
The Historical Problem of Generations

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EACH GENERATION writes its own history of generations. Or perhaps, when contemporary generational differences force themselves on the consciousness of historians they rediscover significant age-specific relationships in the past. Given our recent past, the current preoccupation with past generations was predictable, but as is appropriate for historians we shall probably run somewhat behind events, flooding the market with histories of generations just when our present generational crisis has evaporated.¹ There is nothing wrong with this—our responsibility does not lie in being up-to-date but in the effective application of what has been a vague, ambiguous, and stretchable concept to the explanation of past events.

¹ A sampling of recent works in the history of (predominantly European) generations includes: Anthony Esler, *Bombs, Beards and Barricades. 150 Years of Youth in Revolt* (New York, 1971); Esler has also mined this theme in *The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation* (Durham, 1966) and in his chapter, "Youth in Revolt: The French Generation of 1830," in Robert Bezucha, ed., *Modern European Social History* (Lexington, 1972), 301-34; Lewis S. Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements* (New York, 1969); Daniel R. Browder, "Fathers, Sons and Grandfathers: Social Origins of Radical Intellectuals in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Journal of Social History*, 2 (1969): 333-55; Herbert Moller, "Youth as a Force in the Modern World," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 10 (1968): 237-60; Phyllis H. Stock, "Students versus the University in Pre-World War Paris," *French Historical Studies*, 7 (1971): 93-110; Phillipe Bénéton, "La Génération de 1912-1914. Image, mythe et réalité?" *Revue française de science politique*, 21 (1971): 981-1009; Peter Lowenberg, "The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort," *AHR* 76 (1971): 1457-1502; Herbert Butterfield, *The Discontinuities Between the Generations in History* (Cambridge, 1972); William J. McGrath, "Student Radicalism in Vienna," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2, no. 3 (1967): 183-201; the entire issue of *ibid.*, 5, no. 1 (1970) is devoted to "The Conflict of Generations"; Michael A. Ledeen, "Fascism and the Generation Gap," *European Studies Review*, 1 (1971): 275-83. Somewhat earlier efforts include: Marvin Rintala, *Three Generations: The Extreme Right Wing in Finnish Politics* (Bloomington, 1962); Rintala, "The Problem of Generations in Finnish Communism," *American Slavic and East European Review*, 17 (1958): 190-202; Rolland Ray Lutz, Jr., "Fathers and Sons in the Vienna Revolution of 1848," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 12 (1962): 161-73; John Eros, "The Positivist Generation of French Republicanism," *Sociological Review*, new series 3 (1955): 255-77; Yves Renouard, "La Notion de Génération en Histoire," *Revue Historique*, 209 (1953): 1-23; Sigmund Neumann, "The Conflict of Generations in Contemporary Europe: From Versailles to Munich," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 5 (1939): 623-28. In my opinion the best historical treatment of a particular generation is still Louis Mazoyer, "Catégories d'âge et groupes sociaux. Les Jeunes Générations françaises de 1830," *Annales*, 10 (1938): 385-423.

The parallel development by sociologists, political scientists, and demographers of a literature devoted to a systematic analysis of contemporary generations provides a methodological resource for historians, although the social scientists also fall into the tendency, characteristic of generational studies, of a slippery, ambiguous usage that blurs distinctions which should be clarified.² It will be my contention that clarity can be preserved and useful explanations developed if instead of asking how long a generation really is, or how many generations usually coexist, or what points in the individual's life cycle are decisive, or whether aging has more profound political consequences than early socialization, we ask whether, and in what respects, age-related differences mattered in a given historical situation.

Modern empirical studies of generations proceed from the theoretical contributions of Karl Mannheim. Most historians accept Mannheim's classic formulation: "The social phenomenon of 'generations' represents nothing more than a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related 'age-groups' embedded in a historical-social process." They follow Mannheim and other pioneers such as François Mentré and José Ortega y Gasset, in distinguishing between generations identified through familial succession—the biological chain from father to son to grandson—and generations conceived as groups of coevals, people of roughly the same age whose shared experience significantly distinguishes them from contemporaries in other age groups. Some demographers prefer to reserve the term "generation" for the familial succession and apply "cohort" to the group of coevals, but historians have generally retained the traditional term with a qualifier that indicates a significant shared experience, writing of "social" or "political" or "literary" generations.³

² Some of the standard approaches from the perspective of the social sciences are: Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in his *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1959), 276–322; S. N. Eisenstadt, *From Generation to Generation: Age Groups and Social Structure*, (Glencoe, 1956); Rudolf Heberle, *Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology* (New York, 1951); Bennett M. Berger, "How Long Is a Generation?" *British Journal of Sociology*, 11 (1960): 10–23; Marvin Rintala, "A Generation in Politics: A Definition," *Review of Politics*, 25 (1963): 509–22; see also Julián Mariás, "Generations: The Concept," and Martin Rintala, "Generations: Political Generations," in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968), 6: 88–96. There is a recent immense accumulation of literature on youth as such, distinguished by contributions from Erik Erikson, Kenneth Keniston, Richard Flacks, Seymour Lipset, and others. See the bibliographical article by John Somerville, "Toward a History of Childhood and Youth," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (1972): 439–47.

³ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 292; François Mentré, *Les Générations sociales* (Paris, 1920); José Ortega y Gasset, *The Modern Theme* (New York, 1961); Ortega, *Man and Crisis* (New York, 1958); Norman R. Ryder, "The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change," *American Sociological Review*, 30 (1965): 843–61; the recent translation of Julián Mariás's *Generations. A Historical Method* (University, Alabama, 1970) provides the best survey of the theory of generations in Comte, Mill, Wilhelm Dilthey, Ortega, and so forth. It also covers the classic works on literary generations. On the latter, see also, Julius Petersen, "Die Literarischen Generationen," in Emil Ermatinger, ed., *Philosophie der Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin,

Such adjectives provide a certain focus for the application of the concept but do not resolve fundamental problems of definition, or the essential problem of establishing the boundaries of any presumed generation. That problem is defined by the most telling argument against any historical explanation based on generations—to wit, “There’s one born every second.” This observation seemingly disposes of all the theories that divide centuries into three generations, or substitute generational spans for traditional periodization, or discover a dialectical alternation of types of generations. Johan Huizinga provides a classic statement of the objection:

A triad of generations 1700–33, 1734–69, and 1770–1800 is proposed, by means of which a number of historical phenomena, together constituting the history of the eighteenth century, are considered in the sequence rise, maturity and decline—or action, reaction and synthesis. But there can just as easily be a series of generations marked by the years 1701–1734, 1735–70, and 1771–1801, and so on for every year, and actually for every day. . . . The theory is more valid when applied to one specific and well-defined cultural phenomenon. But even then its validity is deceptive, for the generation in itself, considered biologically, is always quite arbitrary, and can never be held responsible for an evolutionary phase of a specific historical phenomenon.⁴

Another formidable statement of dissent was contributed by Lucien Febvre, who showed what little comfort was left in confining the theory to “one specific and well-defined cultural phenomenon”; for this very limitation is an admission that any general chronological definition cuts across significant particular age groups. There is no a priori guarantee that a literary generation, for example, will be chronologically congruent with a political generation which can be identified in roughly, but not precisely, the same time span. Even if such generations happen to be perfectly congruent chronologically they may not share the attributes that set them apart from their predecessors and successors, for “there is no guarantee that the *political* generations of 1660 and 1690 are set apart by the differences and for the reasons that divide the literary generations of 1660 and 1690.”⁵ Furthermore, the historical treatment of generations invariably refers to only a segment of the age group under consideration. The attributes of a “youth” composed of French intellectuals will have little relation to their Chinese coevals, or more to the point, to French peasants and workers of the same age.

These objections have been recognized by theorists of generations, who usually apply some variant of Mannheim’s “generation unit” to

1930), 130–87; Detlev W. Schumann, “Cultural Age-Groups in German Thought,” *PMLA*, 51 (1936): 1180–207; and Henri Peyre, *Les Générations littéraires* (Paris, 1948).

⁴ Johan Huizinga, *Men and Ideas* (New York, 1965), 73–74.

⁵ Lucien Febvre, “Généérations,” in *Bulletin du centre internationale de synthèse. Section de synthèse historique*, no. 7, p. 41, published in *Revue de synthèse historique*, 47 (1929).

the social group or cultural phenomenon they wish to isolate with reference to birth dates. According to Mannheim, "Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways, constitute separate generation units."⁶ We must all make do with something like Mannheim's distinctions whenever we wish to generalize about age-specific behavior without asserting the identity of all those within the relevant cohort. Yet it can be argued, as Febvre did argue, that the identification of political, intellectual, religious, economic, social, and some number of other variables that might plausibly differentiate one generation unit from another requires distinctions so fine and complex as to reduce the ambitious concept to a "useless" and "parasitical" notion.⁷

THE MOST SYSTEMATIC attempt to meet these and other serious objections to any historical theory of generations is in the recently translated book of Julián Marías, *Generations. A Historical Method*. It contains a thorough survey of the literature on the subject, and an attempt, through a consolidation and exposition of Ortega y Gasset's fragmentary writings on generations, at a definitive resolution of the issues raised in the literature. Marías ranges over the entire history of the concept of generations, but the core of his argument is concentrated in the pages where he shows how generations can be reconstructed "empirically" through the application of Ortega's principles.⁸ Ortega and Marías begin with the definition of a generation as a group born within a zone of dates and sharing "a structure of *vigencias*"—the binding customs, collective usages, traditions, and beliefs that define the real social existence of each individual. The dimensions of each zone of dates approximately correspond to the fifteen-year span that Ortega assigns to each overlapping but historically distinct age group. These age groups are characterized by the fairly familiar categories of childhood, youth, initiation, dominance, and old age. The age of dominance, for example, subsumes those aged forty-five to sixty, who usually run the world and who share a not completely separate but appreciably different structure of *vigencias* from the preceding and succeeding generations.

⁶ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 304. There are two gradations in this concept: only those coevals who shared significant experience would comprise a generation, and only those who worked out their problems in the same way would be members of the same generation unit.

⁷ Febvre, "Généérations," 42.

⁸ Marías, "Ortega's Theory of Generations," in *Generations*, 69–106.

Mariás is aware that this approach is vulnerable to Huizinga's objection. What justifies the arbitrary selection of one zone of dates instead of another? Why refer to an age of dominance for those aged forty-five to sixty in 1965, rather than those forty-five to sixty in 1964 or 1966? The answer is revealed in the concept of "the decisive generation," the one that "for the first time thinks the new thoughts with full clarity and with complete possession of their meaning, a generation that is neither still a precursor nor any longer bound by the past." The decisive generation is identified or reconstructed through the discovery of the individual who "most clearly represents the essential characteristics of a period," when the "full bloom of a new era" occurs.⁹ Thus Descartes is identified as the "eponym" of a decisive generation, and the date of his thirtieth birthday becomes a tentative point of departure from which other generations can be fixed by adding or subtracting multiples of fifteen. The generational center of the decisive generation might actually fall on the twenty-eighth or the thirty-fourth rather than on the thirtieth birthday of Descartes, but empirical investigation will reveal the appropriate birthday.¹⁰

Mariás and Ortega recognize major objections to this approach but dispose of them with reference to "the empirical content of the human past." Their brand of empiricism consists of magisterial assertions about significant individuals in the history of ideas who are characterized as anomalous, or representative, or eponymous with regard to their epoch. If one does not choose to widen one's historical lens to Ortega's focus on two hundred years of "historical crisis" resolved by a spiritual renaissance commencing with Galileo and culminating in Descartes one is not likely to be persuaded of the eponymous individual in the decisive generation. But even if one believes that a new era blossomed between 1600 and 1650 and that its essential characteristics were represented by Descartes, one need not agree that whatever was particularly significant in Descartes was substantially shared by his coevals, or that the essential contributions of Descartes had much to do with generational phenomena which cannot be subsumed under intellectual history, or that the fundamental transformation separating the generation of Descartes from its predecessors would subsequently be significantly modified at something like

⁹ Mariás, *Generations*, 100. Ortega y Gasset, *Man and Crisis*, 62. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 61: "Take a great historic ambit within which a change in human living has been brought about which is fundamental, visible and unquestionable."

¹⁰ Mariás (*Generations*, 172-76) presents a tentative variation on the Ortegian approach for periods in which it is difficult to locate the decisive generation or *the* representative figure. He locates more or less representative figures born fifteen years apart, clusters the names of other important coevals around each, and then adds chronological layers to each core, year by year, until an age group seems anomalous in one of the original categories but appropriate to its predecessor or successor, at which point he has established the boundary between two generations. It is difficult to see the need for this, for if Mariás believes in the decisive representativeness of Descartes, and the permanent validity of the fifteen-year intervals, he can simply add on fifteen-year layers from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

fifteen-year intervals. Some of this might be rendered plausible by research or even demonstrated; in Ortega and Mariás it is merely asserted.¹¹

Furthermore there is a circularity in the Ortegan approach characteristic of those generational theories which define a phenomenon in a way that provides an explanation of its historical effects. It is perfectly acceptable to identify *vigencias*, or generation units, as clusters of attributes that distinguish groups chronologically, but it is something else to explain the behavior of those groups with reference to a chronological definition constructed out of the evidence of that very behavior. That is, if a historically significant cohort is defined as all those whose experience of the First World War decisively affected their political behavior in 1939, questions about the generational consequences of World War I are answered by definition.

I do not present these criticisms as a counsel of despair because I believe that a certain methodological modesty can disarm the standard objections put with such clarity by Huizinga and Febvre. The problem posed by Huizinga: how to specify the boundaries of generations in the seamless continuum of daily births? is a problem for anyone who chooses to mark off categories in any continuum. In this sense specifying generations is no more arbitrary than specifying social classes, or ideologies, or political movements where there is inevitably a shading off or ambiguity at the boundaries of categories. Indeed the most chaste behavioralism often creates arbitrary categories—as tall, medium, or short; extremely anti-imperialist, moderate, extremely proimperialist; and so forth. I would even argue that such categories as 5'9" or 160 lbs. suffer from the same defects as "the generation born between 1792 and 1802." Demographers, after all, feel no qualms in manipulating categories presented to them by the arbitrary decisions of the Bureau of the Census, inserting in their pyramids the cohort of "males aged 25-30 in 1960," without wondering whether they might not have used "left-handers aged 27-31 in 1958." Where we suspect that age-specific differences are historically significant we can quite appropriately cut age groups out of the continuum to see whether observations of their documented collective behavior and their relation to other groups can contribute to plausible explanations. Of course it may be that their behavior is not sufficiently distinct to set them off from older or younger groups in any useful way.

The same considerations apply to the class of objections raised by Lucien Febvre. His criticism is actually directed against two different ways in which units of generations are used to identify the entire age group. The first has to do with generation units suggested by categories of collective behavior that presumably can be distinguished along

¹¹ For a historian who accepts the Ortegan method with certain qualifications see, Renouard, "La Notion de Génération en Histoire."

generational lines, as in literary or political generations. The second refers to minorities of age groups which are presumed to characterize the entire generation, such as a "youth" consisting of a radical minority of college students.

The first method of identifying generations presents a problem only because of slovenly usage or of familiar habits of expression. When one identifies a literary generation that persists for some fifty years, one is really saying that despite the differences in the socialization and life experience of individuals who were not coevals there were no significant age-specific differences with regard to literature during the period. A fifty-year generation makes people uneasy so they try to chop it up into decent fifteen- or thirty-year intervals.

While slovenly, the chronological stretching of the term "generation" is often perfectly intelligible. When Alexander Portnoy says that he belongs to the generation of network radio and eight teams to a league he is locating himself in a population born perhaps between 1890 and 1935, but he has identified a cultural category in which age differences do matter without foreclosing other ways of slicing up the population. On the other hand the chronological stretching of the term sometimes obscures significant age-specific experiences and blurs useful historical distinctions. One might identify a Positivist generation in France extending from 1850 to 1900, but this is little help in understanding the persistent differences among Positivists, Cousinian spiritualists, and devout Catholics that characterized the intellectual life of the period. However the attack on Positivism after 1900 was manifested along generational lines, at least in contemporary polemic.¹²

Febvre's correct remark that such a unit as a literary generation may not be substantially identical with a coeval political generation need not inhibit us if we can document significant age-specific differences in the particular subject or field of collective behavior under consideration. But this does not dispose of the objection to the presumption that some minority incarnates or represents an entire generation. The question often has a polemical edge—for example, when the characterization of a "youth" depends on one's response to the assumption that a radical intelligentsia expresses the general will of its coevals.

This issue is endemic in many areas of political and social analysis. Identifying radical college students with youth in general raises the same questions as characterizing the entire black population by urban militants, or all Protestant churches by Prohibitionists. The point is that we can reject false claims to identity or even representativeness

¹² Eros (in "The Positivist Generation of French Republicanism") does identify a specific generation of the young Republican politicians of the 1870s whose Positivist formation distinguished them from their predecessors. They constituted the aging establishment attacked by the anti-Positivists of the turn of the century.

without denying that significant distinctions may depend on the relevant minority. We might discover both that Prohibitionists were only a minority of Protestants and that Prohibitionism separated the Protestants from other sects. George Rudé's investigations of the social composition of the revolutionary crowd cannot demonstrate that his militant workshop masters, craftsmen, wage earners, shopkeepers, and petty traders actually represented their social groups, but he can show that insofar as such groups played a significant political role they did it through that militant minority.¹³

WE ARE AFTER THE way in which the unit contributes to an explanation of collective differences. We want to avoid the imposition of categories in ways that blur or obscure significant differences. Blurring and obscuring are chronic to the generational approach because distinct age-specific phenomena are often jumbled into the same historical generation. This problem is recognized in the recent research of political scientists and sociologists who will, for example, distinguish between life cycle and generation behavior—the first referring to recurrent behavior appropriate to the chronological phases of every individual's life span, and the second, as emphasized by Mannheim, Mariás, Rudolf Heberle, and others, reflecting the distinct collective experiences of given age groups, which stamp those age groups with a permanent separate identity as they move through time. The first approach is as old as the conception of the Ages of Man; the second is often applied by historians with reference to a social trauma or a "Great Divide," as in the identification of a World War or Depression generation. Neither of these categories need be identical with what occurs when, as Mannheim puts it, "individual members of a generation become conscious of their common situation and make this consciousness the basis of their group solidarity."¹⁴ The articulation of this shared consciousness is more or less what is meant by a generational ideology.¹⁵ If the division (however perceived) between generations is greater than that normally attributed to life-stage differences we have what is currently called a generation gap.

¹³ George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1959). A different way of looking at this issue is by identifying and controlling relevant variables. For instance, in evaluating the significance of age for collective behavior, social scientists often control for education; see, for example, Samuel A. Stouffer, *Social Research to Test Ideas* (Glencoe, 1962), 121–24. It is also possible to examine generational identities as phenomena of more profound social divisions; see, for example, Georg Lukács, "Balzac: Lost Illusions," in *Studies in European Realism*, (New York, 1964), 47–64.

¹⁴ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 290.

¹⁵ Eisenstadt (*From Generation to Generation*, 102, 311) defines a "youth ideology" that affirms "youth culture" as a distinct type of social and cultural life. Collective affirmation of a generational ideology has usually been embodied in a youth movement, but could in principle just as well be articulated by older cohorts.

These historically overlapping but conceptually distinct generational categories by no means exhaust the ways in which collective behavior might correlate with age. When, for example, we have identified age-specific differences in political attitudes that constitute a significant generation gap we have not necessarily demonstrated that these differences "will endure and transform culture."¹⁶ We are more like our fathers than we like to think, and dramatic generational conflicts have often been softened or eroded by time and the stamp of culture until the rebellious youths assume in maturity the commitments and lifestyles of their predecessors. This is sometimes the case even when a generation has suffered a historical trauma presumed to mark it for life—the cataclysms of the First World War, the Second World War, the German occupation, and the Liberation did not liberate Frenchmen from the characteristic political institutions of the Third and Fourth Republics.

On the other hand, there are fundamental changes, manifested first as a generational break, that become permanent and are transmitted through successive age groups until they characterize the entire population. Many observers believe that the differences between older and younger cohorts of French farmers represent such a turning point, or more broadly, that the most fundamental change in French life since 1789 lies in the patterns of social and economic behavior that have distinguished those born after 1930 from their predecessors.¹⁷

Just as specific investigation is required to differentiate the presumed historical consequences of being young, it is called on to verify assertions regarding the effects of aging on collective behavior. American political scientists have been especially concerned with the relationship between aging and political attitudes.¹⁸ The same easy generalizations and hidden complexities obtain for received opinions associating aging with increased conservatism as for those identifying youth and rebellion. To cite a familiar example: When one has identified a correlation between old age and conservative attitudes one still has to establish whether that cohort has become increasingly conservative with age or has retained attitudes,

¹⁶ This is an insight of the sociologist Philip Abrams. For the concept of the life cycle Abrams coins the term *age span*, the "culturally defined phases of the individual life cycle which may be empirically observed in any society"; for the phenomenon of generational solidarity he introduces *age groups* shaped by the "collective consciousness crystallized within an age span . . . creating meaningful (linking or disassociating) relationships between it and other age spans"; and he assigns the term *generations* to age groups that "not only repudiate norms established by their seniors but carry that repudiation with them through life and seek to transmit it through their successors." Philip Abrams, "Rites de Passage," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5, no. 1 (1970): 175-90.

¹⁷ See, for example, John Ardagh, *The New French Revolution* (New York, 1969), 67-68.

¹⁸ For an early proposal to explore this relationship, see, John Schmidhauser, "The Political Behavior of Older Persons: A Discussion of Some Frontiers of Research," *Western Political Quarterly*, 11 (1958): 113-24.

considered relatively liberal or radical in its youth, that have come to rest at the Right of a shifting political spectrum.

An age cohort may, then, be differentiated from the rest of the population because its attitudes persist while those of the majority change. In such a case differences that begin as political or ideological may end as generational. A political elite that wrests power from its coeval enemies may hold it long enough to become a gerontocracy increasingly distinguished from the mass of the population by attitudes preserved from its heroic receding past. Perhaps this is the phenomenon to which Chou En-lai referred when he commented on the relative youth of President Nixon's entourage.

There are many ways in which age differences of no particular significance are transformed and sharpened by changing objective realities. Where we find a developing correlation between old age and resistance to tax-supported education, we may be observing an appropriate collective response to the deteriorating financial situation of older people rather than some constitutional crabbedness inevitably associated with aging. The introduction of military conscription creates an immediate, vital age- (and sex-) linked distinction that virtually imposes a generational self-identity on those of draft age.

The actual historical situation of any age group is defined in practice by its relationship to other cohorts, even with regard to size. Norman Ryder's observation that "a cohort's size relative to the sizes of its neighbors is a persistent and compelling feature of its lifetime environment"¹⁹ has been tragically verified in this century by the effects of the virtual obliteration of entire generations. As Sigmund Neumann suggested over thirty years ago, the demographic consequences of the First World War are not exhausted by the skewed pyramids of the demographers. On the eve of the Second World War he emphasized the "over-age" of the political leaders of France and Britain who "had to maintain positions which should have been filled by millions of young men lost in the World War and cheated of their share in making a new world."²⁰ This suggestive insight into the complex, remote consequences of an erosion that separated generations by something like a demographic trench was rather blurred by Neumann because he fused it into a discussion of the crucial conflict between the prewar political cohorts and the surviving members of the wartime generation. He was concerned to advance what has become one of

¹⁹ Ryder, "The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change," 845. From a somewhat different angle Bennett Berger emphasized the difference in conceptions of relative age associated with different occupations—a baseball player is "old" at thirty-five, a presidential candidate "young" at fifty. Berger, "How Long Is a Generation," 15.

²⁰ Neumann, "The Conflict of Generations in Contemporary Europe," 627; he covers roughly the same ground in *The Permanent Revolution* (New York, 1965), 230-56.

the familiar interpretations of the Nazis—as a political generation separated from their elders not because they were decimated by the war but because they were socialized in the trenches.

Neumann's approach reflects the classic distinction between contemporaries and coevals argued by generational theorists such as Mannheim and Ortega who emphasize that generations at different phases of the life cycle experience the same events in different ways.²¹ Young soldiers fight and die while older cohorts mourn and rule. However, one cannot deduce the historical significance of a particular generational relationship from the fact that "every moment in time . . . is always experienced by social generations at various stages of development."²² It remains to be established by research and analysis.

Indeed any assumption of a relationship between age groups and behavior of interest to historians needs to be established by investigation of each particular case. Marvin Rintala's assertion that "no shared destiny is more fundamental than that of the same generation" cannot be refuted (or verified) if it is a statement about human essence, but it is of no help in understanding specific historical context. There have been many situations in which class, racial, sexual, religious, or linguistic differences were far more significant than those related to age. The questions to be put to the data are suggested by Philip Abrams's remarks on so-called political generations: "We must ask in what circumstances differentiation springing from the social organization of age will crop into age-linked political conflict, and finally we must ask in what particular circumstances such conflicts will be defined in terms of a conflict of generations rather than anything else."²³

In answering such questions the familiar generalizations about the recurrent characteristics of phases of the life cycle are not always helpful. To explain the alienation of young Frenchmen in the early 1830s and young Americans in the late 1960s by the chronic tropism of the young for radicalism, idealism, frustrated mobility, oedipal hostility, and so forth, contributes little to explanations of youthful passivity and careerist pragmatism in the 1850s or the 1950s. Again Mannheim cleared the conceptual ground with the observation that factors presumed to be present in every situation cannot explain "the particular features of a given process of modification."²⁴ Of course

²¹ This concept is persuasively applied in Claude Digeon's *La Crise Allemande de la pensée française (1870-1914)* (Paris, 1959), where characteristic responses to the catastrophe of 1870-71 are identified for generations of 1830, 1850, 1870, and 1890.

²² Mannheim, *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 283.

²³ Rintala, "A Generation in Politics," 509; Abrams, "Rites de Passage," 181.

²⁴ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 312. In *ibid.*, 297 n., Mannheim characterizes "the fundamental thesis of this essay . . . that biological factors (such as youth and age) do not of themselves involve a definite intellectual or practical orientation (youth cannot be automatically correlated with a progressive attitude and so on); they merely *initiate* certain formal tendencies, the actual manifestations of which will ultimately depend on the prevailing

one might construct an explanation out of the clichés about youthful alienation by assuming that the periods of rebellion were the norm, other things being equal, and that the task is to identify the intervening variables that precipitated those abnormal eras when youth was apolitical and acquiescent—as if parents were to ask, “What *is* the matter with that well-behaved boy?”

There are times, as at the present, when significant generational differences seem confined to the conflicts between youth and everybody else. This encourages the tendency to consider those historical developments that are linked to age groups solely in relation to the generation gap.²⁵ Significant generational differences are then reduced to the conflict between father and son, the biological succession of generations is confused with the historical succession of age cohorts, and assumptions regarding patterns of behavior common to youth at any time and place are fused with descriptions of specific experiences that stamp a permanent collective identity on a given generation.²⁶

A RECENT WIDELY DISCUSSED attempt to specify the historical circumstances in which the life-stage of youth attains a particular, and malignant, coherence is Lewis S. Feuer's *The Conflict of Generations*. Professor Feuer ranges widely across time and space to identify and explain the implications of dynamic student movements from the German *Burschenschaften*, through a century and a half of generational rebellions in Europe, Africa, and Asia, to the Berkeley student uprising of the late sixties. Feuer's concentration on student movements is consistent with his title, because he argues that a politically dynamic student movement always reflects a conflict of generations. His concern is not merely to demonstrate where and how youth movements have mattered, but to identify the recurrent ele-

social and cultural context. Any attempt to establish a direct identity or correlation between biological and cultural data leads to a *quid pro quo* which can only confuse the issue.”

²⁵ See, for example, Anthony Esler's *Bombs, Beards and Barricades*, which is subtitled *150 Years of Youth in Revolt*. Esler does distinguish the nonrevolting youth of other times and places from those in the Western world who have been revolting ever since the impact of the Democratic and Industrial Revolutions, *ibid.*, 34. This is virtually the conclusion of Konrad Lorenz, who finds modern youth extraordinarily revolting in “The Enmity between Generations and its Probable Causes,” *Psychoanalytic Review*, 57 (1970): 334-404. Lorenz believes that the process of family disintegration that began with the Industrial Revolution has deprived youth of the indispensable transmission of tradition, except in “certain lucky old-fashioned peasant families.” Herbert Moller (in “Youth as a Force in The Modern World”) makes a demographic distinction between periods when youth is a relatively small proportion of the population and things are reasonably quiet, and periods when a large proportion of the population is young and things go to hell in a hand basket.

²⁶ For the observation that the concept of youth as a distinct life stage between adolescence and adulthood is not universal, that it is both historically contingent and confined to a minority of the age group, see Kenneth Keniston, “Youth: A New Stage of Life,” *American Scholar* 39 (1970): 631-54; see also the influential if controversial views of Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, tr. R. Baldeck (New York, 1962).

ments that give them a characteristic stamp and predictable consequences. These elements might be summed up by the terms "idealism" and "irrationality," attributes explicable, according to Feuer, by the psychological matrix of all such generational conflict. Without repeating the criticisms of Feuer's tendentiousness in selecting, ordering, and interpreting evidence to confirm his antipathies,²⁷ I wish to comment on those flaws in his conceptual apparatus that suggest recurrent problems in historical explanations of generational conflict.

The major conceptual flaw in *The Conflict of Generations* is in the causal model that provides the explanatory force and interest of the work. In principle at least, Feuer's method allows him to discriminate, and to explain the differences, between rebellious and conformist youthful generations. Universal characteristics of youth contribute to the characteristic form of youth movements but do not guarantee the rise of those massive and militant student movements that only appear with the "de-authorization" of the older generation "as a collective whole."²⁸ In the particular occasions of the de-authorization of the fathers an explanation is found not only for the radical alienation of the sons but for the recurrent political expressions of this alienation. The recognition of the oedipal springs and the parricidal guilt of the generational rebellion helps us to understand the self-sacrificing idealism, the populism, and the murderous and suicidal irrationalism of militant youth movements.

As Feuer travels across his immense blighted generational landscape he traces a somewhat circular path because he begins with a definition of a student movement as a combination of students moved by "disillusionment with and rejection of the values of the older generation."²⁹ He would probably answer that he has in fact identified a locus of collective parental loss of authority for each case of destructive youthful rebellion—fixing historically the psychological antecedents of behavior that could never be understood in strictly ideological or sociological terms. But Feuer cannot establish that a militant, irrational youth had reason to reject its fathers' authority unless he can demonstrate that the generation's irrational militants actually experienced the psychological process of parental de-authorization. Feuer does this with selected individuals such as Mao Tse-tung or Karl Follen, the leader of the German student movement after the Napoleonic Wars. However, these individual examples—which themselves do not

²⁷ For example, Richard Flacks's review article in *Journal of Social History*, 4 (1970-71): 141-53; Marshall Meyer's review in *American Journal of Sociology*, 75 (1969): 293-95; for a review which admits the flaws but is fundamentally sympathetic, see Henry A. Murray, *The American Scholar*, 38 (1969): 710-16.

²⁸ Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations*, 184.

²⁹ A point made in a review by Arthur Liebman, in *American Sociological Review*, 34 (1969): 1012.

bear careful scrutiny—cannot validate an explanation of collective behavior.³⁰

Feuer's variant of the "Oedipal-rebellion" hypothesis is rejected by all those who hold what Kenneth Keniston calls the "red-diaper-baby" theory, based on evidence that today's young rebels are characteristically the children of yesterday's radicals. Of course it is perfectly possible that contemporary studies which find "continuity with parental values to be the rule and discontinuity the exception"³¹ cannot be generalized to other times and other places, but in any case generalizations about the individual antecedents of collective behavior cannot be verified solely with reference to the collective behavior. That is, one cannot explain collective behavior with reference to specific antecedent experiences when one cannot provide evidence for the antecedent experiences.

Attempts to do this often fall into the ecological fallacy—the assumption that the relationships of properties of groups are identical with the relationships of properties of individuals within the groups. This is particularly tempting when one wishes to emphasize the generational consequences of early socialization, where it is assumed that because a large percentage of a given age group has had a certain experience at time 1, and a large percentage of the same age group engaged in a certain form of behavior at time 2, the two percentages represent the effects of the experience in time 1 on the behavior in time 2.

A stimulating example of this fallacy is Peter Lowenberg's article, "The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort," which asserts a correlation between the political behavior of young Nazi voters in 1932 and their childhood experience of nutritional deprivation, absence of parents, and failure of public authority during the First World War. Applying Freudian conceptions of fixation and regression, Lowenberg argues that the traumatic wartime experiences of those born roughly between 1900 and 1910 resulted in a "weakened character structure manifested in aggression, defenses of projection and displacement, and inner rage," which revealed itself politically as a result of the renewed trauma of the Great Depression, in the preference

³⁰ Feuer's treatment of Follen is certainly unpersuasive. To support the characterization (in *The Conflict of Generations*, 59) of Follen's prototypical conflicts with his father, Feuer quotes a passage about Follen's resentment at having been teased by his father, without giving an inkling of the following passage from the same text: "It was during this period, that the strict and tender union commenced between Charles and his father, which combined all the holiness of a natural affection with all the peculiar pleasures of a tender friendship. . . . This tender, this unlimited indulgence established a peculiar feeling of intimacy and of confiding love between him and his father, such as few boys are blessed with." What the entire passage seems to establish is that Follen's relations with his father were deeply affectionate but not without friction. Charles Follen, *The Works of Charles Follen* (Boston, 1841), 1: 5-9.

³¹ Kenneth Keniston, *Youth and Dissent* (New York, 1971), 273-74.

of the cohort for “extremist paramilitary and youth organizations and political parties.”³²

Lowenberg likes the generational approach because it “deals with probabilities—with the law of averages on a macroscale—thus canceling out any of the many individual variables that determine conduct.”³³ But the law of averages on a macroscale does not eliminate the *post hoc* element in his model or guarantee that those individuals who actually experienced the relevant early trauma disproportionately voted Nazi in 1930 or 1932, or that the young Nazi voters had not enjoyed a significantly more secure, stable, and well-fed childhood than that of the young voters whose relative mental health led them to join the paramilitary organizations of the Social Democrats.

It is conceivable that the younger cohorts of northern Protestant agricultural, lower-middle-class, and self-employed voters who swung to nazism, or the young urban workers who voted Communist, suffered greater childhood deprivation than the young inhabitants of Berlin and Hamburg working-class districts who stuck with the SPD, but Lowenberg presents no evidence to that effect. Nor does he present evidence that would impel one to prefer his model to standard explanations of the propensity of young people in general, and students in particular, to turn to extreme solutions when traditional alternatives have failed. He does more or less feed this interpretation into his explanation, along with the thesis that assimilates the political responses of young Germans, especially students, to other groups vulnerable to economic dislocation, chronic underemployment, and the threat of proletarianization. He also grants some force to the thesis emphasizing continuities between the prewar youth movement and Nazi appeals to a postwar youth. Presumably he believes that these relationships are not sufficient conditions for such pathological political behavior as voting Nazi or Communist in 1932, without the additional variable of the early trauma.³⁴ My argument is not that this view is impossible, but that Lowenberg fails to demonstrate that traumatized youth voted in a manner significantly different from nontraumatized youth, or to explain why the “second trauma” of the depression and the other factors that impelled older cohorts to vote for the Nazis do not sufficiently account for the Nazi sympathies of youth.

A somewhat different psychohistorical origin is identified by Anthony Esler in his study of the rebellious French youth of 1830. They characteristically experienced a pattern of parental overindulgence fol-

³² Lowenberg, “The Psychohistorical Origins of The Nazi Youth Cohort,” 1501.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1464.

³⁴ I am not concerned here with Lowenberg’s debatable assumptions that to vote Nazi or Communist in 1932 was in some sense pathological or neurotic behavior and that such behavior was psychodynamically congruent with the early trauma.

lowed by extreme repression at school, and "this pattern of permissiveness in childhood yielding abruptly to repressiveness in adolescence surely helped to create the smoldering sense of injustice that burst out at last in the generational rebellion of the 1830's."³⁵ Without dwelling on the psychodynamic assumptions buried in Professor Esler's "surely," one might still point out that his model does not help to distinguish this rebellious generation from any other cast in the same familial mold; nor does it establish a significantly different background for the nonrevolutionary generation units of 1830.

Something rather like the ecological fallacy is argued in Rolland Lutz's attempt to relate social class to the political role of the generation of the Viennese "sons" who were at the radical core of the revolution of 1848. Noting the lower-class origin of a considerable minority of students at the University of Vienna he remarks, "What could be more natural than the assumption of leadership over the Vienna masses by the educated sons of provincial shopkeepers and artisans?"³⁶ This assumption is fortified by no evidence that the poor students were the most militant. There seems no reason to prefer Lutz's assumption to the contemporary American discovery that militant students are more likely to be drawn from upper-class educated families than from the ranks of the ambitious poor.

In arguing these points it is not my intention to smother fruitful hypotheses under a blanket of methodological Pyrrhonism. This article proceeds from the assumption that age-specific relationships are sometimes of great historical significance. The problem is to decide which kind of age relationship is specifically relevant and, therefore, to identify explanatory model and criteria of verification that are appropriate to the specific relationships under investigation.

BECAUSE ATTEMPTS TO verify generalizations about the effects of aging, early socialization, or other generational phenomena have not come to much, some social scientists have concluded that there is little to be gained from a generational approach.³⁷ Yet others have assembled evidence indicating that age differences do matter for certain groups under certain circumstances. Such evidence is usually drawn from survey research, which can be useful, despite various limitations, to historians of the recent past. My purpose, however, is not to remind those historians of something they already know or to suggest that historians imprison themselves in the methodological preferences of sociologists and political scientists. The point is that surveys of generational phe-

³⁵ Esler, in Bezucha, ed., *Modern European Social History*, 308.

³⁶ Lutz, "Fathers and Sons in *The Vienna Revolution*," 167.

³⁷ See, for example, H. Hyman, *Political Socialization* (Glencoe, 1959), 139-54.

nomena, particularly when periodically readministered to age cohorts, suggest and clarify the various and distinct ways in which age categories relate to collective behavior. It might be instructive, therefore, to contemplate some examples of cohort analysis in the social sciences as well as certain methodological issues raised in the literature.³⁸

The most familiar and least informative ordering of data related to age is a cross-sectional survey with the age group as the independent variable and an attitude expressed at the time of the survey as the dependent variable, as, for example, in table 1. V. O. Key cites this table to suggest some relation between fundamental shifts in opinion and subsequent generational differences, but he grants that one can draw few firm conclusions from it: "The numbers of the sample do not suffice to permit analysis to tie these differences definitely to age, but if they are so connected, the more conservative views of those of the earlier generation may reflect a strong attachment among them to the values of an earlier era."³⁹ But even if the sample were adequate, the only discernible connection would be that differences of opinion at the moment of the survey over the proper scope of government welfare were to some extent related to age.

We cannot say whether the more restrictive views of older white-collar workers reflect a stronger attachment to an earlier era, a natural consequence of aging, the permanent effect of early socialization, an unusual temporary generational difference, or the attitudes of the same age cohorts in other occupations. Furthermore the age categories

TABLE 1. AGE IN RELATION TO OPINIONS ON PROPER SCOPE OF GOVERNMENT WELFARE ACTIVITY AMONG WHITE-COLLAR RESPONDENTS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Per Cent under 35</i>	<i>Per Cent 35-55</i>	<i>Per Cent over 55</i>
Should do more	28	28	23
Doing about right	51	43	34
Should do less	15	25	39
Don't know	6	4	4
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
N	148	226	106

Source: V.O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), 255.

³⁸ There is still some point in Mannheim's observation: "The present status of the problem of generations thus affords a striking illustration of the anarchy in the political and cultural sciences where everyone starts out afresh from his own point of view." *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 287.

³⁹ V. O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York, 1967), 255.

may be too gross for the distinctions we wish to make. Someone interested in the attitudes of postadolescents would find little comfort in such a category as "under 35." However, more finely discriminated cohorts would come no closer to answering the questions posed above if such cohorts were taken from a single cross-sectional survey. What is required is evidence arranged longitudinally—age-related data gathered through time. The most familiar ordering of such data is in arbitrarily defined age cohorts re-examined in successive surveys, which are often separated by uniform intervals.

The systematic manipulation of cohort data is nothing new, at least in the field of demography, but the other social sciences have only recently begun to explore its possibilities. William Evan's article on the cohort analysis of survey data, published in 1959 and often cited as a pioneering effort, was the cutting edge of what has become a fairly substantial literature.⁴⁰ Evan's intention was to introduce and illustrate "the cohort technique, which for present purposes will be roughly equated to a generational analysis, as a means of inquiring into the impact of types of historical events on the opinions, attitudes or ideologies of different generations." For his example Evan traced cohort opinions on government control of railroads, through polls successively taken in 1937, 1945, and 1953 (see table 2).

Perhaps the most useful message delivered by Evan's table is that questions about political or other effects of generational differences must be answered empirically with regard to specific situations. As we follow Evan's cohorts A and B through sixteen years we note what might be considered an increasing conservatism about government control, but not a tendency for older groups to become progressively more conservative than their younger contemporaries. The comparison of the opinions of cohort A in 1937 and cohort X in 1953 indicates that the relative interventionism of the younger cohort in the earlier survey was not a permanent attribute of youth as such. Indeed the juxtaposition of the attitudes of all the cohorts with those of the total population suggests that the increased hostility to government control was general and not age-specific in any significant sense.

The various age-related distinctions expressed in small percentage differences offer little food for reflection except perhaps in the tendency of middle-aged cohort B to shift opinion less sharply than did its younger contemporaries in the course of the sixteen years. Evan notes

⁴⁰ William M. Evan, "Cohort Analysis of Survey Data: A Procedure for Studying Long-term Opinion Change," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 23 (1959): 63-72. For a more recent examination of the methodological problems of applying cohort data to generational analysis see Neal E. Cutler, *The Alternative Effects of Generations and Aging upon Political Behavior: A Cohort Analysis of American Attitudes toward Foreign Policy, 1946-1966*. (Oak Ridge, 1968), especially chapter 4.

TABLE 2. OPINIONS OF TWO COHORTS ON GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP OF RAILROADS, IN 1937, 1945, AND 1953 (IN PER CENT)

<i>Opinion and Year of Cross-sectional Survey</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Cohort A 24-30 in 1937</i>			<i>Cohort B 47-53 in 1937</i>		
1937 ^a							
Yes	25	27			23		
No	58	54			60		
No opinion	17	19	—	—	17	—	—
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>			<u>100</u>		
	(2855)	(618)			(344)		
1945							
		<i>Cohort A 32-38 in 1945</i>			<i>Cohort B 55-61 in 1945</i>		
1945 ^b							
Yes	20	21			25		
No	63	64			59		
No opinion	17	15	—	—	16	—	—
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>			<u>100</u>		
	(1584)	(252)			(155)		
1953							
		<i>Cohort X 24-30 in 1953</i>	<i>Cohort A 40-46 in 1953</i>	<i>Cohort Y 47-53 in 1953</i>	<i>Cohort B 63-69 in 1953</i>		
1953 ^c							
Should	14	15		12	16		19
Should not	74	73		78	74		69
No opinion	12	12	—	10	10	—	12
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>
	(1527)	(247)		(233)	(257)		(108)

^a "Do you believe the government should buy, own, and operate the railroads?"

^b "Do you think the government should own the railroads in this country?"

^c "Do you think the United States government should or should not own the following things in this country? How about the railroads?"

Source: William M. Evan, "Cohort Analysis of Survey Data: A Procedure for Studying Long-Term Opinion Change," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 23 (1959):67.

that differences between age groups were smaller in a given year than were differences between identical age groups in different years; that is, the difference between cohort A and cohort B in 1937 or 1953 is smaller than the difference between cohort A in 1937 and cohort X in 1953, or cohort B in 1937 and cohort Y in 1953. This impels him to

conclude "that the historical situation has a greater impact than aging in opinion change."⁴¹ He might just as well, or better, have said that with regard to government control of railroads age differences didn't matter much.

Despite its rather unexciting substantive results, Evan's essay is a useful, and influential, introduction to the systematic analysis of age cohort phenomena and has been succeeded by more detailed and statistically complex attempts to establish correlations between age and collective behavior.

A STATISTICALLY SIMPLE attempt which suggests, more or less unintentionally, the pitfalls in the manipulation of cohort data is Seymour Lipset and Everett Ladd's examination of the politics of college-educated generations. Their observations are based on the findings summarized in table 3. According to the authors, the most obvious generational phenomenon revealed by this table is "a persistent age association in the voting preferences of the college 'generations,' " so that "the younger the voter the greater the preference for the more liberal nominee," and vice versa. It is this phenomenon that suggests the tentative conclusion: "In so far as we can generalize, Aristotle's emphasis on the moderating effects of growing older turns out to be more predictive than Mannheim's theory of the long-term consequences of the early political experiences of 'generation-units.'"⁴² The fact that older generations are more conservative than their successors does not, however, establish the moderating influence of growing older. We cannot know whether the older cohorts became more conservative as they aged unless we have established a base with which to compare their subsequent development. If we rearrange some of the data in a manner that helps us to think diagonally (see table 4), we will see that the information provided by Lipset and Ladd only partially supports their interpretation. To take an example, if we follow the cohort that attended college in 1934-38 we note that, starting with its solid Republican bias in 1948 it fluctuated from Right to Left with the rest of the electorate in 1956 and 1964, to come to rest in 1968 roughly in the position it had held twenty years before.

The authors do recognize that differences related to age may not so much reflect an absolute change in the attitudes of particular generations as a change in the position of the generation relative to the entire population. Since "the historical slope of political attitudes

⁴¹ Evan, "Cohort Analysis of Survey Data," 69.

⁴² Seymour Martin Lipset and Everett Carl Ladd, Jr., "College Generations—from the 1930's to the 1960's," *Public Interest*, 25 (1971): 99-113.

TABLE 3. PRESIDENTIAL CHOICES OF THE COLLEGE-EDUCATED (GALLUP)

<i>Years of College Attendance</i>	1948			
	<i>Dewey</i>	<i>Truman</i>	<i>Wallace^a</i>	<i>Thurmond^a</i>
1946-48 (N = 115)	47	41	9	2
1944-48 (N = 247)	53	37	8	1
1939-43 (N = 302)	57	34	5	3
1934-38 (N = 491)	56	34	7	1
1929-33 (N = 518)	64	29	3	3
1919-28 (N = 752)	70	25	2	3
1918 and earlier (N = 574)	69	27	1	2
All college-age cohorts (N = 2999)	62	30	4	3
Actual Presidential vote, total population (48,790,414)	45.1	49.6	2.4	2.4

<i>Years of College Attendance</i>	1956	
	<i>Eisenhower</i>	<i>Stevenson</i>
1954-56 (N = 40) ^c	70	30
1949-53 (N = 164)	55	44
1944-48 (N = 215)	59	41
1939-43 (N = 292)	66	34
1934-38 (N = 272)	64	35
1929-33 (N = 175)	55	45
1919-28 (N = 274)	75	25
1918 and earlier (N = 241)	75	24
All college-age cohorts (N = 1673)	62	38
Actual Presidential vote, total population (61,825,206)	57.4	42.1

<i>Years of College Attendance</i>	1964	
	<i>Goldwater</i>	<i>Johnson</i>
1962-64 (N = 159)	27	73
1956-61 (N = 310)	30	70
1950-55 (N = 330)	35	65
1944-49 (N = 321)	42	58
1939-43 (N = 367)	34	66
1934-38 (N = 307)	42	57
1929-33 (N = 191)	30	70
1919-28 (N = 271)	46	53
1918 and earlier (N = 109)	57	43
All college-age cohorts (N = 2365)	37	62
Actual Presidential vote, total population (70,420,910)	38.5	61.1

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Years of College Attendance	1968		
	Nixon	Humphrey	Wallace ^b
1966-68 (N = 59)	41	48	12
1962-65 (N = 221)	45	42	12
1956-61 (N = 289)	51	36	13
1950-55 (N = 115)	57	31	11
1944-49 (N = 111)	60	32	8
1939-43 (N = 184)	56	30	13
1934-38 (N = 134)	56	35	9
1929-33 (N = 109)	47	44	8
1928 and earlier (N = 235)	67	22	11
All college-age cohorts (N = 1457)	54	33	12
Actual Presidential vote, total population (73,188,253)	43.4	42.7	13.5

^a Henry A. Wallace (Progressive); J. Strom Thurmond (States Rights)

^b George C. Wallace (American Independent)

^c N is too small for reliability.

Source: Seymour Martin Lipset and Everett Carl Ladd, Jr., "College Generations—from the 1930's to the 1960's," *Public Interest*, 25 (1971): 108. Copyright c. by National Affairs Inc., 1971.

among American college generations . . . has been toward a more liberal position over time,"⁴³ the unchanged loyalties of the older generations assign them a more conservative position on the political spectrum. But if this is the case how can one speak of "the moderating effects of growing older" except in the sense that the younger cohorts have grown less moderate?

According to Lipset and Ladd their table does suggest at least one striking instance of the permanent effects of the early political experience of a generation unit. They observe that the college generation of 1929-33, graduating into the "directionless gloom" of the Hoover years, would evince a permanent disproportionate antipathy toward

TABLE 4. REPUBLICAN PREFERENCE

Years of College Attendance	Cohort	1968			
		1948	1956	1964	1968
44-48 (49)	A				
39-43	B	53			
34-38	C	57	59		
29-33	D	56	66	42	
		64	64	34	60
			55	42	56
				30	56
					47

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 113.

the Republican party. This disproportion does manifest itself in the elections of 1956, 1964, and 1968, but apparently the early trauma had not yet taken hold in 1948 when the Hoover generation voted substantially to the Right of its successors.

Lipset and Ladd would undoubtedly grant the tentativeness of any conclusions drawn from their limited data. But the conclusions they wish to draw, however tentative, put a burden on the evidence that it cannot support. The fact that younger college graduates are less likely to be Republican than are older cohorts is clear enough, but any persuasive statements about the effects of aging or early experience on the politics of various cohorts should be supported by more precise and detailed evidence, traced longitudinally through time.⁴⁴

Such evidence has recently been assembled by political scientists concerned with the statistical discrimination of the relationships between political behavior and age-specific variables. This literature has now accumulated to the point where it can support methodological controversies such as the running debate in the *Public Opinion Quarterly* over John Crittenden's article on aging and party affiliation.⁴⁵ I will briefly review the controversy, not for its substantive contributions, but for what it reveals about the problems of using longitudinal data to distinguish separate age-specific relationships.

Crittenden organized available survey data in a form that conveys the fluctuating political loyalties of age cohorts surveyed at four intervals between 1946 and 1958. On the basis of the data in table 5, Crittenden concludes that in non-Southern states, and irrespective of educational differences, aging was accompanied by an increase in Republican identity. He makes this point in two ways—first, by a vertical comparison of the age cohorts in each row, remarking that the percentages of Republican sympathizers in the older cohorts are uniformly higher than those in the younger cohorts. This of course tells us nothing about the political effects of aging but only about the political preferences of age groups in the given years. The burden of Crittenden's argument is therefore borne by his analysis and comparison of the changing preferences of successive cohorts as they age through the twelve years between 1946 and 1958. In order to fix on a measurement for the general direction of change in all the cohorts Crittenden decided to follow two cohorts from each age group through an eight-year period; for example, he records the shift in party prefer-

⁴⁴ For a nice example of the risks of generalizing on the basis of inadequate longitudinal data, see Norval O. Glenn and Richard E. Zody, "Cohort Analysis with National Survey Data," *Gerontologist*, 10 (1970): 237-40.

⁴⁵ John Crittenden, "Aging and Party Affiliation," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26 (1962): 648-57; Neal E. Cutler, "Generation, Maturation, and Party Affiliation," *ibid.*, 33 (1969-70): 582-88, followed by Crittenden's "Reply to Cutler" and Cutler's "Comment," *ibid.*, 589-92; Norval D. Glenn and Ted Hefner, "Further Evidence on Aging and Party Identification," *ibid.*, 36 (1972): 31-47.

TABLE 5. REPUBLICANS BY FOUR-YEAR AGE GROUPS AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL IN NON-SOUTHERN STATES

Age Group	1946		1950		1954		1958	
	Per Cent	(N)	Per Cent	(N)	Per Cent	(N)	Per Cent	(N)
High Education ^a								
21-24	46	(160)	41	(45)	42	(57)	43	(38)
25-28	54	(171)	43	(52)	45	(53)	51	(57)
29-32	51	(145)	44	(53)	39	(87)	49	(71)
33-36	59	(118)	50	(50)	47	(63)	49	(86)
37-40	59	(135)	53	(48)	51	(67)	42	(64)
41-44	70	(87)	58	(30)	56	(52)	44	(50)
45-48	58	(109)	58	(33)	52	(42)	34	(49)
49-52	58	(93)	50	(19)	89	(18)	62	(38)
53-56	60	(74)	60	(15)	66	(32)	47	(36)
57-60	65	(55)	75	(12)	58	(13)	63	(23)
61-64	58	(37)	86	(7)	75	(8)	55	(19)
65-68	70	(20)	60	(5)	90	(5)	66	(19)
21-68	57	(1204)	51	(369)	50	(497)	48	(550)
Low Education ^a								
21-24	36	(81)	14	(28)	38	(34)	41	(17)
25-28	52	(91)	18	(22)	37	(45)	24	(17)
29-32	43	(101)	26	(35)	29	(40)	38	(33)
33-36	42	(115)	32	(45)	27	(52)	30	(38)
37-40	51	(128)	28	(51)	38	(60)	33	(36)
41-44	40	(105)	40	(46)	36	(52)	39	(54)
45-48	54	(118)	44	(35)	38	(56)	34	(47)
49-52	44	(130)	48	(47)	39	(44)	37	(49)
53-56	59	(128)	37	(32)	45	(32)	46	(41)
57-60	59	(118)	42	(43)	50	(54)	47	(30)
61-64	58	(72)	61	(28)	50	(48)	50	(41)
65-68	52	(63)	58	(26)	59	(28)	45	(49)
21-68	49	(1250)	38	(438)	40	(545)	39	(452)

^a High education: graduated high school or better. Low education: did not graduate from high school. This basis of comparison is used in all subsequent tables employing education breakdowns.

Source: John Crittenden, "Aging and Party Affiliation," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26 (1962): 651.

ence of the cohort aged 21-24 in 1946 and 29-32 in 1954, and of the cohort aged 21-24 in 1950 and 29-32 in 1958. This gives him four entries for the age group, two in the High Education and two in the Low Education categories. Thus he finds, for the age group 21-24, three cohorts that shifted toward Republicanism and one that was unchanged, as

recorded in table 6. The raw figures do not give Crittenden the balance he finally strikes—an association of aging with increased Republicanism—until he corrects for the general tendency of the entire population, which is in the direction of the Democracy. That is, he counts an increase in Democratic sympathies smaller than that of the average of the entire population as a shift to relative Republicanism. The results of this method and of a similar treatment of Republican voting patterns produce his conclusion that “aging seems to produce a shift toward Republicanism in the period from 1946 to 1958.” Crittenden is quite tentative in suggesting reasons why this might have been the case as well as in granting that the effects of aging might have been complemented by “generational effects . . . that result from the impact of the Great Depression and New Deal.”⁴⁶ The modesty of his conclusions have not disarmed his critics.

In his article, “Generation, Maturation and Party Affiliation: A Cohort Analysis,” Neal E. Cutler uses Crittenden’s data as evidence for conclusions the reverse of those in the original article. Cutler correctly dismisses as beside the point Crittenden’s observation that the older groups were characteristically more Republican than the younger and proceeds to the main criticism, which is the inadequacy of the treatment of the longitudinal development of the cohort allegiances between 1946 and 1958. Cutler rearranges the data from Crittenden’s

TABLE 6. EIGHT-YEAR COHORT SHIFTS ON PARTY IDENTIFICATION RELATIVE TO TREND

<i>Age of Cohort</i>		<i>Time 2</i>		
		<i>More Republican</i>	<i>More Democratic</i>	<i>Same</i>
<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>			
(21-24)	—(29-32)	3	0	1
(25-28)	—(33-36)	2	1	1
(29-32)	—(37-40)	4	0	0
(33-36)	—(41-44)	3	1	0
(37-40)	—(45-48)	1	2	1
(41-44)	—(49-52)	3	1	0
(45-48)	—(53-56)	2	1	1
(49-52)	—(57-60)	3	1	0
(53-56)	—(61-64)	2	1	1
(57-60)	—(65-68)	3	1	0
Total		26	9	5

Source: John Crittenden, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26 (1962): 652.

⁴⁶ Crittenden, “Aging and Party Affiliation,” 654, 657.

table on the political identification of the High Education population to demonstrate that in no instance in the twelve-year existence of a cohort can one find a linear increase in Republicanism (see table 7).

At first glance the controversy has something to do with "Fun with Numbers," or "How to Get Different Results from the Same Statistics." Cutler's emphasis on the issue of a linear pattern toward Republicanism is, however, justified by Crittenden's allegation of its existence. Cutler's longitudinal arrangement of the data shows that there was no regular progression toward increased Republicanism; his reading of the data even argues a progression in the opposite direction.

Cutler's arrangement of the data in table 8 reveals that whether one looks at changes in political allegiance recorded every four years, over an eight-year period, or across the entire span of twelve years, one finds that changes in a Democratic direction outnumber those in a Republican direction. Cutler also introduces calculations to show that, on average, fluctuations in political preferences are greater within "life stages" than within cohorts surveyed at four-year intervals. That is, there is less homogeneity across the age columns than along the cohort diagonals, "more homogeneity, associated with generational cohorts than with aging process or life-stage groups."

TABLE 7. AN EMPIRICAL EXAMPLE OF COHORT ANALYSIS^a

Age Intervals	Cohort ^b Labels					Lifestage ^b Labels
		1946	1950	1954	1958	
21-24	A					
25-28	B	46	41	42	43	(1)
29-32	C	54	43	45	51	(2)
33-36	D	51	44	39	49	(3)
37-40	E	59	50	47	49	(4)
41-44	F	59	53	51	42	(5)
45-48	G	70	58	56	44	(6)
49-52	H	58	58	52	34	(7)
53-56	I	58	50	89	62	(8)
57-60		60	60	66	47	(9)
61-64		65	75	58	63	(10)
65-68		58	86	75	55	(11)
Total		70	60	90	66	(12)
		57	51	50	48	

^a Cell entries are the percentage of each cell which identified with the Republican party in the year indicated. Source: John Crittenden, "Aging and Party Affiliation," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26 (1962): 651. Data represent the "high education" group in Crittenden's analysis.

^b Capital letters indicate the cohort diagonals; numbers in parentheses indicate life-stage rows.

Source: Neal E. Cutler, "Generation, Maturation, and Party Affiliation," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 33, (1969-70): 585.

TABLE 8. ALTERNATIVE TESTS OF THE AGING-REPUBLICANISM HYPOTHESIS^a

Cohort	Four-Year Differences			Eight-Year Differences		Twelve-Year Differences
	1946-50	1950-54	1954-58	1946-54	1950-58	1946-58
A:	-	-	+	-	+	+
B:	-	+	-	-	-	-
C:	-	+	-	*	-	-
D:	-	+	-	-	-	-
E:	-	-	+	-	+	+
F:	-	+	-	+	-	-
G:	-	+	-	+	+	+
H:	+	-	-	*	-	-
I:	+	*	-	+	-	+

^a A - indicates that the percentage of Republicans decreased from the first observation point to the second and fails to support the hypothesis; a + indicates that the percentage of Republicans increased, and supports the hypothesis; an * indicates no difference. Cell entries derived from table 1.

Source: Neal E. Cutler, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 33 (1969-70): 586.

Crittenden erects various defenses of his method and conclusions, notably through his concept of correcting for trend, which identifies as relatively more Republican a shift in cohort opinion that is less Democratic than the average shift of the entire population. Cutler's answer to this is merely to remark that if the entire population is shifting away from Republicanism as it ages and if a majority of the cohorts are also shifting in that direction, it is rather odd to conclude that Republicanism increases with age.

In a recent re-examination of the controversy, Norval Glenn and Ted Hefner pose the issue in this way:

If the Crittenden data can be trusted, several important questions arise as to their proper interpretation. For instance, during a period in which the secular trend is away from Republicanism, is an increase in the "relative" Republicanism of an aging cohort evidence for a conservative influence of the aging process or of passage to the later stages of the life cycle? Or does it merely reflect a tendency for party identification in adult cohorts to remain stable?⁴⁷

Glenn and Hefner's assessment of revised and expanded survey data reveals a pattern of change that seems to confirm Crittenden's conclusions. They reject those conclusions, however, because the tendency for which Crittenden corrects—the trend of the entire population away from Republicanism—was significantly affected by the heavy

⁴⁷ Glenn and Hefner, "Further Evidence on Aging and Party Identification," 31.

mortality in the older, more Republican cohorts. Glenn and Hefner conjecture that mortality in the higher age brackets entails the disappearance of those least affected by the massive defections from the Republican party during the Great Depression, thus lessening the Republicanism of the entire population without contributing to a trend of the living population toward the Democrats.

The issue of correcting for trend has been re-examined in William R. Klecka's attempt to devise a statistical technique for leaching out the effects of all variations except those related to age—with fairly inconclusive results for the Crittenden controversy. Klecka has also proposed an alternative to the longitudinal analysis of arbitrarily defined uniform cohorts in his attempt to identify “empirically” the chronological dimensions of generations at a specific time and place. That is, he has attempted to construct a statistical device that will uncover the actual boundaries of generations by identifying significant changes in collective attitudes.⁴⁸ These are but examples of a substantial literature dedicated to compensating by statistical refinements for the limitations of available data.⁴⁹ Such efforts may prove suggestive to the few historians who struggle with the same sort of evidence, but in a broader sense, even the most arcane and least conclusive contributions of the social scientists do expose problems of generalization and inference that are implicit in most discussions of the relationship between age and collective behavior.⁵⁰

AMONG OTHER THINGS these contributions suggest what every good historian knows: that the way that evidence is selected and ordered is the way that questions are posed, and therefore the way that the possible answers are imposed. The very decision to examine arbitrarily defined age cohorts admits of some insights and excludes others. To

⁴⁸ William R. Klecka, “Some Strategies for Seeking Age Relationships in Political Behavior,” a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, in September 1971. See also Klecka, “Applying Political Generations to the Study of Political Behavior: A Cohort Analysis,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 35 (1971): 358–73.

⁴⁹ See for example, Gosta Carlsson and Katarina Karlsson, “Age, Cohorts and the Generation of Generations,” *American Sociological Review*, 35 (1970): 710–18.

⁵⁰ Some of the fundamental issues are suggested in Glenn and Zody, “Cohort Analysis with National Survey Data,” 233–40; see also, Richard E. Zody, “Cohort Analysis: Some Applicatory Problems in the Study of Social and Political Behavior,” *Social Science Quarterly*, 50 (1969): 374–80, which deals with the problems of cohort overlap, sample attrition, and design asymmetry. The issue of controlling such variables as sex and education is explored in Norval D. Glenn and Michael Grimes, “Aging, Voting and Political Interest,” *American Sociological Review*, 33 (1968): 563–75.

In addition to Klecka's paper cited in note 48 the following papers were delivered at the session of the annual meeting of the Political Science Association in 1971 devoted to research on the problem of generations: Neal E. Cutler, “Generational Analysis in Political Science”; Stephen J. Cutler, “Some Political Consequences of Prestige Loss Among the Aged”; Anne Foner, “Age Stratification and Ideological Cleavages”; T. Allen Lambert, “Generational Factors in Political-Cultural Consciousness.”

select a particular statistical relationship is to choose a potential generalization. There was nothing in the logic of Crittenden's research that forced him to measure the political effects of aging by calculating cohort changes over eight-year periods. His even more basic decision to consider the "aging" that occurs between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-eight as functionally equivalent to the aging that occurs between the ages of fifty-seven and sixty-four imposed a range of possible answers to certain questions, but not to all possible questions, about the political effects of aging.

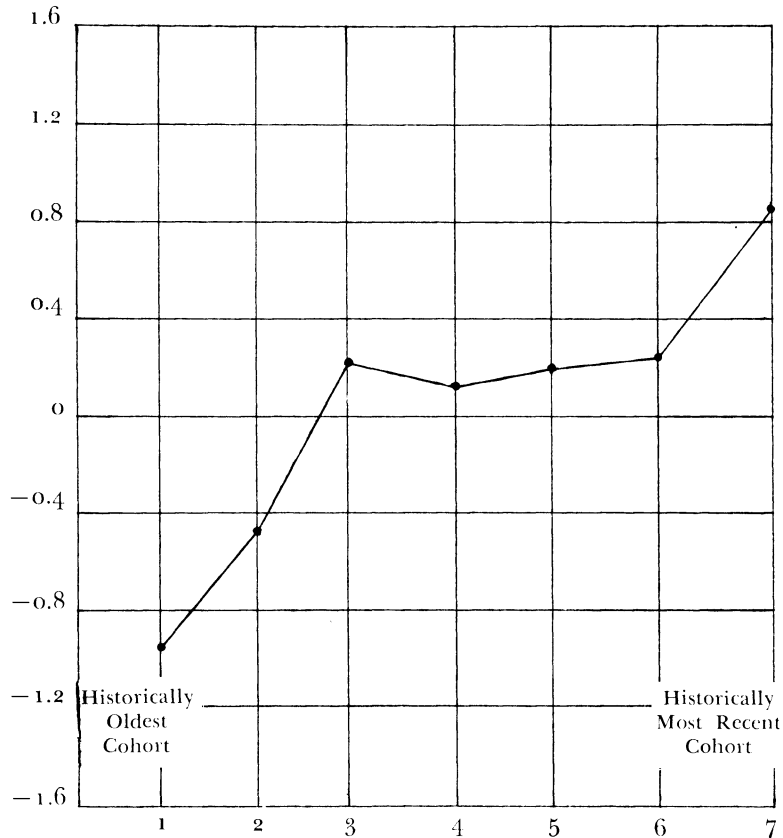
If we wish to compare how successive generations have viewed salient foreign policy issues, we might, as Neal Cutler did, construct a measure of cohort response to questions about foreign policy and then average this measure over the life of each cohort as it responded to four successive surveys administered between 1946 and 1966 (see figure 1).⁵¹ This would enable us to graph and thus compare age-related attitudes to foreign policy, expressed as an average response of the particular "generations," who are experiencing the same events at different stages of their life cycles.

Cutler interprets figure 1 to support the hypothesis that the younger the cohort the greater the support for foreign aid. The method of averaging does plausibly convey the existence of differences between age groups, not at a particular time but over time. However, the method conceals possible rhythms of difference and uniformity that might have been flattened out in the averages; and does not allow of questions regarding the effects of aging, for example, or the degree to which the collective opinion of a given cohort might have been affected by a traumatic event such as the Korean War. Cutler could have organized the evidence to bear on such questions but did not. There is no point in objecting to his choice but some in recognizing the way it shaped the possibilities of his conclusions.

In an even more basic sense the nature of the available evidence shapes the nature of the conclusions—for example, generational analyses based on survey data are limited by the inherent limitations of surveys. The most obvious of these has to do with time and place. Surveys successively applied so as to provide longitudinal data have been collected only for a short time, in a few places, and about a few topics. Social scientists recognize this, of course, but cannot always resist the temptation to draw, or at least suggest, large generalizations out of their narrow data base. Consider for example, Lipset and Ladd's modest, "In so far as we can generalize, Aristotle's emphasis on the moderating effects of growing older turns out to be more predictive

⁵¹ Neal E. Cutler, "Generational Succession as a Source of Foreign Policy Attitudes," *Journal of Peace Research*, 1 (1970): 33-47.

FIGURE 1. FOREIGN AID



Source: Neal E. Cutler, "Generational Succession as a Source of Foreign Policy Attitudes," *Journal of Peace Research*, 1 (1970): 40.

than Mannheim's theory of the long-term consequences of the early political experiences of 'generation-units.'⁵² This dubious assumption of generality is not really saved by their disclaimer. There is no point to their guess that what they discovered about college-age cohorts in mid-century America "predicts" such generational patterns in other times and places and with regard to other forms of collective behavior—except to the extent that their findings falsify any formulation of the Mannheim theory as a universal law. Such gratuitous conjectures are usually controlled by the behaviorist super-ego; and a venerable tradition of criticism and self-criticism has instilled in survey practitioners a sophisticated sense of the conceptual limitations and practical flaws in extant survey data. Some of these, such as accumulated sampling error, systematic underrepresentation of certain social groups, changes in the wording of questionnaires applied in successive surveys, might be relevant to a particular generational study but are not germane to our general concerns.

⁵² Lipset and Ladd, "College Generations," 113.

One rather technical issue of survey research is, however, central both philosophically and practically to the systematic investigation of generations. This issue might be approached by discussing the difference between a "panel" and the sample of a cohort. When a panel is surveyed the same questions are periodically readministered to the same group of respondents. Longitudinal studies based on survey data do not, strictly speaking, measure the change in attitudes of the individuals originally surveyed, but the change in the proportion of those holding particular attitudes in successive samples of the same cohort.⁵³ A study that concludes that the surveyed cohort becomes more conservative with age is actually describing an increase in the percentage of those expressing conservative attitudes in the later samples, not the increasing conservatism of particular individuals surveyed in the early samples.

The relevance of this issue has to do with what William Evan calls "the biasing effect of changes in the composition of cohorts."⁵⁴ This would be no problem if one could assume that changes in the composition of cohorts through demographic loss, migration, and immigration were randomly distributed along the spectrum of attitudes surveyed. But in the world we precariously inhabit this is not always a safe assumption. There are not only demographic effects related to the normal erosion of the aged population or to the disproportionate erosion of males in the older cohorts, but also the immense age-specific destruction that accompanies war and other social tragedies. Thus unfortunately there is some sense in speaking of the virtual disappearance of an entire generation. One could not assume identity in the internal structure or the interrelationships of cohorts of French males surveyed in 1914 and 1919.

How such considerations might apply in less dramatic and obvious circumstances can be illustrated by a brief discussion of Maurice Zeitlin's treatment of political generations in his *Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class*.⁵⁵ Zeitlin's work is refreshing because it breaks out of the usual class and cultural boundaries of American

⁵³ For practical reasons the scope of panel studies is quite limited. One often-cited example is Erland N. P. Nelson, "Persistence of Attitudes of College Students Fourteen Years Later," *Psychological Monographs*, 68 (1954): 1-13. Although the time span and population examined are limited, the study reveals the care with which variables should be controlled to be able to draw any conclusions regarding collective shifts in opinion, even about the panel that was resurveyed.

⁵⁴ Evan, "Cohort Analysis of Survey Data," 72. Glenn and Zody (in "Cohort Analysis with National Survey Data," 239) argue that cohorts (that is, surveyed samples of a larger population) are preferable to panels "with a local or otherwise restricted sample in which changes in the sample cannot be related to changes in the total population." However, Nelson's study shows how, in principle at least, one might contrive controls for local deviance and for national trends. As I point out above, the relatively stable structure of recent American cohorts, which have no significant emigration or immigration, cannot be assumed for other times and other places.

⁵⁵ Maurice Zeitlin, *Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class* (New York, 1970), 211-41.

public-opinion research to investigate the political self-definition of Cuban working-class generations. He finds that successive age groups of Cuban workers retained the stamp of the historical circumstances prevailing at the time of their entrance into the labor force. Aging did not correlate with decreasing militancy. For example, those who entered the labor force from 1928 to 1935 during a period of militancy and Communist leadership remained, in 1962, significantly more sympathetic to the revolution and to communism than those some fifteen years their junior who received their political baptism during the 1940s under different circumstances.

Zeitlin's research was necessarily based on limited data. Such a problem as the adequacy of his sample is not our concern, but the force of his generational conclusions is weakened by certain other, probably insurmountable, limitations. Since he did not investigate age-related attitudinal shifts for the entire Cuban population, we cannot know the extent to which specific proletarian cohorts deviated from, or merely recapitulated, shifts of the larger population. An even more basic issue has to do with the stability of the sampled cohorts. Even if Zeitlin had been periodically able to survey samples of his cohorts during the entire era 1928-62 he could not have been certain that there was no relevant migration from the cohorts. This is not a completely abstract quibble because it is at least conceivable that the relatively negative response to communism in the age 36-43 cohort reflects the disproportionate erosion or emigration of those who had been Communist sympathizers in the 1940s.

I believe that these reservations qualify but do not vitiate the plausibility of Zeitlin's conclusions. And I certainly subscribe to his view that "failure to use the generational concept because its empirical demonstration is difficult is detrimental to the analysis of political behavior."⁵⁶ The commitment to the goal of empirical demonstration does, however, make some approaches to the problem of generations more plausible than others. The attempt to grasp the essence of the historical process through an analysis of age-specific relationships analogous to the Marxian analysis of class relationships has raised more problems than it can hope to solve. Thus we have not gotten very far with the elucidation of Mannheim's, "the phenomenon of generations is one of the basic factors contributing to the genesis of the dynamic of historical development,"⁵⁷ but we might well settle for the elucidation of specific historical phenomena, of the sort suggested by Mannheim.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁵⁷ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 320.

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 290 n: "It is a matter for historical and sociological research to discover at what stage in its development, and under what conditions, a class becomes class-conscious, and

I HAVE ARGUED ABOVE that so-called generational phenomena have to do with age-specific relationships that may or may not matter; that such relationships vary in nature; and that the varieties must be distinguished in order to decide how statements about them might be verified. I have identified the following distinct, though sometimes overlapping, categories in which age-linked differences might constitute significant historical variables:

(1) Recurrent collective behavior is associated with a certain phase of the life cycle. This conception of the "ages of man" has most often been applied to behavior peculiar to youth, or to the presumed effects of aging.

(2) Groups of coevals are stamped by some collective experience that permanently distinguishes them from other age groups as they move through time. Social scientists usually characterize this as a generational as opposed to a life-cycle effect.

(3) Different groups of coevals may simultaneously experience the same significant events but respond to them in distinct ways more closely associated with age than with other variables.

(4) Particular circumstances produce extraordinary temporary differences between age groups, constituting a generation gap. A gap that regularly recurs, however, would actually be a phenomenon of stages in the life cycle, as in the first category described above.

(5) Attributes separating a cohort from older age groups may persist in the behavior of all subsequent cohorts. Then what began as a generational difference eventually characterizes the entire population under a certain age.

(6) Changes in the relative size of cohorts may cause significant temporary or permanent differences, linked to age such as those that result from large age-specific demographic losses.

I believe, without insisting on it, that the other distinctions mentioned in this article can be made to fit more or less comfortably into one of the above categories. They are presented, not as a rigid taxonomy, but to suggest that useful generalizations proceed from appropriate distinctions.

similarly, when individual members of a generation become conscious of their common situation and make this consciousness the basis of their group solidarity."