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Ulrike Jureit, Generation, Generationality, Generational Research,

Three generations of the baker's family Zavelberg about 1937. Source / courtesy of Andrea Zavelberg-Bolliger ©

Generation, Generationality, Generational Research

by Ulrike Jureit

Generation: Conceptual dimensions and research perspectives

"Generation" is a basic concept of history.[1] It purports to explain a specific manifestation of thinking, feeling and acting by positing that certain factors of socialization and their long-term, homogeneous effects on a group of people can be grasped as a collective experience. The similar, parallel experience of history as a stratification of biographical experience and an imagined common origin (in time) – such linkages are of fundamental importance to understanding the formation of generational communities (Vergemeinschaftungen). The assumption that the simultaneity of experience creates a felt connection between people born around the same time is essentially founded on the modern notion of temporalization (Verzeitlichung), one of the decisive changes in modernity being the denaturalization of previous experiences of time.

With the onset of the Enlightenment, the "doctrine of Last Things" was "displaced by the gamble of an open future," to quote Reinhart Koselleck.[2] As a result of this paradigm shift, the concept of generation has become more nuanced and the hitherto dominant genealogical understanding, in which the history of humanity was viewed as a succession of generations, has sometimes been supplanted by an alternative understanding in which it is seen as the rhythm of modern progress. Generation has subsequently served as a way to perceive historical change collectively in biographical time, linking it to the generational renewal of society. Individual lifetimes, generational spans, and historical periods have since been

viewed as interlinked categories of historical experience, essential to the perception and order of history.[3] This also means that there are "generation-specific limits and thresholds of experience that create shared history once they are institutionalized or crossed."[4] Generations are a social fact not only because people feel they belong to one but also because the concept of generation is used to interpret and structure modern experiences of social transformation. The connection between "generation" and "time" alluded to here indicates that we are talking about complex processes of social group-building that make it necessary to analyze systematically the semantic content and usage of generational patterns of interpretation.

A theory-driven study of generations requires a fundamental distinction between generation as a formula of self-thematization and generation as an analytical category. Self-thematization in this context means, first of all, that someone observes themselves, reflects on this self-observation, and at the same time has the feeling of belonging to a collective that is relevant to his own self-understanding and allows him to feel a connection to others whom he views as equal or similar. On the other hand, generational self-description also means that social groups imagine themselves to be a generation and articulate this as such, with the aim of communicating certain interests or needs to society at large. Hence generation is an individual category of attribution as well as a collective self-descriptor.

„Generation mobile phone?" – a felt connection between people born around the same time.
A group of women in Edinburgh, Scotland, 8 August 2012: „time to check the phone".
Photo: byronv2, Source: Flickr, License: CC BY-NC 2.0

By contrast, generation has recently served as a scholarly category of analysis beyond mere specialist circles and which, independent of the self-understanding of the generations investigated as social units, is seen as a fundamental condition of human existence, one that is accorded an explanatory power of controversial scope. It is helpful to distinguish between these two variants, a distinction not always made so clearly in the day-to-day work of scholars. In practice, most scholars take the generational self-thematization of a social formation for granted, using it as an opportunity to investigate the formation, dynamics and development of such age-specific relationships and deriving an explanatory model from it that aims to shed light on historical transformation by referencing the generational identity of historical protagonists.

To be sure, the parallel use of self-descriptive and analytical concepts of generation by scholars is only one fundamental problem. Another difficulty is the lack of a uniform approach or, to give it a positive spin, the wide range of existing methodological approaches. In the pedagogical-psychoanalytical field, a family and hence vertical understanding of generation predominates, with a focus on the collective relationship between parents and children or, more broadly, the relationships between relatives in the extended family. The family is the starting point and point of reference, its socialization, inheritance and parenting functions being considered essential for the maintenance and development of societies.

These need to be distinguished from horizontally structured research methods which understand generational group-building as age-specific units of conditioning and interpretation, identifying potential or actual units of activity within them. Generation here is considered a category of simultaneity, the benchmark being not family but society. Sociological, historical and political-science studies in particular are beholden to such an understanding of generation, but there are meanwhile a number of new integrative approaches that attempt to link the two models.

Generational research: Theoretical foundations

No other collective term has been so deeply influenced by sociological theory. This is not only because it deals with socially relevant we-groups, but also because it was a sociologist who fundamentally conceptualized and shaped the study of generations. Karl Mannheim's 1928 essay "The Problem of Generations" is still considered a seminal work in generational theory.[5] During the boom period of generational concepts of order, Mannheim linked the social experience of value shifts and cultural transformation to the generational renewal of societies. Mannheim saw the "continuous emergence of new participants in the cultural process" as an explanation for the "accelerated pace of social change characteristic of our time."[6] By adopting the class concept to distinguish between "generation status" (Generationslagerung), "generation as an actuality" (Generationszusammenhang) and "generation unit" (Generationseinheit) he succeeded in creating a systematization that is still path-breaking by today's research standards.

For Mannheim, generation was first of all not a group in the sociological sense but a mere connectedness. It meant cooperation between individuals who felt a certain bond but did not form a concrete community. Every individual has a particular generation status that cannot be opted out of as if it were a social club and that opens up specific possibilities as well as imposing limitations. This status is incontrovertible, "whether the individual in question knows [it] or not, and whether he acknowledges it or not."[7] "Generation as an actuality" therefore means a related position in historical-social space, which by no means presupposes being conscious of belonging to one generation or another. For Mannheim, the difference between generation status and generation as an actuality was in the culturally determined stratification of consciousness and experience (Bewusstseins- und Erlebnisschichtung) that enabled people born around the same time to have a similar perspective on things.

A common cultural context, chronological simultaneity, and the perception of events from the same stratification of life and consciousness were in Mannheim's view the decisive prerequisites of generational group-formation. "Whereas mere common 'location' in a generation is of only potential significance, a generation as an actuality is constituted when similarly 'located' contemporaries participate in a common destiny and in the ideas and concepts which are in some way bound up with its unfolding. Within this community of people with a common destiny there can then arise particular generation-units."[8] Accordingly, generation units differ from "actual" generations by virtue of their uniform responses to events and living conditions. And yet, according to Mannheim, these units are related by a shared resonance and formative influence, which may take on quite varied forms of concrete expression, even antagonistic ones, but are still based on a general prevailing mood. The romantic-conservative and liberal-rationalist youth movements of the early nineteenth century are examples, both of which were focused on the same historical issue of national identity yet did so in quite contradictory ways.

Despite its undisputed merits, Mannheim's generational model is responsible for a persistent lack of conceptual clarity in generational research. He conceived of generation as a scientific category between culture and nature, and failed to explicitly distinguish it from concepts such as "generativity," "peer groups," and "genealogy." The study of generations is still coming to terms with this shortcoming. The theoretical premises underlying the sociological model of generations have yet to receive much attention from scholars. It is therefore no wonder that they frequently use the word "generations" when in fact they mean "generativity." And sometimes things labelled "generations" are actually no more than "peer groups."

Generation concepts: Self-thematization and historical reference events
Generation, like no other category, serves the need to situate oneself in an age-specific community, and this in quite different social configurations. Generational research was long beholden to the notion that only great historical events such as revolutions, natural catastrophes and world wars were capable of creating new generations. There is reason to doubt that such radical events are formative in every instance, but there is no denying that political generations in particular, like the kind Mannheim had in mind, define themselves around "key reference events" (M. Rainer Lepsius). The First World War was one such radical break, an event that was perceived and interpreted generationally.[9] The postwar years were

marked by attempts to understand the variety of experiences of war as belonging to different generations. The First World War is therefore still the key example of the causal relationship between extreme political events and generation-building.

It is here that Ulrich Herbert's much-lauded and innovative study begins. His biography of Werner Best, the deputy of Reinhard Heydrich and later the Reich plenipotentiary in Denmark, is almost inevitably confronted with the imponderables and possibilities of generational self-thematizations, for Best himself, in retrospect, characterized his career as well as his personal and political experiences as those of an entire generation, sometimes so intensively that it is almost impossible to distinguish between his own and more general impressions or experiences. Best undoubtedly represents a "political generation," one that had formed during and after the First World War. The politicization of its elite took place in a process of group-formation that centered on a community of experience, emotion and action. While Best's biography may not offer us a history of the twentieth century, as is sometimes claimed, it does help answer the question of whether and how generational influences can affect subsequent collective behaviors.

Michael Wildt, too, in his study of Nazi leaders in the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) addresses the generational self-thematization of individual protagonists, using a sample of 221 individuals to create a group-biographical portrait under the title An Uncompromising Generation. His analysis is considered a successful attempt to explain the dynamics of the Third Reich as a particular configuration of generation-specific experiences that were fundamentally impacted by the First World War. The focus of this group biography are young men born, like Werner Best, between 1900 and 1910, who thus had no war experience of their own and viewed the First World War from their perspective as younger brothers or sons. "The painful sting of missed opportunities"[10] was among their formative experiences of socialization, which set them apart from the young war volunteers who returned from the war disillusioned and often severely wounded. But the lack of experience did not make the First World War less significant to this younger generation. War, wrote Sebastian Haffner, who was born in 1907, was so close he could almost reach out and touch it despite his lack of combat experience. It lived in his imagination, as a world of adventure, and as the fixed idea of a generation of young men growing up in social and economic ruins. Their vision of the future was radical: they wanted to create a totally new world with the concrete promise of community and an elitist claim to leadership.

Those born between the turn of the century and the First World War had a specific reservoir of experience on account of their "generational location," not

only with respect to the war but also their political and social expectations regarding the imminent future. The crisis of the 1920s with its economic instability and political violence was experienced by this war youth as a challenge and justification to seize power, initially with no specific political orientation. Regardless of whether these young men were from a proletarian or bourgeois background, their ideas were militant, antibourgeois and antidemocratic. Wildt's leadership corps of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) belong to this "generation as an actuality." Of the RSHA's approximately 3,000 employees, about 400 of them held leadership positions, more than two-thirds of whom, in turn, were born between 1900 and 1910. As an ideological elite they represented a type of perpetrator that differed from the career-failing, socially uprooted SS man as well as from the cliché of the mass-murdering bureaucrat. These men had an excellent education, were highly motivated, and above all determined to reach their goal.

Though generational theory has proven a viable approach for such case studies, there are a number of conceptual problems. Representativity, homogeneity, generalization, retrospectivity – these keywords suggest just a few of the problems generational researchers are confronted with. Added to this is the fact that history is increasingly measured by and narrated with reference to "generations."[11]

Though generational research may have moved beyond the naturalized laws of development of the nineteenth century, generation is still a useful instrument for one thing in particular: lending order to history. The very complexity of historical upheavals such as revolutions and regime changes, but also the heterogeneity of social movements and political parties, as well as the dynamics of conflicting social forces and the sheer endless number of isolated events in the context of political crises make abundantly clear that historiography needs a theoretical foundation and systematic terminology in order to effectively describe and analyze historical transformations. Categories such as "class," and later on "gender," were long key structural principles. Generation has now become a factor as well. Two different fundamental patterns of generational order can meanwhile be observed in scholarly practice. On the one hand, the generation approach is used to link coexisting but competing social or political models to collective protagonists. On the other hand, historical change is divided into periods according to successive generations.[12] While this might create order out of historical chaos, it also produces an unjustifiable and scarcely verifiable simultaneity or sequence of events, often understood to be causal and referring to an arbitrary starting point. There is therefore good reason to question whether generation is really a

meaningful analytical category for dividing history into periods.

The various research methods as well as the controversies surrounding the theoretical and conceptual orientation of generational research indicate that it is meaningful to conceive of generation as an interdisciplinary category of historical experience rather than dwelling on the question of how real, construed or substantial these felt communities actually are.[13] It is far more productive to focus on the conditions of communication in which generational self-positioning takes place. Generation-building is a process of group-formation found primarily in the public sphere and which is hence the object and result of collective agreements. But how can people acquire a sense of belonging when, despite their conviction of having something in common, their experiences reveal more differences than commonalities, however much the opposite is claimed? Imagined communities need media-disseminated points of identification for potential commonalities to be negotiated and passed on at all.[14] These points of identification make perceived commonalities emotionally accessible, while helping to achieve the collective promise inherent to the notion of a generation. This is not only true of "political generations" but also of generational self-interpretations oriented towards cultural or social conditions of living. These frequently diffuse communities – such as the "Golf generation" (for German men) or the "Ally generation" (for German women) popularized by books with those titles – do not require a major historical event, but they do need the shared expectation that a mutual awareness of life suffices to not feel alone in the modern era.

Alongside the generational reference points offered by popular culture, generational research also discusses to what extent the crisis of the welfare state, ongoing for the last three decades, has a formative influence on generations.[15] To be sure, people with a social safety net approach their lives differently than those who are subject to incalculable risks. It is likewise indisputable that the social promise of the modern welfare state cannot be fulfilled the way it was originally envisioned. That this shifting experience is interpreted generationally in Germany is partly due to the fact that social-policy debates there have always been construed in terms of generations. Though the issue is primarily one of economic redistribution, the participants being distinguished not so much by their year of birth as by their status according to labor law, the conflict is nonetheless laden with relationship patterns of a generational nature. Weakening economic data, declining birth rates, and an increasingly superannuated population are elevating social pressures as well, so that generation is viewed as the demographic factor that needs to be corrected.

Transgenerationality

Generational research indebted to Mannheim's theory has long been subject to critique from other scholarly disciplines. Psychoanalysts and educationalists in particular have challenged the notion that generation is primarily a category of discontinuity, noting that sociological generational theory has subscribed to a belief in progress whose emphasis on generative renewal neglects the notion of "emotional heritage" (Gefühlserbschaft) so essential to an understanding of generation.[16] Despite this critique and the unmistakable relevance of this topic to their own work, these critics from the therapeutic camp have been slow in proposing a viable alternative. There have at least been some attempts to combine horizontal and vertical generation models.[17] Such theoretical models are usually based on a sometimes rather vague notion of transgenerationality.
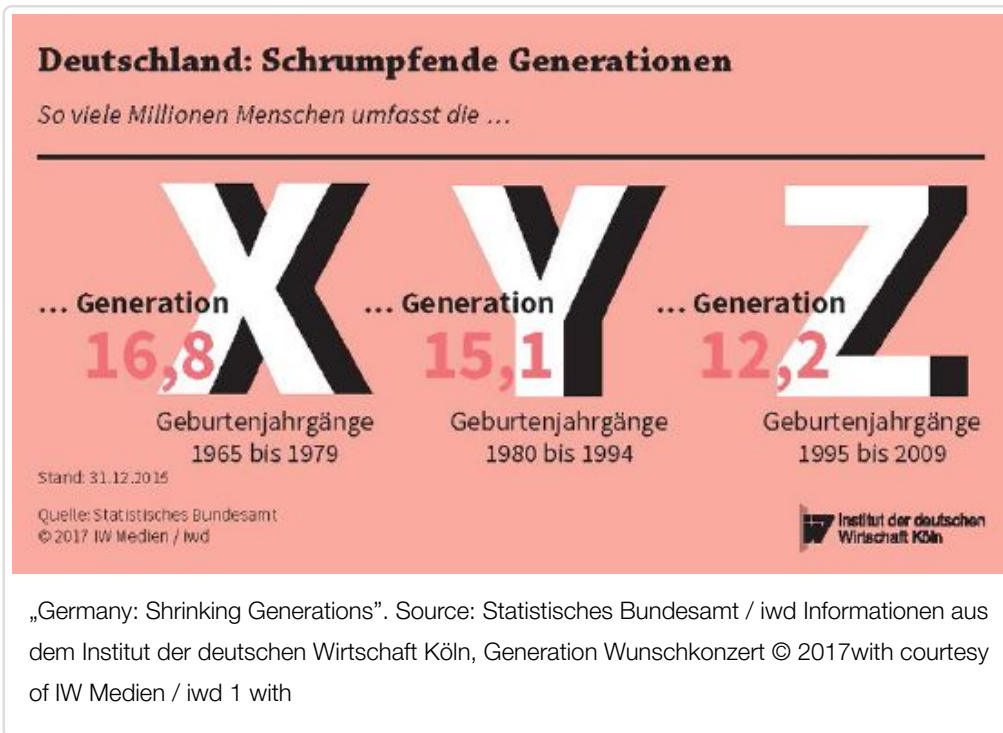
Thus, with regard to the basic theoretical assumptions of interdisciplinary dialogue, the notion of transgenerational processes and their transfer to other disciplines and research contexts is of particular relevance here. Analytically this is not always helpful. Transgeneratonality, after all, was originally a psychoanalytical concept involving a variety of preconceptions, theoretical traditions and practical applications. Applying it to other fields implies transferring its structural characteristics to extraneous contexts, or at least necessitates some reflection on the implications of such a transfer. Haydée Faimberg's concept of the "telescoping of generations," for example, developed in 1987, was highly regarded even outside her discipline, but the difficulties of transferring it to other, especially non-therapeutic fields has not been sufficiently reflected. The subconscious processes of identification derived from the practice of psychoanalysis are considered by Faimberg to be "links between generations."[18] Internalized parental images are a key concept in psychoanalytical practice for locating the moment when the child psyche is infiltrated and occupied by his or her parents. This connectedness means that no generation is able to "hide significant emotional events from the next generation."[19]

Transgenerationality, in this understanding, means the passing on of conflict-ridden, unaddressed issues to the next generation through the absence of deidentification. The consequence of this mechanism is a negative bond in which the ego has "hardly any room for its own feelings and thinking," thus inhibiting its development and vitality.[20] Psychological damage and unresolved conflicts from the previous generation are "deposited" in this individual. Hence transgenerationality describes an intergenerational relationship pattern, one

involving a specific form of memory. This understanding implies that generational contexts are often only constituted in retrospect. It also means that whenever unresolved issues are passed on unconsciously certain events are unknowingly repeated, as opposed to being remembered in the usual sense.

Despite the broad reception of Faimberg's approach, there is no uniform psychoanalytical theory of transgenerationality to speak of. Even in specialist circles, it is still a matter of theoretical debate how transgenerational patterns are passed on. Given its controversial nature, there is reason enough to be skeptical about whether psychoanalytical concepts of generational ties are compatible at all with other disciplines.[21] The ongoing debate about the interdependencies of trauma and drive theory make abundantly clear at any rate that psychoanalysis, for its own purposes and in dialogue with other disciplines, could stand to be more specific about its theoretical contribution to scholarly research on generations, especially if it wants to counteract the tendency to be seen as just one among many theories of socialization. That's exactly how most scholars see it: the complexity of a transgenerational concept whose "Oedipus drama" links a conflicted generational entanglement with compulsive repetition can only be reduced to a theory of imprinting that, moreover, is almost impossible to disentangle from its therapeutic setting.

A more interesting question is whether between these two poles – the analysis of parent-child interactions and a culture-historical theory of generations – there lurks an added value for social-theory research, one that has interdisciplinary potential. The cultural theory of memory and the generational inheritance of historical consciousness, two approaches that have largely been exhausted, could potentially profit from this. To put it another way, the benefits would be considerable if psychoanalytical generational research would reflect on the insights gained in therapeutic practice and conceptualize them in a more socio-theoretical way. Research on the transgenerational aftereffects of Nazism undoubtedly played a big part in helping psychoanalytical generational research make a name for itself. In particular the studies of Judith Kestenberg, but also more recent work on infant and attachment theory are pioneering in this regard, having identified mechanisms of transgenerational transmission while isolating the conditions under which they can be broken. And yet transgenerational processes need to be more closely linked to social analysis. If transgenerationality is to represent more than a concept from clinical and developmental psychology, the transgenerational inheritance of conflicts must be more consistently historicized.

Deutschland: Schrumpfende Generationen

So viele Millionen Menschen umfasst die ...

... Generation X
16,8
Geburtenjahrgänge
1965 bis 1979

... Generation Y
15,1
Geburtenjahrgänge
1980 bis 1994

... Generation Z.
12,2
Geburtenjahrgänge
1995 bis 2009

Stand: 31.12.2015

Quelle: Statistisches Bundesamt
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„Germany: Shrinking Generations". Source: Statistisches Bundesamt / iwd Informationen aus dem Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln, Generation Wunschkonzert © 2017 with courtesy of IW Medien / iwd 1 with

Generation: A collective intermediate-range term

As a self-thematization formula, generation is a social fact with astonishing continuity. The concept of generation-building certainly has its high and lows, not always being in demand on the market of collective self-descriptions, but in this it is no different than other collective terms. Its popularity soars whenever other notions of order (such as "nation") are either not an option, have lost their cohesive force, or are too historically burdened. This is when the concept of generation proves to be most advantages. It is future-oriented, fundamentally elastic and, most importantly, distinct from the world of policy-making. Generation is a collective social term which, depending on the historical context, can be more or less politically charged. Political elites lay claim to it, as do fleeting communities with similar consumer habits. The bonding intensity, reference points of identity, and effect on behavior can all vary considerably between generations, an elasticity that makes it particularly attractive for social positioning.

Generation thus has considerable potential in terms of identification. Part of this has to do with the fact that generational thinking is closely linked to our ideas of origins, ancestry and reproduction. Though many consider generation a category of simultaneity, it is popular as a means of self-thematization because of its genealogical connotations. The question of personal identity is always a question of origins and traditions. Generation is an identity formula that enables individuals in the modern era to position their self-understanding on the spectrum between culture and nature. Depending on the occasion, historical context or social

expectations, the member of a generation can change the emphasis of his or her self-image, allowing certain aspects to come to the fore and other to recede into the background without appearing implausible. Generation's lack of clarity as an analytical category, that is to say it's biological implications, make it all the more attractive for individual and collective self-definitions.

Another advantage of age-specific group-building is the fact that generation is an intermediate-range collective concept. The imagined link between individual and community takes place at a level that suggests a certain clarity, unlike society as a whole. Generations might be anonymous masses, but not everyone, and certainly not a majority, is entitled to feel they belong to one. It is easy to recognize, or at least to guess, who belongs to a given generation, even though a given member will never encounter most of the members of his generation in person. Generational thinking lends order to modern societies and promises to keep the individual from getting lost in the crowd. In an era of global markets it is hard to emphasize this quality enough. Generations occupy a kind of middle ground between concrete social groups and society, between the nation and a (global) community. They satisfy the need for collective identities that unlike other collective categories are not perceived as completely anonymous, for belonging to a generation implies day-to-day practices that enable a person to classify those around him as belonging or not belonging. Moreover, this cataloging of differences follows criteria that are viewed as natural.

Generations also serve a translation function, transforming individual and collective experiences into cultural capital. This transfer, which can take place at various levels, allows generational models of society, age-specific memory configurations or self-images to acquire a wider social significance or even global relevance, thus divorcing them from their original generational context. The concept of generation is therefore of fundamental importance for acquiring and passing on social knowledge.

Generation as a category of collective self-description is undoubtedly a rewarding subject of scholarly investigation. One of the central questions is who articulates a generational community when and with what interests in mind, as well as what understanding of generation is used for the purpose of self-description in a given historical situation.[22] Is it a political elite that sees itself as a new generation, as a revolutionary unit that will stop at nothing to achieve its aims, or the children of migrants who feel a loose sense of belonging and describe their experiences in a majority society as those of a generation that is different from the one previous and subsequent immigrants belonged to? Both examples show that group-

formation in the form of generation-building can take place in quite different ways. It is revealing for our understanding of collective processes why in one case a group avails itself of the concept of generation while another invokes the notion of "class."

But generation as a category of discontinuity – and thus the possibility of proclaiming a new beginning – is by far not the only and probably no longer the most common configuration in which felt communities are thought of as generations. It is not only political watersheds but also social living conditions that serve as frames of reference for generational self-reassurance. The implicit or explicit call to action that resonates more or less in the political concept of generation clearly takes a backseat here. Generation in this case is more a vehicle of self-discovery than a unit of action. With that a core question has changed, namely which reference events have a formative influence on generations. The long-prevalent notion that major historical events were primarily responsible for the generational bonding of a certain age group has proven to be too narrow a focus from an experiential-history perspective.

If generational history is consistently conceived of as experiential history – and there are good reasons to do so – it becomes clear that it is not events like war, revolution and catastrophes that give rise to generations. Generation-building can take almost any conditions of living as its reference point and turn them into the focus of age-specific self-interpretation. The concept of generation is not only a concept of experience but also, and especially, a category of processing experience that people use to appropriate their everyday experience as well as the decisive events in their lives. This process of appropriation takes place not only in the form of internal self-examination but also in the form of social reassurance. The individual wants to know how others with certain, seemingly comparable experiences deal with them. And since this manner of processing experience is linked to patterns of perception, social skills, and certain previous experiences and interpretive patterns, it makes sense to focus on those of the same age group for this kind of comparative self-interpretation.

Potential and risks of the concept of generation

The enormous popularity of generational groups produces irregularities in research when the concept of generation is no longer just a formula of self-thematization but serves as an analytical category as well. Many researchers do not restrict themselves to interpreting a collective self-projection as an expression of a

transformation in social experience. Instead, group-specific self-performance becomes a key explanatory factor for certain political, social or economic changes. This transference often occurs unnoticed or at least in an unthinking manner. In this case what the group in question claims about itself or lays claims to ultimately becomes the explanatory model used by scholars. Imagined commonalities can even be passed off and essentialized as behavior-guiding generational characteristics. Those who employ the concept of generation analytically run the risk of reproducing self-performances. There is also the legitimate concern that concrete behaviors will be deduced from age-specific experiential contexts. But generation units are not invariably behavior units, which is why the claim to explain historical change by dint of its protagonists belonging to a certain generation is suspect to say the least.

Generation as an analytical category is linked to theoretical imponderables that arise from its customary use as a collective formula of self-description. The imagined generation, like other collectives, is based on a specific, sometimes fully distorted self-interpretation and perception of the world. A perspective like this is convincing, because it presents itself as a possible community and papers over existing differences by emphasizing felt commonalities. Biases and simplifications of this sort, which are bound up with any collective promise, need to be critically examined rather than reproduced. This perspectivity becomes apparent in the analytical use of the concept of generation, as only in exceptional cases can historical change be described as the generational group-formation of a minority. More compact explanatory approaches are generally needed here. In practice, however, the generation factor is often used to conceptualize age-related patterns of interpretation and behavior, or sometimes to order history by means of often rather arbitrary periodization schemes. In both instances the community-generating stamp of the generational approach is given short shrift, which is why it would be more appropriate here to talk about "peer groups" rather than "generations."

The lack of conceptual clarity shows how important it is to ask what gets spotlighted, what gets neglected or what gets glossed over by talking about generations. Why are certain things generationally charged whereas others are interpreted economically? A more rigorous theoretical reflection seems called for given the challenge faced by generational research since the 1990s, namely the increasing adoption and discussion of the term in transnational contexts. Mannheim developed his generational theory with reference to a certain national context. Today's generational research, on the other hand. is faced with the

challenge of viewing generation-building in a globalized social context – the '68 generation, for example. Empirical case studies in the coming years will provide a detailed investigation of whether the student movement was indeed a global "generation." A second observation too will preoccupy generational research in the future. For quite some time now we have witnessed the inflationary use of the concept of generation, and there is no denying that the label "generation" sells fantastically well in the mass media, regardless of quality standards. A generational argument is certain to attract attention, no matter if the speaker has something to say or not. In the dawn of the post-factual era, this tendency will presumably escalate. One of the core challenges of a generational research that is fully aware of its scholarly premises is to not merely bemoan this loss of substance but to analyze this tendency as a socially relevant phenomenon.

Translated from the German by David Burnett.

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Recommended Reading

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7. ↑ Ibid., p. 289.

8. ↑ Ibid., p. 306.

9. ↑ Some examples from a very extensive literature: Detlev J.K. Peukert, Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne, Frankfurt am Main 1987 (English edition: The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity, translated from the German by Richard Deveson, New York 1992); Ulrich Herbert, Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903-1989, Bonn 1996; Michael Wildt, Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes, Hamburg 2002 (English edition: An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office, translated from the German by Tom Lampert, Madison, 2009); Hans Mommsen, "Generationenkonflikt und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik," in: Jürgen Reulecke (ed.), Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert, Munich 2003, pp. 115-126. Innovative with regard to the assumption of the cooperation between generations: Heinz D. Kittsteiner, "Die Generationen der ,Heroischen Moderne'. Zur kollektiven Verständigung über eine Grundaufgabe," in: Jureit/Wildt, Generationen, pp. 200-219. Indispensable as a recent historical document: E. Günther Gründel, Die Sendung der jungen

Generation: Versuch einer umfassenden revolutionären Sinndeutung der Krise, Munich 1932.

10. ↑ Wildt, Generation des Unbedingten, p. 848. Translation mine.

11. ↑ See Sigrid Weigel, "Generation, Genealogie, Geschlecht. Zur Geschichte des Generationskonzepts und seiner wissenschaftlichen Konzeptionalisierung seit Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts," in: Lutz Musner/Gotthart Wunberg (eds.), Kulturwissenschaften. Forschung – Praxis – Positionen, Vienna 2002, pp. 161-190.

12. ↑ See, e.g., Ulrich Herbert, "Drei politische Generationen im 20. Jahrhundert," in: Jürgen Reulecke (eds.), Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert, Munich 2003, pp. 95-114; generational periodization is particularly common in the history of science: Rüdiger Hohls/Konrad H. Jarausch (eds.), Versäumte Fragen. Deutsche Historiker im Schatten des Nationalsozialismus, Stuttgart 2000; Günter Burkart/Jürgen Wolf (eds.), Lebenszeiten. Erkundungen zur Soziologie der Generationen, Opladen 2002; Christoph Cornelißen, "Historikergenerationen in Westdeutschland seit 1945," in: idem/Lutz Klinkhammer/Wolfgang Schwentker (eds.), Erinnerungskulturen. Deutschland, Italien und Japan seit 1945, Frankfurt am Main 2003, pp. 139-152.

13. ↑ On the history-of-experiences approach, see Ulrike Jureit, Generationenforschung, Göttingen 2006.

14. ↑ See Christian Schneider, "Der Holocaust als Generationsobjekt. Generationengeschichtliche Anmerkungen zu einer deutschen Identitätsproblematik," in: Mittelweg 36 13 (2004), no. 4, pp. 56-73.

15. ↑ See Lutz Leisering, "Wohlfahrtsstaatliche Generationen," in: Martin Kohli/Marc Szydlik (eds.), Generationen in Familie und Gesellschaft, Opladen 2000, pp. 59-76; Franz Xaver Kaufmann, "Generationenbeziehungen und Generationenverhältnisse im Wohlfahrtsstaat," in: Kurt Lüscher/Franz Schultheis (eds.), Generationenbeziehungen in „postmodernen" Gesellschaften, Constance1993, pp. 95-108; Heinz Bude, ",Generation' im Kontext. Von den Kriegs- zu den Wohlfahrtsstaatsgenerationen," in: Jureit/Wildt, Generationen, pp. 28-44; for a commentary on Bude's essay and a generally skeptical look at the generational concept in general, see in the same volume: M. Rainer Lepsius, "Kritische Anmerkungen zur Generationenforschung," pp. 45-52.

16. ↑ See Christian Schneider, "Vom Generationsbegriff zur Generationengeschichte," in: idem/Cordelia Stillke/Bernd Leineweber, Trauma und Kritik: Zur Generationengeschichte der Kritischen Theorie, Münster 2000, pp. 23-36.

17. ↑ A seminal work on the psychoanalytical investigation of transgenerational processes: Martin S. Bergmann/Milton E. Jucory/Judith S. Kestenberg (eds.), Kinder der Opfer – Kinder der Täter. Psychoanalyse und Holocaust, Frankfurt am Main 1995; Werner Bohleber, "Das Fortwirken des Nationalsozialismus in der zweiten und dritten Generation nach Auschwitz," in: Babylon. Beiträge zur jüdischen Gegenwart 4 (1990), no. 7, pp. 70-83; Anita Eckstaedt, Nationalsozialismus in der zweiten „Generation". Psychoanalyse von Hörigkeitsverhältnissen,

Frankfurt am Main 1989. Also relevant to psychoanalytical generational theory: Haydée Faimberg, "Die Ineinanderrückung (Telescoping) der Generationen. Zur Genealogie gewisser Identifizierungen," in: Jahrbuch der Psychoanalyse 20 (1987), pp. 114-142; Erika Krejci, "Innere Objekte. Über Generationenfolge und Subjektwerdung. Ein psychoanalytischer Beitrag," in: Jureit/Wildt, Generationen, pp. 80-107.

18. ↑ Faimberg, "Ineinanderrückung," S. 128. English original in book form: The Telescoping of Generations: Listening to the Narcissistic Links Between Generations, New York 2005.

19. ↑ Krejci, "Innere Objekte," p. 103.

20. ↑ Ibid., p. 105.

21. ↑ See Günter Mey (ed.), Von Generation zu Generation. Sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Analysen zu Transgenerationalität, Giessen 2015.

22. ↑ See Jürgen Reulecke, "Generationen und Biografien im 20. Jahrhundert," in: Bernhard Strauß/Michael Geyer (eds.), Psychotherapie in Zeiten der Veränderung. Historische, kulturelle und gesellschaftliche Hintergründe einer Profession, Wiesbaden 2000, pp. 26-40.