would be termed ‘social geography’ there has been too little interaction between those researchers working on developing and developed countries. There are, however, some indications that this is changing with greater appreciation of the implications of the globalization of communication and economic relationships and the significance of diasporic cultures.

For many social geographers the growth of cultural geography presents an opportunity to combine many of the themes of the two sub-disciplines in fruitful investigation of social inequality and difference and to focus on and destabilize definitions of a wider range of ‘social groups’—such as disabled people and gay and lesbian people. Social geographers’ tradition of political engagement and ethnographic research can combine positively with cultural geographers’ sensitivity to discourse and symbolic expression of difference. The rapprochements between social, cultural, and development geographers seem likely to produce valuable research. Nevertheless, the term ‘social geography’ on its own—as opposed to ‘social and cultural geography’ or ‘social and development geography’—seems likely to revert to its earlier obscurity.

See also: Access: Geographical; Behavioral Geography; Crime, Geography of; Critical Realism in Geography; Cultural Geography; Disability, Geography of; Gender and Feminist Studies in Geography; Humanistic Geography; Marxist Geography; Postcolonial Geography; Postmodern Urbanism; Postmodernism in Geography; Qualitative Methods in Geography; Residential Segregation: Geographic Aspects; Rural Geography; Sexuality and Geography; Space and Social Theory in Geography; Spatial Analysis in Geography; Time-geography; Urban Geography; Urban System in Geography

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Social History

The term ‘social history’ refers to a subdiscipline of the historical sciences on the one hand and to a general approach to history that focuses on society at large on the other hand. In both manifestations social history developed from marginal and tentative origins at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries and experienced a triumphant expansion from the 1950s to the 1980s. Throughout, social history can be best defined in terms of what it wants not to be or against that to which it proposes an alternative.

On one hand it distinguished itself from political history, which had been dominant during most of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Consequently, the ‘social’ in social history meant dealing with the structures of societies and social change, social movements, groups and classes, conditions of work and ways of life, families, households, local communities, urbanization, mobility, ethnic groups, etc. On the other hand social history challenged dominant historical narratives which were constructed around the history of politics and the state or around the history of ideas by stressing instead social change as a core dimension around which historical synthesis and diagnosis of the contemporary world should be organized. With these aims in mind, social historians (including historical sociologists and economic historians) sought to uncover the relationships between economic, demographic and social processes and structures, as well as their impact on political institutions, the distribution of resources, social movements, shared worldviews, and forms of public and
private behavior. For the comprehensive variant of ‘social history,’ the term ‘history of society’ (Gesellschaftsgeschichte) has gained currency. Not only in Western Europe and North America but also in other parts of the world, the establishment, expansion, and specialization of social history belong among the significant trends of interwar and particularly postwar intellectual and academic life. Nevertheless, in recent years, it shares with other fields of the humanities and social sciences a ‘time of doubts’ (Chartier 1993), a period of challenges from interpretative, constructivist, and discursive approaches (Palmer 1990, Bonnel and Hunt 1999).

1. Early Institutionalization (Late Nineteenth–Early Twentieth Century)

Like other generations of historians in the twentieth century that have at some point used the label ‘new’ for themselves, the claim to innovation by social historians in the 1960s and 1970s obscured the rich diversity of predecessors and competitors, which goes back to the second half of the nineteenth century (Kocka 1986). In that period, the academic professionalization and disciplinary differentiation of economics, sociology, and political science on the one hand and history on the other prevailed.

The mutual contact zones or, by contrast, the strength of boundaries were marked by significant national differences. The resulting interactions and hierarchies between these ‘fields of knowledge’ (Ringer 1992) differed in respect to the amount of space they provided for historical approaches. The ‘Historical School’ of political economy in Germany, dominant in the last third of the nineteenth century, is a case in point. It was part of economics and did not gain much recognition in the discipline of history. Some professional historians took part in a process of specialization in ‘social and economic history’ that kept a critical distance as much from this strand of economics as from the traditional history of great men, events, and ideas. The development of the combined field ‘social and economic history’ marked a double opposition, on the one hand to the history of political events and on the other hand to an increasingly ahistorical economic science.

The creation of a specialized journal in Germany allows one to give a precise date to the development of this subdiscipline of historiography. In 1893 the journal for social and economic history was founded, which was continued after ten years (and still exists today) as the Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte (VSWG), under the direction of the Austrian socialist Ludo Moritz Hartmann and the conservative medievalist Georg von Below. That journal served as a direct reference for Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch (see Bloch, Mark Léopold Benjamin (1886–1944) when they founded the Annales in 1929 in Strasbourg. Not surprisingly, their journal was first called Annales d’histoire économique et sociale (1929–1939). The international exchanges and mutual observation between some of the protagonists of historiographic innovations in the early decades of the twentieth century were intense. Thus, only two years after the French flagship, the Polish journal Roczniki dziejow społecznych i gospodarczych (Yearbooks for social and economic history) appeared. These early journals shared a further characteristic which distinguished them from the mainstream political history around them, namely a keen interest for ‘universal,’ non-nationalistic history.

In Germany, social and economic history remained a specialized branch without much impact on general history. In England, economic history maintained close links to social themes. After World War II, the French Annales historians tended to move their journal away from its earlier identification with this ‘subdiscipline.’ Similarly, the program represented by Ernest Labrousse for a history of class relations taking as its starting point the economic ‘basis’ broadened out more and more into the areas of urban history, quantitative analysis of social strata and the integral description of regional societies. Where ‘social and economic history’ continued to be an institutionalized specialty, it did not necessarily figure as an area of major innovations, as was later the case with the ‘new’ history of the 1960s and 1970s.

These early efforts to establish a specialized field and an alternative view of history with ‘society’ as the main object and organizing principle of analysis were paralleled by similar movements in various countries. In the USA, the New History of the turn of the century; in France, Henri Berr with his Revue de Synthèse (Historique) starting in 1900 and the reception of Durkheimian sociology by historians; in Germany, the development of a historical sociology by Max Weber and others; and in Great Britain in the first half of the twentieth century the impulses of George Unwin and R. H. Tawney for the development of an economic history that included social and cultural factors, were all among the most influential strands of socio-historical thinking (Iggers 1975).

Two characteristics of these debates and innovations deserve emphasis: the challenge of Marxism in a broad, nonorthodox sense provoked both emulation and animosity. Secondly, it is interesting to note in light of current discussions that especially in the German context the concept of ‘culture’ rather than that of ‘society’ was conceived as the vantage point for the synthetic organization of knowledge in the social sciences. In the 1950s the representatives of French ‘new history’ used the term ‘history of civilization’ to define the broadest possible framework of historical synthesis. Even Tawney’s 1942 definition of social history as ‘the history of a people with the politics left out’ which is cited as often as it is refuted provides a surprisingly wide room for the ‘social,’ implicitly
including culture, mentalities, everyday life. (For a detailed treatment of the above topics see Historiography and Historical Thought: Indigenous Cultures in the Americas; History and the Social Sciences).

In recent times a further root of social history has attracted wider attention. It lies in the antimodern nationalist currents, critical of industrialization, which in particular in the 1920s and 1930s presented a special attraction for the younger social and human scientists. The interest in rural life, population, and race combined particularly in Germany with aggressive nationalism and criticism of the new political borders (Raphael 1997). This historical writing opposed conventional research subjects and forms; it turned away from the state and classical political history, looked for alternatives to the traditional focus on elites, and took as its example the methods which had already seen much progress in demography, geography, and anthropology. In the 1930s and 1940s a number of representatives of this so-called Volksgeschichte (history of the people) moved closer to National Socialism and became active as wartime political consultants. As some of these historians and social scientists played a significant role in the modernizing of the human sciences in the German Federal Republic, a debate arose as to the extent to which lines of continuity led from ‘history of the people’ to social history, and concerning the relation between its representatives’ rightist views and their proposed ‘structural history’ of modern industrial society (Schulze and Oexle 1999, Conrad 1999).

2. Postwar Expansion (1950s to 1970s)

Not only in Western Europe and North America but also in other parts of the world, the establishment, expansion, and specialization of social history belong among the significant trends of interwar and particularly postwar intellectual and academic life. The spread of the ‘new’ histories since the 1960s occurred at a time when systems of higher education in Europe and North America were dramatically expanding. The general increase in academic jobs, student enrolments and Ph.D. candidates, as well as the massive growth in book publications and journals, allowed the various strands of social history to find ample space without replacing or pushing aside more traditional ways of writing and teaching history.

The institutional growth of social history followed different national directions. But it can generally be said that in the 1970s a high point was reached as far as the establishment within universities and among the larger public was concerned. The most impressive indicator is the founding of new journals concentrated around the year 1975: Social Science History (USA, 1975), Geschichte und Gesellschaft (West Germany, 1976), History Workshop Journal (UK, 1976); Social History (UK, 1976). Along with the Journal of Social History (USA) founded in 1967 they represented the new ‘historical social science,’ complementing the older ‘school-forming’ reviews such as above all Annales ESC (France, refounded 1946) and Past and Present (UK, 1952).

2.1 National Variations and International Circulation of Ideas

The triumph of social history in the 1960s and 1970s was a transnational phenomenon. The themes, questions, and methods were astonishingly similar in different countries; the international specialist public was interconnected through increased contacts. In many places the attractiveness and legitimacy of new approaches were aided by models coming from other countries. Particularly the French ‘nouvelle histoire,’ often described by others as the Annales school, developed into a veritable export hit. Already at the international historians’ congresses in Paris in 1950 and in Rome in 1955, its French representatives and Italian or English allies very much set the tone (Erdmann 1987). In the following decades the international circulation of concepts and approaches took on greater strength through the translation of books. A few historiographic models or theoretical influences (such as for instance the work of Fernand Braudel) became widespread in the countries of southern Europe and South America, while others won international recognition via their reception and dissemination on the North American market.

Yet for all that the national differences remained considerable, even in retrospect and after several decades of approaches and exchanges. The strengths of the French school remained—with a few exceptions—limited to the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Not the genesis of industrial society but the explanation of the revolution of 1789 was and remains the dominant theme for French historians. By contrast in Great Britain, an early market society and ‘first industrial nation,’ historians gave particular importance to these factors. The central approach which English social historians shared with social reformers and social scientists was however focused on the persistence and dynamism of class society.

It is by no means a coincidence that E. P. Thompson in his pioneering work The Making of the English Working Class (1963) made decisive strides for social history in this field. And the historical self-examination in other countries can also—though certainly not entirely—be characterized through central motives in their social development: the USA as an immigration and frontier society, in which ethnic cleavages are given more weight than class conflicts; Sweden with its experiences of mass emigration and social crises at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries; and finally Japan, which after
World War II looked to describe its latest developments in terms of Marxian-inspired modernization models (Conrad 1999). The political breaches and catastrophes of the twentieth century also formed the node of the new German social history, which was especially influenced by the political history by the ‘Bielefeld School’ historians. The German Sonderweg, the German divergence from the West, and the social conditions for the national-socialist rule were the central preoccupations of a whole generation of historians who broke with ‘historicism’ (see Historicism) and individualizing explanatory models (Kocka 1999, Welskopp 1998).

2.2 Topics, Neighbors, Models

The place of social history in the intellectual landscape of the historical and social sciences of the post-World War II era can be understood by tracing the main trends with respect to its preferred research topics and questions, interdisciplinary alliances, methods, and explanatory models. These trends were most conspicuous in the period from the late 1950s to the 1970s, which witnessed the most pronounced change toward the ‘new’ social history. The reorientation effected by the spread of social history is most obvious with respect to the subjects chosen for monographs, in the programs of congresses or in the contents of major journals. The history of social classes and social stratification in general entered into the historical mainstream.

In researching social mobility and standards of life in the past, historians in Europe and North America tended to prolong the prehistory of their contemporary societies into the nineteenth century (and later even further back). Labor history (Labor History) left its subaltern and ideological niche and expanded its focus to the realities of work, family, and everyday life. The economic interests and social position of political actors were taken seriously and entered into the ‘social interpretation’ of great processes like the American and French revolutions, colonialism and imperialism, the development of political parties and social movements, or the causes of war. The fluctuation of harvests, prices and wages, the ebb and flow of population movements and land use, even microbes and the climate were considered with growing technical sophistication and by an increasing numbers of historians.

Population history with the more micro-oriented historical demography became a leading sector of the new historiography: migration, demographic behaviour, household structure were reconstructed by large research projects. The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure founded in 1964 by Peter Laslett, E. A. Wrigley, and Roger Schofield as well as the historical department of the French Institut National d’Etudes Demographiques represented the effort of making history ‘scientific,’ and influenced similar enterprises in Germany and Austria, the Scandinavian countries and North America among others. Similar aims were held by historically minded sociologists, political scientists, and economists who joined historians in the USA to create a discussion forum under the heading of ‘Social Science History’ (with conferences since the 1960s and a journal of the same name since 1975).

The flourishing subfields, each with their own journals, congresses, and experts, read like a repertoire of social history themes (Stearns 1994): labor, demographic, family, urban, rural, ethnic, women’s, and gender histories emerged and became aspects of a more encompassing social history (Social History). Internal sequences and echoes were to be observed in the establishment of subdisciplines and the proliferation of new topics: the growing emphasis on mentality, agency, subjectivity, and experience since the late 1970s was itself a response to the establishment of abstract, often quantitative studies on standard of living, family and demography, social and geographic mobility, or political interest groups. Women’s historians criticized the unspoken gender assumptions of much of historical demography and family studies, as well as of the history of labor markets and welfare states. The very meaning of the term ‘social’ was itself reconceived; it lost its direct association with ‘socialist’ movements or ‘social policy’ and embraced instead the whole abundance of the life-world. The enlarged thematic spectrum of the Amsterdam-based International Review of Social History (1956), the Parisian Le Mouvement Social (1960) or the German journal Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte (1961), are examples of this transition which had gained considerable ground by the mid-1970s.

The shift in interdisciplinary alliances mirrored and underpinned topical interests. The nearest neighbors to history were no longer philology, philosophy, or law, but economics, political science, and sociology. For the French Annales School the close relationship with geography and demography was particularly important. The West German focus on a ‘political social history’ of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to an alliance with historical sociology and political science. Various strands of descriptive, often quantitative economics, social surveys, and sociography are found among the more practical roots of historians who embarked on studies of living standards, family formation, or business cycles. Equally it should not be forgotten that the enormous growth of sociology in the postwar era held a particular attraction for historians.

The varieties of social and cultural anthropology, or ethnology as it is called in some countries, served as models for a minority of social historians, especially those working on early modern history. The journal Comparative Studies in Society and History (founded in 1958) became an important forum for historically
mined anthropologists and anthropologically interested historians and social scientists. The relationship between history and anthropology—a discipline which has also changed dramatically during the last three or four decades—is a good indicator for the underlying change of emphasis from ‘society’ to ‘culture’ within social history. Natalie Z. Davis’s influential collection of essays *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Davis 1975) or the wide impact of Clifford Geertz’s writings, especially his 1973 collection *The Interpretation of Cultures*, are cases in point.

Parallel to these shifts, the protagonists and agents of the new social history reflected on the mechanisms of scientific change as such. What appeared to be happening under their own eyes and with their help in the humanities and social sciences seemed to resemble a ‘paradigm shift,’ as Thomas S. Kuhn had described it for physics in his influential book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* of 1962. Notwithstanding Kuhn’s own doubts as to whether his model could be applied to the social sciences, the ‘paradigm shift’ became a battle cry in the nascent struggle to establish social history over and against the history of politics, great men, or ideas. The implications of Kuhn’s work for the history of science were also welcomed by social historians. Indeed, the emphasis on social and external factors in the development and application of knowledge clearly corresponded to the efforts of social historians to stress context, interests, and structural constraints when dealing with ideas and ideologies (Appleby et al. 1994).

Although at the time many were fascinated by the idea of a ‘paradigm shift,’ in retrospect we see a more subtly differentiated, less abrupt transition. It is certainly true that in individual national academic traditions there were in part intense debates as to the ‘right’ sort of history. And in most cases a political dimension was also present, in which social history was defined as being more to the left, and political history more to the right. However rather than superseding an old paradigm, social historians could work on several levels (institutional, methodological, and thematic) and go about broadening and innovating their field within quite different time frames. If one sees the success story of social history as a pluralistic project fed from many different sources, it becomes easier to understand its expansion and, later, its reorientation in the direction of cultural history. In fact the many social-political and intra-academic forces which were involved in the rise of social history have continued to develop independently, and gradually cast doubt upon the plausibility of their own basic assumptions.

These definitional clarifications should not, however, obscure the impact of the new social history on the traditions of historiography. The historicist principles of the historians’ craft were challenged by analytical, theory-driven approaches. The borrowing of concepts and even the adaptation of ‘middle range theories’ (R. K. Merton) as tools in historical research and writing has become a trademark of social historians as compared to traditional ‘narrative historians’ (Le Goff and Nora 1985, Fairburn 1999). The use of comparative methods gained wide currency (Tilly 1984). Theories of modernization (*Modernization, Sociological Theories of*) became more attractive, above all for historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even if the explicit use of theories remained in general limited, process-oriented terms such as industrialization, urbanization, secularization, and professionalization became ever more widely used in historiography. And they were by no means limited to social history in the more restricted sense. Modernization, industrial society, even democratization, were all part of the meta narrative governing a good part of social history writ large—albeit with national differences and often heavy criticism from alternative political currents within social history (see for example Judt 1979). Yet despite evident tension the height of the social history wave was marked by a good deal of common ground.

The explanatory models proposed by the ‘new’ histories of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s shared the aim of explaining collective behavior and social relations by linking them to the structures of the economy and society. Although most opposed the rigidity of official Marxism-Leninism, many historians conceived of society as an architecture which resembled a vaguely materialist interaction between ‘basis’ and ‘superstructure.’ In her work on the French revolution Lynn Hunt explicitly rejected the widespread partition of monographs in three levels of economy/demography, society, and politics or mentality by simply turning it on its head (Hunt 1990, pp. 102–3). Interests, world views, political stances were largely understood as collective responses to objective social positions. Since the 1970s, social history has experienced shifts in its basic assumptions about causality that have led to a much less homogenous situation. But there seems to be a widespread refocusing first on agency and practices, secondly on meaning and identity, and thirdly on microprocesses.

### 2.3 The Will to Synthesis

The social-historical approach to history set other requirements on the writing of an overall historical account as conventional political history. The narrative structure of political events, the periodization by means of wars or revolutions, and the intentionality of a historiography oriented towards the ‘big players’ could not be simply transposed on to social history. In this new field syntheses therefore had to contain—whether one liked it or not—a reflection on the character of ‘society.’ The will to synthesis is for this reason part and parcel of social history’s emphasis on a comprehensive approach to history. Here social
The authors of large syntheses in social history are for that reason also more or less explicitly protagonists of a ‘history of society,’ or of a *histoire totale* in the French tradition. Mikhail Rostovtzeff’s *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (1926) and Marc Bloch’s *Société féodale* (1939–1940) are both early and distinguished examples. Fernand Braudel, Eric Hobsbawm, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler emphasized in their own way this requirement with monumental general histories. But they could do so only by consciously borrowing concepts and models from the neighboring social sciences, and by setting out theoretical considerations on social structure and on the motors of social change. Whether these involved models on temporal and geographic structures such as Braudel’s, or a flexible use of Marxist theories such as Hobsbawm’s, or an explicit use of modernization theories such as Wehler’s—in each case this type of general history distinguished itself from the conventional historiography also in its explicit theoretical orientation. Yet a clear difference in the degree to which theory governs the historical narrative or the display of arguments remains between these works and those of historical sociologists such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Theda Skocpol, Charles Tilly, or Michael Mann—authors who nevertheless share common interests with the historians.

But also at a more humble geographical and temporal level social historians have continuously endeavored to reconstruct the object of their investigations, society, as a coherent if multifaceted system, sometimes even in a literary way. Above all however they continue writing within their respective national historical frameworks (Wehler 1987–1995). Often this takes the form of collections of articles in which various authors describe the individual aspects of society (a recent example is Thompson 1990). But even the short, broad-based handbook giving an overview of the state of research belongs in this category. In part this reflects the tendency to specific research on social classes and strata which leaves out further societal, cultural, and political contexts (Charle 1994). Although the emergence of the newer directions of gender, experience, and cultural history has increased the fear that social history would become even more fragmented, José Harris (1993), for example, has explicitly endeavored to integrate these very perspectives into a general historical account.

3. The Revenge of Success

However, social history’s expansion in quantitative scale and conceptual scope was large enough to produce serious side-effects. First, specialization increased dramatically. Greater demand for technical expertise such as quantification, the creation of such subfields as historical demography, or the tendency of methodological approaches like oral history to take on a life of their own contributed to the differentiation of the field. Second, the proliferation of topics as well as of local or regional units of analysis deemed worthy of a monograph concurred to create a very colorful map of approaches and subjects. In the late 1980s and later, representatives of social history looking back on the success story of their field could make out the first signs of self-doubt already in the second half of the 1970s, at the highpoint of social history’s intellectual and institutional glory (see contributions in Kocka 1989). More than any other approach to history, social history gradually came to be marked by fragmentation and dispersion. Third, social history as a general approach gained access to other historiographical periods and to other disciplines in the humanities. In literary criticism and modern languages the social history of literature became a trademark in the 1970s and early 1980s and, since then, has met with growing skepticism and disillusionment.

Certainly it must be said that these developments represent a tribute to the success of social history. In the course of differentiation and specialization, the new approaches and subfields which had established themselves under the heading of social history gradually changed their character and underlying priorities (Burke 1991). What is often described at the end of the twentieth century as a cultural ‘turn’ in fact emerged over the years. Indeed, disillusionment with the social history of the 1970s can best be understood not as a ‘paradigm shift’ but rather as an incremental, self-reinforcing, sometimes conflictual transition on different, non-unified, levels of historical work: research methods, preferred topics and sources, examples taken from other disciplines, new ‘buzz words’ and concepts, more hidden understandings of causality, agency, and evolution. Without question, the more recent set of shifts, from social history to the ‘new cultural history,’ makes us think harder about the establishment of social history and its concomitant changes of the societal and political context in earlier decades.

The recent ‘cultural turn’ can first of all be understood immanently, that is intra-academically. In its various manifestations, social history continued in the tradition of an oppositional approach against the historical mainstream. Small wonder that it has attracted attacks from every new wave of critical and revisionist historians as well as the revival of older (biographic, narrative) forms of historical writing. The concept of gender has in many countries been at the forefront of debates around structure and agency, macrosociological categories and deconstructivist criticism. Particularly in Germany, a fierce debate with aspects of a generation conflict divided the ‘history of society’ embodied in the Bielefeld school of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Iggers 1975, Kocka 1986,
Wehler 1987–1995) and the ‘history of everyday life’ (Alltagsgeschichte) represented by grassroots history workshops and a number of younger academics at the margin of the profession (Ludtke 1995).

Yet one must also consider the external, extra-academic factors which in the last decades have changed the relationship of the social sciences to society. The social and political movements of the postwar years made their mark on social history. Especially in the USA the expansion of themes and problems in social history since the 1960s had been given a strong push by the corresponding conflicts in American society: the movements of Afro-Americans, of students, of women, and of gays and lesbians added to the traditional input from the workers’ movement and radical intellectuals. Since the 1980s, the already proverbial trinity of race, class, and gender reflected these social forces in an academic discourse. In Europe, too, a similar, by no means linear elective affinity could be observed between social movements (the alternative left, the women’s, ecological and peace movements) and fresh ideas in history (gender, everyday, and microhistory).

The 1980s and 1990s experienced a strong move toward independence and pluralization of identity politics and the associated attempts at claiming one’s own history for oneself. Taken together these trends have aided the transition away from a history of anonymous social processes and structures. This reorientation became even stronger with growing critique of the ethnocentric dominance of industrial societies in social history leading up to this time. In recent years, the slow inroads which postcolonial discourses have also made into historical science have on the one hand furthered the significance of classical social history, this time in the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. On the other hand the established concepts of modernization, development, progress, and culture were subject to a thoroughgoing critique and redefinition. Finally, the breakdown of actually existing socialism in 1989/1990 and the resulting political and economic transformation led to reflection on the basics of politics and the economy (Kocka 2000).

The answers to these challenges and interrogations are by no means clear. The voices which speak of a ‘crisis’ are not restricted to social history, but are directed at the historical sciences, if not the humanities in general. Two trends can be made out: beyond all methodological differences the self-reflection of the academic historian has moved to center stage. The idea that one can produce reliable knowledge about society—contemporary or past—was in 2000 taken far less for granted than a few decades previously (Bonnell and Hunt 1999). On the other hand the historicization of all forms of knowledge has become, as it were, a patent remedy in all debates. In opening up towards this sociocultural direction, it is true that social history may have lost in unity, perhaps in recognizability, but it has gained in intellectual dynamism.

See also: Business History; Cultural History; Economic History; Family and Kinship, History of; Gender and Feminist Studies in History; Gender History; Historical Demography; History and the Social Sciences; Labor History; Life Course in History; Modernization and Modernity in History; Social Movements, History of: General; Urban History; Work and Labor; History of the Concept; Work, History of; Working Classes, History of

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Social Identity, Psychology of

1. Social Identity

Social identity is those aspects of the self-concept that are derived from belonging to social groups and categories. Social identity theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and colleagues at the University of Bristol in the 1970s and 1980s. Social identity is a concept that continues to be used widely in the social psychology of intergroup relations, social influence, and the self. This article describes social identity theory and associated work on intergroup relations and group processes. It points to the diverse areas of research to which the theory has contributed and concludes with issues that are currently being explored.

2. Minimal Conditions for Intergroup Bias

In the 1960s and 1970s social psychology underwent a crisis of confidence that generated a powerful critique of individualistic theorizing and research. In response, European social psychologists began to develop theories that concerned the relationship between individuals and society. Social identity connected cognitive processes of categorization with the social structure of society. Research on social identity therefore ranges from the detailed analysis of cognitive processes underlying stereotyping and prejudice to wide-ranging questions such as reactions to group disadvantage. Tajfel’s early work on social categorization included development of the minimal group paradigm. In this widely used paradigm people are randomly allocated to categories that have little meaning (e.g., A group and B group, or people who prefer Klee vs. Kandinsky). Research participants are unaware of which other individuals belong to the category, or what their characteristics might be. Evidence shows that minimal group membership is a sufficient basis for people to allocate points or money preferentially to anonymous members of their own category. They also evaluate in-group members more positively, although it seems that reward allocation and evaluations are not highly correlated. If a trivial categorization is sufficient to generate in-group bias, it can be reasoned that more significant and meaningful categorizations have substantial real-world consequences. An important theoretical implication of in-group bias in the minimal group paradigm is that in-group bias does not necessarily have its roots in objective or realistic intergroup conflict or in personality differences or interpersonal dependency.

3. Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) offers an explanation for minimal intergroup bias, and also a broader statement of how relationships between real-world groups relate to social identity. According to social identity theory, there is a continuum on which identity and relationships can be depicted as purely personal and interpersonal at one extreme, and purely social, or intergroup at the other. Personal identity is derived from personality, idiosyncratic traits and features, and particular personal relationships with other individuals. A special emphasis of social identity theory is that an effective account of group and intergroup phenomena is not possible if the theory only considers personal identity and relationships. Social identity is the individual’s knowledge that he or she belongs to certain social groups together with the emotional and value significance of the group memberships. Social identity affects and is affected by intergroup relationships. The theory aims to explain the uniformity and coherence of group and intergroup behavior as mediated by social identity (see Hogg and Abrams 1988 for a detailed account).

3.1 Categorization

Categorization leads to accentuation of differences among objects in different categories, and accentu-