

**REMARKS to the CRIME, LAW AND DEVIANCE SECTION
ON RECEIPT OF DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR AWARD 1989
Gary T. Marx**

I am very pleased to receive the Distinguished Scholar Award and I am sorry that a long-awaited residency in Bellagio precludes my presence in Washington. My first sociology class at UCLA was in deviance and social control. That wonderful experience led to a major, graduate school, and work. The scientific, philosophical, and policy issues around individualism, deviance, rebellion, conformity, community, law, morality, justice, power and authority, which were raised in the course provided the framework for a career.

My mother, intending to give me a compliment, once noted that I was a very modest person. To which my father countered “he has much to be modest about.” It is not modesty, however, to note my indebtedness to my teachers and the many others in this Section, and beyond it, from whom I have learned so much. Our culture of individualism masks the collective underpinnings of our enterprise. The colleagues mentioned in the book’s acknowledgments gave generously of their time and ideas.

My former students, Professor Nancy Reichman of the University of Denver and Dr. Jay Wachtel of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, provided invaluable research assistance and friendship. They also served as the objects of my need to mentor and to convey the sociological craft and sensibility. I am particularly grateful to the 20th Century Fund for supporting the study after the National Institute of Justice refused to.

I have written on issues of academic success and failure and the search for meaning within an academic career and will resist the temptation to dwell on these matters offered by a captive audience.* Let me simply say that I drew three broad practical lessons in that work, 1) value the process of creating as an end in itself, 2) expand one’s professional repertoire, and 3) do not make your career your life. I am indeed fortunate that this research project supported these principles. It was great fun to work on. I trespassed with profit in the neighboring fields of ethics, law, and history. The summer salary my grant provided permitted a family river trip down the Grand Canyon.

I also have a post-partum paper with reflections on finishing the undercover book and on issues that have subsequently appeared such as the CISPES and Marion Barry investigations, which I will be pleased to send to anyone.** Here let me express my hope that, apart from whatever substantive contributions the book makes to specialized fields and the stimulation of research on emerging forms of social control, the peer recognition this award conveys for *Undercover* can more generally:

- 1) serve to further legitimate qualitative, interdisciplinary, and integrative approaches to broad topics of social importance for which there are (contrary to the politicians and ideologues) no easy answers. Sociology, residing between the humanities and the sciences, is uniquely qualified for such inquiries. The building blocks of our highly specialized research endeavors must occasionally be put together.

- 2) justify the search for wisdom, as well as knowledge and strengthen the realization that the former is impossible without the latter and the latter is pedantic and lifeless when divorced from the concrete details of our lives and from value issues. There is no necessary opposition between policy and basic research, nor between writing for colleagues and the educated public.
- 3) serve as a reminder that comprehensive work on controversial topics takes time and scholarly independence. I spent a decade working on the book and would not want to have been judged for tenure (or anything else) after only five years. The pressure to produce work quickly and to bring in research grants only on topics that federal agencies want to fund can be highly dysfunctional. John Adams had it reversed when he wrote "learned academies, not under the immediate inspection and control of government . . . are incompatible with social order."

In commenting on an investigation that went sour an agent I interviewed said, "sometimes you get the elevator and sometimes you get the shaft."**** Thanks for the elevator!

* Washington, D.C. August 1990

** "Reflections on Academic Success and Failure : Making It, Forsaking It, Reshaping It." in B. Berger, *Authors of Their Own Lives* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1989)

****"Second Thoughts, Anticipated Criticisms and Enduring Tensions: Some Thoughts on Finishing *Undercover*" for author meets critics session, American Society of Criminology, 1989.