
The Intergenerational Legacies of Louise Audino Tilly

Leslie Page Moch

These comments take us back to a very different era, when women historians were rare in state universities and women's history was in its infancy. Sorting out the threads of Louise's legacy is difficult; this is a multifaceted legacy of character and scholarship, of intellectual and personal support of those around her. In the context of emerging family history—one that began with consideration of neither women nor the poor—Tilly fought for histories including both. This was not a struggle only about inclusion, but also about writing a history that had theoretical stamina. In addition, as much as Tilly's early work focused on women in the family setting, her legacy also lives in the study of women who leave home as well—those who exit the family economy to live on their own. Migration theory and history have become much more nuanced and sophisticated in the last two decades, almost managing to keep up with Louise's insights in two crucial ways. The first is her understanding that people use strategies learned in their families of origin to come to grips with the challenges of new situations. The second set of fundamental insights elucidates the importance of gender and family roles, insights that have undergirded the past decade's work on the gendered nature of migration processes. Despite the shifts in historical debate, Louise Tilly's intellectual innovations, insights, and insistence upon theoretically meaningful work remain a model for scholars of succeeding generations, and various moments of intellectual coming-of-age.

As an undergraduate history major at the University of Washington, I never saw a woman historian. My comments, then, take us back to a very different era, when women historians were rare in state universities and women's history was in its infancy, when there were no digital finding aids, personal computers, or e-mail. One could make contact by long-distance telephone calls, and these were expensive. These times meant that what I learned from Louise was not simply historical scholarship; rather, she was the first productive woman historian engaged with her work who also had children whom I knew, and as a consequence it is difficult to sort out the threads of Louise's legacy. For me this is a multifaceted legacy of character and scholarship, of intellectual and personal support of those around her.

I met Louise Tilly when I was beginning graduate school at the University of Michigan and Louise was working at Michigan State University—before she was hired by the University of Michigan in 1975. Louise then had a life that many historians have since come to know—commuting while being a parent, teaching, and writing. And because this was long before electronic copies, my first memory of Louise is her advising me to consult Frédéric Le Play's *Ouvriers europeens*, and then struggling through the door of the house carrying the six volumes of this early sociological classic—brought to me from the Michigan State University library because it was not in the University of Michigan collection (Le Play 1877–79). Of course, Le Play's work is now available in its entirety on Google Books so nobody need lug Le Play around

anymore. But that is not the point, of course. The point is that Louise demonstrated extraordinary caring about students' scholarly development, and that she was willing to go to great trouble to stimulate that. She made occasions for conversation by arranging lunches for graduate students with visiting scholars such as Olwen Hufton, and hosting dinners for visiting former students like myself so that new graduate students could meet with them. And she helped: When I needed to leave one job for another—to return to Michigan—she wrote a long letter on my behalf to the University of Michigan–Flint where she had worked as an adjunct.

What was striking to me about Louise in this era when solidarities among women were being formulated in new ways was her loyalty and devotion to friends. She had a legendary friend of very longstanding who was a lawyer in New York City. One evening, sewing a button on a blouse, she mentioned a dear friend in New Jersey who had been slapped with an unexpected and unwelcome divorce—this in the mid-1970s, when divorce rates were soaring in the United States; this disaster called for the extraordinary measure of a long-distance call. (Today the extraordinary measure would be the mending, rather than the telephone call.) Newer close bonds formed among women's historians including Louise, Joan Scott, and Natalie Davis. Louise had been a student of Natalie's in Toronto, where Louise and her family had lived before Ann Arbor, and Natalie's attachment to Michigan dated from her childhood and then graduate work at the University of Michigan, connecting her with Elizabeth Douvan, University of Michigan social psychologist and founder of the Family and Sex Roles Program at the Institute for Social Research. Natalie Davis and Libby Douvan had coauthored the 1952 anti-HUAC pamphlet "Operation Mind" (Davis 2000). Joan Scott and Louise were intensely connected, engaged in writing the seminal *Women, Work, and Family* (Tilly and Scott 1978). The beginning graduate student saw palpable connections and support among such women at Sunday evening seminars in the Tilly living room and receptions like that for Natalie hosted by Libby Douvan. These links would remain visible twenty and thirty years on, through the crises and joys of these historians and their families. For the student in the mid-1970s, this was a new world that coincided with the naissance of women's history, some years before gender became the coin of the realm.

The scholarly disputes of the age surrounded women's and family history, and Louise entered the fray with coauthors in tow. In the case of what were considered Edward Shorter's egregious claim that out-of-wedlock births increased in the eighteenth century because everyone was having more fun, Louise wrote an effective rebuttal with Joan Scott and Miriam Cohen, who was then her student (Shorter 1975). Similarly, Louise and Joan Scott's *Women, Work, and Family* acted as a riposte in the emerging field of family history where a rather aristocratic perspective was in development, articulated by the likes of Lawrence Stone's *Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (Stone 1977). In the battlefield of the emerging area of family history—one that began with consideration of neither women nor the poor, as inconceivable as that may seem—scholars like Louise and Olwen Hufton, fought for histories including both (Hufton 1974).

This was not a struggle only about the inclusion of women, as I understood it, but rather about writing a history that had theoretical stamina. Our theoretical contribution, Louise once told me, must stand in all societies at all times; no case study could pass without making an important point about historical processes. This demand for rigorous history was a bracing order, but invigorating indeed. For example, in the early 1980s, Louise and I together worked on an article that was published in a 1985 *Comparative Studies in Society and History* on work, family, and migration in the French cities of Amiens, Nîmes, and Roubaix. So while we were composing, Louise sent us an economist's articles to add a theoretical steel spine to our piece. In this case, we addressed the structure of urban economies and their match with that of the female labor force (Moch and Tilly 1985).

As much as Louise's work in this period focused on women in the family setting, her legacy lives in the study of women who leave home as well—those who exit the family economy to live on their own. Although Louise and Joan Scott noted in *Women, Work, and Family* that young women were sent out by their family to earn, young women did not always return their wages or even return home, but rather forged a future away from family like Jeanne Bouvier. Bouvier's autobiography relates her painful transition from her childhood in an impoverished family in the Rhone Valley to a successful seamstress and labor organizer in Paris (Bouvier 1983). The price of urbanization was in such cases a split between generations—not only in residence, but also in skill, in work, in language, and eventually, in many cases, in sentiment. This is certainly the case for many of the women and men whom I study—those from Brittany who made their way to Paris during the Third Republic (Moch 2003, 2012). The legacy of Louise's perspectives lie in the economic underpinnings of departure; the networks of support and contact that underwrite the journey and creation of a new life; and possibilities for women in the urban labor force.

In relating to the history of human mobility, migration theory has become much more nuanced and sophisticated in the last two decades, almost managing to keep up with Louise's insights in two crucial ways. The first is her understanding that people use the strategies of their childhoods and families of formation to come to grips with the challenges of new situations. While abroad, they use the tools of their home culture. This central idea manifests itself in the keen insights into continuities and connections in migrant and immigrant lives that are reflected in recent studies of historical letters and transnational practices. Donna Gabaccia's work, for example, reflects this most fully in *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives*, among other works (Gabaccia 2001; Iacovetta and Gabaccia 2002).

Louise's second set of fundamental insights elucidate the importance of the gender and family role that underwrite the last decade's work on the gendered nature of migration processes. Explored in the dissertations and first books of her students Miriam Cohen, Donna Gabaccia, and myself, the power of gender and family role have been explored further and more broadly by other migration scholars like Linda Reeder, whose *Widows in White* examines the impact of emigration on those women

left at home, “in the shadow of the periphery,” where Gabaccia located them so long ago (Cohen 1992; Gabaccia 1984; Moch 1983; Reeder 2003). For Louise, these women were probably never in the shadows or peripheral.

Another generation of legacies is on the horizon; I am thinking of Laura Cuppone, who came to my institution with an MA, having done research on the people of Montelongo in central Italy who had moved to the steel mill town of Youngstown, Ohio (Cuppone 2010). Of course, most of the Italians in Youngstown were men, but their travel and work were made possible by family support, especially that of their wives who stayed at home, as Linda Reeder discovered in Sicily. A rich set of letters covering a 60-year span links Youngstown with Montelongo, serving as sites of connection, expression, and the transmission of social and material resources. Laura Cuppone’s research will ultimately focus on an Italian town, so marked by departures, as well as by the transnational communication of social and material remittances that not only pushed at gender relations in the home place, but also shaped the possibilities for the home area. This will be a study of the *longue durée* that will transcend World War II and cover some 80 years that promises to shed light on Louise’s fundamental work on the intersections of gender, economic structures, and social norms. Comparative study over time, concern with gender and migration theory, written from an Italian perspective: all of these traits of Cuppone’s research plan echo the concerns of Louise Audino Tilly, herself a grandchild of Italian immigrants.

The historical moment in which I met and worked with Louise as a graduate student is precisely that—a historical moment in which particular conditions held and certain academic debates raged. We each have such experiences and moments that suffuse our professional lives with urgency about one or another set of issues. The past few decades have transformed the technology of our reading, research activities, writing, transfer of knowledge, and communications with one another. Nonetheless, despite the shifts in historical debate and the assault on university programs in the humanities and social sciences, Louise Tilly’s intellectual production, insights, and insistence upon theoretically meaningful work remain a model for all of us, whatever our moment of intellectual coming-of-age.

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