

NEWSLETTER OF THE
Comparative & Historical SOCIOLOGY
SECTION OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Winter 1985

Vol. II, No. 2

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SECTION NEWS

The ASA has approved our request for a third session at the Washington meetings. Our plans are, therefore, proceeding as announced in the last newsletter.

Anyone wishing to nominate colleagues for section office, please write to David Zaret, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

We are pleased to publish in this issue the first response to the questions we raised in the Fall issue regarding the coherence of the field of comparative/historical sociology. We welcome responses from other readers and hope they will be equally provocative and concise.

We would like to publish descriptions of the current research of section members. If you are interested, please send us a one-paragraph statement of your ongoing work. We would also like to publish short bibliographies of recent work in specific areas of historical/comparative sociology and encourage section members to submit them to us.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The tenth annual meeting of the Social Science History Association will be held November 21-22, 1985 at the Chicago Marriott Hotel, 540 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois. Those wishing to organize a panel, present a paper, chair a panel, serve as a discussant or offer suggestions for the program are invited to contact either Phyllis F. Field (Chair), Dept. of History, Ohio Univ., Athens, OH 45701 or David Kertzer, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME 04011.

Papers may be proposed singly or as part of a proposed session. Panels may also be in the form of roundtable discussions. All proposals should include a short descriptive statement concerning the topic being explored and the methodology used. Chair and discussant volunteers should include a brief vita. All proposals must be received by March 1, 1985. Final decisions concerning the program will be made in late April.

Editorial Reply

HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY AS A SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENT

Charles Tilly

Committee on Historical Studies and Center for Studies of Social Change
New School for Social Research

A coherent enterprise called "historical sociology" does not exist, probably can't exist, and certainly shouldn't exist. In practice, the term could mean one of two things: 1) the study of all social structures and processes that are somehow embedded in time; 2) the set of inquiries within sociology that employ historians' methods and materials. The first is pretentious, since all social structures and processes that are worth studying are somehow embedded in time; do you want to revive the claims of Auguste Comte? The second is bad practice, since sociology has recurrently suffered the malady of specialties organized around methods and materials rather than human substance.

Yet we can cheer the effort as a subversive movement. The success of the multiple enterprises that coalesce as "historical sociology" will undermine two features of the discipline that are ready to tumble: first, fixation on a fictitious present which is actually a series of tiny historical fragments; second, attempts to deal with large social processes without taking time, historical time, seriously.

Much of contemporary social analysis, despite its claims to timelessness, concerns inescapably historical processes: transformations of capitalism and socialism, growth of national states and systems of states, major population changes, international migration, creation and destruction of social classes, shifts in family structure, revolution, war-making, urbanization, and related changes. These processes belong to history in two fundamental ways. First, they take time to unfold; anyone who looks only at a moment of the process - including the present moment - runs a great risk of mistaking its character. Second, they cling to time and place; how they happen varies significantly from one time and place to another, as a direct consequence of events in previous times and places. People who want to understand these large processes have no choice but to examine them in historical context.

Recognizing the strategic place of historical analysis, students of social life have created a series of specialties that bridge the gap between the discipline of history, as usually practiced, and the social sciences. These specialties go collectively by many names: social history, economic history, historical demography, historical and comparative sociology, and so on. The most coherent of them ignore disciplinary boundaries and organize around the study of a structure or a process. Studies of the changing organization of production, for example, obviously draw on economic analysis, but also typically deal with demographic problems. Historical studies of conflict and collective action, which might seem to fall into the province of sociology, generally pay extensive attention to the structure of government, and frequently take up economic and demographic changes as well. The coherence of such studies does not rest on their attachment to conventional disciplines, but on their pursuit of structures and processes having a continuous historical presence.

To the extent that analysts of present-day social change fix their attention on large structures and processes, they have much to learn from the histories of those structures and processes. The point is not that history repeats itself. On the contrary, it is that the world changes constantly, but changes systematically, with each historical moment setting the opportunities, and limiting the potentialities, of the next.

The past works through the present. The American Baby Boom of the 1950s, for instance, shapes the American present and future in the form of a population bulge that is inching up, year by year, through the labor force, across the housing market, athwart the health industries, toward the age of pensions, Social Security, Medicare, and nursing homes. Less visibly but no doubt just as profoundly, the successive experiences of the

Historical Sociology as a Subversive Movement (Cont.)

Depression, World War II, the first atomic bombs, the Korean War, the Civil Rights movement, and the Vietnam War pervade contemporary American politics both as a set of disputed collective memories and as formative moments for one generation after another. Past capital accumulation constrains the present volume and distribution of capital, as past collective action and its outcome shape the probabilities of present collective action.

Sometimes contemporary observers rule out the relevance of history on the ground that things now change too fast for past regularities to hold, or on the ground that some fundamental change has altered all the rules. We often hear the claim that the possibility of nuclear destruction renders the lessons of all previous warfare irrelevant. That claim itself deserves historical scrutiny. It deserves scrutiny in the form of a review of previous occasions on which a new means of destruction has produced a break with the past and in the form of a sustained comparison of present-day warmaking with its counterparts in the past. The least that can result from such an inquiry is a better specification of the ways in which the present is, in fact, distinctive.

Systematic historical analysis, then, is not merely a diverting luxury. Nor is it simply a means of assembling cases for present-oriented models of human behavior. It is a prerequisite to any sound understanding of large-scale social structures and processes. That is reason enough for cheering the impossible, subversive movement called historical sociology.

Research Report

THE LABOR PROCESS IN COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Michael Burawoy

Until recently the sociology of work paid relatively little attention to changes in work organization. Beginning with the Western Electric studies, industrial sociology has searched for the elixir of productivity. How can management foster cooperation among workers and develop peaceful industrial relations? How to elicit the loyalty of workers? What makes them restrict output? While industrial sociologists were tinkering with work organization, they missed the major transformations of work that were going on at the same time - transformations that were due to changes in the capitalist environment. There were notable exceptions such as Warner and Low's (1947) classic study of the transformation of work in a shoe factory and Blauner's (1964) study of the effects of different technologies on alienation, which places these technologies and the corresponding work organizations in a historical sequence. Even where changes in work organization were recognized they were taken as given rather than themselves made the subject of investigation.

We had to wait for Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital (1974) before researchers began to systematically study the causes of changes in work organization, or as it has come to be called, the labor process. First, he offers a theory of the dynamics of the labor process which roots its change in the capitalist character of production. Capitalists harness domination in the form of the separation of mental and manual labor to the pursuit of profit. Second, this focus makes it possible for him to develop a systematic view of capitalism and the transformation of its occupational structure.

He has been criticized for the unidimensional character of his notion of labor control. Edwards (1979), for example, insists on distinguishing between personal or simple control, technical control and bureaucratic control, each evolving sequentially with the development of capitalism. This typology as such underlines three dimensions of production - technology, the relations of work organization around the technology and the

The Labor Process in Comparative and Historical Perspective (Cont.)

mode of control of the labor process - as it does different types of control. This failure to distinguish between the labor process and its mode of regulation, between the task structure on the one side and the organization of conflict and the enforcement of domination on the other, threads through much of the literature. We find it in Friedman's (1977) important historical analysis of changes in the labor process in England which focuses on two alternative managerial strategies of control: direct control and responsible autonomy. Although their analysis of subcontracting systems present important refinements and amendments of Braverman's unidimensional conception of workplace domination both Clawson (1980) and Littler (1982) also fail to recognize the distinction between the labor process and its mode of control. In this respect the industrial relations literature of the 1950s in the United States and Warwick studies in England have a great deal to contribute (see, for example, Dunlop, 1977 and Clegg, 1976).

In breaking down Braverman's simple schema of unilinear development of de-skilling, these writers, more sensitive to specific historical contexts, easily lose sight of the systemic character of capitalist development. If, on the one side, the capitalist environment is left unexamined, on the other side technology is taken for granted. Unfortunately, there have been very few studies that carefully examine the development of technologies, establishing the criteria for and the timing of their introduction. One notable exception is David Noble's (1984) study of the introduction of numerical control machines in U.S. industry after the second World War.

A second set of issues raised by Braverman's book is the role of struggle in the transformation of the labor process. Braverman's analysis tends to relegate struggle to a marginal friction. Instead he emphasizes the logic of capital accumulation as the driving force behind change. There has been a great deal written about the resistance of artisans and skilled workers to the process Braverman describes as the separation of conception and execution. Montgomery's (1979) treatment of skilled workers in the United States, Scott's (1974) study of the glassworkers of Carmaux, and Thompson's (1968) work on the artisans of nineteenth century England all highlight resistance to the expropriation of skill. Yet in each case that skill was expropriated - the artisans were defeated. Others such as Edwards introduce struggle, like a *deus ex machina*, to explain transitions from one mode of control to another, but this struggle is never theorized and its origins are left unexamined.

In marginalizing the significance of struggle, Braverman is in fact betraying the context in which he wrote his book, namely the United States after World War II. It is indeed a very American book. It has to be understood as such and placed in a comparative as well as a historical context. The briefest glance at British industrial sociology reveals a very different perspective - one of apparently eternal shop floor strife. We already have a number of comparative studies involving Britain, Dore's (1973) comparison with Japan, Maitland's (1983) with West Germany, and Gallie's (1978) with France. Each comparison controls for industry and points to variations in work organization, industrial relations, and state intervention and in so doing explains the different character and level of industrial militancy.

The cutting edge between Marxist and conventional sociological theories of the organization of work must come in the comparison with actually existing socialist countries. By stressing the centrality of profit in the unfolding of the capitalist labor process Marxists would expect the socialist labor process to take on a different character, whereas theorists of industrialism and convergence would expect no such difference. All the evidence is not yet in. But at any rate it does appear that the labor process defined strictly in terms of task structure is not that different in the two types of society even though the form of its regulation may be. Here there are relatively few studies but of interest are Walder (forthcoming) on China, Haraszti (1977) on Hungary, Fullter (1985) on Cuba, and Comisso (1979) on Yugoslavia. Equally significant are comparisons between state and private sectors of capitalist societies. Here, too, Marxists might anticipate divergences in the form of production inasmuch as

the latter is driven by profit whereas the former is shaped by political forces. We are only at the beginning of this type of comparative research but see the study of the British Post Office by Batstone et al. (1984).

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annuals

The following research annuals typically devote a substantial portion of their volumes to comparative/historical materials. The editors of these annuals encourage section members to submit manuscripts:

Current Perspectives in Social Theory. Editor: Scott McNall, Dept. of Sociology, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-2127. Available to section members at a discount.

Comparative Social Research. Deadline for submission of completed manuscripts for Volume 9, to appear in 1986, is August 1, 1986. Editor: Richard F. Tomasson, Dept. of Sociology, The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131.

Political Power and Social Theory. Editor: Maurice Zeitlin, Dept. of Sociology, University of California-Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California 90024.

Research in Social Policy: Critical Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. Editor: John H. Stanfield, Dept. of Sociology, Yale University, P.O. box 1965, Yale Station New Haven, CT 06520-1965.

Centers

Program in Comparative International Development Department of Sociology - John Hopkins University

The goal of this program is to give students an in-depth knowledge of the various theoretical perspectives in the area of development coupled with substantive expertise in one or more topical issues. The faculty takes an eclectic view of research methodologies, believing that both quantitative and qualitative approaches can produce useful information. The program does not have an area focus, although its members have conducted extensive research in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Instead of an area approach to development, the emphasis is on substantive issues which cut across different countries and world regions. Examples include urban poverty and the informal economy, city systems and urban primacy, rural colonization and land tenure, international migrations, comparative family structures, and health and nutrition.

Students enroll in a sequence of four courses and seminars in development theory and research methods plus electives. They also participate actively in ongoing faculty projects dealing with one or more of the above issues.

A. Eugene Havens Center for the Study of Social Structure and Social Change

A new research center, the A. Eugene Havens Center for the Study of Social Structure and Social Change is being established within the Wisconsin Sociology Department. The Center is named in honor of Professor Eugene Havens whose work embodies the combination of political commitment and scholarly contributions which the Center hopes to encourage. The basic objective of the Center is to foster critical perspectives in the social sciences and to link those perspectives to systematic empirical and historical research. The first director of the Center will be Erik Olin Wright.

As currently planned, the Havens Center will sponsor several principal activities: Eminent scholars from Europe and elsewhere will visit Madison for periods of one to four weeks for intensive discussions with faculty and students affiliated with the Center. In the 1984-85 academic year, visitors will include Agnes Heller, Daniel Bertaux, Alec Nove, and Michael Mann. In subsequent years, Stuart Hall, Theda Skocpol, Goran Therborn, Perry Anderson and Claus Offe will visit.

The Center also sponsors post-doctoral fellows, provides them with university privileges and office space. Honorary fellows will be able to participate fully in the visiting scholars program seminars and all other Center activities. In addition, the Center plans to begin a working paper and reprint series during the 1984-85 academic year. For further information, please contact Professor Erik Olin Wright, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

The Committee on Historical Studies at The New School

Founded in 1984, the New School's Committee on Historical Studies offers interdisciplinary graduate training in history and a Graduate Faculty social science field (economics, political science or sociology). The program complements the established strengths of New School graduate training: its critical approaches to social theory, to social reality, and to systematic empirical analysis. Historical Studies trains social scientists to place contemporary analyses in the context of long-term changes in economic, social, and political structures, and to use historical materials as evidence in the development and elaboration of social science theory. The program offers unique collaborative research training in continuing proseminars, each one organized around a historical theme, in which faculty and students work together.

In 1984-85, members of the Committee on Historical Studies (and their departmental affiliations) are Robert A. Gates (Associate Dean of the Graduate Faculty), Eric Hobsbawm (Political Science), D. Carol Joynes (Seminar College), Ira Katznelson (Political Science), William C. Roseberry (Anthropology), Ross D. Thompson (Economics), Charles Tilly (Sociology), Louise A. Tilly (Sociology), Aristide R. Zolberg (Political Science), and Henri Zukier (Psychology).

One of the resources available at the New School for students in Historical Studies is the Center for Studies of Social Change, directed by Professor Charles Tilly. The Center contains computing facilities for quantitative historical analysis and several major historical data bases. It also houses an extensive microfilm and photocopy collection of archival materials. Research projects currently being conducted at the Center examine collective action in England and France, class and family in France, and post-Civil War and twentieth century American politics.

(to be continued)