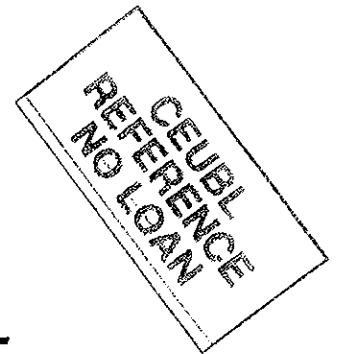


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\$3,000 per year in the paychecks of those performing historically female work. Even flawed studies with gender biased evaluation systems have resulted in important wage increases for hundreds of thousands of women. For many women, it represents the difference between poverty and economic autonomy. It would empower women as decision makers in their families. It would make visible and positively reward the productive contribution of women's labor market work.

See also: Economic Development and Women; Economic Sociology; Education and Income Distribution; Feminist Theory: Liberal; Feminist Theory: Marxist and Socialist; Gender and Feminist Studies in Economics; Gender and Feminist Studies in Sociology; Gender, Economics of; Labor Markets, Labor Movements, and Gender in Developing Nations; Labor Movements and Gender; Sex Differences in Pay; Sex Segregation at Work; Sexual Harassment: Legal Perspectives

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R. J. Steinberg

Comparative History

Comparative history differs from other historical methods in that it takes an explicit line of questioning to compare two or more cases stemming from different contexts. The aim of this operation is either to bring out the similarities and differences of the different cases, or to determine the scope of social scientific theories or theoretical approaches. Seldom does comparison itself lead to the formulation of theories. These characteristics distinguish historical comparison monographic work concentrating on case studies, from historical syntheses with an international scope and from implicit comparison, which indeed belongs among the analytical instruments of all historical work.

1. The Story of 'Comparative History'

Although the comparative perspective has appeared repeatedly in the history of historiography, it has only presented itself as a methodical instrument of explicit theoretical comparison since the 1930s. Of course, the historiography of the Enlightenment made use of comparison in its endeavor to grasp the specific characteristics of the historical process by means of universal historical types; in this context, Montesquieu, Adam Smith, and the Cameralist J. H. G. Justi should be mentioned. In Scottish, English, French, and German Enlightenment literature as well, cultural areas and development stages were compared. Thus, just as the demarcation of the European model against non-European civilizations in the eighteenth century belonged to the arsenal of universal history, so did the belief that developed societies can trace their own history in that of less-

developed societies (e.g., Karl Marx). In this attempt, development thinking became closely intertwined with a Eurocentric perspective. This universal historical tradition persisted, carried on in the twentieth century by such diverse authors as Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, Karl Polanyi, and Schlomo Eisenstadt.

Modern comparative history, however, is not rooted in this tradition. Profoundly affected by the experience of World War I and the traumas suffered by parts of academia under nationalistic exclusionism, comparative history established its argument for comparison as a fruitful enterprise particularly based on the results produced in neighboring sciences. Henri Pirenne, a Belgian historian and one of the pioneers of internationally comparative historiography, did admittedly make reference to universal history in his opening speech at the fifth international conference of historians in Brussels in 1923, but with the intention of combating the narrowness of purely national perspectives and the subjection of historical research to functional ends. However, Marc Bloch and Otto Hintze, two of the most influential forerunners in the field of comparative study, were even more active in taking up approaches from neighboring disciplines where comparison had long been a commonly practiced method. Historiography, as a historically comparative discipline, was a latecomer compared with other sciences. In fact, as early as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, various sciences had practiced comparative study successfully. Such works were produced not only in anatomy and physiognomy, but also in religious studies, jurisprudence, geography, and philosophy. Among them was that of F. Max Müller, the first *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, published in 1873. Thus it was no coincidence that Marc Bloch, in his 1928 essay advocating the practice of comparative history, does not cite historians, but rather Antoine Meillet and the broad range of scholars who had been carrying out internationally comparative linguistic research since as early as the nineteenth century.

In the development of modern comparative history, contact with the social sciences played the central defining role. Marc Bloch, whose works on the 'royal touch,' on the agrarian history of England and France, and on the different forms of feudal society in Europe up to 1940 provided important examples of comparative study, had received theoretical stimuli, above all from Emile Durkheim. Durkheim saw comparison as the sociological method *par excellence*, enabling the delineation of the fundamental characteristics of social types. Bloch used this method, for example, in his analysis of feudal society when he concentrated on its dominant dependency relationships. Otto Hintze, who was among the pioneers of historical comparison, also took the work done in the social sciences as his model. He adopted the concept of the ideal type from Max Weber and went on to construct an ideal-type concept

of feudalism. He then applied this to the various manifestations of feudal domination, which he found to be particularly pronounced in Russia, Japan, and the Islamic countries.

In the period following World War II in particular, the number of theoretically based works with an internationally comparative perspective increased. The science of history bore a complex interrelationship to historical sociology. On the one hand, it profited from the broad scope of sociology's macro comparisons, which were limited neither to a specific epoch nor to a specific continent. These comparisons studied different national cases, using stringent argumentation to examine theoretical questions. Thus Barrington Moore inquired as to the role of agrarian development in the emergence of either democracy or dictatorial fascistic regimes in a broad comparison of six national cases, while Jack Goldstone compared revolutionary crises of the early modern age in Europe and Asia. On the other hand, however, it was only the historical research in monographic form that made available to historical sociologists the theses and research results that would enable them to carry out extensive comparisons. The stimuli obtained from historical sociology were also accompanied by critique of its generalizations and its handling of the historical state of research, which it did not always improve upon extensively. Nevertheless, historical sociology provided an important stimulus to comparative history. Its works elicited an increasingly favorable response in the 1960s to the extent that history was open to theoretical questions, and gradually after 1970, these works were also emulated.

The theory of modernization, which originated mainly in the United States in the 1950s, provided a powerful comparative impetus as well, and elaborated parameters of development against which it measured individual societies. The successful combination of market economy and political democracy was its criterion for modernity. In this sense, the vague but positively cast concept of 'modernity' was used widely in historiography on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; it emphasized structures, functions, and interdependencies among the different parts of systems more strongly than their historical individuality. In individual historiographies—particularly in those countries catching up in industrial and political development—the comparison to the Anglo-Saxon 'leader' countries soon became one of the standard lines of argumentation. In the West German debate about the long-term and medium-term causes of National Socialism, structural deficits were identified in comparison to Anglo-Saxon development, which itself was admittedly highly typological and idealized: these included the feudalization of the German middle classes, a general deficit in the middle-class way of life, the exceptional proximity of middle-class life to the state, and the persistence of privilege-based social orders in the old and new middle class. Especially in

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this debate about Germany's *Sonderweg* ('unique path')—but in Italian historiography as well—it was no longer just the linear and unceasing advance toward modernity that was at issue, but the ruptures, contradictions, and deficits in the development.

Within the science of history, comparative methods by no means penetrated all disciplines to the same degree or simultaneously. They emerged earlier in economic history, population history, and political history than in social history, gender history, or cultural history. As early as 1957, the Economic History Association dedicated one day of its annual conference to comparative economic history, and it was no coincidence that one year later, economic historian Sylvia Trupp founded the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History* with the expressed goal of publishing studies of an interdisciplinary and comparative nature. In Europe, the English model of industrialization and its spread was the central topic of the comparative studies that appeared even before 1960. The most broad-based and influential comparative analysis was produced by Alexander Gerschenkron, who studied the basic similarities and differences within the European process of industrialization, inquiring into not just the different answers to similar challenges, but also the functional equivalents among European societies. He explains the differences in development on the basis of both the specific position of the individual economy in the system as a whole ('relative backwardness') and the influences generated by developed societies. Walt Rostow's 'stage theory' of economic growth also provided an impetus to comparative economic history after 1960, as did Simon Kuznets's quantitative studies. Rostow's thesis that every society has to go through similar phases of economic growth and that therefore each society's position can be identified against this background was almost a direct invitation for checking by historical comparison. Kuznets, in contrast, instead emphasized the uniformity of modern economic growth, although without ignoring its national diversity. His three-sector thesis also led to comparative studies.

In historical demography, in 1963 at Princeton, Ansley Coale began comparing 600 European regions to answer the question of whether and why the birth rate was declining in Europe; this was called the European Fertility Project. Although the project did produce convincing demographic results, the explanation of demographic behavior on the basis of historical macro processes came under criticism. The reasons for the early comparative studies of political movements and institutions can be found not only in the field of 'comparative politics,' which gained importance in the USA in the 1960s, but also—according to Klaus von Beyme—in a unique approach to research within political science. This approach applies to institutions that can be classified under the general type of democratic systems, but that never-

theless take on specific forms. Research on resistance movements and on social systems or constitutions paved the way for the advancement of comparison in social history.

Nevertheless, since the mid-1960s, sociohistorical comparison has taken on a leading role, showing a remarkable breadth of research and differentiation in approaches. In Europe, at least a handful of papers have been published every year since 1970 on comparative social history, none limited to a specialized area, but including the history of the family and social classes, and the development of the social state, the city and education. These studies have been focused mainly on three central issues. First, they deal with the explanation of national peculiarities, which often—because of political events—are seen as characteristic of the social development of the last few centuries. In the debate about the German *Sonderweg*, this orientation of comparative sociohistorical research has taken its most comprehensive and probably also most fruitful form as a scientific heuristic device. Second, they focus on the different pathways of individual European societies into the modern age: their distinctive features are identified above all in comparisons between different societies, and between European and non-European cultures. A third focal point has been the European model and its social characteristics. All these studies have demonstrated methodical diversity in both quantity and in quality; have integrated social, political, and economic factors; and have focused attention on both linear and cyclical developments. Furthermore, they have compared societies as well as parts of societies.

European historiographies have not all made use of the comparative method to the same degree. Surprisingly, Marc Bloch's appeal in France went unheard for many years, as French historiography was and continues to be strongly oriented toward monographic work and highly skeptical of theory. In Great Britain as well, historical comparison did not catch on because of the dominance of national history and the distance from the social sciences. In Italy, comparative history remained on the periphery—despite the proximity of many historians to debates in the social sciences—because of the strong regional orientation. In West Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Austria comparative work remained rather limited within total historical production, even though the number of comparative works was significantly higher than the number of other European historiographies. Although sociohistorical comparison was particularly strong in Germany, this was a result of both debate on the theory of the German *Sonderweg*, which was dealt with in many comparative historical essays, and the explicit discussions of social-scientific theories and proposed explanations that characterized modern German social history. In general, one may assume that internationally comparative history had a difficult time gaining a foothold wherever the relation to theory

Comparative History

was weak, and wherever attempts to explain national patterns of development in the philosophy of science remained only peripheral. Before 1989, this was the case in Iberian societies as well as in Eastern Europe.

The study of history in the United States, where, according to Raymond Grew, comparison is a weak point rather than a strong one, has not only brought forth a series of excellent comparative studies on European history, but also practices transepochal and transatlantic comparison more intensively than does European historiography. Among the comparative works on Europe, those of Charles Tilly, Peter Baldwin, and Susan Pederson are particularly worthy of mention. The study by Arno Mayer on the Holocaust, which he sees in the tradition of the Crusades and the Thirty-Years' War, takes a transepochal and internationally comparative approach and presents a comparative tableau of the situation of Jewish people in Eastern European societies in the 1930s. Transatlantic perspectives are opened up by those studies that place slavery in the South, the frontier problem, and the situation of migrants in a larger, multinational context.

In gender history, the comparison of male and female roles was for a long time the constitutive element of analysis, and only recently have theoretical, internationally comparative studies been produced. These have concentrated on institutions or sub-areas which, like social laws, have attained a special meaning for gender roles. Modern cultural history as well, which discusses the creation and relevance of stems of meaning, rituals, and symbols, has concentrated thus far on national configurations and ascribed little importance to international comparison.

In historiography on classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern age, comparative studies were carried out, comparing rulers, regimes, and individual institutions. Because of the international character of political systems, the national aspect decreased in importance as a unit of comparison. However, theoretically oriented comparisons remained scarcer in this area than in the historiography on modernity.

2. Functions of Historical Comparison

The comparative method pursues two goals alternately. On the one hand, it seeks to accentuate the distinctive feature of each individual case, and on the other, attempts to derive evidence on general developments from case studies. While historians tend toward the first approach, the second is more prevalent among social scientists. Comparative historical studies do, however, also deal with the question of commonalities. Four functions are granted to comparison in these studies: a heuristic function, a contrastive function, an analytical function, and a distancing function.

Comparison plays a heuristic role when it alone can offer explanations and reveal phenomena that had been unknown or inadequately known up to that point. This function was already referred to by Marc Bloch, who, based on his knowledge of the English enclosure movement, sought an equivalent in French agrarian history. Founding his thesis on research in regional history, he dates the disappearance of collective rights in Provence as early as the fifteenth century, and concludes from this that similar movements took place in France not only earlier, but also under other conditions. Thanks to the comparative method, Bloch was able to discover a characteristic of French agrarian development through his studies of the agrarian history of other countries.

Historical comparison can be called contrastive when it serves to define more precisely the special features of a specific case. Above all in German-French comparison, this method was used to bring into bold relief the particularly xenophobic character of German nationalism in the early nineteenth century, the insurance character of Germany's social security system, and its unique characteristic of having a highly educated middle class. Comparison of Italian and Anglo-Saxon developments brought out the regressive state of Italian industrial development, its lack of a modern party system, and its unique feature of having a patrician, noble class. Depending on the country selected for comparison and the logic behind this comparison, specific characteristics of the mostly isolated national case but also of regional patterns of development are illuminated and brought into clear contrast against the totality. At least two problems emerge in this endeavor: the further the development stage in the reference country or region deviates from the individual case in question, the less suitable it is for defining the specifics of the case beyond mere identification of general deficits. If one measures the economic development in Italy in the nineteenth century using as a yardstick the conditions that promoted industrialization in England, one can only determine that these conditions were lacking in Italy, but cannot identify the specific conditions for the economic growth that took place there. The more that the comparative reality is used merely as a foil to highlight the contours of a specific case, the more typological and reductive the resulting picture. International case studies written in comparison to the German case with the aim of presenting a general view of the livelihood and benefits of German white-collar employees have only rarely provided convincing analyses of the individual national developments in the employee milieu. This inherent bias of comparison should be borne in mind in each case.

Comparison has an analytical character when it either tests a scientific hypothesis or identifies constellations of causes in a specific situation. The thesis that a causal relationship exists between capitalism and feudalism is relativized by the fact that strong fascist

movements did not emerge in all capitalist societies; they were able to develop only under specific conditions. Jürgen Kocka qualified this assumption in his comparison of American and German society between the two World Wars. In a study of the French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions, Theda Skocpol inquired as to the results of collapsed administrative apparatuses, broad peasant rebellions, and movements among political elites, thereby demonstrating the extreme diversity in the constellations of causes which explain the outbreak of modern revolutions.

In this analytical approach, comparison can also serve as an indirect experiment. When phenomenon *a* is ascribed to cause *b*, the historian can test their hypothetical connection by looking for constellations in other societies in which *a* appears without *b*, or where *b* exists without leading to *a*. This heuristically useful procedure is distinguished from experiments in the natural sciences in that here, the *ceteris paribus* conditions are seldom given.

Comparison has a distancing effect when it offers another perspective to observation and analysis. It can produce surprising discoveries as well as relativizing the tradition-based context of national historiographies. Especially for those historiographies that are deeply embedded in a national context, comparison can open up new and often broader vistas. When confronting comparisons with other reference cases—especially those from other cultures—not only does one gain experience with different types of question and method, but also fundamental assumptions of one's own historiography can be revealed and their problems expounded. The comparative view can also contribute new insights: Skocpol, for example, uses the comparative method to shed new light on the similarities between the French Revolution of the eighteenth century and the Chinese revolution of the twentieth century in her comparison of revolutions, and between the cities of France and Japan in the eighteenth century. Taking into consideration the variety of alternative pathways into the modern age prevents exclusive concentration on the European development path, and offers insight into those conditions of European development which cannot be generalized.

3. Methodology of Comparison

Although comparative history does not possess its own methodology, it does present particular methodological problems in bold relief.

Historians have used the proximity of their work to original sources as a special proof of its scientific nature. The goal of reconstructing history via a multitude of sources in as comprehensive a manner as possible is one of the fraternity of historians' standards. This fundamental methodological principle to a

certain degree evades historical comparison. In so far as it compares more than two cases, it depends more heavily on secondary literature than on the evaluation of a consistent body of sources. Thus, it also faces the problem of having to assess adequately the historiographic context, where each individual work of secondary literature interprets the original sources in its own specific way.

Another of the principles of historical study is that individual aspects of reality cannot be understood separately from their place within a totality or within a historical development. The full meaning of details comes into focus only when looked at in synchronic and diachronic perspective. The method of isolating variables—a common one in empirical social research and political economy—can and should be used within the framework of research projects, but is inadequate for representing the results of research. Comparisons can trace diachronic development processes in their similarities or differences, but they can also examine trans-epochal cases along one specific line of questioning. For example, Raymond W. Goldsmith studies the premodern financial systems in ancient Mesopotamia, the Indian Mogul empire, and England under the rule of Elizabeth I. For him, what is of interest is not how an epoch can be characterized, but the contribution of different states and ages to a central line of questioning. Comparison can also evade both chronology and the total context in question: one separates out the individual cases, subjects them to examination from a specific perspective, reduces their complexity, and studies them as exemplary cases belonging to a 'universal,' the *tertium comparationis*.

Because of this isolation and reduction, the methodology of comparison enters into a relationship of unresolvable tension with fundamental principles of historical study. What has proven to be a rule of thumb is that the loss of context in comparative study is less severe the smaller the number of reference cases. By choosing medium-range theories and argumentation on a moderate level of abstraction, one limits as far as possible both the loss of concreteness and the distance from the object of study. To do justice to the diverse kinds of relationship affecting a particular case, comparative historical studies include processes rather than constellations, and link the analysis of individual situations with questions derived from the historical study of relationships. The integration of individual cases into the total social context can be intensified through close attention to the linguistic and conceptual specifics that define and influence these contexts.

Despite all of these methodical problems, historical comparison also has a positive impact on historical research by raising its consciousness about the extent and limits of different approaches, the implicit premises of scientific study, and the coherence of the total context. It opens up historical study to theoretical reflection.

The unit of comparison changes according to the line of questioning and the information being sought. For a long time, a national framework of study was dominant in the science of history, both because this framework influenced the problems being studied, and also because answers to questions of national history were sought in comparison. Research on nationalism and welfare states, democracy and religious denominations have been given a privileged place in the national framework. This national approach has been called into question by two developments: micro-history and intercultural history.

Microhistory has brought increased interest to local, often unique sources and problems which give a privileged role to the viewpoints of the people involved, and which—because of the emphasis on individuality—had been excluded previously from methodical comparison. In addition, this shows the importance of another area which calls into question the self-assuredness of past research on national historical developments. For the study of family constellations and famine unrest, local frameworks present themselves as the most appropriate, while for the analysis of linguistic dialects or industrialization, the regional level is preferable. As the study of history becomes increasingly global, the national level will decrease continuously in significance. This does not just apply to colonialism, the migration movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or the global economy that has been developing since 1880. Marc Bloch pointed out as early as 1928 that the development of manorial rule in the Middle Ages and early modern age in individual localities and regions cannot be understood independently of the decline of money rent throughout Europe.

In so far, then, as one seeks to identify the special features of Europe's development, it is necessary to include non-European cultures, which, however, should no longer serve merely as a foil as they did for Max Weber, but rather be examined with a differentiated view to their independence and specificity. In order to obtain a new perspective, Jürgen Osterhammel proposes a new approach: instead of analyzing non-European cultures from a European standpoint, one should take the opposite point of view and determine European specifics from the standpoint of non-European cultures. The methodical problems of such a perspective are as obvious as its advantages: these include on the one hand problems of languages, the knowledge of often very different historiographies, and aggregation of data that decrease in meaningfulness and are often statistically antiquated, and on the other, a new view of known developments, and the opening of a wider sphere of activity and relationships.

In particular, the history of transfer processes brought attention to Galton's problem of ethnologies when it questioned whether two or more cases can really exist independently alongside one another, or if

they are enmeshed in a visible or invisible web of relationships that influence them decisively. The question of how specific constellations develop through direct influence, appropriation or imitation of foreign models does indeed increase the complexity of comparison, but in no way replaces it. As is well known, Marc Bloch extolled the study of societies in the same epoch which are neighboring, mutually influential, and subjected to the same macro changes as one of the ideal methods of historical comparison.

4. Comparative History's Agenda and Unsolved Problems

Comparison poses methodical and theoretical problems for the science of history, but at the same time challenges it, and can even work as a factor to increase method-consciousness and support theoretical reflection. Currently, an expansion of previous approaches and fields of comparison in the following directions could be considered:

Until now, comparative studies have limited themselves to defining the range and meaningfulness of theories. Such problems as whether Weber's class theory is appropriate for the history of the European middle class, whether Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is useful for an analysis of intellectuals, or whether Marx's theory can be applied to modern revolutions—and whether all of these can explain more than just national cases—have been the focus of interest thus far. However, the question of what changes must be made in theoretical concepts if they are to explain more than one national development and encompass a multitude of empirical cases has seldom been asked. Therefore, comparative history has contributed little to the development of theory thus far, and has seldom taken the step to formulate theoretical alternatives by relativizing existing approaches.

In historical comparison, progressive types and structures—rather than the constitutive processes of historical facts and materials—were, for a long time, at the center of attention. With the increasing importance of constructivist approaches, individual sources such as reports and statistics are being interpreted to be more a representation of individual administrations or rulers than an account of social or political reality. Comparisons that strengthen this point of view would involve representations and strategies of representation, and prevent the naive use of sources and statistics. In this area, new fields of research are opening up.

In numerous comparative studies, the process of modernization is built in as the *tertium comparationis*. This enables that the trajectory of development of each particular case be identified and defined. The more that temporally staggered comparisons are used

in these studies, however, the less importance they ascribe to synchronic observation and the more they ascribe to the content of the line of questioning. In this way, comparison concentrates less on the characterization of phases of historical development, and more on different contexts—such as collectives' self-descriptions, social placement strategies, ascription of religious meaning—which it analyzes for several collectives.

Contemporary processes of globalization have left their mark above all on the capital and labor markets, but have also called into question the national contexts of thinking prevalent in the sciences. On the one hand, historiography in the European framework reacts to this relativization of the national: it can give a privileged role both to comparison between individual societies as well as to the homogeneity of powerful forces and processes. Transcultural comparison with non-European cultures also presents a promising means of isolating and identifying the factors of Europe's development. On the other hand, the individual societies themselves have become complex 'melting-pots,' as reception and diffusion of cultural models, social modernization, and social and cultural coding have merged in them, accompanied by national-historical and global-social influences. With the increasing demand for an adequate survey of contemporary society, the demands placed on a theoretically based, methodically differentiated comparative history will increase as well, expanding the spectrum of questions with which history will be interpreted.

See also: Civilization, Concept and History of; Civilizational Analysis, History of; Comparative Method, in Evolutionary Studies; Economic History; Global History; Universal and World; Historical Demography; History and the Social Sciences; Marx, Karl (1818–89); Modernization and Modernity in History; Modernization, Sociological Theories of; Polanyi, Karl (1886–1964); Social History; Weber, Max (1864–1920)

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H-G. Haupt

Comparative Method, in Evolutionary Studies

Comparative methods seek evidence for adaptive evolution by investigating how the characteristics of organisms, such as their size, shape, life histories, and behavior, evolve together across species. They are one of evolutionary biology's most enduring approaches for testing hypotheses of adaptation. This article discusses the application and interpretation of comparative studies, reviews their historical development, then describes new methodologies for analysing comparative data.

One of the classic comparative relationships is that between the size of an organism's body and the size of its brain (Fig. 1): brain size increases steadily and predictably with body size in mammals, and this relationship also holds within most other animal groups. Much of the interest that comparative rela-