codes, etiquette books, and common sense offer guidelines on when such performances turn deviant, but it is a good idea to examine the context before we judge the matter.

Biocritical research relies on a kind of "reverse editing" that restores the redacted enselfments and reframes the overall self-construction by cross-referencing the agent's programmatic commitments with the available biographical records of their actions, feelings, and words.

Great kind of like those inserts and deletions that can be brought back by a computer command indicating when and by whom a change was made -- but a bit more difficult!

One more ethical guideline to add to the list of principles governing biocritical research is this: Anyone condemning a certain practice or committing publicly to a moral principle invites scrutiny of one's verbal and nonverbal conduct. It is fair to explore Senator Larry Craig's peculiar behavior in an airport bathroom after he publicly declared his opposition to gay marriage and made derogatory statements about gay lifestyle. This is in contrast with a situation where he said nothing or come out in support.

By collecting biographical data and subjecting it to biocritical

Again the biocritical doesn't set well as I noted above. Could just call biographical analysis which involves the social, personal, cultural and historical contexts – factors which the subject may or may not have been aware of or treated openly.

analysis, we can better understand how affectively ambivalent and situationally ambiguous occasions are framed into ready-to-hand accounts which, in turn, feed back into our conduct and emotion work.

6.

Epistemologically, biocritical hermeneutics takes its cue from early Heidegger who stressed the link between our moods and theoretical practices. "It is precisely when we see the 'world' unsteady and fitfully in accordance with our moods, that the ready-to-hand shows itself in its specific moodhood, which is never the same from day to day. . . . Yet even the purest theoria has not left all moods behind it. . . . Indeed from the ontological point of view we must as a general principle leave the primary discovery of the world to 'bare moods'" (1962:177).

Yes but there is some consistency in moodhood and that matters in contexts where it is found (in contrast say to feelings about an overplayed popular song that is out of fashion and even arouses negative moods now)

It would be hard indeed to build an ontology of beings and moods following Heidegger's suggestions. His *Being and Time* can be seen as a valiant attempt, but the range of moods and emotions covered in his book is exceedingly narrow. The same can be said about Goffman who is fixated on embarrassment and more or less ignores other affective states.

This bold premise calls for a reexamination of the link between affect and discursive practices. It also invites a fresh look at the hermeneutical circle which, as Heidegger (1962:195) warned us, "is not to be reduced to the level of vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated, [for in this] circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing." I take

this to mean that, consciously or unconsciously, we insert ourselves into the hermeneutical circle and bring our affections and deeds into a social inquiry (Shalin 2007:220-221). Our theoretical constructs draw on the somatic-affective experience we bring to the research situation, just as the experiences gleaned from the situation under study brings about reconstruction in our experience.

Yes but key issue is whether there are some universals here re intuition, archtypes etc, tricky stuff but is certainly worth thinking about, that is why biology can be so important as one aspect of understanding society, even as it is unpopular among many of our colleagues. I have added intuition (which no doubt has as a major source what you suggest but may also be something deeper across species –work on what is beautiful across cultures, the smile, light as good etc.).

Intuition is a big word, covering all manners of things. We fall back on the intuition when something – a deal, proposition, or self-presentation – seems too good to be true. We eagerly search for signs to substantiate our intuition, remaining uneasy until we succeed in rationalizing our suspicions.

Not sure about too good to be true, although that is one strand. For me intuition is a feeling or belief that can't be conventionally accounted for within our logical and empirical ways of reasoning.

7.

Goffman's methodological stance echoes this agenda. We can see that in a talk that Goffman (2002) gave at the 1974 Pacific Sociological Association meeting where he described participant observation as a way of "getting data . . . by subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, or their ethnic situation, or whatever. . . . That 'tunes your body up' and with your 'tuned-up body' and with the ecological right to be close to them (which you obtained by one sneaky means or another), you are in a position to note their gestural, visual, bodily response to what's going on about them and you are empathetic enough because you have been taking the same crap they were taking – to sense what it is that they're responding to" (Goffman 2002:125-126).

Great quote, you might even start with this. It also works the other way -- to share insights about the joy re things you have taken delight in. Some of my writing about the professional side of the profession is about the thrill felt in succeeding, as well as the disappointment and sometimes anger, felt in

failing. Need to separate these, author and maybe his/her analysts need to talk about kinds of affective influences beyond the negative, also is probably a neutral category.

8.

Having being drawn into the pragmatically understood hermeneutical circle, the biocritic will face a host of ethical challenges. Which information about the researcher's private life should remain private and which belongs to public domain? What if a scholar under biocritical scrutiny made special effort – as Erving Goffman did – to insulate his or her backstage from public scrutiny?

Also what about the former that may be more revealing rather than concealing? – subjects who spill themselves all over the pages, as unseemly as this can be, it seems increasingly a characteristic of our media video culture. A nice variable across all kinds of things is how clearly offered the backpage stuff is across fields, time periods etc. There also are good leakage issues that Goffman wrote about. Even when the subject-author tries to protect it, it can often be inferred from expressions etc. One of the things I most admired about Goffman and took from him was subtly, and speaking in code so that the hip (or the learned and smart on your wave length) will know what you are saying -- because of double entendre cleverness, analogies, esoteric references etc, or what was *not* said. In that sense he let a lot out. His humor is a case in point. It was often biting, sarcastic and clearly was a way of kind of showing your aces without quite doing that. He was not directly judgmental re current events or persons and preferred to make more categorical points about persons with privilege. That quote at the end of his last paper about if we need warrant to speak, do so on behalf of those without official voices applies well. While I resonated with that emotionally, empirically it can smack of cultural colonialism, as well as the need to critically examine *all*perspectives, even as we are aware of the hidden and not so hidden hands of stratification.

I am intrigued by today's youngsters who are eager to post personal info on YouTube, Facebook, and similar networking vehicles. It is amazing what one can find posted on the web about the dates, colleagues, bosses. . . . The standards are evolving rapidly in this area, as the etiquette books are rewritten and the meaning of selfhood and privacy continues to evolve. I appreciate your insights into Goffman's manners and the meaning encoded in his actions. It would be hard for me to latch onto some of that stuff and understand its socio-cultural context.

9.

"Goffman was very secretive about his personal life," Fine, Manning, and Smith (2000:x) remind us in their extensive review of Goffman's work. "[T]he executor of Goffman's estate, abiding by his wishes, has closed his personal records to those who would investigate his life," confirms Jaworski (2000:299). Yves Winkin, a sociologist who made a concerted effort to study Goffman's biography, corroborates this point: "In Goffman's case, it was clear that his privacy was jealously guarded. He never gave interviews to the media, he never allowed his publishers to release pictures of him and he never appeared on television. In November 1983, when I approached Gillian Sankoff, his widow and literary executor, I was politely acknowledged but was given no overt help (such as access to the archives). . . . As Gillian Sankoff explained to me, Goffman wanted to keep his life totally separate from his work" (Winkin 1999:19-20). But can a scholar really keep one's life completely separate from one's work?

That contrast is really interesting given how much he generalized from his own personal experiences, perceptions and sense of things as a bedrock method – at least when starting. It also contrasts with the 60s communal, share it ethos and the role of reciprocity in human solidarity and the tilt toward authenticity. It also is a status differentiating thing.

This really needs explaining! There is (or should be) a literature on wills, instructions to executors, things to be opened only upon death. A variety of reasons for posthumous offerings or withholdings and that needs to be connected to degree of revelation etc. during the person's life. Beyond strategic reasons for holding back, there may also be effort to create some mystery, playfulness in teasing an audience in hinting or withholding while alive, a type of manipulation known to advertisers, but that wouldn't hold for after death. Holding back is also a form of power (the sociology of information and the secret are relevant here ala Simmel) as it touches such things) but then it only works if you let it slip sometimes so others know there is a secret. It may also speak to his seriousness about being what he called a "student" in which we have this glorious trek to knowledge and what matters is the project not the person.

I am thinking how Simmel's interest in secrecy might have implicated his own life, his very personal need for secrecy. That is the issue implicating biocritique. One has to consider the danger of reductionism here, but also be aware of a potential for serious exploration. It is hard to believe that Simmel theorized secrecy without drawing on his own experience. He talks about the situations where "the guilty one alone knows the fault," about "a fault against the other of which both are conscious," "a considerateness, a delicacy, a secret wish to make up for it, a yieldingness and selflessness, none of which would

ever occur to him had he a completely untroubled conscience." These observations come from a man maintaining vigorous social intercourse, managing a wife and a mistress, having a child that would be raised by both, and so much more. An urbane man par excellence, Simmel traveled in many circles and fully enjoyed what the partially overlapping networks, ample financial resources, and his celebrity status had to offer.

Also I don't know, but imagine some of documents from a will or estate are public and something might be learned there, but this as you note, gets delicate even it is legal to rummage around. I think a lot about the interplay of public and private and different meanings of these. Part of it is being able to see and morally and mentally order the public in the private and the reverse.

What do you think he meant in dedicating one of his books to Radcliffe-Brown who he almost met? That in a sense is personal, but in a peculiar way. What doesn't happen to us is rarely made much of. Why does he inject himself here? Why not in other places?

Yet, I was unable so far to track the statement he made on the subject. I suspect that Goffman saw a kindred spirit in Radcliff-Brown, a fellow ethnographer, a master craftsman, even though the kind of ethnography each man did could not be more different.

In the past, Gillian turned down requests for interviews (I understand that her daughter is equally uninterested and have no idea what the situation with his son is). I would not want to bother her with my inquiries. As for the reasons behind Goffman's decision to seal his archives, I wish I knew more details. Most published info appears to be second-hand; the gist of it is that Erving wanted to separate his life and work. The exact wording of his will, formal or informal, is important.

The case was made to me on occasion by those who knew Goffman personally that his work stands or falls on its own, that in-depth knowledge of his personal life cannot help us build on Goffman's insights and carry on his sociological tradition. Moreover, interest in the scholar's personal life risks turning prurient.

This ain't necessarily bad, if some broader points lie there, it may be a necessary cost, also gives realism to us as humans and can make more interesting to read. The issue is prurience for its own sake does not belong in this type of work.

I think so too, but many enough disagree. I hope that once the scholarly dimension of the Goffman project becomes clear, more people agree to share memories or offer comments/corrections. The thing I particularly value in your comments is that they help me understand Erving's humanity – something I want to explore and celebrate – without glossing over the rough edges of his personality, as well as of his time and place.

10.

In the same spirit, P.S. Strong lists several lessons Goffman bequeathed to us, one of which bears on the propriety of treating the researcher's life as a resource: "[Y]ou can treat your own life as data. Each one of us is a natural control group; if our splendidly universal theories don't even apply to our own lives, there must be something wrong with them. . . . To treat one's entire life as data is at one and the same time to dedicate oneself entirely to the discipline; to relentlessly combat 'that touching tendency to keep a part of the world safe from sociology' and to treat the whole life, including sociology, its works and homilies, as a resource for intellectual exploration" (Strong 2000:42, 41).

Yes but depends on the kind of issue or question one is concerned with, dangers of over-generalizing. Also I recall his wonderful remark about how "it's all data." That applies to what is offered apart from its logical, empirical or moral adequacy but also to that which is not revealed. Such data more clearly takes on meaning when contrasted to related settings where it is revealed by others. Is hard to see non-events however. But an aspect of imagination is identifying them. Imputing motives for withholding is also even harder absent a confession or an informer.

Biocritical hermeneutics raises the issue of autobiocritique. Those interested in other peoples' archives ought to be ready to open up their own. I am troubled by the fact that the founder of "archeology of knowledge" destroyed his archives before his death, and the great explorer of "society's backstage" refused to lift the curtain on his private existence. We own our archives and can dispose of them as we see fit, but we do not own our reputations and have no right to other people's opinions about ourselves.

11.

As co-director of the *International Biography Initiative* (see the reference section for URL), I grapple with such issues when I prepare for publication interviews recorded over the course of years with Russian social scientists and intellectuals. Even when respondents gave every indication that their

interviews or memoirs should enter the public domain, the question persists whether frank opinions and intimate details that surface in their narratives should be kept away from the public.

Yes, but need to stay on guard against being manipulated or ask it is for a good cause?

I thought I would find clear guidelines articulated by historians, biographers, and archivists on how best to handle private information but discovered that this was not at all the case. Much needs to be done to clarify this murky domain. Recently, I have learned (from Carolyn Ellis and Kathy Charmaz in particular) about the lively debate on this subject among ethnographers. The issues of autoethnography and co-constructed narratives are of particular interest in this respect.

Those compiling an autobiography confront a similar set of narrative problems and ethical dilemmas. Which biographical materials are to be redacted, how closely the edited truth must resemble messy realities, when the account offered to the public becomes self-serving, what is the proper balance of tact and frankness, of an overarching narrative unity and jarring self-revelations? Interviews and memoirs posted on the *International Biography Initiative* site are highly illuminating in this respect. They show that Russian scholars seeking to reconcile their perestroika selves with their earlier soviet incarnations sometime willfully omit key events that cast their past identities and subsequent metamorphoses in more ambiguous light (Shalin 2006, 2008).

Good acknowledge the tensions; have you read The File by Ash-Garner, very relevant for these issues! The film The Lives of Others is relevant here as well.

Have not read "The File" but saw the movie 'Lives of Others" – a powerful statement indeed. I found it to be more effective as a political testimony than artwork. Conversations with Russian sociologists and public intellectuals I have been conducting over the course of years address many of the issues raised in the movie.

12.

Ives Winkin (1999:20) asks, "[D]o I have the right to invade his [Goffman's] privacy?" The answer is "yes," provided the researcher is "well-intentioned as good literary standards permit. There should be no stature crafting, but equally there should be no unnecessary unwrapping either"

That does not sound like much of an advice (how much unwrapping is too much?) for those wading through the muddy waters of biocritique. Still, we should heed the common sense appeal to tact. Be clear about your inquiry's goal, highlight alternative interpretations, explore the potential sources of bias, consider the best and worst case scenarios,

do as little harm as possible to the third parties, pay close attention to the historical circumstances and the ethical standards of the time – such are ethical guideposts I propose to follow in this biocritical inquiry. We also need to bear in mind that biocritical accounts may reveal as much about the biocritic as about the object of biocritical investigation.

13.

A good example is Robert Erwin who provides this brief but telling account of his encounters with Goffman:

      I base my opinion of Goffman's personality on three conversations I had with him as a publisher between 1967 and 1979, on a couple of casual social encounters, and on stories told me by two friends and a person who dealt with him on academic business.

      A number of people who knew him in person referred to him as sour and sardonic, although a minority objected to those labels. The word I would use to characterize his personality is eerie.

      During a year he spent at the Harvard Center for International Affairs, where I was then Editor of Publications, Goffman enrolled a child at the Cambridge school which one of my daughters was attending.

      One sunny Saturday at a fund-raising fair at the school I discovered that the jazz quartet playing outside the Science Building included Edmond Hall, the superb Dixieland clarinetist. Hall was old and down on his luck by the look of him, but he still had fasts fingers and a mahogany tone.

      Goffman came ambling along while I was listening. As we carried on small talk about the fair, the school, and our offspring, I nodded and beamed at the music, making no secret of my exultation and veneration. The more

enthusiasm I showed, the more Goffman looked at me with dread, and in a little while he left like a miner escaping from a tunnel that may collapse at any minute.

Maybe I was ingenuous. Maybe he was tone deaf. Yet I could not help but think of the Wicked Witch in the Wizard of Oz, the one who would melt if you splashed water at her. Dread is not too strong a word for what I felt in him. He seemed to fear that to be splattered with joy would be lethal. (Erwin 2000:94)

Good writing, I knew Bob in Cambridge and found him delightful. Yet I'd be careful about basing too much on such superficial data. Re that one instant, a lot of other things might have been on his mind that he was pulled by, rather than being pushed by the music.

He worked very hard and was serious about learning and I think about advancing his career (I don't know how well he lived with the higher income he had from several sources (re his life style -- did he live beyond the usual faculty – since he clearly could of? I sensed a kind of social tenseness in him, not quite a quivering voice but close to it, he was deliberate, a good listener in the sense of using what you said/did for his own sardonic comments rather than as a deep response to what you had said directed to you and your needs. Phrasing in the form of "people like you" "people of that ilk" come to mind, not sure if he said "like us" but he clearly included himself in some of the stigmatized categories.

I agree that we need to use caution passing judgments on such episodes without knowing the entire context. Erwin's immersion into the music scene might have desensitized him to Goffman's emotional needs, situational concerns. Wish I had more than one account of this episode.

14.

As the work on the Erving Goffman Project lumbers along, it might be helpful to distinguish between (1) **hearsay** – tales about the person floating around without clear attribution; (2) **anecdotes** – stories traced to a particular source but not necessarily witnessed by the narrator; (3) **episodes** – single events witnessed by a narrator who did not play a major part in the encounter; (4)**encounters** – an interaction in which the narrator engaged in a focused interchange with the person in question; (5) **transactions** – a series of direct and indirect encounters stretching over a course of time and hinting at a pattern; (6) **reputations** – opinions about the person's agency formed by specific narrators on the basis of personal observations, second hand accounts, and partial record; (7) **evaluations –** considered biocritical judgments about an embodied historical agent based on the personal

accounts, institutional records, and other traces that the agent or a group of agents left behind. We might also need a term like **biographical repertories** to describe a range of biographical blueprints that gain currency in a historical group, strata, society, or era. The notion of "biographem" deployed by Winkin (1999) suggests additional lines for biocritical investigation. A specific tale may not fall squarely into either category, spanning several framing models at once, but the above schema might help assess its general thrust.

Great set of concepts, you should elaborate on these in your paper, -- expand with examples. Do you know my essay on means of finding dirty data, (http://web.mit.edu/gtmarx/www/dirty.html). I think a lot about these things, but more in trying to figure out what is truth of various kinds, the nature of knowledge, how does the positivist's knowledge connect to other kinds of knowing etc. I do this pretty seat of the pants not from much knowledge (yet) of the deeper literatures. I will try to connect your comments here to a chapter on types of personal data for my surveillance project.

Will supply examples in time and see how much testimony falls into each category.

The would-be contributors to the Erving Goffman Project who witnessed Erving personally and have a tale to share can shed light on his physical appearance (e.g., estimates of Erving's heights range between 5.2 and 5.6), his demeanor (e.g., his eagerness to reveal the other's and conceal his own backstage), manner of dress (e.g., some remember him as a dapper, deliberate dresser while others recall him being casual about his clothes), as well as specific deeds that show the widest possible range of his enselfments (e.g., is the story about Goffman's pointing to the inferiority of female grad student apocryphal?).

I am sure he was under 5.6 since he seemed short to me but he was graceful. I don't recall ever seeing him in a tie but he was not a slob either. He did indicate to me that some concessions had to be made –I think he said he didn't much like to shave but he did on those occasions requiring it, also re being a drop-out California fun seeker in the scenes John Irwin wrote about, Goffman said that was great but you couldn't do it forever, not after age 30 anyway. I think the point here wasn't about needing a real job, but more that you would look silly. Well if we know about social construction etc., why should the well-put-together smart person care what it looks like to others, why not be subversive, not to shock but to be "true" to yourself? So that comment perhaps suggests his commitment to the middle class values he could also mock so well. He seemed to be saying that even role distance had

to be within appropriate bounds/bonds or else it didn't work. Knowing how to read opaque social situations is clearly an interpretive gift and skill for humans.

15.

As Dean MacCannell put it, "Goffman was both friendly, modest, and considerate – and he could be mean as hell" (MacCannell 2007).

I never saw any personal meanness. I did a few times sense his impatience and I did not appreciate the almost total lack of comments on my paper and the B plus grade as I recall, even though he cited in his Stigma and I think I got an A on his final. I think he gave me a B+ for the class and that seemed wrong, but it never occurred to me to ask why or to argue.

I hope to write about Goffman and his students some days. Would be interesting to learn your impressions about Goffman the lecturer. I have collected some interesting and inconsistent testimonies on that score.

He was the most interesting teacher I have ever had. He taught by his content and by his style.

16.

People who knew Goffman well have sought to reconcile such contradictory strands in Goffman's enselfments and explain their admiration for the man. Says John Irwin, "Even though Erving could be a pain in the ass and sometimes cruel, my wife and I loved him because he was so smart, fascinating, entertaining, and occasionally kind" (Irwin, 2007). Gary Marx invokes the image of "at least two Goffmans. One was wise, warm, and of good humor, eager to impart knowledge via morality tales and specific advice and make the student feel like he or she was within the chosen circle of person in the know. . . . The other Goffman was controlled, insensitive, and indifferent and made sure the student knew his place. Most of the 'Tales of Goffman' are negative. In many of his dealings with others he did not reflect the sensitivity and concern for the underdog shown in his early written work" (Marx 2000:67). John Lofland captures "dialectical contradictions" in Goffman's presentation of self especially well:

He was a severe formal theorist yet a descriptive ethnographer; a reclusive scholar yet an adroit administrator and a rapier-witted party-goer; cynical yet sincere; an intellectual giant yet skeptical about his achievements; openly crass in promoting his self-interest yet rejecting broad and public self-promotion; brilliant at ferreting out social bluffs yet less than adept at bluffing;

religious about scholarship yet cynical about social enterprises. Most certainly he stripped away polite fictions in print and in person, yet also in print and in person had the deepest and most profound appreciation of the importance of 'tact, graciousness, and compassion" (Lofland 2000:176).

This part I think was central and the dialects from his personal marginality and novelists/human's ability to imagine helped with his insights. I don't know about his adroit administrator part, he seemed to avoid committees etc by being difficult.

17.

How could a scholar speaking so eloquently about the cruel way society stigmatizes its members tell a female student that "he did not think women should be in graduate school" or pointedly use derogatory terms like "gimps" when "there was a badly crippled woman in the class" (Marx 2000:67). Notice that it was the same Goffman who published pioneering studies like *Stigma* (1963), "The Arrangements between the Sexes" (1977), and *Gender Advertisements* (1979). It is hard to think Goffman was unaware of how his speech acts must have affected the people he stigmatized. Then, what was the pedagogical meaning of his harangues?

Maybe he couldn't so easily always control them, there needn't always be a method behind the madness.

Or consider a report about Goffman passing through a hotel lobby at a sociology convention and casually remarking to a group of friends: "'If I can't find anybody more important to talk with, I'll come back and talk with you'. A jaunty terrorist with a diffident voice reminding us that in this world's bag full-to-bursting with banal sentiment,"

This could also be a sign of respect – you mattered enough to be able to share in his cleverness and honesty to confront sacred animals. We all know that opportunistic climbing sentiment, even as it gets suppressed. I would take it in an appreciative way if he said that to me. The issue is would he have said it to Merton or Blumer? I bet not, so in saying it he is acknowledging that we in a sense can be trusted because we are at or below him and he can be honest with us. This may hurt because it says we are lower, but also may flatter because it says he is honest and we know what he is expressing and he knows that we know.

observes Bennett Berger (2000:279), "anybody who says something cruel and true can't be all bad."

Yet these 2 are linked in delicate ways and as he knew there are times when it is better to be false and kind.

The issues of power are powerfully implicated in Erving's conduct, as they are in his theories, although he does not conceptualize them explicitly.

18.

Here is one more example illuminating the persistent self-referentiality in Goffman's conduct. It comes from Goffman's "lecture about lecture" delivered at the University of Michigan in 1976 where he mocked a typical lecturer who "in exchange for this song and dance, this stage-limited performance of approachability, this illusion of personal access . . . gets honor, attention, applause and a fee. For which I thank you" (Goffman 1983c:194).

I don't get this one, once in awhile there is a big gap and it is a ritual and empty. But the best academic presentations (especially in a small group, or if a large one, involving those deeply knowledgeable or at least interested), it needn't be an illusion since there are sincere and helpful exchanges which can go on, there is personal access re future meetings, advice, footnotes etc. and the honor is very modest. Perhaps he exaggerates to make the point about how there is a ritual presentational quality to it but there is so much more (or can be). So in a way this is a cheap shot kind of remark and his own work ethos undercuts it. Can the same be said for publishing an article?

Just about any interaction can be viewed from the vantage point of impression management, just about every situation can morph into a staged performance requiring a dramaturgical analysis. This applies to lectures and lecturing. The important thing is that Erving perceived himself under those circumstances as engaged in a highly stylized, staged self-presentation.

19.

Also, there is probably a sampling bias in all memoir literature that tends to focus on the spectacular, the offbeat, and the negative and underreport the routine, the mundane, and the benign. Here is a recollection by David Dickens, 2008) that shows Goffman's different sides:
During my last year of graduate school, in 1977 or 1978, I presented a paper on phenomenological sociology at a conference in Boston. The session was chaired by Larry Wieder, a prominent ethnomethodologist. Once the presentations concluded, a small unassuming man walked up to me, shook my hand and told me "I really enjoyed your paper. It was very clear." I thanked him and he then turned toward Larry, whom he seemed to know, and said

"Larry, I didn't understand a word you said." Wieder, being the kind fellow that he was, simply chuckled and said, "Well, Erving, I'm sorry to hear that." I still had no idea who the stranger was but, as he turned and walked away, Larry looked at me and said, "you should be very proud, that was Erving Goffman."

But this goes in the right direction re the weak and the strong, unlike some of his other stuff. In those early years most of the students I knew had trouble making sense of ethno-methodology, even when they were sympathetic to symbolic interaction.

This story also fits with his not wearing a name tag at professional meetings. His failure to introduce himself in the story above could be seen as humility and wanting to put the emphasis on the student's paper or as arrogance, just assuming that everyone would know who he was and people as famous as himself had no need to introduce themselves.

I agree. Wish I had more episodes of this kind to see how they are distributed in Erving's self-production.

20.

As this example shows, Goffman could be supportive and dismissive at the same time. And he clearly showed the capacity for growth, both intellectually and personally. Goffman might have been skeptical about women's work in graduate school at the early stages of his career but later wrote papers on gender discrimination and institutional reflexivity, which must have been prompted in part by his reflections on his own role as a professor in the academe dominated by males. He castigated mental institutions for the abusive treatment they gave their charges, following which he wrote a powerful account of what it is like to live with a disturbed person prone to violating the interaction order. He pretty much ignored the role of the body in his early writings, notably in *The Presentation of Self*, then spoke eloquently about the pervasive effect that our bodily limitations and affective disturbances have on our conduct. We might take these metamorphoses as a warning against the tendency to cherry pick evidence that accords with certain preconceptions and gloss over human agency's inchoate properties. Human agency is a stochastic phenomena marked by indeterminacy and contradiction.

Yes but also by lots of consistency and predictability, especially over groups and aggregates, need to contextualize to note where have more or less of this, one of my areas is the sociology of surprise but that is partly possible because there is so much that isn't a surprise.

Yes, there is a dialectics of continuity and discontinuity. The question is what we designate as a figure here and what relegate to the background.

Still, when I hear about the "hazing" to which Goffman subjected those close to him (Lofland 2000:167; Scheff 2006:11), I cannot help thinking that such episodes are too numerous to ignore, especially when they concern a student-teacher relationship. When we profess we impart knowledge not only via discourse but also viscerally, through our embodied actions which provide a somatic-affective backdrop against which our professed theoretical commitments loom larger or smaller. That applies not only to Erving Goffman whose deeds and theories reveal a certain thematic (dis)continuity, but to all of us who aspire to profess and who, often in spite of ourselves, serve as vital links in the long semiotic chains of history. Goffman's abiding commitment to scholarship, seriousness of his intellectual pursuits, willingness to work closely with aspiring scholars are of signal importance

There was not a lot of this that I saw. He had very few PhD students, what does that say? A great quote about this in the book Genius that I will track down and send you about the physicist Richard Feynman's lack of students.

This may be meaningful. I would like to compile a list of Goffman's grad students and see if there is any pattern.

but so are the occasions where he exhibited a remarkable lack of emotional intelligence as evidenced by the tears to which he reduced his charges and humiliations he caused to those close to him.

21.

Goffman's relationships with his students deserve a special attention. In many cases, it seems, these relationships were marred by strain and ill-feelings. All teacher-apprentice bonds have the potential to be fragile on account of the inevitable status disparity, signal crossing, only partially fulfilled promises. Still, the number of Goffman's students regaling their ambivalence and misgivings about the master seems unusually high.

But the number writing about him relative to others is also high. The issue is within those who comment does he get a higher proportion of such stories?

That is one of the tasks to be undertaken.

22.

Tom Scheff, who notes that "as teacher and mentor, Goffman was generous and helpful," tells about his disappointment when he travelled some distance to consult Goffman on his project only to be dismissed in a rather summary fashion – "he cut me off abruptly after hearing only a few minutes of my observation and confusion" (Scheff 2006:8-13). Joel Best (2007) recalls how he went to Goffman's office to inquire about the project he tried to model on his teacher's writing "in a sense that it had examples from fiction, newspaper articles, and so on . . . and he gave me a B+ on the paper. He told me, 'It is really hard to do that kind of thing well.' And that was about all the advice I ever got from him." John Irwin (2007) recounts a similar story about a paper he turned over to Goffman who" coldly informed me that he would not work with me on a PhD. . . .   I didn't have much contact with Goffman for the next two years. When I put together a group of professors to serve as my orals' committee, which had to pass on my mastery of several chosen areas of sociology before I could go on to my last task, the dissertation, I purposely left him off because I heard he gave one of the other graduate students I knew a lot of trouble during his orals."

I am pretty sure this was me, I remember talking a lot to John (who came a few years after I did) about my graduate experiences. I don't recall Goffman giving me a lot of trouble, but I do recall he took it all very seriously and pushed me. It took the committee a long time to decide my case. I was outside nervously waiting. S.M. Lipset came out and said something like, "congratulations you passed with distinction." Lipset said it took awhile because they were trying to decide whether I had passed with distinction. I assume since Lipset was my main advisor then, having given me my ma data on Father Coughlin and Neil Smelser later praised that Goffman was less enthusiastic, but I don't know. I then took off for a year of round the world travel and received an NIMH grant with him as my sponsor for the following year. But I let that go because of an offer that seemed much more appealing (this involved a full time job and a study more related to social issues). I didn't see him much the next year, but we did meet at least once. The next year he was at Harvard for the year and then he moved to Penn.

One thing I would dearly like to do in the Goffman project is to track the same event(s) as they are reflected in different accounts. The Goffman project is designed in part to examine how real time events grow into narrative facts and how biographical narratives deploy and transcend the conventions of the time. Fleeting impressions, second-hand accounts, and comments on other people's comments are equally valuable in this respect, for they can be cross-referenced and checked against each other.

23.

Recalling "the fight with Goffman" that he and Sacks carried on and that some might have mistaken for the oedipal urge to slay one's intellectual father, Schegloff observes that the animus was coming from the other end: "It was Sacks, actually, who remarked once that we nowadays think of Oedipus story as a story about patricide, but that it was in the first instance, of course, a case of intended infanticide . . . it was his father who first left Oedipus to die, and not the other way around" (Schegloff 1988:91). This story had a characteristic twist. When asked if Sacks was his student, Goffman once allegedly answered: "'What do you mean; I was his student!'" (Schegloff 1992:xxiii). This episode is indicative of Goffman's ability to shift shapes without the willingness to explain himself, to connect his past and present enselfments and square off with the ethical implications of his deeds. Goffman will not be contained; whatever frame he was about to impose on the situation and himself, he would find the way to undercut it at one point or another.

In this setting where he has the power there is also an aspect of playing, teasing, hiding. But that won't be contained thing is also an attribute of those we find "interesting" or "a character" or a "live wire" could also be for someone who is easily bored because he is so smart and insightful and needs to play and confound to keep himself amused, as well as perhaps sometimes as a pedagogical tool. I recall sometime connecting him to the problems of those who are so much smarter or quicker and more insightful than others, there is a kind of impatience with the slow and less wise that can re responded too with role distancing by the superior party and with humor and also by challenging them by doing something not expected.

The quick-witted might be annoying to those around. Perhaps Goffman used to single out such students and treat them differently. He was a smart aleck himself, according to Hughes. There was not much interaction between Hughes and Goffman after the latter's defense. Goffman avoided citing his teachers. Only later on in life Goffman acknowledged his teacher's influence in a personal letter (see Jaworski's article on the subject posted in the Intercyberlibrary).

24.

Perhaps the boldest interpretation of Goffman's conduct comes from Dean MacCannell who reads Goffman's life as a deliberate effort to combat bad faith that Sartre decried in his existentialist philosophy:

Not sure how you fight bad faith by asserting it – unless it is to offer examples that encourage self-reflection and bring insight by shattering the taken-for-granted. His analysis and writing can be seen partly as pleas for authenticity

and honesty and as stressing the importance of respecting the dignity of the person and not exploiting others or engaging in anti-community actions for self-serving ends. Somewhere he wrote that the first norm was to be what you appear to be (or perhaps he put it more softly as a universal expectation). A lot of his work dealt with deviations from this and responses to it. His brilliant insights and vision saw more often than most persons the gap between verbal and other presentations and the "reality" within back stage scenes and personal masks. Given what we know of power, stratification and culture this was more likely to show up the more privileged and hence is a blow for the good guys. His insights into gender images is the best example, but Stigma has many as well.

But I don't see how some of the "tales of Goffman" re his behavior were fighting this good fight.

How does one combat it rather than encouraging it by behaving badly or counter to the norms? To be honest and direct and not hide perhaps counters it, but some of his other behaviors seem to involve bad faith. You could count up all the behavioral examples you have found and categorize those and see where they fit re the above and other categories.

I agree – fighting bad faith with bad faith may perpetuate bad faith rather than expose and undercut it. At the same time, I see why this strategy has been deployed by agents in particular historical circumstances.

If we list the various claims (both substantiated and the other kind) that have been made against Goffman – cynical, ironical, duplicitous, deceptive, unserious, nonresponsive – we find they are also the key terms in Sartre's analysis of 'bad faith'. It seems that Goffman took Sartre so much to heart that he assembled a persona for himself exactly on the model of 'Sartrean bad faith', perhaps in the belief that a double negative makes a positive, that is, if he could only mock up bad faith maybe he, at least, could escape the determinism he describes so well. Certainly there is evidence in his comportment that Goffman was more concerned than anyone else about the implications of his theory (MacCannell, 2000:13).

25.

Goffman's research agenda could have been influenced by his struggle to assert his dignity, move up in the social hierarchy, overcome the stigmatizing experience of his childhood and youth (consider in this context his remark to Dell Hymes). Hence, his preoccupation with appearances, stigmatization, and passing persisting throughout his intellectual career, as well as the impostor

complex ingrained in his dramaturgical preoccupation with the con artists' craft.

Really are at least two pieces here. First as a kind of living testimony to injustice and unfairness and pretense and second simply as a strategy to get ahead by fitting into showing role-nearness rather than distance. Don't stand out, to get along go along, don't rock the boat.

I paid close attention to Goffman's first major article, the one on the symbols of class status. I feel it illuminates his early interest in climbing and passing that can be connected with his biography, even though he preferred not to tackle head-on the issues of class in his subsequent works.

None of these explanations is self-evident, neither excludes the others, yet they all point to a linkage between Goffman's life and work.

26.

The impression that Kohn and his colleagues at the Institute of Mental Health formed at the time was that this separation had to do with marital difficulties. Kohn is careful to problematize his conclusions, pointing out that his information came to him second-hand: "We all assumed this [the fact that his wife did not at first join Goffman at Berkeley] had to do with the strain in their marriage. We might have learned this from people who knew both of them better. But I knew of nothing [in particular]. She did not have a job. My assumption might have been informed by those who knew the situation."

This is ok as a broad observation on the irony etc., but the timing and circumstances seem off. The de-institutionalization movement I think came only later. Also as a rich person she would likely have been in private institutions and able to come and go at will unlike those turned out onto the streets from public hospitals a bit later

That is a worthy resource and I should probably look into it. If you know how to go about it or how to contract Charlie Glock, please let me know. Goffman' interest in mental institutions interfaces with his wife's mental issues and experiences with psychiatry. That mush seems clear. The exact nature of this interface needs to be researched.

27.

The impression management technique focuses on the qualities amenable to

semiotic control, susceptible to simulation and dissimulation.

Great ambiguous terms. I have written on this and would be interested in how you approach it. This ties to the ambiguity of language and the fact that while just about everything is a social construction and partial, that doesn't mean it is all fake or fake in the same ways when it is and that of course has social causes and consequences.

I discuss the relationship between simulation and dissimulation in my ST article "Signing in the Flesh" (it is posted in the Intercyberlibrary).   My position is that every act of simulation involves dissimulation and vice versa. I have proposed the notion of "dissimulacrum" to complement the more familiar "simulacrum." The thrust of this discussion is directed against the postmodernist contention that we can never get a hold of "presence," that all we can witness is "absence." My suggestion was that postmodernist gloss over the pesky corporealites and affective disturbances driving their imagination.

Semiotic resources of the body are vast indeed, but they are not limitless. Not all body indicia can be stage-managed. You cannot sit at the piano for an improvisation, take a bar exam on the fly, stand your ground in a dog fight, or argue gracefully in a high-stake debate – unless you have the right stuff, the hard-acquired habitus. The ceremonial skills we deploy at a wedding will not get us far in the operating room or on a dance floor. Talking the talk is one thing, walking the walk is another, and rocking the rock is something else altogether. You can fake an orgasm, but it is hard to simulate a hard-on, or dissimulate it, for that matter. Much of our life is embodied, substantive, and instrumental in a way that anonymous encounters in the elevator or chance meetings on the streets are not.

28.

Goffman's works are replete with the observations that presuppose Goffman's exposure to the relevant experience or vouch for his willingness to trust his contemporaries to supply the meaning of the reported activity. However, the exact source of Goffman's knowledge about the "real thing" and the "faked one" and the empirical indicators thereof are rarely spelled out.

This gets to my opening comment, the assumption of a shared culture and set of experiences, but it also makes me wonder why persons are drawn to Goffman (or what separates those who are from those who aren't). A worthwhile paper lies in analyzing Goffman's legacy through those he influenced. In my book on surveillance which I will send some of, I frame it

around a number of his information control concerns updated to the cyberage.

Why am I drawn to Goffman's life and work? There must be reasons for that, implicating my own embodied existence. I remember discovering Goffman in my college years, reading the Presentation of Self, writing a paper on Russian culture inspired in part by Goffman's ideas. With its tradition of Potemkin portable villages, USSR seemed like a perfect terrain for dramaturgical analysis. I can list several possible connections between Goffman's theories and my own biography: (a) Goffman's parents emigrated from Russia, and so did I; (b) Goffman is given to mocking and sarcasm common in Russian intellectuals, a pattern I interpret as a response to an abusive environment with which I am all too familiar; (c) the ambivalent tales regaled by Goffman's students resonate with my own experience; (d) I can identify with Goffman's efforts to transcend the formative conditions of his age, to shed the habits informed by the narrow perspective of the era. Other parallels can be drawn here, no doubt. The list is not exhaustive, nor can it be exhausted in principle. Anything I can say about the reasons and motives driving my inquiry is problematic. (Isn't it why you cannot fully psychoanalyze yourself?). The process is inevitably open-ended, yielding new insights when performed by different biocritics. The very process of inventing the terms and frames for autobiocritique is continuous with social transformation.

29.

Displaying requisite selves, protecting other people's faces, maintaining proper affect, remedying situational infractions – there is hardly an interaction ritual that Goffman would not violate when the opportunity presented itself. This is not to say that the interaction order is a figment of our imagination, only that it is indefinitely flexible and that its power to constrain is perennially problematic. It is less of a ceremony than a semi-chaotic order that keeps emerging in feats and starts without ever solidifying into a reality sui generis.

Yes but… seems too strong for me, depends on type and context --some are wide open, others highly contained and some in between. People vary in their styles apart from context. We sometimes say there is a bad fit etc or you are just right for that task, implying the perfect merge. Studying collective behavior earlier in my career helped with these issues, (e.g., especially the first chapter of a collective behavior book --
 http://web.mit.edu/gtmarx/www/cbchap1.html

Yes, the degrees of orderliness vary from one social domain to another, but there is hardly a realm where a measure of indeterminacy and an element of ad hocing are present.

Goffman's theory of interaction order glosses over the formal and explicit issues of power which inform much of our interactive strategies.

But a lot is there by indirection.

The insights Goffman has to offer are personal; they are sifted through the affective filter that informs his ethnographic sensibilities and colors his conceptual innovations. While such insights may be biased and thus need to be corrected, they often have a visceral truth to them that owes much to Goffman's willingness to insert himself into the hermeneutical circle and allow his affective compass to guide his inquiry.

30.

But this is hidden. There is rarely an "I" in his work, that could be another easy to do computer project ala the methods used by those who analyze Shakespeare word patterns.

Goffman's theories elide certain emotions in part because he had troubles experiencing particular affective states. If his formulations sometimes evince the uneasiness about the bodily dimension of social interaction, it is in part because he felt ambivalent about his own corporeal dimensions and embodied qualities.

Don't we all? This is partly why people resonate so with some of his work, even those who don't know from sociology. I also think his imaginative empathy suggests undercuts the suggestion that he had affective issues. I would keep observable behavioral expressions distinct from what the actor may experience.

True, but our ambivalence manifests itself in a drastically different manner. Some people maintain stoic impenetrability, others get hot under the color, still others dissimulate.

As several commentators point out, Goffman's take on stigmatized agency implicated his own embodied being. A master of ceremony, Goffman felt more comfortable communicating the niceties of social etiquette and expressive behavior than articulating the substantive, exchange-based transactions in which social life is grounded and which serve as a check on our expressive claims.

For example consider…

Conartistry can get us only that far. The expressive costume we don must meet the requirements of the place but it also must fit our biosocial physic, skills, qualifications.

31.

The Durkheimean insistence on social reality as a phenomenon sui generis is partially to blame for this weakness. This emphasis played a crucial role in circumscribing sociology as a separate disincline, but policing its borderlines and fending off the encroachment from neighboring disciplines like biology, physiology, psychology, and psychiatry had an unintended consequence of delimiting the scope of sociological investigation and discouraging interdisciplinary research. No doubt society informs the somatic-affective phenomena, but its reach is powerfully checked by the corporeal and neurological resources of the body that cannot be dramatized away and that shape social dynamics according to the logic of their own. When psychic events come to our attention, we should not assume that they are necessarily psycho-logical. By the same token, social phenomena are not automatically and exclusively socio-logical. The bio-social continuum calls for an analysis that undermines the bureaucratic imperative of adhering to the disciplinary logic sui generis.

Very very important and a next big need for advances in understanding, the interaction of these factors. I see it a lot of this in work on surveillance technology, with the silly battles between techno and social determinists. There is some useful work in the social studies of science that tries to integrate. In writing about the engineering of control it also is present. The physical and natural worlds (beyond the bio) need more presence in social understanding. Your example of the distended male member works well (although I would have written erection instead) and no amount of presentational aplomb will alter the different starting points for most males and females, to stay nothing of the powers of gravity!

The whole division into social sciences and corresponding academic departments must be problematized. Each field proceeds on certain discipline-constituting assumptions and operations that the practitioners use to abstract from practical manifold – the buzzing confusion of experience, as James put it. The result is the compartmentalization of social sciences, each one staking claims on a particular "reality" and vigorously policing its borders. Yet there is no socio-logical reality that is not at the same time psycho-logical, no psycho-logical phenomena free from the imprint of politics, no political events devoid of economic influence, and so on. The bureaucratic logic sui generis favors

splitting the humpty-dumpty into as many academically certified fields and pieces as possible. I am looking for the interdisciplinary logic that brings the humpty-dumpty together again.