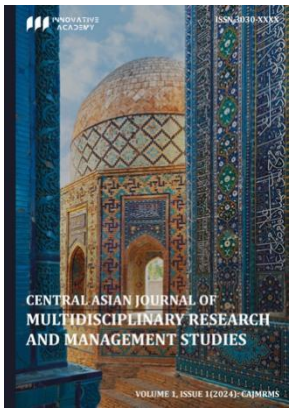

GENERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article provides detailed information about the concept of generations, their role in society, and the differences between them. Each generation is shaped by its historical, social, and economic conditions, and possesses distinct values, behaviors, and communication styles. Differences between generations such as the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z are examined, describing their approach to work, attitudes toward technology, and social activity. The article also emphasizes the importance of developing effective communication, collaboration, and social understanding between different generations. This knowledge helps reduce intergenerational conflicts and promotes mutual respect in the workplace, educational processes, and everyday life.

Indroduction

Generations are groups of people born and living around the same time, often categorized by shared experiences and birth years. Key generations include the Greatest Generation (born ~1901-1924), the Silent Generation (~1925-1945), Baby Boomers (~1946-1964), Generation X (~1965-1980), Millennials (~1981-1996), and Generation Z (~1997-2012). Each generation has its own unique set of characteristics shaped by the historical, social, and technological events of their time.

A **generation** is all of the people born and living at about the same time, regarded collectively. It also is "the average period, generally considered to be about 20–30 years, during which children are born and grow up, become adults, and begin to have children." In kinship, *generation* is a structural term, designating the parent–child relationship. In biology, *generation* also means biogenesis, reproduction, and procreation.

Generation is also a synonym for *birth/age cohort* in demographics, marketing, and social science, where it means "people within a delineated population who experience the same significant events within a given period of time."[3] The term *generation* in this sense, also known as *social generations*, is widely used in popular culture and is a basis of sociological analysis. Serious analysis of generations began in the nineteenth century, emerging from an increasing awareness of the possibility of permanent social change and the idea of youthful rebellion against the established social order. Some analysts believe that a generation is one of the fundamental social categories in a society; others consider generation less important than class, gender, race, and education.

Etymology

The word *generate* comes from the Latin *generāre*, meaning "to beget".The word *generation* as a *group or cohort* in social science signifies the entire body of individuals born and living at about the same time, most of whom are approximately the same age and have similar ideas, problems, and attitudes (e.g., Beat Generation and Lost Generation).

A **familial generation** is a group of living beings constituting a single step in the line of descent from an ancestor. In developed nations the average familial generation length is in the high 20s and has even reached 30 years in some nations. Factors such as greater industrialisation and demand for cheap labour, urbanisation, delayed first pregnancy and a greater uncertainty in both employment income and relationship stability have all contributed to the increase of the generation length from the late 18th century to the present. These changes can be attributed to social factors, such as GDP and state policy, globalization, automation, and related individual-level variables, particularly a woman's educational attainment. Conversely, in less-developed nations, generation length has changed little and remains in the low 20s. An intergenerational rift in the nuclear family, between the parents and two or more of their children, is one of several possible dynamics of a dysfunctional family. Coalitions in families are subsystems within families with more rigid boundaries and are thought to be a sign of family dysfunction.

Social generation

See also: Western generations

Social generations are cohorts of people born in the same date range and who share similar cultural experiences.[11] The idea of a social generation has a long history and can be found in ancient literature, but did not gain currency in the sense that it is used today until the 19th century. Prior to that, the concept "generation" had generally referred to family relationships and not broader social groupings. In 1863, the French lexicographer Emile Littré had defined a generation as “all people coexisting in society at any given time.”

Several trends promoted a new idea of generations, as the 19th century wore on, of a society divided into different categories of people based on age. These trends were all related to the processes of modernisation, industrialisation, or westernisation, which had been changing the face of Europe since the mid-18th century. One was a change in mentality about time and social change. The increasing prevalence of enlightenment ideas encouraged the idea that society and life were changeable, and that civilization could progress. This encouraged the equation of youth with social renewal and change. Political rhetoric in the 19th century often focused on the renewing power of youth influenced by movements such as Young Italy, Young Germany, Sturm und Drang, the German Youth Movement, and other romantic movements. By the end of the 19th century, European intellectuals were disposed toward thinking of the world in generational terms—in terms of youth rebellion and emancipation.

One important contributing factor to the change in mentality was the change in the economic structure of society. Because of the rapid social and economic change, young men particularly were less beholden to their fathers and family authority than they had been. Greater social and economic mobility allowed them to flout their authority to a much greater extent than had traditionally been possible. Additionally, the skills and wisdom of fathers were often less valuable than they had been due to technological and social change. During this time, the period between childhood and adulthood, usually spent at university or in military service, was also increased for many white-collar workers. This category of people was very influential in spreading the ideas of youthful renewal.

Another important factor was the breakdown of traditional social and regional identifications. The spread of nationalism and many of the factors that created it (a national press, linguistic homogenisation, public education, suppression of local particularities) encouraged a broader sense of belonging beyond local affiliations. People thought of themselves increasingly as part of a society, and this encouraged identification with groups beyond the local. Auguste

Comte was the first philosopher to make a serious attempt to systematically study generations. In *Cours de philosophie positive*, Comte suggested that social change is determined by generational change and in particular conflict between successive generations. As the members of a given generation age, their "instinct of social conservation" becomes stronger, which inevitably and necessarily brings them into conflict with the "normal attribute of youth"—innovation. Other important theorists of the 19th century were John Stuart Mill and Wilhelm Dilthey.

Generational theory

The sociologist Karl Mannheim was a seminal figure in the study of generations. He elaborated a theory of generations in his 1923 essay *The Problem of Generations*. He suggested that there had been a division into two primary schools of study of generations until that time. Firstly, positivists such as Comte measured social change in designated life spans. Mannheim argued that this reduced history to "a chronological table". The other school, the "romantic-historical" was represented by Dilthey and Martin Heidegger. This school focused on the individual qualitative experience at the expense of social context. Mannheim emphasised that the rapidity of social change in youth was crucial to the formation of generations, and that not every generation would come to see itself as distinct. In periods of rapid social change a generation would be much more likely to develop a cohesive character. He also believed that a number of distinct sub-generations could exist. According to Gilleard and Higgs, Mannheim identified three commonalities that a generation shares:

- Shared temporal location: generational site or birth cohort
- Shared historical location: generation as actuality or exposure to a common era
- Shared sociocultural location: generational consciousness or entelechy

Mannheim elaborated on the meaning of a generation's "location" (Lagerung), understood in a historical, economic and sociocultural sense. In 1928 he wrote: The fact that people are born at the same time, or that their youth, adulthood, and old age coincide, does not in itself involve similarity of location; what does create a similar location is that they are in a position to experience the same events and data, etc., and especially that these experiences impinge upon a similarly 'stratified' consciousness. It is not difficult to see why mere chronological contemporaneity cannot of itself produce a common generation location. No one, for example, would assert that there was community of location between the young people of China and Germany about 1800. Only where contemporaries definitely are in a position to participate as an integrated group in certain common experiences can we rightly speak of community of location of a generation.

From Mannheim's perspective, then, the chronological boundaries often attributed to different generations ("Generation X", "Millennials" etc.) seem to have little global validity since these boundaries are mostly based on shared Western, especially American, historical and sociocultural 'locations'.

Authors William Strauss and Neil Howe developed the Strauss–Howe generational theory outlining what they saw as a pattern of generations repeating throughout American history. This theory became quite influential with the public and reignited an interest in the sociology of generations. This led to the creation of an industry of consulting, publishing, and marketing in the field (corporations spent approximately 70 million dollars on generational consulting in the U.S. in 2015). The theory has alternatively been criticized by social scientists and journalists who argue it is non-falsifiable, deterministic, and unsupported by rigorous evidence. There are psychological and sociological dimensions in the sense of belonging and identity which may define a generation. The concept of a generation can be used to locate particular birth cohorts in specific historical and cultural circumstances, such as the "Baby boomers". Historian Hans Jaeger shows that, during the concept's long history, two schools of thought coalesced regarding how generations form: the "pulse-rate hypothesis" and the "imprint hypothesis." According to the pulse-rate hypothesis, a society's entire population can

be divided into a series of non-overlapping cohorts, each of which develops a unique "peer personality" because of the time period in which each cohort came of age. The movement of these cohorts from one life-stage to the next creates a repeating cycle that shapes the history of that society. A prominent example of pulse-rate generational theory is Strauss and Howe's theory. Social scientists tend to reject the pulse-rate hypothesis because, as Jaeger explains, "the concrete results of the theory of the universal pulse rate of history are, of course, very modest. With a few exceptions, the same goes for the partial pulse-rate theories. Since they generally gather data without any knowledge of statistical principles, the authors are often least likely to notice to what extent the jungle of names and numbers which they present lacks any convincing organization according to generations."

Social scientists follow the "imprint hypothesis" of generations (i.e., that major historical events—such as the Vietnam War, the September 11 attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, etc.—leave an "imprint" on the generation experiencing them at a young age), which can be traced to Karl Mannheim's theory. According to the imprint hypothesis, generations are only produced by specific historical events that cause young people to perceive the world differently than their elders. Thus, not everyone may be part of a generation; only those who share a unique social and biographical experience of an important historical moment will become part of a "generation as an actuality." When following the imprint hypothesis, social scientists face a number of challenges. They cannot accept the labels and chronological boundaries of generations that come from the pulse-rate hypothesis (like Generation X or Millennial); instead, the chronological boundaries of generations must be determined inductively and who is part of the generation must be determined through historical, quantitative, and qualitative analysis. While all generations have similarities, there are differences among them as well. A 2007 Pew Research Center report called "Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change" noted the challenge of studying generations: Generational analysis has a long and distinguished place in social science, and we cast our lot with those scholars who believe it is not only possible, but often highly illuminating, to search for the unique and distinctive characteristics of any given age group of Americans. But we also know this is not an exact science. We are mindful that there are as many differences in attitudes, values, behaviors, and lifestyles within a generation as there are between generations. But we believe this reality does not diminish the value of generational analysis; it merely adds to its richness and complexity. Another element of generational theory is recognizing how youth experience their generation, and how that changes based on where they reside in the world. "Analyzing young people's experiences in place contributes to a deeper understanding of the processes of individualization, inequality, and of generation." Being able to take a closer looks at youth cultures and subcultures in different times and places adds an extra element to understanding the everyday lives of youth. This allows a better understanding of youth and the role generation and place play in their development. It is not where the birth cohort boundaries are drawn that is important, but how individuals and societies interpret the boundaries and how divisions may shape processes and outcomes. However, the practice of categorizing age cohorts is useful to researchers for the purpose of constructing boundaries in their work.

Generational tension

Main article: Generation gap

Norman Ryder writing in *American Sociological Review* in 1965 shed light on the sociology of the discord between generations by suggesting that society "persists despite the mortality of its individual members, through processes of demographic metabolism and particularly the annual infusion of birth cohorts". He argued that generations may sometimes be a "threat to stability" but at the same time they represent "the opportunity for social transformation". Ryder attempted to understand the dynamics at play between generations.

Conclusion

Understanding generational differences is crucial for proting effective communication, collaboration and mutual respect in society. Each generation contributes uniquely to society through its values, work styles and relationship with technology. Awareness of the distinctions among Silent Generation, Baby Boomers Z helps minimize conflicts in workplaces and educational settings, while enabling the integration of diverse pers ectives and contributing to overall social progress.

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