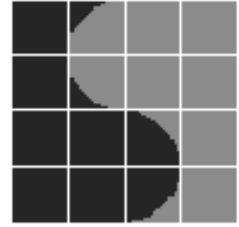




Evolution, Biology & Society



Fall 2009 Newsletter of the ASA Section on Evolution, Biology & Society Volume 6, No. 2

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Message from the Chair: Evolutionary Sociology and Evolutionary Social Science

Stephen K. Sanderson
University of California, Riverside

When I was an undergraduate I took some anthropology courses and found them especially interesting because I already had, not quite consciously known to me at the time, a comparative and interdisciplinary focus. Later in graduate school when I was asked to teach a course on the sociology of the family, I grudgingly accepted because I had found this subfield of sociology boring and tedious. But I needed the money so I agreed and then rummaged around in the library looking for sources and stumbled on Robin Fox's classic *Kinship and Marriage*, an anthropological analysis of kinship in the wide range of human societies. I read it in one day, was mesmerized, and used it for my class. Thus was I set on the road to comparative social analysis.

In the late 1970s I started reading anthropology more seriously, mainly the work of Marvin Harris, but eventually much more

broadly. Years later I used this anthropological knowledge to write my textbook *Macrosociology*, a comparative and evolutionary analysis of the full range of human societies. In time I was to become about half sociologist and half anthropologist. My anthropological side necessarily included archaeology, since it was critical to understanding long-term social evolution, which had become my main research focus. I also read world history, although in secondary sources, because knowledge of the ancient and medieval agrarian civilizations is a critical part of being comparative and evolutionary. I had become an interdisciplinary and comparative scholar in extremis.

I say these things by way of introduction because I want to encourage sociologists to become more interdisciplinary and comparative. This applies with special force to the members of this section because they are focused on both biological and social evolution. Read anthropology, archaeology, and world history – and perhaps economics and political science as well. And if you want to be evolutionary in its double sense, but especially in its biological side, read some of the most pertinent literature in evolutionary biology, cognitive neuroscience, human genetics, and the like. And do two more things: attend the annual meetings of some of the organizations that specialize in the application of natural selection theory to human behavior. The most important of these is the Human Behavior and Evolution Society (HBES), founded in 1988 by Martin Daly, Margo Wilson, Leda Cosmides, John Tooby, William Irons, Napoleon Chagnon, and Richard Alexander (I may be leaving someone out). They called what they were doing evolutionary psychology, which was largely a successor to sociobiology and very similar in approach (but with a name that raised fewer hackles). I started attending HBES meetings in 1998 and have gone nearly every year since. They are terrific. You can give papers without fear of being attacked. Last year I gave a paper on rape testing the feminist and evolutionary theories of rape and concluding, with supporting cross-cultural and cross-national evidence, that the feminist theory was falsified and the evolutionary theory supported. An overflow audience of more than

100 listened attentively and no one attacked me. Later many people came up to me to say they liked what I said and agreed with me. Heaven. At HBES you can give papers on virtually any controversial topic at these meetings and get a very fair hearing. Think about attending them. There is also the International Society for Human Ethology. It is not as good, but increasingly the papers are rooted in evolutionary psychology rather than old-fashioned ethology (the study of the biological bases of behavior, such as innate facial expressions, by direct observation, usually not with an explicit evolutionary focus). I attended last year when they were in Bologna, Italy. Next year they are in Brazil. (They meet only every other year.)

And read the major journals that publish articles written from an evolutionary perspective. The most important are *Evolution and Human Behavior* (previously entitled *Ethology and Sociobiology*), *Human Nature*, *Behavior and Brain Sciences*, and *Evolutionary Psychology*. They are filled with many very interesting and useful articles, mostly by psychologists and anthropologists (and the rare sociologist). I just sent my rape paper to EHB. Very little of an evolutionary sort is published in the sociology journals (two exceptions are recent special issues of *AJS* and *Social Forces*). One also finds the occasional critique of evolutionary approaches in sociology journals. Recently, for example, *AJS* carried a paper questioning Westermarck's theory of incest avoidance. It is a poor article filled with all kinds of simplistic mistakes and hardly up to *AJS*'s usually high standards. Probably they took it because they were happy to have something attacking an evolutionary approach and defending traditional sociological explanations. (Sandy Maryanski and I are in the process of writing a reply to this article, pointing out all of its flaws. Ironically, obviously unbeknownst to the authors its main line of evidence actually supports Westermarck!)

Sociologists are rarely in attendance at the evolutionary meetings, and when I tell someone I have just met that I am a sociologist they usually laugh and wonder what on earth a sociologist is doing at these meetings. Try these conferences out. They are much more

useful to me than ASA, where new postmodern influenced papers increasingly dominate (the titles of which are often incomprehensible), and where political ideology increasingly trumps scientific sociology. I used to love to spend a lot of time in the ASA book exhibits. They were an embarrassment of riches. Now I struggle to find five books of interest to me. But half of the books on display at HBES interest me and I end up spending more money than an impecuniary retired professor really has. (The conferences are a lot cheaper than ASA also, because they are held on university campuses, where you can get cheap rooms and cheap meals.)

Recently I had the thought of organizing a session at HBES entitled something like "What's Up with Sociology and Evolutionary Social Science?" Anybody interested?

**Didactic Seminar on
Neurosociology and the Social
Nature of the Brain
to be held
at the Annual Meetings of the
American Sociological
Association
Atlanta, August 14-17, 2010**

David Franks and Jeff Davis
Program Organizers

Rationale: Since the last half of the 1990s which Congress officially labeled "the Decade of the Brain", the ASA and its sociological officers have supported special and regular sessions in neuroscience at our annual meetings. From the beginning, these sessions have been very well attended. In 1999 Dr. Franks and Thomas Smith edited the first collection of essays by sociologists dealing with neurosociological issues titled *Mind, Brain and Society: Toward a Neurosociology of Emotion*. One reviewer of this volume said that all sociologists should read it, but that he feared very few would because of the wall between biology and sociology. In a relatively short time, it has become evident that this bias has significantly dissipated, and more and more articles and chapters dealing with neuroscience are being accepted in sociological journals and books. Much of this acceptance has been because of the support for neuroscience by our leading theorists who have been invited to start off the seminar proposed below. This seminar should aid in demonstrating the relevance of the brain to our social natures and to maintaining sociology's growing interest and necessary progress in this area.

Part I. Introduction: (45 minutes)

Introduction of Warren TenHouten founder of the field who first wrote under the label of neurosociology and edited the *Social Neuroscience Bulletin*, 1993-1998
Remarks by Leading American Sociologists regarding their views

of the importance of neurosociology to sociological theory: promises, and cautions.

1. Douglas Massey, Princeton University
2. Jonathan Turner, UC Riverside (accepted pending attendance at ASA in 2010)
3. Randall Collins, University of Pennsylvania.

Part II. Contents of Presentation of Seminar's- Main Theme. (50 Minutes)

Professors Franks and Davis

- I. Leslie Brothers (1997) on the Interactional Nature of the Functioning Brain.
- II. Cautions About Ideologically Driven Conceptions of the Self as Neuroscientific Dead Ends.
- III. The Embodied Self
 - a. Damasio's Proto and Core Self (Biological Reflexivity)
 - b. Effect of Core self on Conscious Social Self. (Studies of Anosognosia in Stroke Patients)
 - c. Leslie Brothers on Socially Dedicated Neuronal Circuits in the Brain:
 1. Social tendencies of Infants. (Jump-Starting Attachment)
 2. Brain-driven Semiotics in the Actors Perception of Inner Persons rather than Bodies.
 3. How Language Areas Share Neural Ensembles that Encode Faces and Voices.
 4. Description of the Parts of the Social Brain Played by Various Brain Areas Like the Amygdala, the Fusiform Facial Areas etc. which Encode Faces and Voices etc.
- IV. Cozolino and Cacioppo on The Social Brain Reading faces and Linking Gazes. Etc.
- V. Tredway et.al. The Effects of Social Isolation on Infants: A Neuroscience Reinterpretation of the Spitz Studies of Infantile Separation Stress Syndrome: Plus Current Cases.
- VI. Questions and Discussion

For further Information contact
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 10130 Epsilon Rd. Richmond Va. 23235.
 Phone: 804-272- 1520.

Laland, Kevin N. and Bennett G. Galef, Eds. *The Question of Animal Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Marion Blute
 University of Toronto

This book will be indispensable to anyone interested in the question of the existence or lack thereof of culture in animals and the extent to which it is or is not similar to that of humans. As well as an introduction by Kevin N. Laland and Bennett G. Galef, it includes nine essays authored or coauthored by those who have been most active in research and discussions of these questions, two essays by anthropologists and a concluding one by a philosopher of science. Most of the major issues involved in the questions receive thoughtful attention.

Coverage is most extensive of the field naturalists' tradition in the study of animal behaviour. There investigators have documented behavioral differences in different local populations of a variety of species (including chimpanzees, orangutans, capuchin monkeys, humpback whales and dolphins for example) which seem to them unlikely to be attributable to genetic or ecological differences or to individuals each learning individually independently. Coverage is less extensive of the psychologists' experimental tradition and in that respect this book could be usefully supplemented by Susan L. Hurley's and Nick Chater's two volume collection, *Perspectives on Imitation: From Neuroscience to Social Science* (VI Mechanisms of Imitation and Imitation in Animals and VII Imitation, Human Development, and Culture) published in 2005 by MIT Press.

Some psychologists are reluctant to sharply distinguish social from individual learning. Perhaps in some cases only part, rather than all of something is socially learned such as the cue, place of action or consequence they suggest. Some anthropologists are doubtful about the use of the term "culture" applied to animal traditions. Are there suites of such behaviors, which are normatively enforced,

ritually celebrated and reflect different roles they wonder? Well, there are suites in some cases. Dominance hierarchies are not uncommonly enforced. Ritual displays among animals are common (storks march, social carnivores rally, birds chorus etc.) and some displays reflect complementary roles, between genders say. However, most of these more complex manifestations of culture have not as yet been demonstrated to be traditional in animals. And of course, the question of language hovers above all but remains undiscussed here.

One thing that struck me reading the Laland and Galef book (as well as previously the primary literature on which it is based) is how preoccupation with documenting the existence of differences in animal traditions between local populations and with the mechanism(s) of their acquisition has obscured the implication that their existence implies not just cultural transmission, but cultural evolution. Assuming they are learned socially, why have different traditions become established in different groups? Is it because different behavioral innovations just happened to arise in different local populations? Or is it because while the complete, or nearly complete variety of such arose in each, small local population sizes led to different outcomes because of sampling error? Either of these cultural 'mutation' or cultural 'drift' explanations would attribute the differences to chance.

On the other hand, perhaps it is not chance at all, but selection. Different alternatives may be differentially adapted to different local ecological conditions and have spread differentially culturally for that reason. In short, ecological correlations and a cultural explanation are not at all incompatible with each other as has most often been assumed. Of course, selection of culture by ecological conditions may mean what biologists mean by the ecological, the physical environment and other species. But it could also mean the cultural ecology i.e. traditions may be favoured because of their adaptedness to i.e. compatibility with other cultural traditions. In any event, perhaps it is time to go beyond the initially surprising existence of culture in animals and its transmission mechanisms and

move on to questions concerning the cultural evolution of animal traditions.

Section Awards

Our section will begin giving two annual awards in 2010.

Best book or article award for faculty. In even years the award will be given for the best book published between 2006 and 2009. In odd years, the award will be for the best article published between 2006 and 2009. The current committee for this award is composed of J. Scott Lewis (chair), Dept. of Sociology, Penn State Harrisburg, Middletown, PA 17057, jsl19@psu.edu; Patrick Nolan, Dept. of Sociology, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29205, pnolan@sc.edu; and Timothy Crippen, Sociology & Anthropology Dept., University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, VA 22401, tcrippen@umw.edu.

Nominations may come from anyone, and self-nominations are acceptable. All nominations should be sent to the chair of the nominating committee, and copies of nominated books for the 2010 award should be sent to each of the committee members by **March 1st, 2010.**

Best article award for a graduate student:

The award will be given each year for an article by a graduate student between 2006 and 2009. Published or unpublished articles are acceptable, as long as the publication date or acceptance is within the period 2006-2009. Co-authored papers are accepted if all authors are students, but the award must be shared. Author(s) must be student members of the Evolution, Biology & Society Section at the time of submission to qualify for the award.

The graduate student article committee consists of Rosemary Hopcroft (chair), Dept. of Sociology, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, NC 27599, rhopcro@uncc.edu; Michael Hammond, Dept. of Sociology,

University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, michaelhammond@rogers.com; and Francois Nielsen, Dept. of Sociology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, francois_nielsen@unc.edu.

Nominations may come from anyone, and self-nominations are acceptable. All nominations should be sent to the chair of the nominating committee, and those nominated should send copies of their article to each of the committee members by **March 1st, 2010**.

New Publications of Section Members

Blute, Marion. 2010. *Darwinian Sociocultural Evolution: Evolutionary Solutions to Dilemmas in Cultural and Social Theory*. Cambridge University Press (in January).

Hopcroft, Rosemary L. 2009. "Gender Inequality in Interaction: An Evolutionary Account." *Social Forces* 87, 4:1845-1872.

Hopcroft, Rosemary L. 2010. *Sociology: A Biosocial Introduction*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Press.

Neurosociology: the nexus between neuroscience and social psychology

David D. Franks
Springer Press (due out in March 2010)

Recently, neuroscientists have presented new research which has a direct impact on many areas of social psychology. These include the evolution of the social brain and the human "self", the social nature of mind, socialization and language acquisition, role-taking (theory of mind), consciousness, intersubjectivity, a balanced social constructionism, human agency and the necessity of emotion for rational decision making. This book integrates glossed-over areas of George Herbert Mead's social behaviorism with current neuroscience and demonstrates how current work on mirror neurons supports the basic tenets of the American pragmatists' focus on the priority of motor behavior and their metatheory of transactional analysis.

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Human Societies
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Sociology: A Biosocial Introduction

Rosemary L. Hopcroft

In an era of human genome research, environmental challenges, new reproductive technologies, and more, students can benefit from an introductory sociology text that is a biologically informed. This innovative text integrates mainstream sociological research in all areas of sociology with a scientifically-informed model of an evolved, biological human actor. This grounding of sociology in a biosocial conception of the individual actor is coupled with a comparative approach, as human biology is universal and often reveals itself as variations on themes across human cultures. Tables, Figures, Photos, and the author’s concise and remarkably lively style make this a truly enjoyable book to read and teach. Makes a good companion book to Nolan and Lenski’s *Human Societies*.

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