

NEWSLETTER OF THE *Comparative & Historical* SOCIOLOGY

SECTION OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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Issues in Sociohistorical Inquiry

Goldstone Wins 1993 ASA Distinguished Publication Award

The 1993 ASA Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award went to a book employing historical and comparative scholarship, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (University of California Press, 1991), by Jack A. Goldstone, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Davis. In making the award at the August meetings in Miami, award committee chair Lionel L. Maldonado said, "The range and scope of this book enrich sociology," calling it "a major work of substance and clarity of prose that will offer a standard to sociologists." Other members of the committee were Walter R. Allen, Judith R. Blau, Kathleen Blee, Carole C. Marks, and Larry T. Reynolds.

The selection of *Revolution and Rebellion* suggests that the best work of historical and comparative sociology continues to occupy an important position within the discipline of sociology more generally. Yet anyone who has followed the reception of the book among colleagues and journal reviewers knows that it has generated healthy controversy. Historical sociologists, who necessarily work to transcend institutionally rigid disciplinary boundaries, confront a challengingly diverse academic audience. In June, we asked Professor Goldstone, who was completing a year at the Center for Advanced Study in Palo Alto, to answer questions concerning one particular controversy over *Revolution and Rebellion* and to describe the vision of historical sociology that Goldstone seeks to project in the recently issued second edition of his edited volume, *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies* (Harcourt Brace, 1994).

The controversy over *Revolution and Rebellion* concerns Goldstone's use of a composite statistical indicator to predict revolutions. Historians of the English Revolution are accustomed to the claim that the conflict was part religious, part constitutional, and part economic. They are also familiar with explanations emphasizing England's long-term structural problems in the society and polity. What history books have not taught, but what Professor Goldstone insists, is that "...these conflicts [religious, constitutional and economic] combined to reach fatal acuteness precisely when English society was undergoing a unique level of social and economic stress..." (p.145). Goldstone has developed a statistical measurement he calls a "political stress indicator" (PSI) to demonstrate how political crises correlate with distinctive conjunctures of varied causes, and to trace shifts in those conjunctures over time.

The contentious aspect of Goldstone's claim for some historians, like Lawrence Stone, lies not with its structuralist but rather its quantitative nature. Reviewing *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* in *The New York Review of Books* (June 11, 1992; April 22, 1993), Lawrence Stone finds Goldstone's narrative explanation persuasive. Yet Stone thinks this narrative is marred by the statistical representation (the PSI analysis). Stone writes, "...the conversion of such fuzzy and unreliable data into hard statistics and graphs is a misuse of the scientific method of quantification to dress up an intriguing exercise of the sociological imagination."

(please turn to page 4)

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Submissions other than short notices should be submitted via email or on diskette [MacIntosh preferred] with wordprocessing format specified. ASR citation format requested.

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The editors wish to thank the Section's Secretary-Treasurer, Harland Prechel, for providing August, 1993 section business meeting minutes, on which several stories on page 3 are based.

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FUTURE PUBLICATION DEADLINES:

WINTER ISSUE:
NOVEMBER 30, 1993

SPRING ISSUE:
MARCH 1, 1994

Greetings from New Section Chair

Ann Orloff
University of Wisconsin

I was very pleased to begin my term as Chair at the meetings in Miami. As usual, our section's sessions were interesting and our reception (this year co-sponsored with the Political Sociology section) a success. I am looking forward to helping to put together more good sessions (and parties) in the coming two years.

I have been thinking a bit about how I might actually contribute, as Chair, to making the section useful to its members. Obviously, our newsletter — and our newsletter editors and those who contribute articles — have made this a very useful forum for methodological and analytic debates among our members. The sessions at the meetings are generally quite successful, and have been a good venue for working with folks in other sections. Even our parties are pretty good. So what's left to do?

I wondered if there are ways for the section to contribute to the institutionalization and strengthening of comparative and historical sociology in our departments. Clearly, the historical turn in sociology is well underway; most departments have at least a few people pursuing comparative and/or historical research; we're teaching many interesting methodological and substantive courses. Yet it's not clear to me that we could not do more to strengthen the standing of comparative and historical approaches in sociology and in social science generally. Some graduate students still tell me they're a bit worried to take up research using (non-quantitative) comparative and/or historical methods; they sometimes mention not having training in those methods available to them. Junior faculty sometimes worry about biases against their analytical approach — or about the quantity of publications they can produce using it — in the tenure decision. Many of us are concerned

about the relative availability of funding for this sort of research. I'd very much like to get some discussion on this subject, through the newsletter or in other forums.

We have continuing good news to report on the financial front; we continue to have a budget surplus (now around \$3000). With dues money last year, we helped to subsidize the production of a new collection of syllabi for comparative and historical sociology courses and subsidized the cost of graduate student membership (they can join for \$5 rather than \$10); we also co-sponsored a reception with the Political Sociology section at the Miami meetings. (By the way, the new syllabi collection was organized by David Smith, and will be available from the ASA Teaching Resources office later in the fall.) Our membership has stabilized at about 520; if we can add another 80 members, we would be eligible for another session at the ASA. Ed Amenta (New York University) continues as our membership chair; send him any good ideas you have about recruiting (about half the ASA membership doesn't belong to any sections).

Our collective thanks go to our departing chair, Ron Aminzade, and departing Secretary-Treasurer, David Zaret, for their work on behalf of the section, as well as to the members of this year's article award committee, Muge Gocek (chair), Roger Gould, Kathleen Blee, Phil McMichael, and Susan Watkins, and nominations committee — Charles Ragin (chair), Jeremy Hein, and Karen Barkey. Congratulations to Said Arjomand, winner of this year's article award, and to the newly-elected members of our section Council, Kathleen Blee and Rogers Brubaker, and to our new Secretary-Treasurer, Harland Prechel.

I look forward to seeing all of you again in August 1994 in Los Angeles (plan ahead — we'll be day four of the meeting this time) — and in hearing from many of you in the meantime. |||||

SECTION SECRETARY-TREASURER, COUNCIL MEMBERS ELECTED

The voting by section members in the Spring of 1993 resulted in the election of Harland Prechel as the section's secretary-treasurer for 1993-94. The two persons voted into council positions were Kathleen Blee of the University of Kentucky and Rogers Brubaker of the University of California - Los Angeles. ||||

GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD ESTABLISHED; AWARD, NOMINATIONS COMMITTEES NAMED

The Historical/Comparative section decided at its annual business meeting to create a new award for the best paper by a graduate student, based on an ASA decision allowing sections to make up to three awards.

Members of the Graduate Student Award Committee for the coming year selected were: Fatma Muge Goccek (chair), Nicki Beisel, and Liz Clements.

The committee charged with awarding the prize for the best recent article is to consist of Bruce Caruthers (chair), Said Arjomand, and Judy Sternenn-Norris.

Selected to serve on the section nominations committee are Pamela Walters (chair), Kevin Neuhouser, and Rogers Brubaker. ||||

HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY SEEKS NEW EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Journal of the History of Sociology, founded in 1977, informs us that they are interested in identifying a department, school, or individual interested in editing and publishing the journal.

Interested parties should contact Dr. Jack Porter, The Spencer Group, 8 Burnside Road, Newton Highlands, MA 02161 (phone 617-244-7384). ||||

SSHA: Baltimore in November

The Social Science History Association annual meetings, which draw a range of interdisciplinary participants with strong representation by historical and comparative sociologists, will be held in Baltimore, Maryland from Thursday, November 4 to Sunday, November 7, 1993.

Special panels include one on "The Hopkins Seminary of History and Politics: Reconsidering the Genealogy of Social Science History," and the President's luncheon panel, "Institutionalism: Ideas,

Structures, Methods."

To register for the meetings, contact the Conference Registrar, Indiana University Conference Bureau, Indiana Memorial Union, Rm. 671, Bloomington, IN 47405, fax: 812-855-8077, phone: 812-855-9824. Further information can be obtained from the conference program co-chairs, Eileen McDonagh, Political Science, Northeastern University (617-373-2796) and Philip Ethington, History, University of Southern California (213-740-1657).

Section Sessions for '94 in L.A.

At its annual business meeting, the section made plans to increase its number of regular paper sessions by reorganizing Comparative/Historical section sessions.

The roundtable sessions will be allocated one hour instead of two, and held during the same time slot as the section business meeting. The section council meeting will be moved to a different time slot. This will free up one regular session, bringing the total to three, plus the roundtables.

The three proposed titles of

regular sessions are: 1. Race, Identities, Migration and Colonialism, organized by David James, and co-sponsored with the Political Sociology section; 2. Historical Methods: The Dilemmas of Doing Historical Sociology; 3. Current Controversies in Historical Methods: Text, Rhetoric, Narrative, organized by Carole Turbin and David Zaret.

The section will try to obtain a fourth session from the ASA general topic sessions to address Issues of Historical Sociology in California. ||||

HISTORICAL/COMPARATIVE MEMBERSHIP GROWS

Membership in the Historical/Comparative Sociology section of the ASA continues to grow, according to reports at the section's business meeting at the August ASA meeting. Currently, membership is at 534, including 120 graduate students. If the section membership increases to 600, the section will obtain another session slot at ASA meetings.

To increase graduate student membership, the section plans to bulk mail copies of the newsletter with enrollment forms to sociology departments with graduate programs, for distribution to graduate students. The section currently subsidizes graduate student membership in the section. ||||

ETHNIC AND IMMIGRANT RELIGIONS PROJECT ANNOUNCED

R. Stephen Warner, professor of sociology at the University of Illinois - Chicago, has received a \$220,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment to conduct a training and fellowship program promoting ethnographic studies of new ethnic and immigrant religious congregations. The program plans to offer intensive training in field research methods and one year of graduate student fellowship support.

Information and application forms can be obtained through December 1, 1993 from: New Ethnic and Immigrant Congregations Project, Office of Social Science Research (M/C 307), University of Illinois at Chicago, 1007 West Harrison Street, Chicago, IL 60607-7136. Email is: u61477@uicvm.edu. ||||

ASA Award... (from p. 1)

Critics like Stone, who refers to the PSI as a "pseudoscientific methodology," raise the old "qualitative versus quantitative" research-methods debate. Comparative and historical sociologists might readily turn their backs to such criticism were it not coupled with one no less banal (for sociologists who have been taught to appreciate the utility and limitations of both kinds of research), though clearly more poignant. Stone claims: "Until he explains this [PSI] in detail, it is unlikely that historians will take his work very seriously...."

Following are a few of Professor Goldstone's responses to questions posed by editors John Dale and John Hall.

What do you think is most significant about Stone's critique of the Political Stress Indicator?

I agree with him to the extent that we should be critical of quantitative measurements. Like any other measurements, they have biases and should be regarded critically. There should be some correspondence between the qualitative and quantitative measurements we use to analyze a problem, and we should be able to make sense of any contradictions between them. But, we should remember that there are many aspects of revolutions. There is a lot of room for saying different things about them. Many large processes can be used to describe history; we can also develop a picture of history as a micro-narrative of events. We need people to push the envelope at both ends. The role of culture from a postmodern perspective is a good corrective to the over-emphasis on the material, despite the problems with this perspective. Ultimately, I think it will bring us back to doing social history. But, I think that social history will have quantitative as well as interpretive veins. I think it's a mistake to dismiss either approach.

Do you think that there has been a shift in the affinity between historians and historical sociologists, signaled, for example, by the textual turn and the rise of the "new historicism"?

Each generation resolves for itself notions of affinity. English historians have been the least forthcoming and sympathetic, unlike Chinese historians, to the usefulness of making historical comparisons. English historians have always been insistent on the notion of "exceptional England." Stone, in *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529-1642* (1972), drew on social science theory, but he never went back again. He took up issues relating to social mobility, labor politics, and the nature of power; but, comparisons — for him and other English historians — are generally considered useful only to the extent they equal "exceptional England." ... What we do as sociologists may not address those themes. Sociologists' questions should not be determined by, our agenda shouldn't be set by, the particular concerns of single-country historians.... This is not to say that general, universalizing views are the goal — they no longer are — and the crisis of social theory is indicative of this.

What are the implications, then, for social theory and the work of comparative and historical sociologists? Social theory is better off describing robust ordering processes. It should be looking for a set of theoretical insights which will tell us about different social processes, which are enabling and constraining in particular contexts. It should identify particular economic and political developments, and how they change social action. Such research should seek new theories of how political and economic life in post-industrial society can be brought to a harmonious balance. How in a post-industrial society, where face-to-face interactions become circumscribed and change occurs so rapidly, does political participation become transformed? No universal model is needed to answer these questions. There may be no more important question for social scientists to answer today; and yet, we may need to solve it by examining only very localized, particular social processes or groups of societies with particular characteristics.

How do you find robust processes?

You find them by spending a lot of time learning about the details; being blessed by stumbling upon a hunch. You may have to fill in gaps or challenge interpretations. Narratives and measurements should be able to sustain that. A really robust process will stick. The next generation of quantitative historians will be willing to draw upon models like my PSI. Probably historical sociologists more than historians will appreciate it. ...The trend toward formal analytical tools as part of the comparative historian's arsenal has not yet caught on nor been seen as necessary — it will in ten years.

How can historical sociologists effectively communicate the importance of their research to historians if historians consider sociological methods to be illegitimate?

The teachings of historical sociology, despite their growth since the 1970s, has not yet reached "critical mass." If historical sociologists judge their success by their ability to lead dialogue in history, they will probably be disappointed. Take, for example, Theda Skocpol. She has had a big impact on social science, but little impact on history — as far as shaping the next direction of research. Comparative historical sociology can be justified within the discipline of sociology in its own terms in a provocative and gratifying way, by developing criteria for judging good comparative-historical sociology. Quantitative inquiry is a way of making arguments about material or cultural phenomena. Not all arguments about such phenomena are best supported through quantitative inquiry (for example, certain arguments about meaning are made through establishing certain analyses and references). But for others, like the frequency of certain measurements, or the extremity of differences, quantitative inquiry has proved quite useful. When historical sociologists have established solid standards and developed a large enough body of real findings that stand up to tough scrutiny, historians will have to take notice. We'll be there soon, very soon. ||||