Social Science History (2024), **48**, 601–602
doi:10.1017/ssh.2025.1

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Introduction to the Special Issue

Simone A. Wegge[1,2]

[1]Department of Economics, Chazanoff School of Business, College of Staten Island – CUNY, Staten Island, NY, USA and [2] Ph.D. Program in Economics, Graduate Center – CUNY, New York, NY, USA
Email: Simone.Wegge@csi.cuny.edu

The history of emotions is a relatively new area of research in the field of history and the broader historical social sciences. The expression of emotions and how they can differ across time and space and across languages and cultures has become a key focus of this research.

Over the last 20 years, scholars have established important centers for research on the history of emotions, including the Centre for the History of Emotions at the Queen Mary University of London (begun in 2008), the Centre for the History of Emotions at the University of Western Australia (started in 2011), and the History of Emotions Research Center at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin (2008 to 2024). Scholars from the latter institution collaborated with our former editorial team to develop a special issue on the history of emotions. This special issue features outputs from that collaboration.

The study of the history of emotions may extend as far back as Darwin's (1872) publication, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. Darwin claimed that both humans and animals have emotions, and that emotions and/or the expressions of them change over time (Oxford Academic, 2023). Scholastic inquiry about the history of emotions warrants an interdisciplinary approach, and it is no surprise that the study of the history of emotions has been influenced by the work of psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists. Given the Social Science History Association and the journal's deep commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship, we are delighted to publish this special issue.

Scholars in the history of emotions field often use ego-documents like personal letters, diaries, autobiographies, and interviews to describe emotions in their time and place. Researchers in other historical social sciences exploring a range of topics, including many readers of this journal, have studied these types of primary sources. Political scientists and historians, for instance, have studied the correspondence of noteworthy historical figures to gain insight into their feelings and behavior and their influence over important historical events. Yet another example is migration researchers who have studied migrant letters to procure answers as to why people in previous centuries moved and how they felt about it. Numerous scholars have made clever use of ego-documents to broaden our understanding of the hardships people suffered in the past. The economic historian Jane Humphries studied the lives of child laborers through the autobiographies they wrote later in adulthood, and she

© The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Social Science History Association.

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.1 Published online by Cambridge University Press

argued that these child laborers bore a heavy toll as a child worker while at the same time made a larger contribution to British industrialization than formerly recognized (Humphries, 2010). In another study, Blassingame (1977) used interviews of slaves, fugitives, and freedmen collected in the latter half of nineteenth century United States to study their emotions, psychological trauma, and difficult experiences as enslaved individuals.

In publishing this special issue, it is our hope that a wide variety of researchers will benefit from learning how history of emotions scholars consider ego-documents and how they articulate changes in emotions over generations and over space. Not only are the actual expressions of emotions relevant, but the community standards and norms of each time, place, and context are as well. The issue's first article, by Cummins and Pahl (2024), discusses the intellectual development of the history of emotions, starting with works in the latter third of the twentieth century; they cite several works that summarize the state of the field, which will be helpful to those wishing to know more. In each of the other articles, the authors bring a very nuanced and carefully articulated lens to the study of emotions.

The editorial team wishes to recognize a number of individuals connected to this special issue. For their imagination and efforts in putting together this fascinating special issue, we give special thanks to the authors, the special issue editors Stephen Thomas Cummins and Kerstin Maria Pahl, our former journal co-editors Rebecca Emigh and Kris Inwood, and our former managing editor Jeffrey Beemer. We also thank the many reviewers who provided insightful feedback.

We hope that this issue will encourage a deeper understanding of the ways in which humans have expressed their emotions through time and space and that it will inspire continued research.

References

Blassingame, John W. (1977) Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press.

Cummins, Stephen Thomas and Kerstin Maria Pahl (2024) "Feeling the rules: Historical and contemporary perspectives on emotional norms and social distinction." Social Science History **48** (4): this issue.

Darwin, Charles (1872) The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals. London: John Murray.

Humphries, Jane (2010) Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution. Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford Academic (2023) "The History of Emotions – The Very Short Introductions Podcast, Episode 69, 13:36. June 1, 2023. https://soundcloud.com/oupacademic/the-history-of-emotions-the-vsi-podcast-episode-69

Cite this article: Wegge, Simone A. (2024) "Introduction to the Special Issue," *Social Science History* **48**: 601–602. doi:10.1017/ssh.2025.1

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.1 Published online by Cambridge University Press