

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

Summer 1997

Vol. 9, No. 3

Welcome to our New Section Officers

To all Comparative/Historical Section Members: thank you for voting. And to all our candidates who stood for office, a special salute. It is an honor to be nominated for section office, and we believe that every candidate is deserving of playing a leading role in the section.

Following the 1997 ASA Meeting, the following officers will take on their new roles:

Chair-Elect: David Stark,
Cornell University.

Council: Julia Adams,
University of Michigan; and
Michele Lamont, Princeton
University.

Also, starting with our next issue, Philip Gorski (University of Wisconsin, Madison) will be the Editor of the Section Newsletter.

Please send any editorial comments or news items of general interest to the section to Professor Gorski at Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, 53706-1393.

Congratulations, everyone, and welcome aboard!

THE HOLOCAUST AND THE PHENOMENON OF GENOCIDE: Their Impact on Sociology

by Jack Nusan Porter, The Spencer School and U. of Massachusetts-Lowell

[Editor's Note: Interest in the Holocaust has been steamed up recently by several outstanding books, most notably Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, but also William Brustein's *The Logic of Evil*. In light of this interest, Jack Nusan Porter, a prominent holocaust specialist, has contributed some thoughts on the place of holocaust studies in sociology.]

One thing is certain: we need much more discussion and debate on these complex issues, discussion that should find its way within the boundaries of this newsletter, as well as academic conferences. While there is much that is heartening within sociology, some problems remain.

(1) Sociology should include a focus on the Holocaust and the phenomenon of genocide, in short, a "comparative genocide" but using the Holocaust as a unique touchstone and case history to compare to others. I also like the term "ethnocide" which describes the destruction of a culture (Black, Native American, Irish Catholic) without it turning into actual physical genocide.

(2) The Holocaust of the Jews in Europe from 1933 to 1945 is unique in history in bureaucratic and technological scope. There have been mass murders and deaths (Native Americans, Blacks in the Middle Passage) that have far exceeded the Holocaust in sheer numbers. However, none before nor since have duplicated its sophistication in terms of modernity (what I define as a tripartite framework of advanced ideology, technology, and bureaucracy.) I do not believe we will ever see another holocaust like "the Holocaust."

(3) Sociologists are uncomfortable with unique events; thus the Holocaust disappears under the rubric of "genocide, politicide, and democide." Of course, all historical events are unique, but the Holocaust was a "tremendum;" one of the defining events of our civilization. Hiroshima was also unique. But because something is unique does not mean that it cannot be comparable and generalizable to other societies. We sociologists, unlike historians, are afraid of unique events, and especially of "uniquely unique" events such as the Holocaust.

(4) Despite the special nature of the Holocaust, I do not take a strictly exclusionist view of the Holocaust as the *only* real genocide. Professors Steven Katz of Boston University and Daniel Goldhagen of Harvard have argued that only the Holocaust involved a state-sponsored effort to wholly eradicate an entire group of people. In all other genocides (against Native Americans, Blacks, witches, homo-

(Continued on page five)

Comparative & Historical Sociology, published quarterly, is the official newsletter of the Section on Historical and Comparative Sociology of the American Sociological Association.

Section Officers:

Chair-Elect

John Stephens

University of North Carolina-
Chapel Hill

Chair

Jack A. Goldstone

University of California-Davis

Past Chair

Andrew Abbott

University of Chicago

Secretary-Treasurer

Elisabeth Clemens

University of Arizona

Council

Edwin Amenta

New York University

Karen Barkey

Columbia University

Bruce Carruthers

Northwestern University

John R. Hall

University of California- Davis

Robin Stryker

University of Iowa

Kim Voss

U. of California-Berkeley

Webmaster

David Zaret

Indiana University

Newsletter Editor

Philip Gorski

University of Wisconsin
(Starting Fall 1997)

Come to Toronto!

Join us at the American Sociological Association Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. August 9 through August 13, 1997.

This year will have an unusual number of sessions dealing with topics in comparative and historical sociology. Check the listings that follow for details

Also, don't forget our gala reception and prize ceremony, to be held jointly with the section on Collective Action and Social Movements.

* * * *

Reception and Prize Ceremony

Saturday evening, August 11, at 6:30 pm, the Section on Comparative and Historical Sociology will hold its reception.

At the reception, the Section will announce the winners of the Reinhard Bendix Prize for best paper by a graduate student, and the Barrington Moore, Jr. Prize for best recent article.

Please check your ASA Meeting program for the location. Come join us for refreshments, celebration, and merriment!

Section News: 1997 Program

The 1997 Meetings in Toronto will offer a rich menu of sessions on comparative and historical sociology. The Section has organized two panels, one on Systems of Exploitation, Subordination, and State-Making (organized by Carole Turbin and Karen Barkey), and one

on Nationalism, Separatism, and Identities (organized by Jack Goldstone). The section also is providing a round-table session, featuring six tables, organized by Cliff Staples.

In addition to the Section's offerings, the ASA Program Committee has sponsored two panels on comparative and historical issues. One is a thematic panel on Methods of International/ Comparative Analysis organized by the section chair, Jack Goldstone, and one is a regular session on comparative/historical sociology organized by Richard Biernacki.

And for a special bonus, don't miss the session on Weber's concept of patrimonialism, organized by J.I. (Hans) Bakker.

Systems of Exploitation, Subordination, and State-Making. Organizers: *Carole Turbin*, Empire State College, SUNY, and *Karen Barkey*, Columbia University.

1. *Mimi Sheller*, New School for Social Research. "Peasants and Politics in Postslavery Societies."

2. *Victor Lee Burke*, Ohio State University. "A Theory of Political Structures in Subordinated Societies."

3. *Tekle M. Woldemikael*, University of Redlands. Postcolonialism and Nationalism: The Emergence of the Eritrean State."

Nationalism, Separatism, and Identities. Organizer and Presider: *Jack A. Goldstone*, University of California, Davis.

1. *Edward Tiryakian*, Duke University. "Modernization Analysis, Goffman, and German National

Identity."

2. *Robert Schaeffer*, San Jose State University. "The Separate Pursuit of a Common Goal or the Common Pursuit of Difference? Separatist Movements and Identities in the Interstate System."

3. *Ralph Fevre*, U. of Wales-Cardiff; *John Borland*, U. of Wales-Bangor; and *David Denney*, Royal Holloway University of London. "Nation, Identity, and Immigration in England and Wales 1967-1989."

4. *Edward J. McCaughan*, Loyola University. "Of Zapotecs, Zapatistas, and Xicanistas: Revising Mexican/ Chicano Nationalism in the Age of Globalization."

Roundtables.

Organizer: *Clifford L. Staples*, U. of North Dakota.

1. Democracy. *Ivan Ermakoff*, U. of Chicago. "Democratic Breakdowns and the Politics of Self Servitude." *Alvin Y. So*, U. of Hawaii. "Hong Kong's Embattled Democracy in East Asia NIEs' Perspective."

2. Political-Economic Change. *Janet P. Stamatel*, U. of Chicago. "Leaders or Followers? Assessing the Uniqueness of the Transition in Eastern Europe." *Jesse Biddle*, Penn State University. "How Cheap is Talk? Theoretical and Practical Considerations of Consultative Mechanisms in Economic Restructuring."

3. Identities. *Denise Ferreira Da Silva*, U. of Pittsburgh. "Mapping the Movements of Difference: The Modern Racial Signifier and the Origin of Modernity." *Alexandra Hrycak*, U. of Chicago. "Post-Soviet Ukrainian

Alternative Culture and Its Postmodernist Identity Project: A Sociolinguistic Approach." *Eric Kaufmann*. "The End of Anglo-America? Theorizing the Decline of National Ethnicity in the U.S. and Canada."

4. Group Maintenance. *Eric Petersen*, Northwestern University. "Overcoming Distance in Medieval North Africa: A Case Study of Group Maintenance Mechanisms."

5. Social Movements and State Policy Formation. *Jane A. Rafferty*, U. of Michigan. "Citizen Reform Movements Compared: The Ten Hours Bill Campaign and Chartism in Nineteenth Century England."

6. The Meanings of History in Historical Sociology. *A.S. Chen*, UC-Berkeley. "What Makes Historical Sociology Historical? Working Notes on Divergent Preconceptions of History in Historical Sociology."

Methodological Dimensions of International/Comparative Analysis. Organizer and Presider: *Jack A Goldstone*, UC-Davis.

1. *Jeffrey R. Goodwin*, *Steven Pfaff*, and *Michael P. Young*, NYU. "Bringing Emotions Back Into Comparative/Historical Sociology."

2. *John Stephens*, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. "Historical Sequences, Causality, and the Comparative Method."

3. *Charles Ragin*, Northwestern University. "Causal Complexity and Comparative Methodology."

Historical Sociology: Classes, Cultures, and States. Organizer

and Presider: *Richard Biernacki*, UC-San Diego.

1. *Richard Lachmann*, SUNY-Albany. "Elites, Structural Rigidity, and the Loss of Economic Hegemony: Lessons for America."

2. *Rebecca Jean Emigh*, UCLA. "Economic Outcomes: Property Rights or Class Capacities? The Example of Tuscan Share-cropping."

3. *Hui Huang*, Rowman College of New Jersey. "The Chinese Construction of the West, 1862-1922: Discourses, Actors and the Cultural Field."

4. *George Steinmetz*, U. of Chicago. "Theorizing the Colonial State: The German Overseas Empire, 1880-1914."

Patrimonial Prebendalism: Max Weber's Pure Ideal Type Model and Its Applicability. Organizer Presider: *J.I. (Hans) Bakker*, University of Guelph.

1. *Robert M. Marsh*, Brown University. "Ming and Ch'ing China as a Patrimonial Bureaucracy."

2. *Ricardo Duchesne*, University of New Brunswick, Canada. "Perry Anderson and the Weberianization of Historical Materialism."

3. *Malcom MacKinnon*, University of Toronto. "Relocating Weber's Idealism: From Caesaropapism to Honoratiore"

4. *J.I. Bakker* and *Gabe Ferrazzi* University of Guelph. "Weber's Pure Ideal Type Model of Patrimonial Prebendalism: Testing the Applicability of the Model in Indonesia"

From the Section Chair

Jack A. Goldstone, University of California-Davis

In the last year, I have enjoyed the honor of chairing our section, and cherished the respect of my colleagues in the field of comparative/historical sociology.

Yet in encounters with sociologists outside our field, I have not always found the respect for, and understanding of, comparative/historical sociology that I hoped for. Other colleagues have told me similar tales -- of sociologists who claim that comparative/historical sociology is not really sociology; that it is filled with speculation and not "true" research, that it really doesn't belong in "serious" departments! I have heard it said that the "golden age" of comparative/historical sociology is over, and that the field is now "dying."

In our previous newsletter, I suggested that part of the reason that sociology departments often do not deem comparative/historical sociology an essential part of the field is that we are not generally identified with a basic, widely taught and widely required, undergraduate sociology course. As far as many sociologists are concerned, the "core" of what we do is already presented in the theory course, where Marx, Weber, and perhaps Durkheim are introduced to students.

I believe it is important that we fight this notion, that comparative/historical sociology has little to offer

beyond a review of our founding fathers. We constantly need to remind our colleagues that, among its other strengths, comparative/historical sociology is the core of macro-sociology, the study of long-term trends and processes of social change. Many of those trends go in directions not foreseen or discussed by our founding fathers -- the spread of democracy to the developing world; the succeeding of the industrial revolution by the information revolution; the unfolding of the demographic transition; the growth of the modern welfare state; the rise and fall of state socialism; the spread of social movements to include new identity and environmental issues; the growth of international trade and cultural influences. These are topics that students need to know about, and that undergraduates are hungry to learn about.

If each of us insists that our department curricula include an undergraduate course on macro-sociology (e.g. "Societies and Social Change") to complement the already nearly universally taught course on micro-sociology (e.g. "Self and Society"), we will greatly strengthen the position of our field in the discipline. If our subject matter is the processes of social change, then it should be clear -- or we need to argue! -- that this subject is far from exhausted, or even satisfactorily introduced, by a study of the founding fathers. Social change did not come to an end in the middle of the 19th

(continued on p. 6)

Join the Comparative and Historical Sociology Section

To join, please fill out the information below, tear off this part of the page, and mail it to:
American Sociological Association, 1722 N. Street NW, Washington, DC 20036

Cost for ASA Members: Only \$10 for regular members, \$5 for graduate students

Please register me as a member of the Comparative and Historical Sociology Section. I am a member of the American Sociological Association and have enclosed \$10 (\$5 for graduate students) for 1997 section membership dues.

Name _____

Address _____

The Holocaust and Genocide

(Continued from page 1)

sexuals, even Armenians), there was never an intent to kill *every* single member of the targeted population, according to Katz. This is quite a provocative statement, and he backs it up in three volumes, each nearly 1,000 pages (See volume one: *The Holocaust in Historical Context* [New York: Oxford, 1994]).

To discuss Katz and Goldhagen is beyond the scope of this small space. Suffice it to say, Katz is convincing about homosexuals, blacks, Native Americans, witches, and women as genocidal targets, but not about Gypsies or Armenians. The latter two were definitely genocides. The former were not genocides, but then most scholars do not consider them as genocides. However, most of our students think of them as genocides.

(4) There is a problem of Holocaust denial and definitional abuse. Misapplying and abusing the term genocide is very common in sociology. *To make everything genocide is not make nothing genocide*. Massacres, mass murders, "oppression," "atrocities," nuclear attack, serial bombardment (such as the firebombing of Dresden), Hiroshima, My Lai, Maalot, black slavery, abortion, the treatment of women and witches, even the "suppression" of the American Indians, are *not* examples of genocide. I have discussed this in my *Genocide and Human Rights* (Lanham, MD: University Press 1982).

(5) To overlook the uniqueness of the Holocaust is also a form of Holocaust denial, although a very subtle form. To see the Holocaust as just another genocide is to deny its uniqueness and its profound ability to be used as the key case study in this field, of universal comparability to other genocides. This is not to gainsay or to underestimate other genocides. I do not believe in ranking comparative suffering; just because something is not a genocide does not mean it is not a heinous act. Just call it something else (massacre, mass murder), not genocide.

(6) There is excellent material available to teach courses in the Sociology of Genocide, or on the Holocaust in comparative context. I have developed a curriculum guide, *The Sociology of Genocide and the Holocaust* (Washington, DC: American Sociological Association, 1992, \$13) that addresses many of these questions of uniqueness and universality. It also has useful material on several historical and ethnic/racial genocides, and contains many syllabi for teachers. I also recommend Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1994) and my forthcoming *Holocaust and Genocide: Theories, Cases, Implications* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998).

(7) The key point is not to lock ourselves into rigid frameworks, definitions, and parameters. There must be respect for different approaches. Mine could be called the "uniqueness-comparability" approach; it sees the Holocaust as unique, yet comparable to other genocides. Others may have a more "inclusivist" or "exclusivist" approach. Some will label events genocide where others would not call them genocide at all (i.e. Blacks of the Middle Passage or the treatment of Native Americans). So be it -- let a hundred flowers (and typologies!) bloom. But let us respect our differences and learn from them by listening to each other and learning from each other. The levels of incivility raised by Goldhagen's work, for example, do not aid our understanding.

Human beings are finding more creative ways to kill each other every day in this 20th century, but not every killing is a genocide.

[Dr. Porter welcomes inquiries from anyone interested in starting a website for "comparative genocide." You can contact him at The Spencer School, 8 Burnside Road, Newton Highlands, MA 02161. Phone: (617) 965-8388; Fax: (617) 964-3971.]

Comparative/Historical Section Web Page

Be sure to check out the Section's Web page,
established and coordinated by David Zaret of Indiana University, at:

<http://ezinfo.ucs.indiana.edu/~zaret/comph.htm>

From the Section Chair (Continued from page 5)

or the early 20th century. Modern social change is too vital a subject to be left outside of mainstream sociology, and too empirically rich to be left to schematic ideas of social evolution or development imported from social theory.

Yet simply introducing such a course may not overcome the skepticism of many of our colleagues. To them, comparative-historical sociology seems to lack focus. What is comparative/historical sociology, they ask. Is it a method? If so, the method of using a small number of case studies to study causal relationships seems suspect to sociologists trained to extract relationships and handle errors from large data sets. Is it a subject? If so, what is that subject -- all of history? And what do we bring to the study of history that historians and social theorists do not already do (and do better?).

Charles Tilly, in a brilliant little book, suggested that our subject matter might be "Big Structures, Large Processes, and Huge Comparisons." Yet aside from its ironical hubris, this title misleads, for it obscures the rich interplay between the analysis of smaller-scale phenomena and the overall project of our field.

I would like to suggest, very tentatively, that we could say that comparative/historical sociology aims at understanding *processes of social change*. It certainly does not aim at finding invariant laws or universal patterns of social development. Nor is its focus confined to the nation-state, for social change occurs at many levels -- in individuals, in communities, and in national and trans-national social relationships and institutions. Comparative/historical sociology examines episodes and trends in social change -- revolutions; democratization; technological and organizational innovation; the rise of the modern state; the rise (and demise?) of capitalism and socialism; the spread of nationalism; wars and genocides; the legacies of colonialism and imperialism; the emergence of modern social movements; the gradual emancipation of workers, women, and minorities; urbanization and the demographic transition; the growth of the welfare state; and others -- and asks: why did this occur? Where is this change leading, and what is the likely outcome? And how will this affect our society, and others?

Comparative/historical sociology is thus defined by its subject, not its method. I believe this is as it should

be, for scholars using a variety of methods, including network analysis, statistical analysis of historical data, time-series analysis, ethnography, narrative, single case studies, and comparative case studies, have all made vital contributions to our field.

Whether it is an examination of the impact of gender on politics in a early modern town, an analysis of the dynamics of immigrant communities over several generations, or an exploration of changes in political and economic power among nations; whether the study is based on personal accounts, or on narratives, or on statistical time-series; comparative/historical studies can illuminate the processes of social change. And what could be more vital for sociology as a whole than to understand social change?

I do not know if any consensus exists, or is possible, in our field regarding this tricky issue of what is comparative/historical sociology. However, I suggest we give some attention to this matter, and try to arrive at some broadly shared understanding that we can convey to others of what is central in our field. The value of such an understanding to our section would be great -- it would help us have a clear and united voice when skepticism about our research is raised by sociologists in other sub-disciplines; it would give us a basis for a central role in the undergraduate curriculum; it might even help in obtaining positions and research support for our members.

We rightly pride ourselves on the range of methods and topics dealt with in comparative/historical sociology. Yet at the same time, this variety leaves us vulnerable to charges of lack of focus, lack of clear subject matter, confusion regarding methods, and other issues that hurt our field in matters of hiring, teaching, and professional status.

I hope that by relating the work we do to the central theme of understanding processes of social change, we can give our sub-discipline a clear focus, end the confusion on subject vs. methods, and increase the perceived importance of our field in the discipline at large, without any sacrifice in the variety and range of our research.

Let me be clear -- this is just a suggestion to start a debate, not to pre-empt it. I hope section members will send their views to the newsletter, and that a discussion of our identities as comparative/historical sociologists will prove fruitful.