

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

Winter, 1995

Vol. 7: No. 2

**Prize Submission and
Nominations Call:**

**1995 Reinhard Bendix
Prize for Best Graduate
Student Paper**

The Section on Comparative and Historical Sociology will award a prize for the best graduate student paper in historical and/or comparative sociology written in the last two years (i.e., 1993 and 1994). Papers may be submitted by the author(s) or others; articles may be submitted to only one of the prize committees. Four copies of the paper should be sent to the Chair of the prize committee, Professor Edwin Amenta, Department of Sociology, New York University, 269 Mercer St., 4th floor, New York, NY 10003; 212-998-8366; e-mail: amenta@socgate.soc.nyu.edu. The deadline for submission of nominations and materials is April 30, 1995.

**1995 Barrington Moore
Prize for Best Article**

The Section on Comparative and Historical Sociology will award a prize for the best article in historical and/or comparative sociology published in the last two years (i.e., 1993 and 1994). Articles may be submitted by the author(s) or others; articles may be submitted to only one of the prize committees. Please send copies of the paper directly to each of the three committee members: Professor Richard Lachmann, Department of Sociology, State University of New York at Albany, Albany, NY 12222; 518-442-4682; 518-442-4936; Professor Robyn Stryker, Department of Sociology, University of

Issues in Sociohistorical Inquiry:

**Escape From Flatland: Is Comparative-
Historical Research Acontextual?**

**Andrew E. Newman
Ohio State University**

Over 100 years ago, Edwin Abbott wrote *Flatland*, a book exploring what life would be like living in a two dimensional world, including our surprise and discomfort in encountering visiting three dimensional beings, who would seem to come "from nowhere." Like Abbott's Flatlanders, we three-dimensional social scientists must give greater attention to a fourth dimension, context, especially in quantitative analyses.

By context I mean any structural or relational phenomena that condition, constitute, or may be captured by or correlated with any attributes we use to characterize cases or units at a give level of analysis. Contextual factors may be specifiabile at more than one level of analysis, along more than one dimension, have variable relevance to different cases, and be of social or nonsocial origin.

All comparative-historical research is implicitly contextual. When well conceived, even case studies are contextual: the case is chosen to represent a type. When analysis moves to directly comparing several cases, we move explicitly to multidimensional research. Variation can occur across cases in space (static comparison of two or more cases) or in time (dynamic, longitudinal analysis of one case over time; time series). Research often combines the two, comparing multiple cases, each observed at a different time (as in the seminal work of Moore and Bendix) or repeated observation of multiple cases (pooled panels or time series). All of these conform to classical Millsian logics of comparison.

But the logic of comparison requires variation across *distinct, independent, uniform* units of analysis
(please turn to page 3)

Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242; 319-335-2502; 319-335-2509 (fax); Phillip Gorski, Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720; 510-525-6972; e-mail pgorski@uclink2.berkeley.edu. Please direct questions to the chair of the committee, Richard Lachmann. The deadline for submission of nominations and materials is April 30, 1995.

February 1995 Conference:

**Interpreting Historical
Change at the End of
the Twentieth Century**

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Address all correspondence to:

Editor,
Historical & Comparative Sociology
Department of Sociology
University of California-Davis
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Submissions other than short notices should be submitted via email or on 3-1/2" diskette with wordprocessing format specified.

FUTURE PUBLICATION DEADLINES:

Spring: March 15, 1995

Summer: June 15, 1995

From the Chair:**Annual Report**

Ann Orloff

I offer my message to you in the form of an annual section report. Our main activity this year was to sponsor panels and roundtables at which members and others discussed their research and their methodological concerns; we had a successful set of panels and other section activities on Monday, August 8, 1994. About 25-30 people attended each of the panels we sponsored: "The Shattering Mosaic: The Politics of Immigration, Race and Xenophobia," "Current Controversies in Historical Methods: Text, Rhetoric, Narrative," and "Theory in Historical Sociology," and about 50 people sat in on or participated in one of the nine thematically- grouped roundtables. Over 200 people attended our reception, which we co-sponsored with the Political Sociology section. We announced our prize winners — Phil Gorski (UC-Berkeley), Lutz Kaelber (Indiana) and Sarah Babb (Northwestern) — at the reception, an innovation suggested by Bob Alford (CUNY Graduate Center), Chair of the Political Sociology section (and Comparative/Historical section member). It definitely increased the fun and the visibility of the prize-winning authors and articles; we'll do it again in 1995.

Approximately forty members of the section attended our business meeting in August 1994. We began on a sad note, as Carole Turbin informed us of the death of Hal Benenson, who had been at McGill. The main part of our discussion covered our usual preoccupations:

ELECTION RESULTS: John Hall (UC-Davis) and Robin Stryker (Iowa) join the Council. The Nominations Committee, chaired by Pam Walters (Indiana), and staffed by Rogers Brubaker (UCLA) and Kevin Neuhauser (Washington- Seattle) coordinated the elec-

tion process for the two new Council members in the spring of 1994. Next year, we will elect a new Chair and two new Council members.

MEMBERSHIP: how to increase it? For a couple of years now, we have been about 50-60 members away from the magic 600 mark (520 in 1992, 546 in 1993, 553 in 1994), which would entitle us to a fourth session at the annual meeting. It was pointed out that other sections with roughly our target population have about 200-250 more members (e.g., Culture and Theory both have about 700-800; with about 550, we're equivalent to Political Soc and Collective Behavior/Social Movements); the Culture Section's activities in encouraging membership and identification (e.g., buttons) were discussed, as were those of some other sections. Since only about half the ASA membership belongs to any sections, there are people to be enticed with the benefits of section membership. Ed Amenta (New York University), our membership chair, had sent around membership forms to departments with large graduate enrollments, following an earlier decision to try to recruit grad students, among other things. With Ed retiring from membership chair to take over as chair of the graduate student award committee, Jeremy Hein (Wisconsin-Eau Claire) has agreed to chair the committee. Jeremy had organized the roundtables this year (with Martin Murray of SUNY-Binghamton), and had noticed that many people who presented at the section roundtables who were not yet members. We will encourage these folks to join, as well as trying to find some other innovative ways to bring practicing comparativists and historical sociologists into the fold. (Send us your suggestions.)

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February Conference Interprets Historical Change at End of 20th Century, Features Historians and Social Scientists

The Center for Comparative Research in History, Society, and Culture at the University of California, Davis, has announced that it will hold a three-day conference on "Interpreting Historical Change at the End of the Twentieth Century: The Challenges of the Present Age to Historical Thought and Social Theory," to be held February 24 to 26, 1995 on the UC Davis campus. The Center offers a designated emphasis degree in Social Theory and Comparative History, one of the few interdisciplinary history/social-science graduate train-

ing programs in the U.S. The planned conference commemorates the twentieth anniversary of the interdisciplinary journal, *Theory and Society*, which is housed at UC Davis. Thirty-three social scientists and historians from eighteen universities will address the following major themes: Historical Thought and Social Theory since the 1960s; Intellectuals and Recent Intellectual History; Changing State Systems; the Liberal Capitalist State; Culture, Power, and Subjectivity; Constructions of Identity; the Social Dynamics of Ethnic Relations in the Late Twentieth-Century United States; World History and Historically Oriented Social Theory. To obtain the conference schedule or make plans to attend the conference, contact the Center for Comparative Research in History, Society, and Culture, University of California, Davis, CA 95616. The Center can be reached by telephone at (916) 752-8707, by fax at (916) 752-9060, and by email to its director, WWHagen@ucdavis.edu. ■

Flatland, continued from page 1...

(McMichael 1990, p 385). Cases must "be responsible" for the actions attributed to them, and the reasons for those actions must not be correlated across cases, as when they share structurally equivalent positions in a larger system of relations, and therefore suffer or enjoy the consequences of the same external conditions which vary systematically across time, place, or groups of cases. Finally, cases must be ontologically independent of one another; their observed attributes must be unique characteristics of themselves, rather than indicators of common origin or heritage with other, presently unrelated, cases. Their characteristics must not be systematically correlated, either by common heritage, or because case variables are epiphenomenal to common systemic (contextual) factors.

These requirements are rarely fulfilled. E.g., it is axiomatic to ecological analysis that actions of one case affect and in turn are affected by actions of others. The identification of macro cases, or systems, depends precisely on the mutual relevance of micro units within them. Cases are often embedded in common systems of relations. This is reflected both in correlation between variables measured at the case level, and ecological correlation via contextual variables. The "solution" is to shift our attention to new questions, such as where do our cases come from, why do they exhibit the attributes (variables and values of variables) that they do, and are they truly independent of one another and their common environments. *In other words, does variation within and across cases reflect variation in common contextual conditions in the past or present?*

A substantive example is the work of Isaac and Griffin (1989) on labor organization. They found "tempo-

rally moving covariance"—the effects of variables change over time—and correctly criticize analyses which do not allow for this possibility. But how to do so? The simplest approach is to periodize, to break time into discrete packages. This is the dummy variables approach. Besides requiring us to draw artificial and discrete boundaries between periods, we need to remember why dummy variables are called that. They reflect what Maddala (1977) called "specific ignorance": we know "something" is going on, but are unable to say precisely what. A good example of this is gender, which also exhibits "moving covariance." The effects of gender also vary by both time and place. Gender is almost without exception measured as a categorical (dummy) variable—one highly correlated operationally if not conceptually with biological sex. Simply noting that the "effect" of gender (or sex) varies by context does little to open up the black box of gender, and few theorists would attribute *changing* effects of gender to individual causes rather than contextual ones that happened to be "captured" by gender. Gender may be a contextual variable.

Isaac and Griffin suggest another solution: to "wash out" the "contaminating" effects of causal heterogeneity to give a purer estimate of the causal model one is trying to evaluate. But this, like the dummy variable approach, obviates rather than explains the problem, and perhaps worse allows us to wash our hands of recalcitrant empirical phenomena by driving them underground. This is a common practice among quantitative researchers applying regression-like analysis. Temporally moving covariance suggests the presence of structural error, which may arise from a number of sources. These include unobserved, common contextual effects (ecological correlation), and hierarchical

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Chair's Report (from page 2)...

Jeremy will be reinforced by Monsoor Moaddel (Eastern Michigan), Hector Roudometof (Pittsburgh), and Brian Gran (Northwestern).

SESSIONS: on what topics should we organize panels for next year? We had a lot of discussion about this (as always); we debated the merits of panels on substantive topics (e.g., the 1994 session on nationalism) versus those on the methods and analytic approaches shared by the membership. For 1995, we are sponsoring a number of analytically-focused panels in the hopes that many section members will find them useful and interesting. We will try to have them "packaged" as a miniconference on analytic strategies by having them scheduled back-to-back.

Following directly from questions she raised as a commentator at the 1994 ASA panel on "Current Controversies in Historical Methods," Sonya Rose (Michigan) is organizing a panel on whether there is (or should be) a middle way between political economy and post-modernism.

Some people raised the issue of how we would like to respond to various critiques leveled at the methodological strategies practiced by many of our members (e.g., small n's and so on). In addition, Jeremy Hein noted that the 1994 roundtables covered a very wide array of topics, giving attention to (what Chuck Tilly calls) "large processes" and "big structures" — but there was not much in the way of "huge comparisons." There seems to be more historical than comparative or comparative/historical work being presented. Charles Ragin and I are pulling together a panel to speak to these questions: "Strategies, Evidence and Logic in Comparative Research: Intensive vs. Extensive Research."

For the third panel on the methodological theme, we will co-sponsor a session with the section on Sex and Gender. This takes us beyond our usual circle of co-sponsoring sections (Political, PEWS, Theory, Culture, with whom we also share many overlapping memberships), and, I hope, will lead to some interesting new contacts between feminist, historical and comparative researchers.

We co-sponsored a session with the Theory Section in 1994 on "Theory in Historical Sociology," and will again put on a session with them in 1995 — this time, Charles Camic, Chair of the Theory Section (and member of our section, as well as conveniently located down the hall from my office at Wisconsin-Madison), and I are organizing an "author-meets-critics" session on Donald Levine's new book, **Visions of the Historical Tradition: Toward a Dialogic Narrative** (University of Chicago Press, 1995), a comparative and historical analysis of the development of modern

theory in a number of Western countries.

Finally, we will again sponsor roundtables, but with a new twist - - we are encouraging people to pull together entire panels of related papers to allow a place for the interests of many different members to find a place on the program and to produce more coherent panels. These will be organized by Desley Deacon (American Studies, Texas-Austin).

FINANCES: we're in good shape, with \$2131 in the treasury as of September 30, 1994. We were able to afford some exorbitantly-priced hors d'oeuvres for our reception with enough left over to help with the publishing costs associated with pulling together a collection of syllabi in comparative and historical sociology, overseen by David Smith of UC-Irvine. We need to consider some other such useful uses of our dues money — should we add a cash prize to the graduate student paper award, or pay for the winner's transportation to the annual meeting, for example?

RECEPTION: should Ann have ordered that "colorful arrangement of assorted raw vegetables and dip" serving 25 for \$80.00? Yes — going back to the days of smuggling liquor into the Chair's suite lacked both popular and elite support. In any event, we had a good time at the officially-hotel-catered bash, which we co-sponsored with the Political Sociology section this year. Since our section will be meeting on the last day of the meeting — August 23, 1995 — we will have our reception on the evening of day three, August 21, 1995, again to be co-sponsored with the Political Sociology section. Hope to see you there — and, of course, at the methodology mini-conference which will follow.

AWARDS: We thanked the 1994 best article award committee — Bruce Carruthers, chair, Judy Stepan-Norris (UC-Irvine) and Said Arjomand (SUNY-Stony Brook); and the 1994 best graduate student paper award committee (our first) — Muge Gocek, chair, Lis Clemens (Arizona) and Nicki Beisel (Northwestern), then set about picking names for our section awards.

We had some debate as to what to name our section awards. E.P. Thompson was one suggestion, but we decided to go for two of the eminent sociologists whose names were suggested to grace our awards, and came up with:

The Reinhard Bendix Award for Best Graduate Student Paper in Comparative and Historical Sociology and
The Barrington Moore Award for Best Article in Comparative and Historical Sociology

Lis Clemens will explain to anyone who wants to know why it isn't vice versa. ■

Flatland, continued from page 3...

embeddedness in a larger system of relations. Any treatment of structural error needs to be viewed as a temporary expedient before further exploration.

I do not mean to single out Isaac and Griffin for criticism. Their critique of "ahistoricism" in quantitative analysis is apt. My point is, they may be misspecifying the cause of their problem. Ahistoricism, on further analysis, is but one possible form of acontextualism. Theoretically, what can account for the "temporally moving covariance" Isaac and Griffin observe? As they themselves argue, temporally moving covariance "demonstrates theoretically important historical contingency" (p 873); "historical contingency and structural change are facts of historical process and thus must become facts *in* historical social science" (p 888). But what is the source of historical contingency and structural change? Structure implies context. If, for example, the effects of specified case-level variables are contingent upon unspecified contextual variables (that are historically structured), the observed result will be precisely the *temporally moving covariance* Isaac and Griffin uncover. We need to make comparative-historical research explicitly contextual at all times and places.

When we find structural error, we should treat it as a signpost to new territories, not as a nuisance or roadblock. When the failures of our theoretical or statistical models correlate in time and space, our attention should shift to these correlations. This calls for contextual, hierarchical, and multilevel models. We need to explain not only what is generating observed heterogeneity in the effects of case-variables, but the values of those variables, their definition, and the integrity of our units of analysis (their "caseness") itself. We need to unpack the question *what* is a case, to include *when* is a case, *why* is it the way it is, and are case-attributes systematically related to other cases.

One of the major contributions of contemporary comparative-historical research is our recognition of the need to historicize and contextualize our cases; e.g., the nation-state. To view them in relation to systemic processes, and ultimately understand their existence and nature as products

of a system of nation-states. Tilly has remarked that "taking account of the interconnectedness of ostensibly separate experiences" is the hallmark of comparative-historical research (1984 p 147). Others (e.g., Rokkan) have pointed to "the multiple levels involved in comparative work... To be effectively comparative, the analyst must move from the system level to examine at least two subsystems" (in Janoski and Hicks 1994, p 5-6). We need constantly to take emergent and causally independent macrorealities seriously. The greatest intellectual danger is allowing reduction to become reification: our cases—and their attributes—become unexplained because they become transparent. Ahistorical social science reifies parts into units, then compares reified units as if they were unrelated. Comparative-historical research must place units within systemic processes operating at levels beneath and above them.

Contextual analysis is not new, but its novelty is reflected in its absence from even the most advanced quantitative strategies for cross national research. We have only begun to recognize the conceptual and methodological implications. In the future, it will become harder to justify comparative-historical research without explicitly incorporating contextual, as well as spatial (comparative) and longitudinal (temporal) dimensions in theory and reality.

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Recent Books in Historical and Comparative Sociology

Here is a listing of recent historical and/or comparative works. Send announcements to Editor, Historical & Comparative Sociology, Department of Sociology, University of California-Davis, Davis, CA 95616 or by Email to: HistSoc@ucdavis.edu.

Polish Americans by Helena Znanieka Lopata, 2nd edition, Transaction Publishers, 1994. Examines changes within three different cohorts of Polish immigrants in America, and their impacts upon Polish American communities.

Circles and Settings: Role Changes of American Women by Helena Znanieka Lopata, SUNY-Press, 1994. A historical analysis of the changing role of American women in the family, occupations, and society.

A Very Social Time by Karen V. Hansen, University of California Press, 1994. In addition to private and public spheres, Hansen constructs the social sphere and through it challenges common

notions of ideological gender boundaries in antebellum New England.

The Social Control of Religious Zeal: A Study of Organizational Contradictions by Jon Miller, Rutgers University Press, 1994. Case history of the Evangelical Missionary Society's efforts on the West African Gold Coast examining religious beliefs, material interests, and historical circumstances that produced and sustained the mission.

Militarism, Imperialism, and Racial Accommodation: An Analysis and Interpretation of the Early Writings of Robert E. Park by Stanford M. Lyman, University of Arkansas Press, 1992. Winner of the Mid-South Sociological Association's outstanding work in sociology book award in 1993.

The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West by Toby E. Huff, Cambridge University Press. Seeks to answer why modern science arose in the West and not elsewhere. ■

Civil Rights Activists!

Wanted! Sociologists who were active in the 1960's Southern civil rights movement. Activities are being planned to recognize these activists at the 1995 Meeting of the Southern Sociological Society. A directory will be compiled for the organizational archives. Please do not hesitate to identify yourself or others! Direct names and addresses of activists or of colleagues who might be informants to: Wilma A. Dunaway, Department of Sociology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-0490 Phone: 615-573-2921. ■

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Historical and Comparative Sociology, ASA Section (22) Membership Form

C/HS 1/95

Please check one:

- Please register me as a member of the Historical and Comparative Sociology Section. I am a member of the American Sociological Association and have enclosed \$10 (\$5 for graduate students) for 1994 section membership dues.
- Please send me information on how I can join ASA and the Historical/Comparative Section

Name _____ Address _____
