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**Comparative & Historical SOCIOLOGY**  
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## REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

Attendance, papers and discussions during the 1984 ASA meetings showed that Comparative Historical Sociology continues to thrive and to attract wide interest. The panel on comparing civilizations drew a good audience which the papers stimulated to active and sometimes pointed questioning. In the most general session, on the resurgence of historical sociology, Theda Skocpol, Barbara Laslett, Ron Glassman and Philip McMichael spoke to more than 150 people.

Perhaps more importantly, many of these people spoke back in the liveliest and best discussion any panelist could remember from an annual meeting session. I think this sparked new ideas, brought colleagues into new contact with each other, and promoted a sense of active membership in the Section, as well as making me feel better about forcing panelists to stick to their time limits. On a less positive note, Section membership fell by more than 25% between the

Report From Chair(Continued)

Detroit and San Antonio meetings. The initial membership had been extremely large, so perhaps it was likely to fall anyway, or perhaps the identity and research orientation of the section had not yet become clear. In any case, in the few weeks since the San Antonio meeting, there has been a slight upturn in membership, a trend I hope will continue. This is important not least of all because it determines the number of annual meeting sessions allocated to the Section, and hence to work of interest to us. The membership drop threatened us with a cut in sessions from 3 to 2. On petition from this and other sections, however, the ASA Executive Committee agreed to base 1985 allocations on September 30 membership counts and we managed to get over the 400 mark in time to keep our third session. The business meeting in San Antonio discussed and voted on session topics for 1985. We decided not to have a roundtable session in Washington, partly at the advice of Steven Turner that the discipline-wide round table committee would be happy to accommodate proposals from comparative historical sociologists. Instead, it was decided to try to organize one session around a invited speaker. Names proposed included Perry Anderson, E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and Barrington Moore, Jr. Moore, unfortunately, has already declined, citing previous experience of August weather in Washington, the pleasures of sailing in Maine, a need to concentrate time and energy on his study of the moral history of industrialization and, more implausibly, a sense that he had little to say that would be of help to us. Efforts to

attract a figure of great note and broad appeal continue. Should they fail, however, the meeting accorded to the Chair the discretion to reshape this session to accommodate lesser luminaries. The other two sessions will be on (1) Religious Radicalism and (2) The Comparative Historical Theory of the State. David Zaret agreed to chair the first, as of this writing, I am still trying to twist an appropriate arm on the second, so papers should be sent to me.

Other actions of the Council and General Business Meeting included establishing this newsletter, for which we are grateful to Barbara Laslett and Ron Aminzade who volunteered editorial services. The Section also decided not to support any specific journal or annual as a Section publication, but rather to use the newsletter regularly to bring publications of interest to the attention of the membership. Stephen Turner, Bob Antonio, Theda Skocpol and David Zaret (Chair) were appointed to a committee charged jointly with drafting a constitution and nominating candidates for the Spring 1985 election. Last but not least, plans were begun for a party or reception to follow next year's Section business meeting.

The Section on Comparative Historical Sociology, I am pleased to report, is alive and well. I hope it will grow to reflect the vitality of our field, to encourage new exchanges among us and to help important works receive the attention they deserve.

Craig Calhoun  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill

# Editorial

As new editors we would like to take this opportunity to welcome membership participation in the newsletter, to raise a provocative question which we hope will elicit lively responses from our membership, and to set forth our ideas about the content of future newsletters. The provocative question we would like to raise, but not attempt to answer, is the following: What is it that holds us together as members of the comparative/historical sociology section? As a group, we share diverse theoretical commitments and methodological stances and our research agendas span different continents and centuries. What then do we share in common? A concern with the temporal dimensions of social life? A desire to understand the dynamics of social change? A commitment to the development of historically grounded theory? We welcome our readers to provide us with their thoughts on this question.

Constraints of time and space weigh heavily upon us. As a section we are allotted four newsletter mailings per year with a total of only 20 pages (10 sheets printed front and back). The

turnaround time (between our submission of the newsletter to the A.S.A. office and its arrival in your mailbox) is approximately four weeks. We plan to use the newsletter to provide section members with information about current research/debates, ongoing research of section members, research centers, conferences, teaching resources, new books, and foreign speakers. Future newsletters will include brief essays that review current research in the following areas: History of Social Thought (Stephen Turner), History of Work (Michael Burawoy), History of Culture (Wendy Griswold) and History of Education (Julia Wrigley). We are also planning to commission short essays on comparative historical research on socialist societies, the family, the welfare state, science, bureaucracy, and Third World development. Please suggest other topics that are of interest to you. We also welcome suggestions about who we might ask to write these essays. We're counting on your active participation to make this a lively and intellectually stimulating newsletter. We begin our task with a good deal of energy and enthusiasm.

Ronald Aminzade  
Barbara Laslett

# Call for Papers

Call for Papers for the ASA meetings, 1985. In addition to the three sessions that will be organized by our Section (see the Report from the Chair), Robert A. Jones (University of Illinois at Urbana) is organizing the session on the History of the Sociological Thought, [Steven Warner (University of Illinois, Chicago Circle) is organizing the session

on the analysis of classical social theory,] and Jack Goldstone (Northwestern University) will be organizing the session on Historical Sociology. The organizers of Roundtables, Robert Wuthnow (Princeton) and Paul DiMaggio (Yale) would also be happy to entertain proposals on historical and comparative subjects. The deadline date for these submissions is 31 December 1984.

# Research Report

"History From the Bottom-up" and Comparative-Historical Sociology

William G. Roy,\*

Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles

American historical sociology, especially that segment with an affinity to political sociology, during the 1950's and 1960's asked many questions about modernization and democracy. During the 1960's and 1970's we asked questions about domination. History was seen as being made by those at the top of society. Common folk were treated as either the beneficiaries or the victims of historical change. Within the last two decades social scientists, including sociologists, have self-consciously asked questions about how non-elites actively participate in history. Frequently citing Marx's dictum that "Men (sic) make their own history, but not of their own free will" (1974 [1852]: 146), sociologists increasingly are asking questions like how and why: peasants and serfs helped make capitalism (Brenner, 1976), peasants became workers (Thompson, 1963; Gutman, 1976), workers made classes (Thompson, 1963; Calhoun, 1982), artisans and workers made collective action and revolutions (Aminzade, 1981; Hanagan, 1980; Bonnell, 1980), middle gentry made democracy (Moore, 1966), Third World peoples helped make the modern world system (Wolf, 1982), slaves made culture (Genovese, 1974), youth made trouble (Gillis, 1974) and women made privacy (Zaretsky, 1976).

With no pretext to an exhaustive review, these pages will survey some historical-comparative themes that (primarily Marxian) sociologists have approached from the bottom up over the past few years.

Capitalism: Brenner's two articles (1976, 1977) criticizing world system and underdevelopment theories revitalized the perennial debate over the primacy of productive vs. market forces as the engine of historical change. In Western Europe the peasant's class power propelled the crisis of late feudalism into capitalism, while in Eastern Europe, the nobility's greater power fomented the Second Serfdom. Brenner moved the people traditionally seen as capitalism's primary victims to the center of the historical action.

Both Marx (1967 [1867]) and Weber (1978 [1925]) argued that capitalism could not have arisen and cannot expand without creating a labor force free from traditional bonds. Proletarianization refers to the historical process by which direct producers are deprived of alternative means of a livelihood and are compelled to sell their labor power as a commodity (Tilly, 1978). In contrast to the conventional concept of industrialization, proletarianization focuses attention on the social aspects of interclass relations rather than the technical, the role of common people rather than entrepreneurs and inventors, the role of conflict rather than progress, and the dynamics within the precapitalist structure that "freed" labor from seigniorial relationships rather than the dynamics within capitalism that spurred economic and technical development. (Thompson, 1963; Aminzade, 1981; Calhoun, 1982; Dawley, 1976).

Recent research has analyzed proletarianization as a driving force in other areas of social life. The separation of home from work cut the modern chasm between public and private life into a "man's world" of politics and economy, objectivity and power, and a "woman's world" of domesticity and family, subjectivity and nurture (Sennett, 1974; Zaretsky, 1976; Lasch, 1977). A formally free labor force created an opportunity for workers to educate themselves while employers faced an unruly untamed workforce. So

\*This piece borrows freely from my "Class Conflict and Social Change in Historical Perspective." Annual Review of Sociology. 1984. 10: 483-506.

proletarianization underlay a long process of conflict over the educational system. By the 1850's 100,000 British workers subscribed to mechanics institutes (Wrigley, 1982). Capitalists also saw schools as a means to domesticate workers by instilling "social skills" like respect for authority (Katz, 1968, 1971; Bowles and Gintis, 1976). But the effects of proletarianization on the workforce itself have received the most attention. Braverman refocused scholarly attention on the classic Marxist theme of workplace dynamics (1974), arguing that contrary to prevailing wisdom, industrialization has "degraded" the general level of skill rather than raised it. Although more recent work has treated the work place with greater historical sensitivity (Montgomery, 1979), less deterministically (Edwards, 1979; Burawoy, 1978, 1979), and with greater attention to class struggle (Stark, 1980), Braverman's work remains as a benchmark against which current scholarship is compared.

Class Formation: Thompson's masterpiece on the making of the English working class (1963) has stimulated an interest in the social processes by which classes make and remake themselves, in contrast to the conventional orientation in which classes are treated as the manifestation of an objectively given economic structure. Montgomery (1968) described the formation of the American working class in terms similar to Thompson's description of the English counterpart: disillusioned and deskilled artisans increasingly bereft of any hope of attaining masterhood, ideologically fired by Paine's The Rights of Man. Gutman (1976) depicted how mobilized working people, drawing on religious and ideological traditions formed a distinctive cross-racial and cross-ethnic class society and culture. Aminzade (1981) used Wright's (1978) model of class formation to describe how artisans built a French working class with the capacity for collective action culminating in the revolutionary commune of 1871. Calhoun (1982), rejecting Thompson's treatment of class as idealist and conventional accounts of class as deterministic, portrays a greater discontinuity between "radical reactionary" artisans and the never-quite-"made" working class.

Class Segments: In contrast to the conventional Marxist two class model, recent scholarship has returned to Marx's emphasis in the Eighteenth Brumaire on class segments, that is, a group within a class that shares interests that conflict with those of other segments of the same class (Zeitlin et al., 1976). Examples are capitalist financiers, industrialists and merchants, or unionized, non-unionized, primary and secondary workers. Barrington Moore's now classic explanation of democracy and totalitarian regimes was based on the notion of coalitions among various class segments. Zeitlin's (1984) explanation of Chile's long standing democratic regime treats the content as well as the form of class coalitions. Roy explained bureaucratization in the U.S. State Department (1981) and Bureau of Corporations (1982) in terms of conflicts among segments of the capitalist class.

Conclusion: History from the bottom has moved sociology beyond many of its sterile theories of social change and power. The determinism of evolutionary theories has given way to a healthy sensitivity to contingency. The naive faith in progress in modernization literature and nihilistic pessimism in much underdevelopment theory has yielded to cautious hopefulness. Similarly a richer, more complex treatment of social power has supplanted both pluralism's facile affirmation of democracy and elitism's cynical depiction of ruling class omnipotence. And best of all it has revived sociology's roots as a richly textured historically informed discipline.

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