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Intergenerational Learning

In Honor of Meinolf Dierkes

with contributions by
Ariane Berthoin Antal
Julian Dierkes
Gerald D. Feldman
Jürgen Kocka
Helga Nowotny
Neil J. Smelser

WZB Lectures 17

WZB

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Symposium
September 22, 2006

WZB Lectures **17**

WZB

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Meinolf Dierkes

Meinolf Dierkes zum 65. Geburtstag

Jürgen Kocka

Lieber Herr Dierkes, liebe Frau Dierkes,

sehr verehrte Gäste, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen, meine Damen und Herren. Ich begrüße Sie zum Symposium „Intergenerational Learning". Das Symposium findet zu Ehren von Meinolf Dierkes statt, der in zwei Tagen 65 Jahre alt wird und in den Ruhestand überwechselt. Als Wissenschaftler, Wissenschaftsunternehmer und Institutionenleiter gehört Meinolf Dierkes zu den zwei, drei, höchstens vier Personen, die das WZB mehr geprägt haben als alle anderen.

„Intergenerational Learning": I could not think of a topic more appropriate for a symposium in honor of Meinolf Dierkes. „Intergenerational Learning" has been and continues to be a topic of Meinolf Dierkes' scientific research work over the decades. As a person, as a scholar and as a coordinator of scholarly work he has been a stimulating center of processes of intergenerational learning here at the WZB, in his research unit "Innovation and Organisation," and elsewhere. It is very appropriate and a beautiful testimony to the broad interdisciplinary range of Meinolf Dierkes' interests and work that the contributions to this symposium will come from very different disciplinary fields. I particularly welcome Helga Nowotny, Neil Smelser, Gerald Feldman, and Julian Dierkes who will speak to us.

Und ich bedanke mich bei den Organisatoren dieses Symposiums, stellvertretend und vor allem bei Ariane Berthoin Antal, für die erfolgreiche Vorbereitung. Ich beschränke mich zur Einleitung auf drei knappe Stichworte. Einmal zum Wissenschaftler Dierkes, zum zweiten zum Institutionenleiter Dierkes und drittens zum Bauherrn Dierkes. Mustert man Meinolf Dierkes' Publikationsliste, dann fällt auf, wie viel verschiedene Themen er angepackt hat und wie oft er frühzeitig Themen aufnahm, die

sich noch nicht auf der Agenda der etablierten Forschung befanden, dies aber bald taten, eben auch als Folge der Pionierarbeiten von Dierkes. Ich nenne zum Beispiel: Sozialberichterstattung und Sozialbilanz der Technik, Technikgenese, Technikfolgenabschätzung oder auch Umweltforschung. Ich habe in meiner WZB-Zeit Meinolf Dierkes vor allem als aktiv im Bereich „Organisational Learning" erlebt, auch mit Verbindung hin zu Themen, die mir näher liegen, wie Unternehmenskultur und Unternehmensgeschichte.

Meinolf Dierkes hat einmal die Bedeutung von Wissenschaftlern herausgestellt, die zum Zeitpunkt der Entstehung ihrer wichtigsten Arbeiten Außenseiter waren und gerade deshalb Anstöße für Neuerungen geben konnten. Er selbst hat die Grenzen zwischen Disziplinen, zwischen Organisationen und zwischen Rollen in verschiedenen Tätigkeitsbereichen immer wieder überquert und dabei auch verschoben. Er war deshalb in jedem einzelnen dieser Bereiche für eine Weile Außenseiter. Davon hat er glänzenden Gebrauch gemacht. Außenseiter war und ist Dierkes im WZB aber nicht. Vielmehr zentraler Insider, auf dessen Rat und Hilfe ich in den letzten sechs Jahren verlässlich zählen konnte, wofür ich mich sehr bedanke.

Als „Wissenschaftsunternehmer" hat Friedhelm Neidhardt seinerzeit seinen Vor-Vorgänger Dierkes apostrophiert, auch das Wort Wissenschaftsmanager ist nicht falsch; das WZB hat davon profitiert. Vor 30 Jahren begann Meinolf Dierkes im WZB als 35-jähriger Direktor des Internationalen Instituts für Umwelt und Gesellschaft, später als Direktor der Abteilung „Organisation und Technikgenese". Von 1980 bis 1987 war er der erste Präsident des WZB. Bis heute leitete er die bunte und dynamische Abteilung „Innovation und Organisation", deren Arbeiten und Mitarbeiter intensiv aufs WZB als Ganzes ausstrahlen.

Was wir hier im WZB als problemorientierte Grundlagenforschung bezeichnen und zu betreiben versuchen, ein Markenzeichen des WZB, das hat Meinolf Dierkes kräftig mitentwickelt und mitgestaltet, durch organisatorische Weichenstellungen, durch praktische Arbeit, auch durch Konzeptualisierung, Colloquien und Sammelbände, zu „Comparative Policy Research: Learning from Experience" – zum Beispiel. Und als vielseitiger Berater von Institutionen im privatwirtschaftlichen wie im öffentlichen Bereich, als Mitglied zahlreicher Kommissionen, Beiräte und Kuratorien. Initiativreich und mobil hat Meinolf Dierkes die praxisbezo-

gene Dimension der WZB-Forschung ganz besonders repräsentiert und verwirklicht. Er hat früh den Transfer von Wissen in unterschiedliche kulturelle Konstellationen hinein nicht nur studiert und zum Forschungsgegenstand gemacht, sondern auch praktiziert: zwischen Europa und den USA vor allem, auch zwischen Europa und Israel, und im letzten Jahrzehnt auch zwischen Europa und Ostasien, besonders China. Auch das ist dem WZB sehr zu Gute gekommen.

Björn Wittrock, der Sozialwissenschaftler aus Uppsala, schrieb zum 25-jährigen Bestehen des WZB 1994: „What has been achieved in the course of the past 25 years is impressive, not to say astounding. The international social science community owes a great dept of gratitude to WZB." And the WZB, I want to add, owes a great debt of gratitude to Meinolf Dierkes.

Ohne ihn würden wir vermutlich heute hier nicht sitzen, denn zusammen mit James Stirling hat er während seiner WZB-Präsidentschaft dieses Gebäude, den hinteren Teil dieses Gebäudes, gebaut, die Entscheidung dazu vorbereitet und herbeigeführt, die Finanzierung zu sichern geholfen, an der architektonischen Planung teilgenommen, den Bau begleitet und ein bisschen mitbeaufsichtigt. 1984 wurde der Grundstein gelegt, vier Jahre später war das WZB, von vier verschiedenen Standorten herkommend, in diesem einen Haus untergebracht, so dass es allmählich zusammenwachsen konnte.

Viele Stolpersteine lagen auf dem Weg zum heutigen Gebäudekomplex zwischen Wilhelminismus und Postmoderne und mussten weggeräumt werden. Baumaßnahmen sind, wie jeder weiß, der einmal damit zu tun hatte, keine Selbstläufer, solche mit Denkmalschutzauflagen und schwierigen Eigentumsrechten an Grund und Boden erst recht nicht. Um die vielfältigen jahrelangen Misshelligkeiten erfolgreich zu meistern, brauchte man einen langen Atem. Meinolf Dierkes hatte ihn.

Hinter dem heutigen Hauptgebäude erstreckte sich, als Überreste der alten Bebauung, ein mehrflügeliger Anbau, dessen Treppenaufgänge man übrigens vom Innenhof aus immer noch erkennen kann. Diese Baulichkeiten mussten erst abgerissen werden, um die Bauten von James Stirling zu verwirklichen, das war nicht einfach. Und so präsentierte Präsident Dierkes, wie mir Christian Rabe mitgeteilt hat, irgendwann Anfang der 1980er Jahre, vor Eintritt in die Tagesordnung der Direktoren-

runde, einen leicht deformierten Ziegelstein. Die Anwesenden blickten etwas überrascht und verdutzt, zumal damals noch jedem die Mahnung „Steine sind keine Argumente" im Ohr war. Doch Dierkes erklärte, dieses sei der erste Stein aus dem Abbruch des nun nicht mehr unter Denkmalschutz stehenden Gebäudeteils des ehemaligen Reichversicherungsamtes, und damit sei der Neubau ein entscheidenes Stück vorangekommen. Der Stein des Abbruchs, sagte Rabe, „war sozusagen der Stein des Aufbruchs", und dieser Stein war dann lange im Bücherregal des Präsidentenzimmers zu sehen. Diesen Stein haben wir jetzt nicht hier, lieber Herr Dierkes, wir haben aber etwas anderes für Sie. Es hat sich nämlich herausgestellt, dass es im WZB ein Modell des Gebäudes gibt, ein Modell aus dem Architekturbüro Stirling, und es ist wohl das Modell, vor dem Sie mit eindrucksvoller Geste und zusammen mit Bundespräsident Carstens und Senator Kewenig fotografiert worden sind, so dass dieses Bild in der Festschrift, die zum 25. Jubiläum des WZB erschienen ist, abgedruckt werden konnte.

Wir haben kürzlich erst entdeckt, dass es in den Beständen des WZB ist, und haben entschieden, Ihnen dieses Modell zu schenken, so dass Sie sich an diese, Ihre wichtige Bauherrenzeit kräftig und intensiv, gegenständlich und sinnlich erinnern können. Aber das ist nun doch schon eine Weile her, und deswegen fügen wir drei schöne Bilder hinzu, die David Ausserhofer und Cordia Schlegelmilch fotografierten: das WZB als Form und Farbe. Beides zusammen, das Modell und diese drei Fotos aus den letzten Monaten, möchten wir Ihnen überreichen. Ich wünsche Ihnen, ich wünsche uns ein interessantes Symposium.

Meinolf Dierkes und Jürgen Kocka mit dem Modell des WZB

Intergenerational Learning

The Leitbild of a Lifetime for Meinolf Dierkes

Ariane Berthoin Antal

The choice of "Intergenerational Learning" for this WZB Symposium may seem especially strange in light of Lewis Mumford's observation that "in fact no generation before our own has ever been so fatuous as to imagine it possible to live exclusively within its own narrow time band, guided only by information recently discovered; nor has it ever before this accepted as final and absolute the demands of the present generation alone, without relating these demands to past experience or future projects and ideal possibilities." But then again, Meinolf Dierkes has been an exception in many ways throughout his career, so what may at first appear to be a strange choice is actually the most fitting. Each of you here today has known Meinolf Dierkes in connection with one or two of his areas of activity and interest. But he has been involved in so many fields that you are probably not aware of them all. What struck us when planning this day is that intergenerational learning is precisely what he has been contributing to across many fields, in many places, with many people, over many years.

Meinolf Dierkes has been "doing" intergenerational learning firstly by agenda-setting. He has been helping define what is worth learning about. And that has been a multinational process from the beginning. His early research on business and society in France, then in the US, then again in Germany, made ideas move between communities of researchers in different countries. He can be credited with having launched corporate social accounting in Germany in the 1970s. He launched academic research on the topic and he stimulated companies to experiment with fresh approaches in practice. Similarly, he brought the topic of Technology Assessment alive here in Germany. In this area too, he activated researchers and practitioners to learn from each other.

Together with his team here at the WZB he created the field of *Technikgenese*, an innovation that spawned projects in areas as diverse as mo-

bility and the internet. Working with researchers, managers, and consultants in Germany and abroad, he developed the concept of a *Leitbild* and he helped organizations develop their own *Leitbild*. It is not by chance that I am sticking to the German in both of these terms: *Technikgenese* and *Leitbild* are words that should enter the English language to enrich it alongside Weltanschauung, Kindergarten, and Rucksack. The impact of Meinolf Dierkes' agenda-setting for intergenerational learning has been magnified through his publications. Hundreds and hundreds of articles, as well as text books and handbooks are being used in universities around the world.

A second way that Meinolf Dierkes has contributed to intergenerational learning is by building institutions in which generations could learn together. We are here at the WZB today, and as Jürgen Kocka described so well, without Meinolf Dierkes that would never have been possible. But the WZB is only the tip of the iceberg of the institution-building that Meinolf Dierkes has engaged in during his long international career. I cannot list them all, but can give you a flavor for how he has created settings for intergenerational learning in different fields and in different countries. In his late 20s he established the Battelle Social Science Research Unit in Frankfurt am Main, after having worked with Battelle in Seattle. He was the founding dean of the Tel Aviv International School of Management. He contributed significantly to the program of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences when he became one of the first international members in the 1990s. Meinolf Dierkes has never let traditional institutional approaches get in the way of his institution-building. One of the most prominent examples of his daring and creativity was the research and service company CHOICE, which required him to persuade the WZB and its shareholders that in order to conduct research on new mobility behavior, the WZB would have to actually create the organization to provide the new service. And finally, a venture particularly close to his heart is the foundation he helped to establish here in Berlin specifically to stimulate creative ventures in local schools, the Erhard-Höpfner-Stiftung.

The third mode in which Meinolf Dierkes has "done" intergenerational learning has been by building networks. He has thereby connected the older generation from whom he learned, such as Professor Schmölders in Köln, and Professor Ray Bauer at Harvard, and the generation with whom

he studied, such as Burkhard Strümpel and Bernd Biervert, with subsequent generations of colleagues, through to the youngest members of his team. Meinolf Dierkes has been an inclusive force across national, disciplinary, and demographic boundaries. The Kolleg on Organizational Learning that he led for the Gottlieb Daimler and Karl Benz Foundation was a prime example of this: it included academics, managers and union representatives, from the most senior through to young doctoral students, drawn from 15 countries. If you were to walk into the offices of his teams over the years, and could compare them to the offices in which he learned from his own professors in Köln years ago, one great difference would strike you: Meinolf Dierkes broke with tradition and has invested heavily in developing women, not just men. Through his network-building he has launched creative and productive working relationships as well as special friendships. Meinolf Dierkes has contributed to intergenerational learning by being daring and by being demanding. He has expected a lot – and given a great, great deal.

Sigrun and Meinolf Dierkes

When we chose the topic of intergenerational learning for this event, Meinolf Dierkes said he was curious about it. Let us now share in his curiosity by listening to the ideas and reflections of our distinguished speakers, each of whom has thought about and practiced intergenerational learning in different ways and settings.

Transmitting Experience

What Generations Can Learn from Each Other

Helga Nowotny

In the hot summer days of 2006 an unusual exchange of views took place in the letters to the editor column of the *Financial Times*. Readers contributed to the question how the concept of the future and the past are expressed in different languages and cultures. While Western culture takes it for granted that the future – in space and in time – is before us and the past lies behind, this is not the case everywhere. In one of the letters a Western student of Mandarin described in vivid terms how his teacher had evoked the image of the chain of human beings standing in line. Those standing before us, she explained, gradually disappear, while those behind were following in our footsteps. It follows that the future clearly is behind us, while what we can observe as being before us is the vanishing past. The image of the queue in which we are standing conjures up not only images of past and future, but of generations as the go-between.

Another image comes to my mind, this time an old picture in the house of a friend of mine, who happens to be a sinologist. It shows a Chinese couple in dignified posture, each of whom is linked through a decorative line with their ancestor. My friend explained that many of such pictures existed. The Chinese, who had invented mass production, made sure that each couple who wished to be commemorated in this way, commissioned the painter to merely portray their faces on what otherwise was a standard, and indeed mass-produced, background. But there was something odd about the picture. At the point where the two lines met, there was the figure of only one ancestor – and he was male. In this stunning case of gender bias, genealogical knowledge clearly privileged the cultural and social concept of generation over its biological counterpart. But it also reminds us how each culture and society, each historical period has to come to terms in reconciling the prevailing biological and social definitions of what constitutes a generation and how the two are intertwined.

In her reconstruction of how the cultural divide between the natural sciences and the humanities arose in 19th century Germany, Sigrid Weigel rightly accords the concept of generation a key role. In its dual semantic, the concept of generation refers to both, the diachronic sequence that makes up family lineages, nations and species, and to the synchronic unity that binds individuals together as an age cohort or a generational community. Wilhelm Dilthey, by emphasizing the latter, chose generation as the key concept for constituting the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Generation became the equivalent to „eine von innen abmessende Vorstellung." The emphasis on the inner temporal measure for human life drew a sharp boundary not only towards the natural sciences, but also towards the emerging social sciences of his time, statistics and demography. It initiated the *Innerlichkeitsdiskurs* which remained the hallmark of the *Geisteswissenschaften* for a long time to come while setting a rigid demarcation towards the natural sciences. Karl Mannheim, the sociological reference for the concept of generation, was the sociological heir to Dilthey.

Today, in the age of biomedicine, genetics and biotechnology, we have all the more reason to go beyond any self-imposed *Innerlichkeit* and to inquire about the role of generations in our life. It is increasingly shaped by the life sciences and therefore worth a glimpse of the role that generations play there. Work in the lab is very much based on the reproduction cycles of fruit flies and other model organism – the shorter the life cycle, the less time it takes to do the experiment. The more generations an experiment can accommodate and follow, the more can be learned about evolution, for instance, how animals and plants under stress adapt across generations to changes in their environment.

But generations and what we can learn from them are not restricted to biology. They play an important part also in technology, where successive waves of generations of technologies strongly interact with the daily life of people. Like living organisms and humans, human-made artefacts also have their beginnings and adolescence. They enter maturity or adulthood before entering the stage that precedes obsolescence. Artificial as they may be, they are not independent from the social world in which they became firmly embedded. As students of the history of technology and of technogenesis know, initial conditions can be decisive in determining which bi- or multi-furcated technological trajectory will be taken in the end. Technologies can become "locked-in," a sort of freezing in a sub-

optimal way before reaching maturity. Students of technology have also studied assiduously the longer and shorter waves of technological and other innovations. Those who believe in recurrent cycles, also believe in generations.

Far from mimicking solely the processes of biological or cultural genesis, generations of technologies are strongly cross-linked with generations of users. This is what all grandparents quickly learn when observing with pride and envy the ease with which the young generation appropriates the necessary skill to play with the new technological toys. While the older generation may still remember the time when their family bought the first car, or when they boarded an airplane for the first time, it is now the first iPod, presented to them for their birthday by the grandchildren, that marks the arrival of a new technological generation encountering a new/old generation of users.

It has been estimated, although the estimate seems exaggerated, that the life of a 21-year-old entering the workforce today has, on average, included 5,000 hours of video game playing, exchange of 250,000 e-mails, instant messages and phone text messages (SMS) and close to 10,000 hours of phone use. The generational life of a technology is thus intimately bound up not only with its inventors and its entrepreneurs, but with those who adopt and use them, in this case the digital natives, those born to the world of technology whose native users they will become. In Schumpeter's time, the figure of the entrepreneur led the pack of those who followed on his heels. In today's technological world, permeated by an innovation craze, it befalls to the ubiquitous figure of the "user" to incrementally improve and thereby horizontally expand, whatever new uses a technology can be put to.

The point I want to make here is that everyone of us belongs to many and to many kinds of generations simultaneously. We interact and exchange with other generations in what I call intergenerational trading zones. In these intersections and interfaces the concept of generation reveals its double face: as diachronic and hence committed to some kind of continuity in transmitting whatever genetic and cultural, material or immaterial inheritance is at stake. The synchronic side of generation, however, includes all those who are bound together through common experience or important events that are assumed to have marked those who lived through them in a shared, similar way.

It is here, at these interfaces, that generational conflicts tend to crystallize and to erupt, when the proverbial revolt of the sons against the fathers takes place (the daughters may also rebel against their mothers, but do so in a less conspicuous, more individualistic way). These conflicts are commonly thought to be structured around a deliberate break of the continuum/continuity which the succession of generation implies. It is a revolt against the transmitted inheritance and the obligations it carries. Such generational divides, whether expressed in an individual or a collective way, emphasize the rejection of the inheritance. What counts is what one is against, not what is taken for granted. Given the fact that socialization is one of the most widely practiced and reliable means through which the next generation is introduced to and taught the norms, values and routines of social behaviour of the society and culture in which it will grow up, to rebel against and reject part of the inheritance transmitted through socialization, takes a deliberate act of will.

Yet without such open rejection, a reshuffling of the norms and values would not be possible. There would be no escape from the iron arm of tradition and no redefinition of identity could occur. Often, the reshuffling takes place by evoking a different vision of the future which is meant to legitimize the break with the values and aspirations of the parent generation. This may include the rediscovery of older traditions and values, like those supposedly held by the generation of the grandparents, thus moving upstream in the redefinition of identity. It may also occur by inventing the generational Other in an entirely novel way. Intergenerational trading zones are also places in which identitites are reshaped.

Intergenerational trading zones thus enable exchanges and interchanges that allow each generation to negotiate its freedom of choice, however constrained it might be under actual circumstances. Despite many setbacks and a continuing high degree of inequality, the history of humankind can be seen as moving slowly from the realm of fate into the realm of choice. Two institutions in particular have shaped the kind of choices available to each successive generation: liberal democracy and modern science and technology. Yet, the expansion of choice also exposes new risks and poses new dilemmas. Without these possibilities of breaking with the past, however, neither scientific and technological nor social innovation would be possible, nor would values be able to reconfigure.

There are two major arenas today that qualify for being accorded the status of being intergenerational trading zones. The first is brought about by the stunning lengthening of the human life span that has been achieved in the industrialized part of the world. Based on higher living standards, better overall hygienic measures, the ability of modern medicine and availability of health services to contain most infectious diseases from early childhood on, and, at least partly, the spread of more healthy life style and dietary regimes, the present older generation can expect to live an unprecedented longer and more healthy as well as active life.

This has repercussions on the younger generations as well. One is by now quite common experience of four generations being alive together at the same time. Another is that the lengthening of the overall life span brings with it a blurring of the boundaries of what were previously sharply defined stages of life. It means that adolescence is lengthened, bringing with it uncertainties unknown to previous generations. It also means that, at least under the current regime of working life, that the redistribution of work across the entire human life span might well become one of the major issues, if not one of the major problems, of the 21st century. If the 20th century can be called the century of the redistribution of income, the 21st may become the century dominated by the redistribution of work. While the older generation is being pushed out of work at a mandatory retirement age that was set more than one hundred years ago, the younger generation is either being pushed in under the somewhat ironic assumption that they are otherwise becoming too old or is simply left in a precarious, indefinite limbo.

Modern biomedecine has inaugurated another major change which has equally unprecedented, but even more dramatic effects on the exchanges between generations: the growing availability and use of assisted human reproduction. From in-vitro fertilization and surrogate motherhood, from pre-implantation diagnostics and other forms of increasingly sophisticated genetic screening methods, human reproduction assisted by appropriate medical technologies, can now be manipulated and delayed well beyond biologically determined limits. Moreover, the derivation of egg cells in vitro from the stem cells of mice conjures the decoupling of reproduction not only from sexuality, but from biological processes as they occur in nature.

For the relationship between generations the growing access to assisted human reproduction technologies brings with it a de-synchronization of the family as we have known it. Multiple lineages can be established more or less in parallel. Delaying motherhood beyond the biological limits is increasingly becoming a feasible option for women who wish to pursue their professional career. New kinship relationship arise among persons who are becoming genetically related in entirely novel ways. This includes families being formed among the descendents of a man who donated his sperm to several women or the possibility of being conceived with the sperm of a father who is already dead. Although these novel family patterns still form a tiny minority today, the technologies are there and will be used, creating further unforeseen and complex social relations.

Generations therefore become intermixed and intermingle in novel ways. Intergenerational trading zones multiply. What can the generations who meet there and mingle learn from each other? Let me preface what I want to say later on, by commenting on the way in which inheritance – the strong genetic link between generations – has come to be redefined in biology today. It is now taken to mean the transmission of information. Although inheritance occurs for the major part through DNA, is it increasingly recognized that other forms of transmission exist, notably through a process called epigenetics. This opens the door for transmitting information from one generation to the other not only through genetic links, but also through behavior and symbols, including what we call culture.

In order to understand and appreciate the proliferation of dimensions across which generations can transmit information, communicate and learn, we have to go beyond socialization as the prime social transmission channel between the older and the younger generation. Socialization is asymmetrical, since transmission largely flows in one direction only. Nor does it necessarily allow to transmit what is the most valuable and the most difficult – because most readily contested – information to transmit: experience.

Experience, Gaston Bachelard warned, is one of the greatest obstacles in the formation of the scientific mind (l'esprit scientifique). This is the case, he wrote, with "primary experience, experience placed before and above the criticism that is necessarily an integral element of the scientific mind."

Experience can thus form a stumbling block that the scientific mind has to unlearn if it wants to approach the world in an open way. At times, we all have to undo what experience has taught us to do. But experience undoubtedly also provides us, including the scientifically minded, with an orientation device that helps to navigate in the sea of aspirations, ambitions and uncertainties.

If it is to function in this way, experience has to be carefully screened and assessed. It has to be compared and fitted into a belief system that can make sense of the world in a hopefully empirically validated way. What counts perhaps most when exchanging experience between generations is twofold: first, the mutual respect for whatever is reported to be authentic experience and, second, to closely scrutinize this experience as to what can be learned from it. If nothing can be learned, experience remains hermeneutically closed to the one who has made it, as well as to others. It cannot be transmitted. The potential for the mutual learning of experience, however, consists in the peculiar balance that it harbors: between mistakes that were made and opportunities that were successfully exploited.

Experience, understood this way, is therefore closely related to risk-taking and to curiosity. Risk-taking must allow for mistakes to be made, since failure is always a possibility that must be reckoned with. And curiosity pushes some individuals towards exploring the edge of the territory that is known. They provide an invaluable service to the rest of the community, for when they fall off the cliff, the rest of us know where the cliff is. Transmitting experience between and across generations as the learning potential that is inherent to it then looses its asymmetry, since it no longer privileges only those who by living longer have had more opportunities to gather experience. Nor does it a priori privilege certain kinds of experience that at a given historical moment enjoy a greater value being attached to them. All experiences from which we can learn then become potentially equal in the benefit they may provide. The door is then pushed widely open for new experiences, including those that have never been made before. It puts trust into the younger generation and their ability not only to have novel experiences, but that we can learn from them. While we may feel at times that the older generation has failed to learn from us, we are offered the opportunity to do otherwise.

I started with contrasting the Western way of imagining the future being before us with the Non-Western view according to which the only thing we can see before us is the past. Generations are therefore both before and behind us. We are the link between them – a link which at the same time is genetic, cultural, social, and technological. Seen in yet another way, generations are the lynch pin that connects the many fabrics of social life. They are the transmitters and responders, the producers and users, the organizers and organized who continue to transmit what we can learn from each other. In his productive professional life which spanned several generations of students and collaborators, Meinolf Dierkes has set pioneering standards in exploring several of the issues that I have touched upon here. This is a special occasion to celebrate his work and the transmission of experience between generations.

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Academic Generations and Academic Mentorship

Neil J. Smelser

At this moment of honoring our esteemed colleague Meinolf Dierkes on the occasion of his retirement, it is especially fitting to speak of academic generations and the process of mentoring. I will say why it is fitting presently, but first I would like to delineate the scope of the topic as I read it. What I say will refer more to the social sciences and the humanities than the physical and natural science, because I know the former better than the latter. However, I hope what I say – even the autobiographical notes I will include – is generally applicable.

Two Meanings of Generations

To begin, I mention two meanings of academic generations, distinguishable but not frequently distinguished. The first is the idea that in its formative years a certain cohort of academics goes through a political or cultural period so distinctive or dramatic that it imposes a kind of time-fixed identity that persists as it marches through its life cycle. Several examples come to mind. In the United States the generation of the Great Depression of the 1930s was a disillusioned generation which at the same time held out liberal- and radical-based hopes for regeneration of a new society, often along socialist lines. In Germany that generation experienced a period of horror and destruction of intellectual life. The 1950s generation (my generation) was sobered and frightened by the Cold War, but at the same time somewhat self-satisfied if not conservative and certainly optimistic about the reformative potential of the social sciences. The 1960s generation was also disillusioned, idealistic, and inspirited by the potential of the social sciences, but for more radically transformative purposes. The only qualification I would place on the notion of a politically conditioned academic generation is that not everybody partakes of it; it is identifiable as a generation largely because a vocal and articulate minority makes itself heard, with most pursuing

their professional preparation and academic lives in conventional ways. Interesting and profound as this first conception of generation is, it is not the main focus in this essay.

The second meaning refers more to a continuous process or a series of recurring relationships between those more advanced and experienced in their careers and those who are their students or junior colleagues. This second meaning of "generation" is not time-specific with respect to historical moments or eras, but is a flow of experience between those more established and those less so. It is forever creating itself as new cohorts enter a field or discipline and, over time, themselves become responsible for welcoming and training – indeed, generating – cohorts "behind" them. Unlike the episodic reference of the first meaning, the second implies a continuous flow of interaction.

The second connotation also reveals both social-structural and social-psychological sides. The academic world is honeycombed with ranked roles reflecting stage of career, status and accomplishment – professor, associate professor, assistant professor, teaching assistant, graduate student, and undergraduate. These different roles mandate that their incumbents enter into senior-junior, trainer-trainee, teacher-student, and mentor-mentee relationships. These roles define in large part how we, as academics, go about our business. One result is that every individual who progresses through an academic career must hold all these roles – in succession – and must assume responsibilities for establishing relations with others at various times in the cycle. No one can escape this social-structural aspect.

We observe great differences in the structuring of mentorship. In the classical European pattern of one professor per faculty and many juniors, the superior-subordinate dimension was extreme. Historically the American pattern has been to end formal mentoring after the years of working on the doctorate, though the development of post-doctoral programs and occasional arrangements for support and guidance of junior faculty by senior faculty extend the principle beyond the graduate years. On both continents the mentor-mentee relationship has tended to evolve in a more egalitarian direction, with regional differences persisting. It has also become more complicated by gender changes in academia, with more women entering the ranks of both graduate students and faculty.

As a result, to the traditionally male-male mentor-mentee relationship we have added male-female, female-male, and female-female ones. Each has its distinctive problems and sensitivities. The female-male mentor-mentee relationship has probably proved the most difficult to absorb, because of its more extreme deviation from traditional patterns of authority in society.

The psychological dynamic refers to a complex of phenomena that go into senior-junior relationships, including socialization from one phase of professional life to the next, role modeling and identification, a balance between subordination and equality, a balance between dependence and independence, and a balance between solidarity and conflict. These phenomena will occupy most of my attention. I will lay out a general picture of the mentor-mentee relationship and give illustrations, some autobiographical. In that connection, I might mention that one of the nice things about a person in my career stage is that I have experienced – and have had to experience – every stage of the generational progression. One hopefully becomes an expert along the way.

The reason why my emphasis is fitting for this occasion is that I regard Meinolf Dierkes as a kind of *beau idéal* of mentors in this world. I cannot say what kind of student or mentee he was, because I did not know him in his early years. In his period of leadership at the WZB, and as I have observed him in action, he has been the quintessential mentor. He was an entrepreneur in mobilizing support for research, and for those whom he brought to his enterprises he consistently combined an insistence on discipline and tough-mindedness with respect and support for his colleagues and students. Many of the ideal qualities I will mention as I go along are embodied in Meinolf's style. In that regard my remarks are a salute to him.

Parent-Child as Helpful but Limited Analogy

Without pressing any particular psychological theory, it is nonetheless possible to think about the faculty-student or mentor-mentee as a recapitulation, in many important respects, of the relationship between parent and child. It is a "tilted" relationship in that senior party has much more experience, power, and influence than the junior. He or she also has some authority, exercised mainly through the evaluation of the quality of

the junior's work. Despite the narrowness of scope of that authority, it is often critical in determining the future career prospects of the student or mentee. The mentor-mentee relationship, like childhood socialization, involves the expectation that there is to be a movement from relative dependence to relative independence over time. Finally, because the mentor-mentee experience usually transpires after the mentee has established a level of independence from his or her family, this relationship between two adults – one older and more senior – is likely to excite feelings of ambivalence that both the mentor and mentee have inherited from their own childhood pasts. These inherited aspects, "external" to the relationship in many respects, must nevertheless be regarded as central to the dynamics of adult relationship and responsible for many of its frailties.

The crucial feature of the mentor-mentee relationship is that it is in certain respects a "throwback" to a relationship of dependency which the mentee has presumably "outgrown" as he or she enters and moves through the third and sometimes the fourth decades of life. In that sense the relationship is an unnatural one, a "regression" enforced upon a person who has otherwise matured. This circumstance often deepens the ambivalence, because the mentee must always feel, at one level, that he or she has really moved "beyond" dependency but is nevertheless thrust into a dependency relationship.

Furthermore, the dependency of the mentee is situated in very different circumstances from that of the child. This has to do with the kind of solidarity and commitment involved. The parent-child relationship is embedded in the solidarity of the family, to which, ideally, all members of the family are committed. Yet the family is fated to alter its character and ultimately experience metamorphosis and death as its young mature and form their own families and as its old die. In the case of mentor and mentee, both have already declared their commitment to the academic profession (and some discipline or sub-field within it), and this entails an over-arching solidarity and implied equality between them, despite differences in age, status, and power, and despite the continuous presence of mutual ambivalence and potential for conflict.

In reality, the life-experience of the mentee is not limited to a relation with one mentor, but to a family of mentors over time, perhaps several

at one time. These multiple relations, moreover, will produce different patterns of interaction. Reflecting on my own experience as a graduate student, I developed on-going relations with perhaps a half-dozen mentors other than the principal director of my dissertation work. The relationship with each was selective. In some cases it was largely instrumental – for example, supervising my preparation in a specific field for my orals. In another case I had a good intellectual relationship with a very senior mentor, but stayed away from involving him directly in my work, because I was aware of his tendency to develop demanding and authoritarian, even neurotic relations with his subordinates. With still others I maintained a friendly personal relationship with faculty members who were supportive but were not involved directly in my research. And with a few I developed what might be called a negative mentor relationship, preferring not to involve them in my work or emulate them in any way. This diversity of relationship is typically not calculated. It develops according to the availability of mentors and to the interests and needs of the mentee in a particular phase of development.

The mentor-mentee relationship thus emerges as a generally positive relation, which, however, is often fraught with tensions and potential instability. It simultaneously incorporates equality and inequality, independence and dependence, subordination and individuation, and solidarity and conflict. All these themes will emerge and re-emerge as I proceed. At this point I only note that, if the relationship is to be successful and not derailed, it requires the greatest sensitivity on both sides. Most of the negotiating around its uncertainties transpires, moreover, without coming into the open. Most mentees remember their mentors fondly and accentuate the positive in later life, often reminiscing sentimentally about their mentors with fellow mentees. But this benign and selective remembering should not conceal the complexities of the relationship.

Respect and Honesty

There are two especially salient moments in the mentor-mentee relationship. The first is in the forming of the relationship, typically at the beginning of the dissertation – though other mentors may play a role at any stage of a student's career. The second moment is typically when the dissertation is completed and the student is "placed" in a post-doctoral or junior faculty position. In both moments the issues of respect and honesty

are crucial. In both, however, we frequently observe a world that is less than perfect.

Ideally, the formation of a mentor-mentee relationship should involve mutual desire, consent, and respect. On occasion this ideal is attained, but too often it is not. Two pitfalls threaten the ideal, and both involve ingratiation. On the side of the mentor, he or she may court or compete for students and mentees as a part of his or her own professional ambition and desire for followers. In many respects this is a confession of weakness – excessive narcissism – which students are surely likely to perceive, even though they may succumb to the seduction. If a faculty member courts students whom he or she does not respect intellectually – or know well enough to respect – he or she is asking for various kinds of trouble, such as spending a great deal of time bringing up the quality of mediocre work, approving marginal dissertations out of weariness or frustration, and having difficulty in honestly sponsoring students subsequently. On the side of the mentee, some students may choose advisors out of motives of believing that they will be better placed professionally if they work with a famous person, out of fear of other faculty members, or out of a belief that a prospective supervisor is a soft touch.

Many of these issues emerge in the formation of a relationship and they work against establishing trust and honesty in it. If, on the other hand, the relationship is formed on the bases of known common intellectual interests and mutual respect, the probability of a fruitful supervision and collaboration is enhanced. Respect and trust are the necessary conditions for the faculty member to give hard-hitting but constructive criticism and for the student to react to it without feeling personally demeaned. Mutual respect and trust also assure that the learning process between mentor and mentee is a two-way process.

The second critical moment is leaving the relationship and formally ending the role as student and mentee. Typically this occurs when the mentee takes a junior faculty position elsewhere. Normally there is an informal understanding – almost a contract – between mentor and mentee that, if the former takes the latter on, he or she is committed to provide consistent and positive support for the student at the moment of placement in a career position and even later. If, however, the mentor has not sustained a consistent respect for the student, this flaws the process. The

completely brave and honest mentor would explain to the student exactly what he or she believes the student merits by way of placement and will support the student in some applications and not others. This seldom happens. The mentor usually withholds his or her "honest" opinion of the mentee from the mentee, and engages in subterfuges such as writing strong letters to weak institutions and weak letters to strong institutions – out of interest in protecting his or her own credibility – or to write letters in codes that communicate explicit enthusiasm but implicit reservations. (This latter effect has become exaggerated where laws and administrative procedures give candidates access to letters of recommendation.) We are all familiar with these codes, but I am afraid that they are not entirely noble, representing as they do self-protective devices on the part of mentors.

Generational Solidarity and Generational Conflict

Reconsider for a moment to the first meaning of academic generation – a cohort of students that lives through a period so decisive in its training phase that a distinct theoretical (and sometimes ideological) stamp is made on them. Three consequences are evident:

- As part of the process of generational stamping, the affected generation as often as not rejects the dominant outlook of their seniors – in economics, the Keynesians rejected the neoclassicists, the supply-siders rejected the Keynesians; in sociology the neo-radicals of the 1960s rejected their functionalist teachers; in political science, the behaviorists rejected traditional political theorists in the 1950s, and the rational-choice theorists rejected the political institutionalists in the 1980s and 1990s. This is generational conflict proper and is one of the bases for the solidification of competing schools in academic disciplines.

- As another part of generational stamping, the affected generation develops a certain solidarity within itself, reflecting itself in a distinctive set of intellectual commitments.

- Finally, in defining themselves at least in part in opposition to their elders, the affected generation assumes the posture that they have got it right, and make an attempt to recreate their generation's outlook on subsequent groups of students, thus setting the stage for still another episode of generational turmoil.

This generational dynamic, repeated and repeated, is an important ingredient in the evolution of knowledge in the social sciences. The positive side of the dynamic is that it keeps a field of knowledge moving and not falling into self-satisfaction. The negative side is that each generation chooses to impose a set of blinders on itself, both by adopting its own worldview and by rejecting that of the prior generation. In all events we cannot expect this dynamic to weaken in the foreseeable future.

Returning to the individual relationship between mentor and mentee, we find additional bases for a tug-of-war between solidarity and conflict that derive from the relationship itself. I have already mentioned the ambivalence that arises from the imposition of a delayed dependency relationship into which the mentee is more or less coerced. On the side of the mentor, he or she is torn between the hope that the mentee's work will be an extension of him or her and between the expectation that the mentor should support and nurture the independent growth of the mentee. Both these aspects make for the potential of conflict.

Another institutionalized expectation – evident throughout the social sciences and elsewhere as well – is that a scholar makes his or her name and reputation through some kind of original discovery, formulation, or theoretical statement. The operative word is "original." It is through ingenuity and the production of sound work that reputations are fashioned. It stands to reason, moreover, that simply to carry forward and elaborate a mentor's work does not measure high on the originality scale. As a result there is a constant push toward being different and novel. Furthermore, the drive on the part of the "arriving" scholar to "set himself off" from his or her mentor in an original way can be generative of conflict between them.

This dynamic of self-realization and reputation-building through original research and publication also has both positive and negative sides. On the one side it also keeps a field dynamic, fostering as it does the search for the new; as such it is a mechanism of constant renewal growth, richness, and change. On the other side it encourages the emergence of forced or artificial originality – generating spurious polemics, renaming old ideas and principles in new and more fetching language, and producing academic "fads and foibles" that make a small splash for a short time, only to fall into the world of the inconsequential and unremembered.

Delicate Issues: Challenging and Leaving

Under this heading of challenging the mentor and ultimately establishing independence, I ask indulgence for being mainly autobiographical in my illustrative episodes. These exemplify general principles and offer more vivid illustration of them than would hypothetical examples.

The starting-point is that, in the nature of the case, neither the mentor nor the mentee can be right all the time as the two work together. In their relationship, however, tilted as it is, there is a presumption that the mentor, being more experienced and being the mentor, will offer guidance, advice, recommendations, and ultimately approval to the mentee. It is also expected that the mentee will not normally return the favor. At the same time, the mentor's own work and ideas are subject to limitations. It also stands to reason that some of the mentor's advice and suggestions to the mentee will be off the mark and challengeable.

Ideally, this point of tension is usually resolved by mutual restraint – by the mentor's presentation of suggestions as such and not as ultimata, and by the mentee's negotiation of reasonable responses to mentors' efforts to direct. Sometimes, however, matters come more into the open, and here is where I would like to present a few autobiographical episodes.

The principal mentor in my life was Talcott Parsons, the American theorist who in the 1950s (the period of my graduate training and collaboration with him) was regarded as the most eminent and perhaps the most formidable theorist in sociology. I began my graduate work at Harvard in 1954. I had previously taken courses with Parsons as an undergraduate, he and I both knew from the beginning of my graduate work that I would be working principally with him, and this included direction of my dissertation. Prior to my beginning work on the dissertation, however, Parsons invited me to collaborate with him as co-author in writing the book *Economy and Society*. This invitation was a most important moment in my life. The collaboration grew out of the circumstances that Parsons had delivered the Marshall Lectures on sociological and economic theory at Cambridge University in 1953, and that I had been studying economics at Oxford and was in many respects more *au courant* with the field than he.

Our collaboration lasted through the academic year 1954–55. Though I was to be defined as co-author, I was clearly the junior one (and mentee)

because Parsons was a giant and I was a fledgling graduate student. Most of the collaboration was a positive and productive process, with many conversations between us leading to a division of labor in preparing first drafts, followed by comments and rewriting. On one large point, however, there emerged in my mind an issue could not be solved without a more or less open challenge. That issue had to do with Parsons' writing style. As many of you know, Parsons was legendary for his abstract and obscurantist prose, particularly in his theoretical writings. His drafts for chapters of *Economy and Society* were no exception. I was aware of this but did not know exactly what to do about it. For reasons I have never been able to figure out, one day I asked him if I could "try my hand" at rewriting an early chapter of the book. Parsons agreed, and was satisfied with my efforts. Thereupon I proceeded to rewrite every chapter in the book, altering the exposition substantially in all cases. Parsons never really challenged me on this – I have never figured this out completely, either – except on one occasion when he said he had shown my efforts to his daughter (also a sociologist) and she thought I had gone "too far." But he didn't ask me to change anything.

Reflecting back on the matter, I believe that one reason I undertook this potentially foolish and dangerous challenge was that – without either of us acknowledging or saying it – a level of mutual intellectual trust had developed between us, and that established a bed of security in the relationship, a bed that could withstand this unlikely challenge from an upstart. Interestingly, Parsons and I remained silent on this moment of our collaboration during our 25 years of friendship after the collaboration.

A subsequent challenge to Parsons had to do with commencing my own career as a young faculty member in 1958. Up to that point I had been more or less completely in Parsons' shadow. As I was completing my thesis – under his supervision – I began the standard search for academic appointments. As a good mentor should do, Parsons wrote extremely strong letters of support for me to several institutions to which I applied. At the same time, Harvard also offered me an assistant professorship, and I knew Parsons wanted me to take it. I also knew that he had an agenda for me as well – to continue as his chief lieutenant in advancing his "theory of action" in my own research and in various intellectual circles in and around Harvard. I was very much aware of this, and very uncomfortable at continuing to be "Parsons's boy" in any sense of the

word, and that circumstance figured significantly in my choice of Berkeley, at the other end of the land, over Harvard.

Parsons made no secret of his hopes that I would stay, and at one moment of candor in the midst of his persuasive efforts, I told him that one of my attractions to Berkeley was that it was an opportunity for me to "set up my own shop." Parsons heard me, but said nothing. I did in fact go to Berkeley, and from there did establish my distance and identity with much less effort and confrontation. I can say in retrospect that Parsons was less than the perfect mentor (he was ideal in most other respects) because he wanted to freeze me into a mentor-mentee relationship that was obviously important and gratifying to him, but at the same time would impede my inevitable march toward independence.

I can also report two occasions on which I was seriously challenged subsequently as mentor. The first involves a male graduate student – I was chair of his dissertation committee – who, in the 1970s, undertook to study a hippie "pad" in San Francisco. His problem, as we fashioned it, was this: how did this urban commune, which declared that it would maintain a completely rule-free house, deal with internal difficulties and disruptions that would seem to call for the invocation of norms? As the research proceeded, however, my student became more and more enamored of the lifestyle of his subjects, and even moved into the pad. The written materials he submitted to me were appreciative and mindless recitations of the counter-cultural ideology of the day. I knew immediately and certainly that this was not acceptable dissertation material. In this case I resorted to a strategy I had never used before and never used after. I called a meeting between him and the entire dissertation committee and we informed him, collectively, that unless his thesis involved analysis, not simply advocacy, it could not be approved. Under this threat the student capitulated and produced a thesis that was ultimately deemed satisfactory.

The second challenge came in the 1990s from an ardent feminist graduate student working on the status of emotion in sociological theory. She was extremely talented. She chose me to be her principal thesis supervisor – out of general respect, I suppose, because she knew that I did not embrace her special polemic. The supervision proved to be very difficult, because, despite all my efforts, she reacted to even minor critical com-

ments very negatively, interpreting them as my deliberate efforts to oppose her position, to derail her from her purpose, and to control her work. She also demanded frequent and positive feedback from me. In this case hard work and patience seemed the only realistic strategy available to me, and over a long period I engaged in an educational effort to make explicit what my intended role as mentor was – helpful rather than directive or destructive when I criticized – and how responding to criticisms was in her interest. Over a long period of time our relationship evolved into a more cooperative one, and a good thesis was produced.

The main moral to be drawn from these instances of challenge is this: the mentor-mentee relationship can be fruitful but is also fragile, ambivalent, and demanding of sustaining and repair work. In the two instances of challenge to me as mentor, the easiest route for me – and I was tempted – would have been to tell the candidates that I was not the person for them and they should seek another supervisor. In retrospect I am glad I did not do this, but I would be less than honest if I did not admit that I was taxed, and had to work as much with my own impatience as with the challenge at hand.

From Mentee to Mentor

Like so many episodes that are associated with a given stage of the life cycle, the mentor-mentee relationships is meant to be one of varying but definitely finite duration. It is most salient in the student and training phases of professional development. If it becomes permanent or quasi-permanent, it blocks the development of the mentee and becomes the source of accumulating frustration and discontent. The principle of sunset is an essential feature of the mentoring relationship. In addition to the expectation of temporal limitation, there is also the principle in academia that those who are mentees at one career stage become mentors thereafter if they continue in the roles of teaching and research in their own fields. They become the mentors of future students, who themselves go through the same cycle. In the end such cycles are dictated by the exigencies of continuous re-socialization and the finiteness of human life. They are a constant feature in the evolution of knowledge.

For those who reach the stage of becoming mentors, their style is the product of many complex determinants in their earlier life, including their

own childhood experience and its derived attitudes toward authority. One of those determinants is how they themselves experienced the mentoring relationship in their young years. In this connection role modeling becomes salient. Those who have undergone a successful mentoring experience are better equipped to be mentors. In my own case, Parsons' very positive qualities – his interest in my work, his intellectual respect, and his support of my career – all became features that I valued and emulated in various ways. The one resolve I did make, however, was to take great care not to demand that my students become anything like clones, emulators, or advocates of my own intellectual approach and commitments in their dissertations and subsequent work. This resolution was consistent with my own personal outlook on life, but also was, I suppose, a reaction to my quiet struggle for independence from Parsons, a man with a heroic intellectual mission who supposed and hoped that his students would remain part of that mission.

Concluding Remark

If you expect a single conclusion or set of conclusions to emerge from the reflections I have ventured, then I am surely going to disappoint. What I have tried to emphasize in all my remarks about the generations and the mentoring process is full of ambiguities, contingencies, and ambivalences. The process continues to generate both successes and failures, but because of all the uncertainties, it is difficult to foresee whether and how any given mentor-mentee relationship will work or misfire. It can be said with certainty, however, that if it succeeds it is the product of some kind of genius and artistry on both sides, as well as a large component of luck.

Historians and Generational Learning

The Case of the German Sonderweg

Gerald D. Feldman

The field of history, like most branches of knowledge, operates with paradigms and concepts that are debated and passed on generationally and intergenerationally. A particularly outstanding example is the so-called German *Sonderweg*. The *Sonderweg* refers to Germany's alleged historical "special path" that began at least with the Bismarckian Empire and produced a failure of political and liberal democracy and the triumph of National Socialism. The concept with all its attendant implications for the analysis of German history took hold at the beginning of the 1960s among historians of modern Germany in Germany and abroad, and while never uncontested and often seriously challenged, remained a dominant paradigm until fairly recently. It is thus a useful subject for a discussion of intergenerational learning in a field where the passage of time and generations obviously has a central place.

Is the *Sonderweg*, as a colleague of mine of my generation, James Sheehan of Stanford University recently put it, a "Paradigm Lost?" Have I and this colleague imparted this idea of the *Sonderweg* to hundreds of undergraduates and a substantial number of graduate students, most of whom hold teaching positions, only now to find it relegated to the trash heap of historiography? Then there are all the books and articles that have been written spiced with *Sonderweg* ideas. Having been in the history business for over forty years, I have been engaged in more than a little intergenerational teaching and instruction and can reasonably entertain the suspicion that my discussions of the *Sonderweg* have found some place on the mental back burners if not further forward in the minds of students and readers. Has this been for good or for ill, and what is, or should be, the fate of a paradigm at once born of generational experience and then repeatedly imparted by successive generations in various forms? It is in the nature of the historical profession to be as concrete as possible in dealing with such questions, indeed, any questions, and what

I intend to do here is to discuss by illustration the various generational permutations and combinations that characterized the transmission of the *Sonderweg*.

Needless to say, the concept itself is something of an absurdity since every nation has its own special path, including my own country, the reduction of whose exceptionalism might be rather welcome these days. Furthermore, the original notion of a German *Sonderweg* was not invented by the Hamburg historian Fritz Fischer or the Bielefelders, the most noted of whom were Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Jürgen Kocka, but rather by conservative historians of the pre-1933 period. They praised Germany for being unique in the sense that it did not follow the path of the West to liberal parliamentary democracy but rather created its own constitutional forms based on a strong executive and corporatist institutions. Some of this even lived on after 1945 in a conservative but anti-Nazi historian like Gerhard Ritter of the University of Freiburg – not to be confused with Gerhard A. Ritter – who blamed National Socialism on mass democracy and mass politics. He viewed these as alien to the German political and cultural tradition. It was the break with what he understood to be the German *Sonderweg* that forced Germany to go astray.

A somewhat similar if less conservative posture was taken by the eminent Friedrich Meinecke, whose *Deutsche Katastrophe* of 1946 reflected a deep ambivalence about German constitutionalism and the trajectory of the Kaiserreich. He had devoted much of his work to exploring the intellectual and spiritual origins of the Bismarckian State and remained suspicious of mass democracy. After 1945, he urged Germans to seek their roots and identity in German Enlightenment humanism embodied in the figure of Goethe. This was not exactly heady stuff that such representatives of the older generation of historians were offering, and there were others who realized that other roads had to be taken.

Oddly enough, it was precisely those older historians who had very nationalist pedigrees and who were even tainted by National Socialist ideas who greatly influenced a newer generation of historians and political scientists to take a fresh look at German history or at least to deal with National Socialism and its problems. One of those in the conservative-nationalist camp who falls into this category was Hans Rothfels, a great admirer of Bismarck and the Prussian conservative tradition, who had to

leave Germany because of his Jewish origins and who returned from the United States to produce distinguished work on the German resistance to Hitler and, most importantly, to found the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich. Not only did Rothfels nurture historians later identified with the left like Hans Mommsen but he also encouraged study of the Nazi regime.

Yet another case was Theodor Schieder of the University of Cologne, some of whose *völkisch* writings during the war have created something of a scandal in recent years, but who produced outstanding studies of the nation state and took a very liberal stand in the post-1945 period. He promoted the work of an extraordinary group of subsequently prominent historians of liberal inclination, among them Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Wolfgang Mommsen, and Lothar Gall.

A third such older historian of great influence was Werner Conze, who did his Ph. D. with Rothfels and whose wartime writings in agrarian history were extremely problematic. Nevertheless, he did perhaps more than any other German historian of his generation when teaching at Heidelberg after the war to promote social history and a social historical approach to political history. He was a founder of the extremely influential Arbeitskreis für moderne Sozialgeschichte in Heidelberg which became a central meeting point for social historians from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Finally, let me mention three other historians of the prewar generation whose influence was very powerful after the war. One was Hans Herzfeld of the Free University of Berlin, who has some similarities to Rothfels in having been a staunch conservative nationalist who lost his position after 1933 because of having a Jewish grandfather, and who resumed teaching in 1950. Among his students was Gerhard A. Ritter, who gained fame for his work on the SPD in the Kaiserreich and subsequently as professor in Münster and then in Munich produced a host of important social historians, among them Jürgen Kocka and Klaus Tenfelde, now at Bochum University. The two other historians to be noted here were émigrés who greatly influenced postwar German historiography, Hajo Holborn and Hans Rosenberg, both of whom studied under Meinecke, and concerning whose postwar correspondence and relationship with Meinecke Gerhard

A. Ritter is presenting a paper at the Deutsche Historikertag in Konstanz this very afternoon.

Holborn, an intellectual and political historian and an expert on constitutional history, worked for the OSS, the forerunner of the CIA. He was significantly engaged in the American occupation policies after 1945 and held a chair at Yale University until his death in 1969. He trained two of the most eminent American historians of Germany, Gordon Craig and Leonard Krieger, both of whom had served in the OSS and, especially in the case of Craig, became important linkers between the postwar German and American historical professions. Hans Rosenberg, in contrast to Holborn, spent most of his emigration teaching at Brooklyn College before coming to Berkeley in 1958, but he played an immense role in 1950 as a guest professor at the Free University, where he taught an amazingly influential seminar that included such leading lights of postwar German historiography as Gerhard A. Ritter and Otto Büsch. Subsequently, Berkeley became a place of pilgrimage for another generation of historians heavily influenced by his work, for example, Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Jürgen Kocka, Rosenberg thus serving in a sense as the godfather of the so-called Bielefeld School.

One can go on and on about these generational influences and interconnections and the intersections of personal and historical backgrounds that strongly influenced postwar German historiography. In my own case, for example, Fritz Stern, another émigré historian and perhaps the best known of them all these days, was my teacher at Columbia, where I was an undergraduate, while my mentors at Harvard were the eminent diplomatic history William L. Langer and Franklin L. Ford, whose specialty was early modern France but who, like Langer, was in the wartime Office of Strategic Services. The OSS was filled with German and Austrian émigré historians and political scientists who, in their spare time, hotly debated such matters as the role of proportional representation in the downfall of the Weimar Republic. While the purpose of the OSS was of course to fight the war against Germany with experts, it also became a kind of graduate school in German history and political science. When I came to Berkeley in 1963, my senior colleague was Hans Rosenberg, and it was through him that I developed connections with many of the postwar German historians I have mentioned and was influenced by their work.

The question here, of course, is what consequences these intergenerational interconnections had for intergenerational learning about German history, and for the propagation of the so-called *Sonderweg*. This is a subject that can only be treated somewhat superficially here since it is very complex. Obviously, some of those who returned to teach history at the German universities after 1945 – Schieder, Conze, Rothfels, Herzfeld – had to undertake a transformation of their own beliefs and paradigms, and while they never were really called upon to account for their pasts and their politics, they did have to make and successfully made an accommodation to the values and at least some of the ideas of a liberal and democratic Germany. These tasks were made easier by the Cold War and a general hostility to Communism.

Thus, the generation that took up the task of teaching had first to learn itself and had to realize that there were some things best not transmitted. Herzfeld, for example, had written a book on the role of the Social Democrats in the disintegration of the German home front during the First World War, a very good and informative study, I might add. However, it was best to deal with Social Democracy in another way after 1945 and certainly would not have been wise to propagate the stab-in-the-back legend. Obviously there was also not much of a market for discussions of Germany's "mission" in the East, which had basically been reduced to fleeing or being driven out to the West.

Whatever the angle taken, the task of the generation of teachers of returning war veterans like Ritter or Karl Dietrich Bracher or other historical stars-to-be had to be to take the disastrous course of German history into account and train their students in the historical methods and types of historical inquiry needed to deal with German history's problems. The emphasis on professionalism is important since there was a type of *Sonderweg* thesis floating about which almost everyone rejected, namely, the Luther to Hitler school of thought. It was represented at the professional level by A. J. P. Taylor, whose *Course of German History*, first published in 1945, quite simply argued that German history had run its inevitable and logical course in that year, and at the more influential journalistic level by William L. Shirer's *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, published in 1960, which had an extraordinarily wide readership. It was subsequently to have a short-lived reappearance in the work of Daniel Goldhagen, whose notorious book reflected intergenerational learning of

the worst sort, namely, transforming the views of his father into a very flawed historical effort.

These, however, were easy targets, and there were more subtle generational tactics for accommodating present needs while remaining reverential to the past. Rothfels, with his support for *Zeitgeschichte* is a particularly interesting illustration of this. On the one hand, he encouraged the study of the Nazi period and the Weimar Republic and even the Holocaust. On the other hand, he rejected all notions of a *Sonderweg* and insisted that *Zeitgeschichte* had to be studied in a certain isolation from what came before and that the problems of the recent past be viewed from the perspective of the faults of secular modernity. This was not a path followed by his students and younger colleagues and in what Wolfgang Sauer once called a "revolt of the Assistenten," people like Karl Dietrich Bracher, Sauer himself, and Gerhard Schulz, all formally political scientists, it is worth noting, insisted on going back in time and also on criticizing the role played by conservatives in the collapse of German democracy and the rise of Hitler.

The alternative to building a wall around *Zeitgeschichte* was to break it down, and this was the path taken by Fritz Fischer of the University of Hamburg, whose past was by no means untainted since he entertained National Socialist views before sharply breaking with them. It is often overlooked that Fischer had studied theology and that some of his most important work was done on German Lutheranism and the Evangelical Church, which he charged with promoting authoritarianism in Germany. It was his famous *Griff nach der Weltmacht* of 1961 which, in my view, really launched the *Sonderweg* thesis. Not only did Fischer argue that Germany was responsible for the First World War, but also that there was continuity between German war aims in the two world wars and that the roots of these continuities lay in the *Kaiserreich*.

Whatever the flaws in Fischer's work, and there are quite a few, his book was an important and controversial event, leading to sharp conflicts within the older generation, especially between Fischer and Gerhard Ritter. Fischer did found a school and produced a generation of historians very loyal to him and to his arguments. Here the generational learning was direct or more or less unambiguous, and it had its pluses and minuses. The pluses were very clear in that it pushed forward the investiga-

tion of themes and problems previously neglected – the role of interest groups, for example. The minuses were that Hamburg became a kind of Fischerite fortress, whose devotees often had to find jobs abroad and were somewhat isolated. Also, Fischer was anything but methodologically innovative, so that his school was burdened with what was at times a rather unimaginative positivism and literalism that revealed some of the flaws in the *Sonderweg* thesis.

In the last analysis, the indirect and less radical transmission of generational learning, knowledge and methods may have proven more effective than the kind of direct transmission reflected in the case of Fischer. This may help to explain why Schieder, Rothfels, Herzfeld, Holborn, and Rosenberg proved so successful in promoting the development of a new generation of historians, as did Gerhard A. Ritter subsequently. Furthermore, what made the *Sonderweg* so effective and convincing as a basic argument was not its function as a polemic for *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* but rather as a mass of empirical work, some of it quite conventional methodologically, which added up to a powerful case that there had been developments in German history that were unfortunate and lived on to feed into the disasters of 1933–1945. In intellectual history, for example, there was Hajo Holborn's study of *German Idealism in the Light of Social History*, Leonard Krieger's great work on the *German Idea of Freedom*, and Fritz Stern's study of the *Politics of Cultural Despair* and his work on the weaknesses and failures of German liberalism. This complemented the findings of Ralf Dahrendorf's influential *Society and Democracy in Germany*. In military history, there was Gordon Craig's *Politics of the Prussian Army*.

In sum, there was a spate of work in the 1950s and 1960s which established a consensus that Germany suffered from a tradition of anti-liberalism, anti-modernity, and militarism which separated its development from that of the western nations, above all England, France, and the United States, and that it was the task of historians to explore why this was the case. Persons like myself who began studying history in the mid-1950s and made their careers in the 1960s were nurtured by these persons and this literature, and we transmitted this to our students with as much vim and vigor as we could muster. There was, therefore, a generationally transmitted *Sonderweg* before the *Sonderweg* and before the so-called Bielefeld School.

This said, there were both methodological and conceptual pretensions and claims connected with the *Sonderweg* that played an important role in giving the *Sonderweg* position its very special character here in Germany. Of central importance was the influence of American social science, modernization theory, and the role and influence of Hans Rosenberg both in Germany and at Berkeley. The central locus was at Bielefeld where Hans-Ulrich Wehler, who taught there from 1971 to 1996, and Jürgen Kocka, who taught there from 1973 to 1988, held sway and established what became known as the Bielefeld School based on seminars known for their methodological rigor. They were strongly influenced by Rosenberg. Although a student of Meinecke and, in his younger years, the producer of important works on early 19th century political thinkers and nationalists, Rosenberg turned his back on intellectual history and traditional political history even before his emigration but especially in the United States.

Probably influenced by the Great Depression, as well as by his reading of Kondratieff and other cyclical theorists, he turned his attention to the importance of business cycles and especially the *Great Depression of 1873–1896*, which he used as a framework for explaining Germany's illiberal turn under Bismarck, the development of anti-Semitism, the rise of protectionism and interest group politics, and numerous other untoward developments. He combined this fervor about the key role of economics with a turn to social history and the social history of politics reflected in his famous study of 1958, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy, and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience 1660–1815*, a monumental analysis of the formation of the Prussian state that was deeply critical of the entire tradition of pro-Prussian historiography and filled with a seething hatred of the Prussian Junkers.

Heavily influenced by Max Weber, especially as transmitted via Talcott Parsons, Rosenberg abandoned traditional narrative analysis and urged historians to read and learn from the social sciences. Neil Smelser will be happy to know that Rosenberg considered Smelser's 1959 study of *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An application of Theory to the British Cotton Industry* a "must" for all his graduate students and younger colleagues, that is, me.

In any case, the Bielefelders took up this agenda, Wehler striving to create a *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* that rested primarily on economic and social analysis, Kocka addressing the problems of industrial organization and social groups in industrial development. They, especially Wehler, quite consciously rejected narrative history, biography, and other traditional forms of historiography. There was a no less conscious rejection of the older and more conservative German tradition that stressed the primacy of foreign policy and Germany's vulnerability as "das Land der Mitte." In their approaches, they were also reacting to the problems of the Cold War and a divided Germany. Thus, Wehler, who had written on American imperialism, was strongly influenced by the Cold War revisionists in the United States and elsewhere, which only reinforced the stress on the primacy of domestic policy. Although unjustly accused by some of being Marxists, Wehler, Kocka, and the Bielefelders were, as I have suggested, far more Weberians than Marxists, but they were obviously influenced by Marxism and certainly of a social democratic temperament.

Indeed, much of their work has to be understood in the context of the struggle with the historiography of the GDR and the pervasive presence of GDR propaganda and arguments for what become known as state monopoly capital (Stamokap) as the root of all Germany's ills. In response, the Bielefelders and their sympathizers posited instead the idea of a polyvalent capitalism that could attach itself to practically any political system. Above all, they picked Rudolf Hilferding's idea of Germany having an "organized capitalism" and called, very fruitfully I think, for the investigation of real existing capitalism and its workings as an alternative to Marxist-Leninist historiography.

At the time, this appeared to be a struggle for the hearts and minds of the coming generation, and I think that the battles that raged then in connection with the *Sonderweg* and over its methodological claims and pretensions was indeed a generational phenomenon in which German historians and their students successively struggled to deal with the problems of the German past and present. The *Sonderweg* thesis was a powerful and, I think, necessary paradigm in dealing with the threats posed by the *Historikerstreit* and other turns in politics and historiography that threatened to undermine the present historical underpinnings of German democratic legitimacy. This left plenty of room for favorite Bielefeld themes, the alleged "feudalization" of the German middle class, the per-

sistence of "pre-industrial values," Germany's incapacity to conduct anything but a revolution from above, etc.

As the saying goes, however, the *Sonderweg* ain't what it used to be. Quite aside from the fact that the *Sonderweg* was never as widely accepted as one might think despite its function as a dominant paradigm for German history, it was strongly criticized for both what it claimed to do and what it failed to do. Not only was it attacked from the very outset by the eminent historian Thomas Nipperdey for being too teleological and narrowly focused, but it was also criticized by left-wing British historians, Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn. They not only made the conventional criticism that every country has its own *Sonderweg* but also suggested that not every bourgeois revolution or society had to look alike and that Germany had a bourgeois society before 1914 and that there was nothing intrinsically superior or wonderful about the so-called Western models.

At the same time, the *Sonderweg* historiography was filled with missing issues, studiously neglecting religion, for example, and issues of gender. Also, some of the basic notions on which the *Sonderweg* rested have simply not held up in research. Studies of the voting behavior of Germans in the crisis of 1930–1933 proved distressing in showing that National Socialism was not really supported by the so called new middle class and that important segments of the working class did vote for the Nazis. Finally, the *Sonderweg* can no longer function as a left alternative to Marxism since anyone who would argue for Stamokap today belongs in a museum.

Before treating the *Sonderweg* as an almost purely generational phenomenon, useful in its time, certainly fruitful, but really passé when it comes to the present needs of historical research and writing, it is I think worth thinking about the present state of the historiography. Some historians these days question the possibility of writing a master narrative and argue for the decentering, whatever that exactly means, of historical analysis. This is not the place to start swimming in the heavy waters of debates about postmodernism. I would submit that there is something special about the years 1933-1945, and matters become worse, the more we know about National Socialism. Furthermore, we know an immense amount more because of the opening of new archives and recent research, the more monumental the regime and its crimes seem to grow

and the more they overwhelm efforts to escape the need for a master narrative and the quest for a paradigm, which is not to say they have to be a teleological.

Of course, one can say that people may be sick and tired of asking what makes this history different from other histories and that the time has come, on the one hand, to turn to other issues and methods, transnational history, for example, which is after all of some significance in an allegedly united Europe, and, on the other hand, to terminate the self-flagellation, especially given what is going on in the world today and what has gone on in the past. The latter position has, in fact, been argued recently at a Hessian CDU meeting by Arnulf Baring, who termed the Nazi dictatorship to be a "bedauernswerte Entgleisung," urged that Germans become more patriotic and more appreciative of their century-long industriousness and peacefulness. He went on to deny that there was any popular support for Hitler and denied any uniqueness to the Holocaust. One may argue that Baring is a generational problem himself that will be solved by the traditional biological method, but then that is true for all of us, and that the issue of what we transmit and how we transmit it and what is received and how it is received remain central to the problems we are discussing today.

How Did We Become a Learning Generation?

Julian Dierkes

Almost all learning occurs intergenerationally in some sense. My focus here is on learning that occurs between academic generations, in other words, cohorts of academics that are considered by others and themselves to constitute a distinct group. This perspective corresponds to Karl Mannheim's classic conceptualization of a "generation." I argue that identifiable generations seem to emerge on the basis of four social processes: perception by others, self-identification, a generational experience, and deliberate efforts at cohort construction. My approach links up well with thoughts we heard earlier today from Neil Smelser and Gerry Feldman. I include the category of a "politically-conditioned academic generation" that Smelser uses echoing Mannheim's "generational imprinting," and some of the currents in the *Sonderweg* discourse, as traced by Feldman, in a wider classification of processes that yield an academic generation that recognizes itself as such. My intention here is to elaborate on Smelser's discussion of the "social-structural" side of mentoring by extending it to generational identity.

I have always assumed that intergenerational learning is a good thing quite simply because that is how I was raised. By hearing about my father's mentor at the University of Cologne, Günter Schmölders; by observing the friendships my parents shared with colleagues of my father's generation, especially with two who died much too young, Burkhard Strümpel and Bernd Biervert; and by getting to know the many younger scholars who came to our house, most continuously perhaps Ariane Antal, the importance of intergenerational learning was literally presented at the family dinner table.

Intergenerational Learning Beyond Individual Dyads

Intergenerational learning occurs not only in individual mentor-mentee relationships but also in dyads of collectivities. Although this may be true

of many areas of social relations, it can be most easily exemplified in the academic community, where paradigm shifts quite often also involve generational shifts. Academic generations cannot always be demarcated clearly and are not confined to birth cohorts but distinct generations do seem to be identifiable.

I draw on my experience to identify the criteria that define academic generations and the role that intergenerational learning plays in the transmission of particular perspectives, both within specific schools and across theoretical paradigms. This discussion is based on observations of the development of my own generation of sociologists who were a part of the Ph. D. program at Princeton University in the United States from the mid- to late 1990s as students or as faculty. Nondemographic markers of this "generation" include the small number of students and faculty, a strong emphasis on empirical research in training and research practice, and neo-institutionalism as a broad theoretical orientation.

Four Paths to the Emergence of a Learning Generation

Abstracting from my observations, I suggest four possible paths toward the external and internal recognition of an academic generation. They are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they are often intertwined and interdependent. The list makes no claim to be definitive and comprehensive, but serves as an exploratory tool.

Outside recognition. The individuals associated with paradigm shifts tend to be recognized as a collectivity only in hindsight. Typically, this recognition comes from the outside first. This is particularly true of scholars preparing for or at the beginning of a career given the relatively solipsistic life graduate students and, to some degree, even junior faculty lead in many U. S. institutions.

Recognition of the formation of a recognizable generation may come in interactions with the profession at large, for example at conferences and during job searches. Casual remarks by colleagues elsewhere may thus often constitute the first trigger of the emergence of a generation. For myself and my peers, this moment came when the first members of my group returned from job interviews with the startling news that our happy circle of graduate students was a "Princeton mafia." While this la-

bel might have been less surprising to the "Dons" in our particular mob family, Paul DiMaggio, Frank Dobbin, Michèle Lamont, Bruce Western, Bob Wuthnow, and Viviana Zelizer, it came as a great surprise to us. Even more startling was the discovery that not all sociologists were and are broadly institutional in their theoretical orientation. An academic generation gains recognition from outsiders by a clustering of publications with a thematic and/or theoretical focus. The visibility of recent Ph.D. and their success in the job market are also important markers of an academic learning generation.

Group identity. Recognition by other members of the profession is probably only likely when some degree of group identity or consciousness of a collective project exists. Such an identity may well be linked to more structural features or deliberate construction. However, as is relatively common in the organizational learning literature, forms of learning depend, perhaps even more than other social phenomena, on some idiosyncratic factors of an unspecified fit of personalities, accidental meetings of individuals, and general luck. One road to group identity might be a momentous political or other event of the type touched upon by Smelser.

At the level of the learning generation that I am claiming to be a member of, a group identity – such as it is – was fostered significantly by friendships that formed among a relatively small group of graduate students in the mid-1990s. Personalities meshed and through a positive group dynamic, a tight-knit collectivity emerged and extended to a more professional collegiality. Such collegiality within a small physical space of shared graduate student offices fostered a common perspective on a multitude of social phenomena under examination, although divergent developments would obviously also have been possible. Beyond luck, however, a number of structural features of the graduate program at the time also contributed to this esprit de corps, features which I will expand upon here.

Generational Experience. Smelser has already discussed the notion of the generational imprinting by a momentous political event. Oddly, for my own age group, such a momentous social event appears to be missing at first sight. We are not a "Generation X" in the sense of a group devoted to slackerdom, and we did not share in some unifying political event or movement that propelled us into academia.

Yet, the common theoretical thread in our work, a broadly constructivist and institutional, if not explicitly neo-institutional perspective, might well be interpreted as a reaction to the ideological turn-around engineered by the Reagan-Thatcher revolution and its emphasis on "small government." Thatcher may have proclaimed that "there is no such thing as society", but the libertarian elements in this quiet revolution may well have opened space for sociologists to bring their expertise to bear on domains that were previously the exclusive territory of economists and political scientists. Furthermore, the questioning of some long-held tenets of the broadly liberal political consensus in the social sciences exemplified the power of the construction of "social facts." A constructivist institutionalism could thus be seen as growing out of our generational experience. My line of reasoning here may be tenuous, but the number of analyses that take the 1980s as a turning-point of sorts seems to be growing across the social sciences.

Research topics my generation has chosen in this vein include the path of the "genetic engineering" debate and the emergence of a religious point of view in politics (John Evans, University of California at San Diego); the culture wars in the humanities (Bethany Bryson, James Madison University); the impact of new information networks on early American political behavior (Jason Kaufman, Harvard University), U.S. employment practices (Erin Kelly, University of Minnesota), the political construction of welfare policies (Brian Steensland, now at the University of Indiana), an examination of the institutional conditions of organ and blood donation (Kieran Healy, University of Arizona), the long-term shifts in dominant understandings of economic rationality (Dirk Zorn, McKinsey & Company); and my own work on the institutional conditions for the portrayals of Germany's and Japan's past. All of these topics share a concern with some of the mediating institutions between individuals and sociology, politics, or the economy.

Cohort Construction. Successful cohort construction may occur entirely through the charisma of a mentor or the persuasive power of academic paradigms relative to the ones they are replacing. Obviously, the success of structures to foster the emergence of a recognizable and recognized generation requires a coherent and innovative empirical or theoretical theme. This can neither be legislated nor is it necessarily common within teaching or research units. On the flipside, a coherent theoretical orien-

tation or research project is also not a sine qua non for the emergence of a self-identified learning generation.

While the categories of structures that can be created to foster the emergence of a generation, if not an academic school, may sound somewhat generic, they can play such a role only when deliberately targeting particular aspects of a graduate program.

Structures of Intergenerational Learning in Graduate Education

Above and beyond any teaching, graduate programs are dedicated to training students to be researchers in an almost apprenticeship-like fashion. The focus on the individual that this implies has been well reflected in the presentations by my esteemed colleagues this afternoon. Although conceptions of what good research is certainly vary across social science disciplines, one common point of view is that good research leads to results that are not fundamentally questioned and are seen to advance the discipline. Such a criterion can be applied in a positivistic fashion or in more open-ended epistemological frameworks, but the credibility criterion is useful despite methodological and theoretical divides. If one is aiming to foster a generation of scholars, mechanisms for explaining, modelling and practicing such credible research would be one possible and plausible avenue.

As Neil Smelser emphasized, particularly in his reflections on his relationship with Talcott Parsons, credibility implies that mentors believe in the capabilities of mentees, or at least in their potential credibility. It is difficult to imagine a mechanism that would serve as a more effective locus of credibility than collaborative research, at least in disciplines where it is generally and appropriately practiced. Such collaborative research passes through several stages, evolving from a relationship oriented around research assistance until it finally culminates into an equal partnership.

Specific mechanisms include formal venues for the discussion of research in progress. Thematic conferences like the now defunct Stanford Conference on Organizational Research held at Asilomar for many years are particularly effective. The key features are an informal atmosphere that

opens opportunities for graduate student participation, and for the observation of faculty members' reaction to research presented and how it is evaluated. Departmental workshops can serve the same purpose, particularly when they are intended, portrayed, and perceived as an integral part of graduate training. Even seemingly superficial decisions about the format of workshop meetings make such activities more useful as training and cohort formation mechanisms. In my graduate training, for example, we only discussed papers that had been circulated, and discussion had to be opened by three graduate student questions. Many seminars deliberately included graduate students, treating them as "emerging colleagues," and thus included tasks that were designed to further model good research, such as mock journal reviews.

Academic associations appear to have recognized the need to structure mentor-mentee relationships beyond the immediate environment of emerging scholars. The proliferation of "Dissertation Workshops" in a plethora of fora attests to this. For example, I participated in the U.S. Social Science Research Council Japan Program Dissertation Workshop and the German "Konstanzer Meisterklasse." These activities are designed to build cohorts across some of the divides that linger in disciplines. I believe that such programs and the general topic of the fostering of intergenerational learning certainly deserve our full attention.

Conclusion: Structures and Processes of Intergenerational Academic Learning

One of the most important aspects of intergenerational academic learning may be that the transmission of knowledge across different contexts (including generations) offers crucial occasions to test the applicability of a received wisdom. Whether academic learning that is rooted in intergenerational interactions is examined from the outside, through internal dynamics, on the basis of a generational experience, or through formal avenues and structures of learning, all these mechanisms of transmission offer opportunities to question the teachings of other generations. Substantive debates and dyadic relationships between mentors and mentees play a crucial role in intergenerational academic learning, and interactions of groups of individuals also offer opportunities for the transmission of tacit knowledge.

Finally, I have focused here on structures of actual person-to-person or people-to-people interactions, ignoring the equally important interactions through non-personal communications. For academics, the emergence of a learning generation thus also depends on mediated communication through books, journals, and conferences. The multitude of learning processes and structures discussed and neglected here suggests that the fostering of learning generations does not come as easily and does not sit as naturally with everyone as it does with my father.

From right to left: Gerald Feldman, Julian Dierkes, Neil Smelser, Helga Nowotny, Jürgen Kocka, Meinolf Dierkes, Sigrun Dierkes

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