2. CONCEPTUALIZING AND UNCOVERING INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE

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INTRODUCTION: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON AN OLD THEME

Intergenerational relations imply dealing with ambivalences. This thesis is what the contributions to this volume have in common. Yet, critics may claim that it is not a new insight. Among them are those who recall that some of the greatest sagas in Greek mythology depicted what we now refer to as ambivalence. Others may argue that the experience of ambivalence pervades everyday life. Adult children, for example, feel ambivalent about placing their elderly father or mother in a nursing home. Parents have mixed feelings about their child's living with a partner without an intention to marry and have children. A son's or a daughter's "coming out" as gay or lesbian is fraught with ambivalence on both sides.

Taking up ideas laid out by Lüscher and Pillemer (1998), Walker (2002) has initiated a debate in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Among the participants in favor of advancing the ambivalence perspective and research, Connidis and McMullin (2002a, b) make a strong case for a structural approach in a sociological and feminist perspective. Curran (2002) suggests further enriching this line of thought by bringing in fundamental economic considerations. Bengtson, Giarusso, Mabry and Silverstein (2002), long-term advocates of solidarity as a key tool for

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the study of intergenerational relations, argue that their multi-dimensional model of intergenerational relationships already covers, at least partially, what is meant by "ambivalence." The question then is: What can we gain by using this concept in contemporary theory and research? This basic issue leads to several sets of questions, around which I have chosen to organize this chapter.

I begin with the terminological issues. What does the term ambivalence *mean*? Is ambivalence just another word for conflict? Does it carry a negative connotation – in the sense of being undesirable? What are the different contexts in which the concept is useful and how are they interrelated? I would like to outline these terminological issues not only because conceptual clarification is always useful, but also, more importantly, because a closer look at the word as used in daily life and in different disciplines can be a source of productive/important insights.

Thus, although it may seem somewhat unfamiliar to research-oriented readers, I find it useful to begin by exploring briefly the origins and history of the term "ambivalence," and I will attempt to make a convincing case for the merits of this approach. Knowledge of the concept's history provides background for a broad view of its meanings as a cultural topic, as well as for selecting dimensions of ambivalence that are relevant for research. At the same time, we begin to set the stage for future interdisciplinary work. Also of interest is the odd fact that for several hundreds or even thousands of years, ambivalence has been a genuine human experience, yet the word itself was not coined until 1910. What does this say about its relevance in present times, often labeled as "postmodern?" In fact, the concept indeed plays a prominent role in postmodernist writings, as shown below.

I would even maintain that the challenge of ambivalence lies in its ambiguities. Donald N. Levine's stimulating book, *The Flight from Ambiguity* (1985), provides a solid basis for contending that insight into the ambiguity of a concept is what powers the development of new ideas. But in order for this driving force truly to function and advance our knowledge, we need guidelines for the formulation of specific hypotheses and for the development of research instruments.

This necessity leads to a set of questions about conceptualization: Could there be a more than accidental connection between the deeper meanings of the words "generation" and "ambivalence?" Do we have reasons to assume that intergenerational relations are especially prone to create or induce ambivalences, or to be permeated with them? Looking carefully into these questions soon reveals that the major issue about thinking in terms of ambivalence is not its "newness" as such, but rather the fruitfulness it displays by including all aspects of relationships and building bridges between disciplines.

Seeing its different meanings in different contexts and different disciplines provokes the question of what is common to the different notions of ambivalence

and how the concept can be defined. I will make a case for a definition that keeps in mind the specific purpose of analyzing what may be called "*intergenerational* ambivalence." At the same time, this definition can be situated within the broader field of using the concept of ambivalence and remains connected to other usages of the word.

The task, then, is to try what may be called an "operationalization" in the broad sense of the word. A first step requires exploring what we mean by social relations or relationships. In a second step, I will outline a schematic model of intergenerational ambivalence, developed in our research group at Konstanz. It is based on an analytical distinction of two basic dimensions of social relationships, which we term the personal-subjective and institutional-structural. Insofar as each of them can refer to two basic ambivalent polarizations, it becomes possible to distinguish four ideal-typical ways of dealing and coping with intergenerational ambivalences.

The model is meant to represent one possibility of a theoretically funded operationalization of intergenerational ambivalence. (Research based on this model is presented in Chap. 7 of this volume.) In the final section of the present chapter I briefly review the current status of research on intergenerational ambivalence and propose steps to advance the approach. I conclude by returning to my original thesis, namely that the concept of ambivalence enriches our understanding of intergenerational relations, relates it to basic issues of the social sciences, connects it with other disciplines, and has fundamental relevance for the analysis of contemporary social life.

DEFINING INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE

Everyday Understanding of Ambivalence

What do parents mean, in everyday language, when they confess to an ambivalent relationship with their daughter or son? They feel themselves somehow tugged back and forth, torn between closeness and distance, intimacy and estrangement. Parents and children want to be independent of one another, knowing all the while that they are still mutually dependent. When both parties experience feelings of estrangement or even of hostility, they may nevertheless still feel bound together by ties of love. Under such circumstances they may be burdened by a sense of indecisiveness, uncertainty, and drifting apart.

Ambivalence offers itself as a plausible label in the context of sophisticated everyday language. The *Collins English Dictionary*, for instance, sums up ambivalence or ambivalency as "the co-existence of two opposed and conflicting emotions . . ." and its thesaurus refers to "contradiction . . . equivocation,

fracturation . . . opposition, uncertainty, vacillation." *The Oxford English Dictionary* points to "the co-existence in one person or one work of contradictory emotions and attitudes towards the same object or situation (or thing)." The root syllables are "ambi," meaning dual or twofold, and "valence," which refers to value or valuation. We might conclude that it refers to a center and to opposite sides. If we equate the center with the self, this aspect of meaning is compatible, formally speaking, with the idea of personal identity as a reference of ambivalence.

To move beyond the unavoidable vagueness of everyday language and its proximity to essentialist and normative usage, turning to the brief but important history of the concept is worthwhile. Such a reconstruction suggests possible dimensions to be accounted for in research. It is also fruitful because it throws light on why ambivalence can and should be understood as a source for new experiences, and should therefore not "a priori" be seen as a negative experience.

Important Facets of the Concept's History

The Origins

As far as we know, the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler invented and first used the concept of ambivalence for the psychiatric diagnosis of "negativism" in 1910, and subsequently as one of four core symptoms of schizophrenia (Bleuler, 1911). This specific meaning is still part of the medical nomenclature (WHO, 1992). Bleuler distinguished three types of ambivalence – in regard to affection or emotions, to cognitions, and to volition (expression of will) – and pointed out that the three are closely intermingled. His scientific usage is more differentiated than is our everyday usage, which speaks mainly of emotions or feelings, as the dictionary definitions above show.

A brief recollection of the first public debate on ambivalence, at an annual meeting of the Society of Swiss Psychiatrists (see the minutes by Riklin, 1910/1911), may illuminate another important point. Among those present at that assembly in Berne was C. G. Jung. He applauded the term, but he wanted to have it understood primarily in an abstract formalistic manner, expressing that "each tendency is counterbalanced by an opposite" (see on this Graber, 1924, p. 8). Thus, Jung equated ambivalence with dialectical opposition aiming at a balance. This interpretation entails a simplification in a way which – following Kris (2000, p. 15) – can be seen as significant for Jung's way of theorizing. Following Bleuler, ambivalence should not be seen as a disequilibrium, nor should it be equated with dialectics.

Bleuler's most comprehensive treatment of the concept is an essay simply entitled, *Die Ambivalenz* (1914, "Ambivalence"). He starts with several

illustrations from clinical practice that hint at the idea of divided consciousness, and mentions the case of a mother who has killed her child, grieving and laughing simultaneously over the child's death. Yet Bleuler also argues that ambivalent affect, cognitions, and volitions can be part of ordinary, "normal" conduct. Furthermore, he points to the experience of ambivalence as a source of creative stimulus for writers, and as a topic of their writings. Goethe in his *Sorrows of Young Werther* provides an example. Relating ambivalence to creativity freed the concept from its association with a pathological condition of the mind, laying the grounds to use and to comprehend ambivalence as a neutral analytical term.

Bleuler made it clear that the inability *to cope* with ambivalence, rather than ambivalence itself, is what leads to psychic disorders. His son, Manfred Bleuler, later added that ambivalence is, in fact, a mental state inherent in the human condition. Significantly, this idea appears in a chapter entitled *Gesundes im Schizophrenen – Schizophrenes im Gesunden* (Bleuler, 1972, pp. 607–613: "The Healthy in the Schizophrenic – the Schizophrenic in the Healthy"). Here we find the statement: "Wie aber dem Schizophrenen gesundes inneres Leben nicht verloren geht, so ist dem Gesunden schizophrenes Leben nicht fremd" (p. 610). ("Just as the schizophrenic person does not lose his healthy inner life, schizophrenic life is not foreign to the healthy person.") Stotz-Ingenlath (2000, p. 156) points out: "For him (Bleuler) the schizophrenic symptomatology seemed to be only an exaggeration and disturbance of healthy psychic processes."

In the context of this chapter, it also is noteworthy that Eugen Bleuler already had connected ambivalence to mythological accounts of what he called the "father-complex." He refers to the accounts of Uranus and Saturn who destroy their children's lives, yet the children survive and become the representatives of the future, castrating and dethroning their fathers.

Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy

Freud took up the concept from Bleuler very quickly. This is not surprising because the theme of simultaneous opposition surfaces, for instance, in an essay on "The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words" (1910, Standard Edition, Vol. 11, pp. 155–161). Freud makes positive, complimentary remarks about the invention of the concept. Like Bleuler, Freud was aware of the ubiquity of ambivalent experiences and of the necessity to adapt their general meaning to specific cases.

Freud thought in terms of ambivalence. He first used the term in connection with a theory of "transference" (Freud, 1912/1975). This use is relevant insofar as the context is a specific social relationship (i.e. between therapist and patient) that may have some similarity, in its asymmetric structure, with intergenerational relationships. Later, he also included it in his theory of the Oedipus complex,

to analyze an exemplary intergenerational phenomenon. A concise presentation appears in his short essay, "On the Psychology of the Secondary School Pupil" (Freud, 1914/1953). Furthermore, he integrated the concept into his work on mass psychology and ego analysis (Freud, 1921/1953), and his cultural-critical study "Civilization and its Discontents" (Freud, 1929/1953). He also connected it with his fundamental theory of "drives" and of "totem and taboo," and ultimately with the juxtaposition of "eros" (love) and "thanatos" (death).

Attempts to lay out in more detail Freud's concern with ambivalence have been made by Knellessen (1978) and Otscheret (1988). Without providing much detail, one can say, with Knellessen, that Freud's usage of ambivalence demonstrates his increasing preoccupation with developing a meta-psychology. He aimed to uncover the fundamental forces – or "drives" – which serve as the agents of personal and societal development. His use of the term has to be seen in parallel with its reception and development by many authors in the psychoanalytic tradition, who also applied it in psychotherapy. This tendency can be summarized in the way Knellessen sees it, that "after an initially strongly biologically conditioned orientation, it is increasingly being embedded in social relationships, in objective structures" (p. 129). This development also runs parallel to the reception of the term in sociology.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to present the full history of the term in psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, and family therapy (for the latter, see especially Otscheret, 1988). Among recent contributions, Parker's treatise on "Mother Love, Mother Hate" merits special attention. Within a feminist frame of reference, she expands the idea, already touched upon by Bleuler as mentioned above, that dealing with ambivalence may be a source of social creativity.

Parker (1995, p. 6) refers to Melanie Klein, who "considered that ambivalence had a positive part to play in mental life as a safeguard against hate." Parker adds: "I want to go further and claim a specifically creative role for manageable maternal ambivalence. I suggest that it is in the very anguish of maternal ambivalence itself that a fruitfulness for mothers and children resides." The major mechanism can be described as follows: Given the fundamental dichotomy and the awareness of love and hate, mothers are able even in desperate situations to reactivate the forces of love.

More generally, mothers search continuously, even under difficult situations, for arrangements that serve the well-being of their children. This fundamental ability to cope with ambivalence creatively can be seen as a genuine cultural and social contribution of mothers to civilization. Contributions like Parker's make clear why – and also how – a focus on ambivalence can be compatible with feminist thinking. This field is sensitized to possible ambivalences in gender relations and to constructive, as well destructive, strategies dealing with them.

Sociology

Looking at the concept's history in sociology, we note again a rather recent appearance of the term itself: despite an awareness of the topic which dates back much further. Indeed, as Levine (1985), Luthe and Wiedenmann (1997), Junge (2000), and a number of other writers point out, classical theoreticians such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber identified – in their critical appraisal of modernization – enduring paradoxes which are more than mere contradictions or conflicts.

The most outstanding theoretician of sociological ambivalence, however, is Georg Simmel. Although he does not use this term explicitly, an early awareness of ambivalence is apparent in many of his writings. In a general way, he can be regarded as the discoverer of what may be called the realm of "in-betweeness" in human sociality, the fields of the indeterminate (Luthe & Wiedenmann, 1997, p. 19) and of ambiguity (Levine, 1995). Simmel saw closeness and distance as basic conditions of human sociality and consequently of social relations.

More recently, Bauman (1991) shows sensitivity for possible roots of ambivalence in language as such. A quote from the opening chapter of his book on postmodernity may serve as an illustration:

> Ambivalence, the possibility of assigning an object or an event to more than one category, is a language-specific disorder: a failure of the naming (segregating) function that language is meant to perform. The main symptom of disorder is the acute discomfort we feel when we are unable to read the situation properly and to choose between alternative actions.
>
> It is because of the anxiety that accompanies it and the indecision which follows that we experience ambivalence as a disorder – and either blame language for lack of precision or ourselves for linguistic misuse. And yet ambivalence is not the product of pathology of language or speech. It is, rather, a normal aspect of linguistic practice. It arises from one of the main functions of language: that of naming and classifying. Its volume grows depending on the effectivity with which that function is performed. Ambivalence is therefore the *alter ego* of language, and its permanent companion – indeed, its normal condition (p. 1).

A dominant issue among sociologists interested in ambivalence concerns whether certain features of social structures generate ambivalent experiences. Yet, the issue is complicated.

In the literature, two notions – structures "being" ambivalent vs. structures generating ambivalence – are confused. This often goes together with a holistic, even essentialistic language that speaks of society as being a thing or an actor. Such reifications carry the danger of oversimplifying social complexities and the interplay between personality and social structure. Also, moralistic arguments such as a society or the "state" being "good" or "bad" are furthered. This line of thinking is situated on the level of general meanings and is difficult to connect to research.

The recent popular use of the term ambivalence in "postmodern" social writings demonstrates these dangers. Nevertheless, Bauman (himself a prominent representative of sociological postmodernism) adds noteworthy elements to the exploration of ambivalence. He often refers to "social types" or "modal personalities," for example, when he illustrates contemporary ambivalence. In this way, he connects the concept to the observation that many people experience themselves as fragmented, that is, they have what can be called a precarious, fragile personal identity. One is reminded of the origins of the concept in Bleuler's work with patients suffering from schizophrenia.

Along this line, reference should be made to Weigert, who published several texts on ambivalence that speak to the topic of ambivalence and identity formation and – like Bauman's works – point to connections with modernization processes (Weigert, 1988; Weigert & Franks, 1989). He primarily located ambivalence in the sphere of emotions (Weigert, 1991). This work suggests a relation to the sociology of emotions and the study of emotion management (see, for example, Hochschild, 1983).

Credit for the most influential sociological reception of the concept of ambivalence is due to Robert Merton and colleagues in the 1960s. In their seminal article, Merton and Barber (1963) first refer to Bleuler and Freud and to the cultural awareness of ambivalence in history. Then, they propose to study "which social structures generate the circumstances in which ambivalence is imbedded in particular statuses and status-sets together with their associated social roles" (Merton & Barber, 1963, p. 95). Significantly, they see the "core" of ambivalence as being in "conflicting normative expectations." Furthermore: "Since these norms cannot be simultaneously expressed in behavior, they become expressed in an oscillation of behaviors: of detachment and compassion, of discipline and permissiveness, of personal and impersonal treatment."

Speaking from our present state of understanding, however, one may argue that Merton and Barber did not distinguish ambivalence clearly enough from conflict. They did not consider the bridge to the notion of the self, a shortcoming that may be due to functionalistic role-theory. Writers in the tradition of symbolic interactionism were more outspoken on this issue. For example, Goffman's treatise on *Stigma* (1963), although without an explicit definition, analyzes the phenomenon of ambivalence and its management by people who suffer from physical or psychic anomalies and illustrates different strategies of dealing with ambivalence. Goffman also reminds us of the relevance of ambivalence for the presentation of the self in everyday situations. Furthermore, Merton and Barber wrote their essay before the "linguistic turn" showed its consequences in the social sciences. Therefore, they did not treat language simultaneously as a social phenomenon and as a means to socially construct reality – in the sense suggested by Berger and Luckmann (1966).

Along these line, Donati (1998) provides a careful critical assessment of Merton's notion of ambivalence.

The strength of Merton and Barber's approach, however, can be seen in their application of ambivalence to the characterization of specific roles for most professions, e.g. the physician, the scientist, the organizational leader, as documented by the later writings of Merton (1976, Chaps 2–5). In this way, the link to societal preconditions of ambivalence is established – certainly a genuine sociological view. Traces of this idea can also be found in works by scholars such as Rose Laub Coser (1964, 1966), Lewis Coser (1965), Jan Hajda (1968), and others who wrote on ambivalence in the 1960s.

A more recent example of the reception of Merton and Barber is Weingardt's attempt to work out the implications of "professional ambivalence" for psychotherapists. He indicates – with reference to Merton and Barber – four conditions to be challenged, namely: the open-ended continuity of the relationship, the authority of the therapists, his or her self-interests, and the difference of performance appraisal. In his account, Weingardt pleads for a two-sided apprehension: "When ambivalence is normalized . . . it can become a productive force of therapy rather than an impediment to it" (Weingardt, 2000, p. 305).

Applying the concept of ambivalence to the study of professional roles implies using it as a quality of social *relationships*. This application coincides with our concern with relations between generations. As mentioned earlier, professional relationships and intergenerational relationships have at least one feature in common, namely, a specific structure of power or authority: The patient depends upon the physician as the child depends upon the mother or father. Yet seen from the other side, the power of the physician, as well as the power of the parents, is not unrestricted and is not a "free-space" for the pursuit of self-interests. To the contrary, authority here (as elsewhere) implies a responsibility for a dependent person. It includes empathy and concern for the well-being of the client or the child. Moreover, it is a responsibility for the development of the person. It is also a personalized responsibility insofar as the patient or the child may sooner or later judge the consequences of the physician's or the parents' "care." These features represent concomitantly structural and personal preconditions of ambivalence in relationships.

Thinking about such issues draws attention toward the "logic of relationships," by which I mean the formulation of specific rules that emerge in a culture or community to establish and to ensure sociality on all levels and in all domains of societal life. Smelser (1998) has taken up the concern with ambivalence in the social sciences and addresses just this point when he juxtaposes "the ambivalent and the rational" to show the relevance of ambivalence in the social sciences as a complementary alternative to the concern with "rational choice." Smelser himself, however, remains somehow undecided. On one hand, he does not see

in ambivalence "a theoretical competitor . . . opposed to the postulate of rational choice" (p. 5). On the other hand, he states:

> . . . if we move toward the broader implications of the place of the rational and the ambivalent in the social sciences, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a fundamental existential dilemma in the human condition. It is communicated in various dichotomies – freedom vs. constraint, independence vs. dependence, autonomy vs. dependence, maturity vs. infancy, and more – but ever the dichotomy, the dilemma appears to be insoluble (p. 13).

Be that as it may, Smelser's essay can be understood as supportive of two of our major concerns. First, ambivalence may be comprehended as a major condition of human sociality; second, it may be prevalent in certain kinds of social relations and situations, especially those where dependency is an issue. The latter is certainly the case for intergenerational relations.

Ambivalence in Fiction and Art

Because ambivalence refers to experiences which are deeply rooted in human life, it is also observable in the work of writers and artists. Here, the links between ambivalence, identity and creativity call for attention. Seeing through the eyes of artists and writers reminds us that the awareness of ambivalence requires specific processes of interpretation. Commentators on the lives of writers, artists, and composers also provide a connection between ambivalence-producing experiences in the life of artists and interpretations of their works, and can show that elements in the works signify ambivalences in the creator's life. Moreover, and as already referred to in passing by Bleuler, artistic works can be understood as ways of *dealing with* ambivalence.

Reinharz (1986), for example, gives an informative overview on "loving and hating one's elders" as "twin themes in legend and literature." She refers, among other examples, to the tragedy of Uranus and his sons and to the Oedipal myth. Hamlet as well, she tells us, can be read as a "portrait of intergenerational relations" (p. 38). Peter von Matt presents a colorful overview of the theme (von Matt, 1995) under the provocative title "Verkommene Söhne, missratene Töchter" (Degenerate Sons, Misguided Daughters). He draws a line from the biblical story of Absalom to the admonitory children's book *Der Struwelpeter* (Shock-headed Peter) and recalls the complex relationships described in Theodor Fontane's *Effie Briest* and in Kafka's tale "The Metamorphosis." We also can add Philip Roth's novel *American Pastoral* as an example of ambivalence in recent American literature. In so far as fictional works are or can be seen as constructions of worlds of their own, one also may see the ambivalences as deliberately constructed.

Transposed into the realm of social inquiry, this observation alerts us to be sensitive to the possibility of actually *creating* ambivalences for ourselves, and

possibly for others. The notion that ambivalences can be created by writers and artists implies, as a further assumption, that they are experienced by readers or viewers. In the same way, spectators are supposed to see ambivalences in the work of painters, as in a still life by Hopper (Levin, 1981). It likewise is assumed that listeners will "hear" ambivalences in a symphony by Mahler or a string quintet by Shostakovitch. Instead of "reading," "seeing," or "hearing" ambivalences, however, it is more customary to speak of "feeling" them. In turn, this may provoke the experience of ambivalence by those exposed to the works of art and music. Thus, we may also consider that "ambivalence can breed ambivalence."

This is an insight which is also relevant for psychotherapy. Brief examples may serve as illustrations. Dagmar Hoffmann-Axthelm is a musicologist and a psychoanalyst. Her sophisticated study (1994) of Robert Schumann looks into circumstances and relationships in Schumann's life, which plausibly can be interpreted as ambivalent. Schumann was torn, for example, between a highly sensitive father and a strong mother who was absent for part of his childhood. Later, his mother opposed his intention to become a musician and forced him to study law. Furthermore, Schumann's relationship with his wife Clara was characterized by a mix of ambitious expectations for harmony and genuine rivalry between them. One can identify a certain repetition of ambivalent experiences in Schumann's life, which can be related to certain elements of his music. Hoffmann-Axthelm, as a musicologist, is able to trace creative responses to these ambivalences in compositions such as the piece for piano, entitled "Papillon." Later in his life, Schumann lost the ability to cope with his complex ambivalences and transform them creatively into music. Clara (at least in the way Hoffmann-Axthelm sees it) had to separate from Schumann, for fear of being herself pulled in to his struggles with ambivalence.

Hoffmann-Axthelm's account of Robert Schumann shows how an ultimate inability to manage or transform ambivalence can lead to the destruction of the self. The opposite can be illustrated with reference to an analysis by Gerhard Schneider (2001) of the work of the Russian painter Kasimir Malevitch. His most significant work, often called an icon of 20th century art, is entitled "Black square in front of a white background." As the title says, the work simply juxtaposes a black square to a white environment that is also a square. Thus, the painting uses two colors, black and white, which are properly speaking "non-colors." The extreme reduction in "color" goes together with an extreme reduction of form, namely to the square. One may really speak of an ultimate juxtaposition. Yet the square is not fully perfect. It shows some minor aberrations. The juxtaposition is just not fully perfect. It may be called a pending, vacillating, waving juxtaposition. For this reason, we can interpret the work as a pictorial representation of ambivalence and its dynamics.

In a second step of the analysis, Schneider relates the realization of this extreme – and in its time absolutely innovative – work to the artistic biography of Malevitch, who eagerly desired to create something new, yet the field was already taken by movements such as cubism. Malevitch's solution was extreme yet ambivalent abstraction. The act of coming to this position became a turning point in the life of Malevitch. Schneider quotes a personal note of the painter that confirms this view. Further proof of the existential relevance of that decisive, creative moment may be seen in the fact that Malevitch made three additional versions of the work. He identified himself with the black quadrangle throughout his life, although his work subsequently moved in a different direction. And conversely, he was "identified" by the artistic community and the public with the "black quadrangle": A reproduction of the picture is even painted on his gravestone. Malevitch, in the interpretation of his life by Schneider (and other art critics such as Simmen, 1998) of which this brief account is only an extremely condensed version, can be seen as having made a successful close and creative connection between the experience of ambivalence and personal development. His example confirms the links between ambivalence and self.

In sum: The role of the concept of ambivalence reveals three aspects, which are relevant for its usage in the social sciences and the study of intergenerational relations. First, ambivalence can be created, and ambivalence can be a source of creative activity. Second, the awareness and the experience of ambivalence require processes, interpretation. Third, these two aspects go together with a usage of the concept that underlines its openness and ambiguity. I will argue that this usage comes close to the notion of ambivalence as an "interpretative concept," to be distinguished from the usage as a "research construct."

Proposing a Definition

The previous section brings to light only a few facets of the rich history and diverse use of the concept of ambivalence. More comprehensive overviews call attention to many other areas into which the concept has been introduced. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989, pp. 387–388) mentions, for example – in addition to the social sciences references already noted above – the following first usages of the term:

> 1939 L. TRILLING, *M. ARNOLD* iv. 123. Rousseau's *Confessions* had laid the ground for the understanding of emotional ambivalence.
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> 1948, M. Joos *Acoustic Phonetics* 23. The principle of ambivalence, which states that any thing which is capable of emitting acoustic power linearly will also absorb acoustic power according (to) the same rules that govern its behavior as an emitter.

> 1953, *Times Lit. Suppl.* 9 Oct. 645/2. What social anthropologists call "plural belonging," what literary critics call ambivalence of attitude, and what the proverb calls having your cake and eating it, is a common human phenomenon.
>
> 1956 A. L. ROWSE *Early Churchill* p. vii. There is much to be said for a certain judicious ambivalence.
>
> 1959 *Times Rev. Industry* Mar. 4/3. There is an ambivalence in the claims on promotional moneys, for the furtherance of distribution on the one hand and for the extension of advertising on the other.

Sources such as this attest to the continuing ambiguity of the concept. A multitude of meanings and a certain vagueness of meaning can be observed not only in everyday language, but also in texts where the concept is invoked as a general characterization of contemporary society. Junge (2000) goes so far as to see theories of contemporary societies converging in an analysis of ambivalences. He refers in particular to Bellah's theory of "moral economy," Münch's theory of action, Beck's theory of "reflexive modernity," and Bauman's characterization of postmodernity (p. 87).

There is much to recommend trying to formulate an explicit definition. While a "working definition" must not be taken as all-encompassing or final, it can help to clarify what is common in all appearances of what we mean by the term, and how it differs in different contexts. Furthermore, an adequate definition may serve as a useful reference point for research; insofar as an explicit definition can identify the fundamental characteristics of the creature to be studied, it also can facilitate the processes of application for research – often called "operationalization." This process goes hand in hand with a certain limitation or, in literary terms, "contextualization" of the concept.

An explicit definition may also serve to set some limits on how other terms are used in the field. The term "conflict," for instance, is much more general than what I would take as the meaning of "ambivalence." "Conflict" can range from indecisiveness, to tensions, to antagonistic interests, and to the clash of physical forces. Many conflicts may be resolved – be it by mutual agreement, by contract, by compromise, by subordination, or even by destruction. These mechanisms do not work in the case of ambivalence, however, because with ambivalence the basic tension remains; it is "pending conflict." Another way this distinction can be expressed is by characterizing ambivalence as a juxtaposition of two forces that cannot fully balanced against each other. Ambivalence expresses an incomplete, imperfect "accountability" (see also Curran, 2002).

The following proposition, then, while appropriately groomed for the application of the concept in the analysis of intergenerational relations, is also an attempt toward a general understanding of ambivalence. It is thought to provide a

better sense of what precisely can be meant by ambivalence, and where possible divergences in our understanding of the term can be identified. I start with the definition to be followed by a set of explanations:

For the purposes of sociological research (on intergenerational relations), it is useful to speak of ambivalence when polarized simultaneous emotions, thoughts, volitions, actions, social relations, and/or structures that are considered relevant for the constitution of individual or collective identities are (or can be) interpreted as temporarily or even permanently irreconcilable.

In the sense that it is intended to help give direction to scholarly (scientific) analysis, and contains therefore a heuristic component, this definition can be called pragmatic. It focuses on elements that may be directly or indirectly related to empirical observations. The usefulness of the definition – its validity or truth, so to speak – is measured by the extent to which it helps to organize empirical observations, to integrate results of research, and to connect insights from different disciplines. Given this intention, it should be understood as tentative and in need of confirmation through results and their acceptance in the scientific community.

This working definition contains some elements – such as polarization or opposition – which seem obvious and generally understood. Going a step further, though, I propose to see in ambivalence not merely a formal opposition, but something that is embedded in the very processes of thinking, feeling, doing, relating, and organizing. From this perspective, ambivalences are dynamics that must be *dealt with*.

We may label this view a pragmatic, action-oriented perspective. Ambivalence is presumed to activate, or at least to appeal to the human potential for action in social structure. In other words, dealing with ambivalence requires what Giddens and other contemporary sociologists speak of as "agency" (see, for example, Malcomb Waters, 1994). In turn, agency implies the awareness of identity (be it individual or collective). It is therefore appropriate to include an explicit reference to identity in our working definition. Support for this view comes also from authors from the field of applied psychotherapy (Weingardt, 2000). The client may enter the situation reluctantly, hoping for a change, yet at the same time, he or she should accept his or her self-image. The therapist, in turn, strives to activate the creative resources of the client, being aware of the client's dependency and need for help (Linehan, 1993; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Under these circumstances, dealing with ambivalence has the character of a dialogue which may be conducted intra- or interpersonally. Consequently, negotiation is an important mode of dealing with ambivalence. In this connection, reference should be made to Jekeli's concern with what she calls "Ambivalenztoleranz" (tolerance of ambivalence). She uses the idea of tolerating and enduring ambivalence as

the point of departure for strategies to cope – more or less successfully – with ambivalence (Jekeli, 2002).

Thus, systematically speaking, the following points may be seen as core of the proposed definition:

Identity: The origin of the concept of ambivalence, as we have seen, is its use as an element in the diagnosis of schizophrenia, a disorder that severely affects personality. More recently, difficulties in dealing with ambivalence have been proposed to be part of the symptomatology of the borderline personality disorder (Kernberg, 1979; Linehan, 1993). The incapacity to cope with ambivalence in a proper way – that is, a way that is accepted in a given socio-cultural context – may lead to psychic disorders and severe problems in interactions, hence to difficulties in the constitution of personal identity.

The basic issue concerns the ability to handle simultaneously competing perspectives toward one and the same object, which at the personal level also can be toward the self. Sociologically, ambivalence can be ascribed to relationships. The emphasis in both cases is always on two polarized yet interdependent components. We can hypothesize that people cope with ambivalence in more or less competent, productive ways. Deliberately constructing ambivalences can also be a strategy in social interaction – another reason to view ambivalence as both an opportunity and a burden. Furthermore, the experience of ambivalence can be related to psychological well-being (Pillemer, this volume). All these considerations include a (sometimes implicit) reference to the self or identity.

Time, irreconcilability, and conflict: Adding the temporal dimension, we can speak of polarized forces that cannot be fully reconciled within a limited or even an unlimited time span. Ambivalence can be experienced in situations in which a child cares for an elderly parent, and it also can be seen in regard to the entire biographical history of the relationships between parents and their children (see Segal, this volume). The specific temporal qualities of ambivalence can also be expressed by the term "oscillation," as used in theoretical writings about family therapy (Simon, 1998). Awareness of temporary or enduring irreconcilability is an important feature; it fundamentally distinguishes ambivalence from conflict, insofar as conflict can, at least in principle, be resolved. If we regard ambivalence as conceptually prior to both harmony and conflict, then we can treat both as common ways of dealing with ambivalence. Such a view is based on the general proposition (or hypothesis) that ambivalence is both a possibility and a challenge of the "*condition humaine*."

Attribution and interpretation: Not to be comprehended as innate, ambivalence may be understood as the product or consequence of an attribution or interpretation

made by actors themselves, other persons, therapists, or social scientists. This insistence on ambivalence as a product of interpretation is inspired by uses of the term in art and literature. However, it should be underscored that interpretation is a central, not disposable, element of the definition. It clarifies the epistemological quality of ambivalence as a "construct." From a social-psychological point of view, ambivalence (and a model of dealing with ambivalence as suggested below) may even be comprehended as "mental representation."

The insistence on interpretation also emphasizes the pragmatic aspects of the idea of "irreconcilability," as the processes of interpretation locate a given experience of ambivalence in a social, interpersonal context and its temporal dimension; these may be seen as more or less limited, but also may be seen as "open" or unlimited. In other words: the experience of ambivalence may persist for a certain time span, and then may lapse because the context loses its relevance. The notion of interpretation also allows us to account for cases where ambivalence is denied or repressed by the actors, yet third persons may uncover it.

Indeed, people differ in the extent to which they are aware of ambivalence. Thus, we must distinguish between manifest, explicit, overt ambivalence on one hand, and latent, implicit, covert ambivalence on the other. These two types must be studied by means of different research methods.

Overt ambivalence can be asked about directly, even in everyday language – for instance, asking a parent if he or she has feelings of being torn. Researchers encounter certain limits, however, imposed by linguistic skills, comprehension, and personal mechanisms influenced by what is considered socially desirable and acceptable. Consequently, it also is desirable and necessary to develop methods of indirect assessment for covert ambivalences. These methods are presented in several of the later chapters in this volume.

There is more at stake than just words in the attempt to produce accurate definitions. The fundamental issue here is about how closely we can bring our thinking into alignment with the reality of social life as it is lived today. In this regard, and by way of a first approximation, we may distinguish two ways that the concept of ambivalence is applied in the social sciences, including psychology and psychotherapy.

First, the term can serve as *interpretative (or explanatory)* concept. This is, in fact, its primary use in macro-sociological texts – as, for instance, in Bauman's characterization of "postmodernity" as pervaded with ambivalence. References to social reality are confined to generalizations, based mostly on highly aggregated, generalized data. Sometimes, outstanding examples are called to the fore, to be seen as enlightening illustrations. Descriptions are sometimes presented in the form of "ideal-types" or "model personalities" such as Bauman's proposed "tourist" or "player" (Bauman, 1997).

In contrast, a second approach to, or use of, the concept of ambivalence begins with viewing it as a *research construct* which is to be operationalized. The goal is to apply the concept in research – such as surveys, experiments, observations, and the analysis of documents. For this purpose, an explicit definition is necessary – one that can serve as the reference point for formulating specific hypothesis and constructing research instruments.

The definition offered here is intended to serve both of these uses, facilitating the discourse between different approaches and disciplines. It attempts to circumscribe the core meaning of the concept, and it refers to elements that are relevant for more elaborated usages.

Any definition provokes the question of differentiation from related terms. Ultimately, this issue is a matter of convention, but it may facilitate mutual understanding and transdisciplinary work to recall the epistemology and the history of a term, as well as how it is used in individual disciplines, even in different approaches or schools within a given discipline. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer this kind of analysis for terms associated with or similar to ambivalence such as: dilemma, paradox, or the social-psychological concept of cognitive dissonance. However, at least a brief note is appropriate in regard to the concept of "ambiguity."

Interestingly, the term ambiguity is much older than ambivalence, and its history reaches back into the 17th century. In present language, the two terms are often used synonymously. Encyclopedic sources such as *The Oxford English Dictionary* or *Websters Dictionary* highlight in ambiguity the idea of uncertainty, and that it implies having more than two meanings. In contrast, ambivalence focuses on bipolar tensions, at least in most usages of the term. In scholarly language, the concept of "tolerance of ambiguity" (Ambiguitätstoleranz), as suggested apparently by Frenkel-Brunswik in connection with the famous study of the "Authoritarian Personality" (Adorno et al., 1950, p. 461; Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949/1950), enjoys certain popularity. It refers to one's ability to endure uncertainty and contradiction in the relationships with another person. This meaning comes close to the idea of dealing with ambivalence, as discussed in more detail by Jekeli (2002). A specific clinical meaning which includes the dimension of coping is Boss' theory of "Ambiguous Loss" (see Chap. 9, this volume; also Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998, p. 416).

OPERATIONALIZING INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE

Generally speaking, operationalization means establishing rules that specify how a concept should be used to guide systematic observation and interpretations. This

involves deciding which observable facts the concept should be associated with and in what manner. In a narrower sense, the aim is to develop measurement procedures. The definition of the concept serves as a starting point, especially in regard to the explicitly addressed elements or dimensions, in which different degrees or levels of concreteness can be discerned.

Predispositions for Ambivalence in Intergenerational Relations

The working definition and the history of the term do not suggest that ambivalence is an innate, a priori, or "given" attribute or quality of any social phenomenon, not even of intergenerational relations. However, using the concept heuristically implies the assumptions that empirical indicators of ambivalence (as noted above) are likely to be found in intergenerational relations, and that dealing with ambivalence is a task or challenge often posed by them. In this section, I would like to support the case for making these assumptions by means of three arguments that address the question: Why is it useful, or even advisable, to analyze intergenerational relations under the premise that they may require dealing with ambivalence?

The first argument is general and even epistemological. It refers back to the basic meaning of the term "generation." Nash (1978, p. 1) convincingly argues:

> Our most secure standard for defining a generation rests on the Greek root of the word *genos*, whose basic meaning is reflected in the word *genesthais*, to come into existence.... That moment when a child is born simultaneously produces a new generation separating parent and offspring – *gonos ergo genos* – and the very concept evokes the paradox of an ever-shifting threshold in time.

Thus, "generation" stands both for continuity and for beginning. It is used in the context of family roles (parents vs. children), but it also distinguishes the older from the younger within the same population. How this differentiation is socially and culturally achieved and accentuated is a major theme of societal development. It displays a complex temporal structure composed of interplay, or interactions, between the past and the future. Both are represented in the present, as is expressed in Pinder's (1928/1961) famous dictum of the "Ungleichzeitigkeit des Gleichzeitigen" ("non-contemporaneity of the contemporary"). Generation refers not only to "procreation," but also to descent from an ancestor. New life is procreated, and at the same time the emerging individual is integrated in an existing social unity.

No matter how strongly parents and children are bonded to one another throughout their lives and experiences, the latter can never become completely identical with the former. Not only are intergenerational relations formally indissoluble, they also are characterized by this fundamental difference from other

relationships. Pragmatically speaking, experiences and identities even may be in opposition to each other in intergenerational relations. The ongoing oscillation between sameness and difference which necessarily ensues, constitutes a basic epistemological and anthropological *precondition* for ambivalence.

The second argument is phenomenological and more concrete. It refers to how relationships between parents and (adult) children are experienced in everyday life. It also concerns the understanding that people may have about the characteristics and specific qualities of these relationships. Although the topic is discussed in the scientific literature on personal relationships, intergenerational relationships are seldom in the focus. This thread of my argument relates to Smelser's proposition (discussed above) regarding how "dependence" in personal relationships is likely to breed ambivalence. Closeness and intimacy may reinforce or strengthen the susceptibility for ambivalence.

Indeed, dependence is an obvious component of intergenerational relations. We see it from birth (or even during pregnancy) through childhood and youth until adulthood, and in many cases even late in the life span. It manifests very early in the needs for nurture, care, protection, and education. Beyond these immediate obligations, and in the course of fulfilling them, parents develop and acquire specific information and particular knowledge about an individual child as a person – that is, about his or her personality and self. This understanding of the child's personality is relevant for decisions that concern his or her well-being and development. It also reinforces the parents' power to control and to discipline the child, not only when he or she is small but also in later phases of life.

While many decisions are matters of daily routine, others may become of crucial importance in later life. Consider, for instance, the impact of their choice of kindergarten, or of a certain type of school, or of approving or denying the child's participation in certain cultural activities or sports. Parents should decide and act on behalf of and in the (best) interest of a child or youth who, later on, may demand that they explain or justify why they decided or acted as they did. Thus, parental authority has limitations. The awareness that they have to act on the child's behalf without knowing for certain how things will work out, and how the child may see those results later, can constitute a breeding ground for ambivalence.

In this context of dependency, power, and accountability, the closeness and physical intimacy that good parent-child relations require also can occasion ambivalence. If the line between physical intimacy and sexual intimacy is not clearly drawn and observed, for example, this area can be particularly susceptible to it. Most cultures have found themselves required to enforce taboos in this realm, most prominently with respect to incest.

Further along in the intergenerational life course, the direction of dependency between children, parents, and older or younger generations may become more

complicated – support and care are specific instances explored in this book. Yet the authority of the elder, established early in life, may persist as another source of ambivalence even as situations arise that produce a possible or real reversal of dependency. Cohler and Grunebaum's studies of relationships between mothers and daughters in Italian immigrant families (1981, pp. 120ff., 197ff.) provide many convincing illustrations of this process.

A third reason for looking at intergenerational ambivalence can be deduced from a close examination of the structural and cultural conditions of contemporary western (postmodern) societies. On the macro-sociological level, population dynamics establish a framework in which ambivalence easily emerges. The rise in life expectancy, attributable to improved living conditions for increasingly large segments of the population, was accompanied by a decrease in infant mortality. As a child's chance of survival became more likely, the possibility of seeing each child as an individual person was enhanced. The decrease in the birth rate was a logical consequence. Childhood and youth soon were seen as specific phases of the life-course calling for their own institutions – for instance, public schooling. The same observation can be made with respect to the other end of the life course via the recognition of aging as a stage of life calling for its own institutions. The rise of gerontology as a science is one indicator, as is, for instance, the popular distinction between the "young old" and the "old old." The distinction is loosely drawn in keeping with the need for intensive care. Finally, even the life period of the "middle years" began to receive attention.

This marking out of different periods or segments of the life course has led to a heightened consciousness of the importance of relationships between age groups, or in other words, between generations. This has been true especially in the realm of the family, but also in the society at large. The development of social welfare became another factor in this marking out of life-stages and of intergenerational relationships.

On the micro-social level, this differentiation of the life course into stages or segments correlates with a rising preoccupation with personal growth and the expression of personal identity. Seen through the lens of these processes, the traditional dynamics of intergenerational relationships are no longer taken for granted. They become issues requiring conscious action, and in this way they gain in importance.

Ambivalence consequently is more likely to be widespread in the general population today than it has been in the past, and is more consciously perceived and experienced. It is more important now than ever before to explicitly structure, negotiate, and organize intergenerational relationships, because the life span shared by successive generations is in general longer than in former times, and larger segments of the population are experiencing ambivalence. The rise

in ambivalence is one by-product of the increasing diversity of contemporary lifestyles (Coontz, 2000).

Last, but not least, the traditional assignment to women of the responsibility to care for family members is not regarded unreflectively regarded as socially justifiable. This challenge to traditional assumptions about who "should" do what with respect to family care, in connection with changes in gender roles, is a important factor in producing a greater consciousness of intergenerational ambivalence (Connidis & McMullin, 2002a).

Any sociological work on the topic has to be aware of Karl Mannheim's seminal essay on the problem of generations (Mannheim, 1928/1993, p. 200), which serves as the point of departure for a genuinely sociological perspective in the field. Mannheim was primarily concerned about social progress and its paradoxes. He turned his attention to the dynamics inherent in the succession of generations, especially to the differences in their perspectives of what is in keeping with "the times." Out of this he elaborated a precise terminology about the notion of generation, differentiating between "generation status," "generation as actuality," and "generation unit."

Noteworthy in our context, however, is Mannheim's proposition to connect the simple fact of belonging to a generation with the awareness of "identity" (although he did not use this term). He emphasized the importance of the formative experiences of youth though, interestingly, he did not really take into account the role of the family. As a consequence, Mannheim's notion of generation is exclusively societal and does not include genealogical succession. We may speculate that this shortcoming derives from his preoccupation with the confrontation between conservative and progressive political and cultural movements (Kettler, Meja & Stehr, 1987; Mannheim, 1927). Or perhaps it is due, or partly due, to the fact that in his historical period, the family was primarily seen as an institution, based on another institution, marriage, of which parenthood was seen as self-evident consequence. This understanding of the family has changed over time. Together with the growing awareness of the consequences of longevity, and the daily awareness of an expanding common life span between the old and the young, the attention has turned to the task of organizing intergenerational relationships, particularly among kin and family members. We may locate here the "new" problem of generations.

What is Meant by "Relationships"?

Preceding discussions and considerations of ambivalence take as self-evident what is meant by "social relationships." This practice corresponds with a long tradition

in the social sciences, where even classical authors only rarely gave serious thought to a systematic elaboration of the concept itself. In sociology, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and Leopold von Wiese are among the exceptions. Since the 1970s, however, efforts have been made to establish a transdisciplinary science of personal or interpersonal relationships. These developments can be seen in reviews by Blumstein and Kollock (1988) and Berscheid (1994), among others. Donati (1990) and Emirbayer and Mische (1998) have attempted to establish the foundations for a genuine sociological approach based on the concept of relationship.

An attempt to clarify also the basic dimensions of the concept of interrelationship can profit from the seminal work of Hinde (1976), who made the following major points:

> A relationship involves a series of interactions in time. By an interaction we usually mean a sequence in which individual A shows behaviour X to individual B or A shows X to B and B responds with Y.... Interactions involving a sequence of behavioural events can be classified according to the extent to which each response by each participant was determined by the preceding behaviour of the other participant.... In studying relationships, it is a proper assumption that each interaction affects the future course of the relationship, even if only by confirming the status quo. In other words, any stability that a relationship has is dynamic in nature. Since all relationships are prone to change... stability in a relationship is a relative matter (pp. 3–4).

Hinde also lays out the importance of control and power in the context of relationship, although he does not elaborate this point.

We commonly speak about how we get along with somebody else, or how we are related to someone. Usually we describe generalized emotional judgements, for instance by saying how close we feel to her or him as a person. Or we may speak of having "mixed feelings," often meaning that we see ourselves torn between feeling close to that person and feeling distant from them. This common way of describing relationships is often taken up in social research, and it can also be used to assess ambivalence. Questions posed in just this sort of language appear in the research instruments developed and applied in the Konstanz and Ithaca studies and by Fingerman (see Chapters by Lüscher and Lettke, Pillemer, and Fingerman and Hay in this volume). The great advantage of this approach lies in the familiarity of the language and the ease of understanding what is being asked.

But familiarity has its limits. The statements are very general and therefore evoke unequivocal responses. The information that can be gained in this way is limited to overt forms of ambivalence. From an analytical perspective, it therefore seems desirable, at least conceptually, to explore possibilities that can offer a more differentiated comprehension of what we will call "relational ambivalence."

Since relationships are self-referential and thus recursive, they not only are experienced as encounters between two (or more) subjects but also are to be seen

as bound to a "system" that provides a framework for the interactions and promotes their continuity. It is therefore reasonable to distinguish two dimensions of social relationships: The first refers to the individuals involved as subjects, with their personal attributes; the second concerns the structural context. Since the latter emerges from the establishment of rules and norms, it seems appropriate to call it the "institutional" component, especially in the case of the family. Such usage is in accordance with the premises of a pragmatic-interactionist or social-constructivist notion of social institutions, as developed by Berger and Luckmann (1966, pp. 47–128).

On one hand, institutional conditions are reinforced and reproduced by the ways people live out their relationships. On the other, these conditions are influenced by general societal conditions, such as stratification into social classes and distinctions among socio-cultural units based, for instance, on ethnographic classifications. Many contemporary approaches also view gender as a structural category.

In their attempt to further extend the theory of intergenerational ambivalence, Connidis and McMullin (2002a) make a strong case for what they call "structural ambivalence." With this term they are referring to social conditions that give rise to ambivalence. They conceptualize ambivalence "as socially structured contradictions made manifest in interaction," and they see ambivalence as "created by the contradictions and paradoxes that are embedded in sets of structured social relations (e.g. class, age, race, ethnicity, gender) through which opportunities, rights, and privileges are differentially distributed" (p. 565). This notion of ambivalence comes close to the idea of conflict as developed in "critical theory," in a general sense of that term. Further discussions about the specifics of structural ambivalence in their understanding seem necessary.

These authors also held that "managing ambivalence in daily life shapes the very social structures that produce ambivalence in the first place, through either reproduction of the existing order or its transformation. Thus, a critical, sociological conception of ambivalence bridges social structure and individual lives by emphasizing the tensions between them, as individuals attempt to meet their own, their family's, and society's contradictory demands and expectations" (p. 565). This view is compatible with the intentions followed up here by putting an emphasis on relationships so as to build a bridge between the personal and the structural conditions of ambivalence. Connidis and McMullin also think that, because of cultural and linguistic differences, calling this dimension "institutional" may lead to misunderstanding (2002b, p. 600). Adding the term "structural" to the proposed working label for this dimension may help to remind us that all institutions imply social structures.

In addition, a closer look into relationships allows us to distinguish between micro- and macro-social spheres of social conduct, as well as to combine both

in our view. Relationships can be conceived as taking place in face-to-face encounters between two or more persons. Relationships emerge from direct interaction and as such are, so to say, "primary" relationships. But the concept of relationship also can be used to describe the mutual influence and connectedness of different social units such as two families, or the community and the church. Relationships of this kind may be called "mediated" or "secondary."

Primary relationships can be influenced by secondary relationships. The field of intergenerational relations provides many examples of this. For instance, the way a daughter cares for her elderly mother may also reflect how older generations in a society are interrelated with the younger generations – which in turn depends, as one "mediating instance," upon the availability of social welfare institutions for care and support. Similarly, the mutual understanding of husband and wife (including, for example, their ability to eventually accept divorce) depends upon the contemporary societal and cultural view of gender relations.

The distinction between primary and secondary relationships can also be understood in terms of social time, not only social space or place. From this perspective, "primary" refers to the immediate present, "secondary" to the past and possibly also the future. Consider, for example, a concrete situation in which a mother is torn between accepting and refusing her adult daughter's help with housekeeping. Looking back on the history of how they have gotten along through the years, the mother may recall situations in which accepting her daughter's help created embarrassing feelings of dependence. In this case, the subjective-personal dimension includes a reference to the history of the relationship between the two parties.

Looking into the temporal preconditions of ambivalence draws our attention to the need to be aware of the life course as a whole. One can hypothesize, as for instance is suggested by Pillemer and Suitor (2002), that a turning point or a crisis situation may be especially sensitive to the experience of ambivalence. This approach also can take into account the institutional-structural dimension, as the passage from youth to adult is at least partially determined by sociocultural dictates and customs. If in a given society – as in, for instance, present-day Italy (see Donati & Sgritta, 2002) – the requirement to become independent is countermanded by adverse economic conditions such as widespread unemployment, ambivalence is likely and widespread. Ambivalence may be felt intensely, for example, on a beautiful morning when a father, going to work, is torn between demanding that his unemployed son "get up and do something reasonable" while also empathizing with the son's deplorable situation.

Another circumstance that breeds intergenerational ambivalence arises when a child begins the process of leaving the parental home. Grown children usually feel entitled to lead their own private lives, but at the same time they often want

to continue receiving certain types of assistance from their parents – for example, financial help or benefits such as having laundry done for them or borrowing the family car. In such situations, parents may ask themselves whether they should help their children (with or without strings attached). They may sometimes even feel that they are being exploited. If they consequently make their help available on conditions of having certain demands or requests met, they may reduce their children's sense of independence. In such situations, it appears difficult to set limits. On a structural level, data show that since 1990, many adult children are getting older when they finally move out; this can be interpreted as a possible structural indicator of increasing intergenerational ambivalence (Lauterbach & Lüscher, 1999).

To summarize: Both primary and secondary relationships – in terms of behaviors, opportunities, and ways of understanding – are deeply embedded in societal structures and in individual and family mentalities. In this connection, Curran (2002) refers to the "embeddedness," of ambivalence. One is reminded of some approaches in the socio-ecological traditions, for instance, in the models sketched out by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995; see also Moen, Elder & Lüscher, 1995).

Intergenerational relations are embedded in a family system which is characterized, sociologically speaking, by a society's prevailing structural, procedural, and normative conditions. These structural-institutional "givens" shape familial relationships. They create a "family world" into which the individual is born.

The Konstanz Model of Intergenerational Ambivalence

Many who study intergenerational relationships, including those between parents and young children, consider the tension between autonomy and dependence to be a central issue (see, for example, Cohler, 1983). Many would also agree that any aspect of the relationship that touches upon this area is a breeding ground for ambivalence. The analytical considerations of the concept of relationship that we have explored above, however, may provide a distinction and a differentiation that can prove useful in this context. Before exploring how the two dimensions of relationship provide a primary guiding idea for the Konstanz schema, we should consider several background issues.

The idea of describing the field of social interactions and relations in terms of two dimensions – an individualistic-subjective component and a structural-societal component – is well known in the social sciences. One example from the classical literature is G. H. Mead's notion of the self as emerging from the interplay between "I and Me," where "I" refers to spontaneous subjectivity and "me" refers to generalized other (Mead, 1938). Recollection of this theory is important, given

the relevance for the self (i.e. one's conscious personal identity) of the experience of ambivalence. Many interpersonal models of personality explicitly refer to Mead. For example, Leary (who developed a circumplex model that describes personality between the poles of love vs. hate and dominance vs. submission), speaks of Mead as a "creative watershed to which later theories of interpersonal relations can trace their sources" (Leary, 1957, p. 101).

A more recent interpersonal circumplex model building upon this tradition is that of Benjamin (1974, 1982; Benjamin, Foster, Roberto & Estroff, 1986; Benjamin & Wonderlich, 1994), who tries to conceptualize even psychic disorders in forms of interpersonal behavior that can be analyzed using the dimensions of love/hate and dominance/autonomy. Benjamin explicitly conceptualizes ambivalence as behavior that alternates between these poles and refers to the self. The use of a two-dimensional model also can be found in the literature on family therapy. Olson's so-called circumplex model is one popular example (Olson, 1986; Olson, Sprenkle & Russell, 1979).

A note of caution is appropriate, however. It is important to remember that schematic models serve heuristic purposes. A degree of simplification (to allow for clear graphic presentation) and a certain open-endedness (due to the ambiguity or equivocal nature of generalized terminology) may bring forward contradictions and stimulate further thoughts that are fruitful for the development of a theory. These qualities are unique to schematic models and may account for their popularity, which can be traced to a long history of this kind of presentation (Bogen & Thürlemann, 1998).

Following these leads, conceptual and empirical researchers at the University of Konstanz encouraged the development of schematic models for the analysis of intergenerational ambivalence. I present the basic outlines of this research in the remaining portions of this chapter, and two other chapters in this book will provide more detail. Our intention is to offer one possible example of how one might advance the conceptualization and the operationalization of intergenerational ambivalence. Chapter 4 (Lettke & Klein) reviews some of the methodological issues involved in this process, and Chap. 7 (Lüscher & Lettke) reports on results from studies based on the Kostanz model (see also: Lüscher & Pajung-Bilger, 1998).

The model is based on the premises discussed in the previous section of this paper. We should also recall that the concept of ambivalence has, epistemologically and theoretically, the status of a construct. This means, briefly stated, that it cannot be observed directly. It must be deduced from indicators that refer to attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors that we can connect with labels that designate juxtaposed poles characteristic of ambivalence. Such labels are needed for both the subjective-personal and the structural-institutional dimension of relationships (Fig. 1).

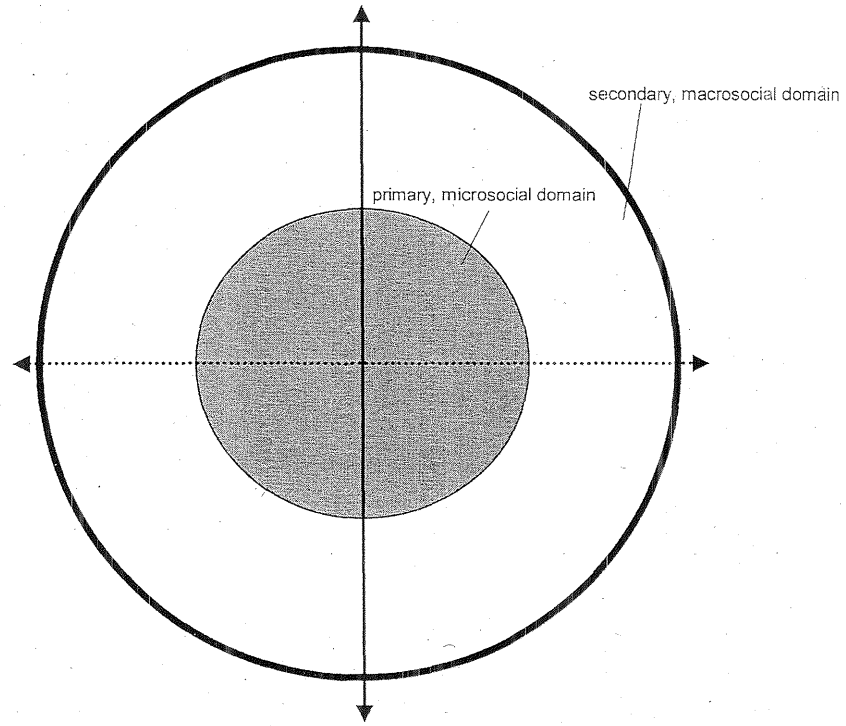

Fig. 1.

The *personal* or *subjective* dimension can be characterized as follows. Parents, children, and the members of other involved generations share a certain degree of similarity. While some of this similarity can be attributed to biological inheritance, no inheritance is total, insofar as individual parents and individual children are never genetically identical. Their similarity is, however, reinforced by the intimacy of interactive learning processes, which creates the possibility for closeness and subjective identification. At the same time, and especially in the process of maturation, parent-child similarity also can be a cause of and reason for divergence. Ultimately, children develop different personal identities than their parents.

For the schematic presentation, two fairly abstract labels are needed. To account not only for the socio-spatial but also for the socio-temporal aspects,

we propose the terms "convergence" and "divergence." Those two polarities can serve as umbrellas for a variety of attributes. Convergence includes such attributes as loving, warm, solicitous, reliable, and close. Divergence is illustrated by cool, easy-going, indifferent, and superficial (see also Chap. 7, Lüscher & Lettke).

For the *institution-structural* dimension, we can conceive of a polar opposition between a desire to preserve the traditional social form or structure of relationships and a desire for dramatic change. Neither is fully realizable. For instance, although children may choose a way of organizing his or her private life that is vastly different from what is customary in their family of origin, some ties to childhood experiences may remain, even if only that they provide a negative background. As technical designations, taking into account again the socio-temporal as well as the socio-spatial aspects, the terms "reproduction" and "innovation" appear useful to express the idea of a dynamic polarization. Here, reproduction includes attributes such as inflexible, restrictive, and "stuck in a rut." Innovation is expressed by terms such as open to new experiences, changeable, and so on.

The differentiation between the subjective-personal and the institutional-structural dimension (as schematic and therefore still very broad and general as it may be) suggests the analytical distinction between personal and structural ambivalences. However, in reality, the subjective-personal and institutional-structural components are interwoven. The mix of the two dimensions is especially obvious in practice, in the ways people deal with ambivalence in daily life.

As mentioned above, one possible benefit of schematic models, which has to be weighed against their shortcomings, is to encourage further ideas. Along this line, the proposed model not only distinguishes analytically two basic types of ambivalence (personal vs. institutional), but also suggests basic strategies people can call upon to deal with ambivalences. This can be observed in regard to both the primary and the secondary realms of relationship and their related activities.

In order to include the role of power and authority, we refer to ideas of Baumrind (1978, 1996), as outlined in her typology of parental styles. This author distinguishes among three parental styles: authority, authoritarian, and laissez-faire. In the case of authority, emphasis is placed on the idea that traditional structures imply a generalized orientation to the well-being of the subjects involved under the name and the general notion of the common good: Under such circumstances, ambivalences are restrained or evaded. The authoritarian perspective gives high priority to personal growth and personality development. Ambivalence can be accepted and should be discussed. Intergenerational relations in the laissez-faire mode focus on the formal equality of the involved individuals. Under such circumstances, we can assume a tendency to deny ambivalence. The fourth type

suggested by our schematic model is not found in Baumrind's original typology. Yet it points to conditions that can be observed empirically and characterized as ones in which people become entangled and entrapped. Ambivalences are strongly experienced and become obvious – if not to the parents and children themselves, then at least to outside observers.

On the macro level of society, we can distinguish cultural patterns that structure intergeneration relationships. As general designations, we offer the terms solidarity, emancipation, atomization, and captivation. These labels (but not the dimensions they refer to) may be modified if they seem too general or are understood as linked to any particular culture. On the micro level, when parents and adult children interact and solve problems together in social situations, they use "situational patterns of meaning" which can be generalized to "maxims" of practical action (for these notions see Lüscher & Lettke, this volume). These must be discovered and identified through research. Based on our qualitative research to date, we offer the following initial propositions in a graphic presentation as shown in Fig. 2.

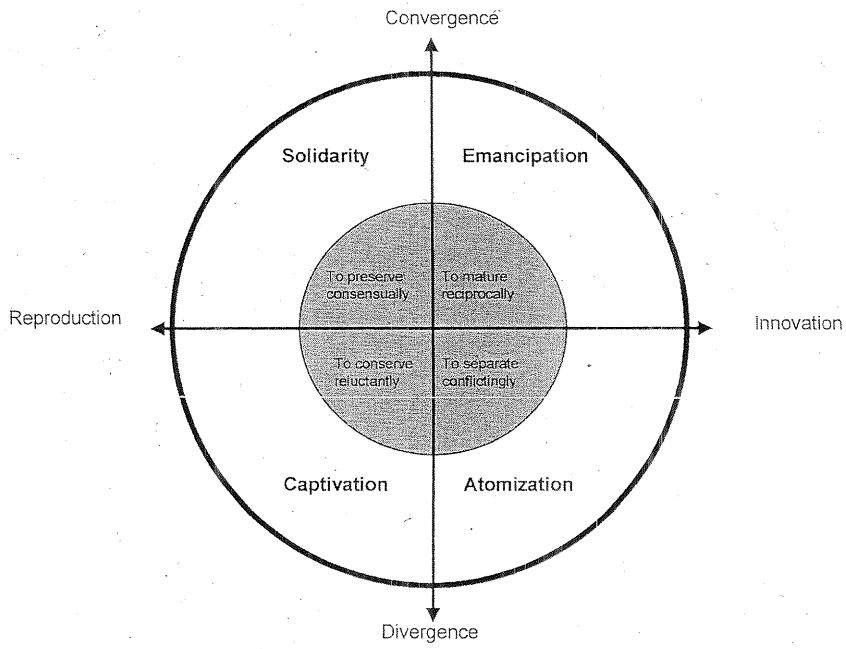

Fig. 2.

(1) *Solidarity* refers to reliable support, or the willingness of the generations to provide each other with services of a not necessarily reimbursable sort. This involves the exercise of authority, but not in the sense of a one-sided exertion of influence and power. Rather, it is understood as representative action including empathy. The maxim of action can be characterized as to "preserve consensually." The members of a family feel committed to their traditions and get along with one another quite well. Thus, "solidarity" is one possible mode of dealing with intergenerational ambivalences, which in this case may be more covert than overt. (It should be noted that this term implies a specific notion of solidarity, and that the term "loyalty" also may be appropriate for this dynamic.)

(2) Where family members strive for *emancipation*, actions predominate that support mutual emotional attachment (convergence) and openness toward institutional change (innovation). Relationships between parents and children are organized in such a way that the individual development and personal unfolding of all family members is furthered without losing sight of their mutual interdependence. This general setting contains a certain amount of direct, common purpose pursued by efforts to "mature reciprocally." Tensions can be discussed openly and temporary practical solutions can be negotiated continually.

(3) *Atomization* takes into account that family cohesiveness is no longer assured by institutional ties and the subjective experiences of relational histories. The concept expresses fragmentation of the family unit into its smallest components, specifically individual family members, who "separate conflictingly." Apart from the unalterable fact that family members are parents and children, they otherwise have very little in common. Actions follow a line of conflicting separation, although an awareness of generational bonds remains.

(4) *Captivation* designates cases where the family as an institution is invoked to support the claims of one family member against another. A fragile relationship of subordination and superiority thereby arises, in which moral demands and moral pressure are used to exert power. Usually one generation, predominantly the parental, attempts – by invoking the institutional order – to assert claims on the other or to bind them by means of moral terms without, however, basing its demands on a sense of personal solidarity. The guiding maxim here is to "conserve reluctantly" and family members may try to "instrumentalize" each other, not respecting each other as subjects, but using each other as "means to an end" or objects.

I would like to underscore the tentative heuristic character of the model. It is an attempt to synthesize and to visualize the basic assumptions about intergenerational ambivalence, and to suggest a first set of labels for the poles that characterize the dimension of simultaneously experienced juxtapositions. It also suggests ways to see how the micro- and the macro systems are embedded in a social ecology of action. As a general schematic representation, the model encourages further differentiations and adaptations to specific topics of research.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION: STEPS TO UNCOVER INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

This chapter's major topics are conceptualization and research strategies. The first part explored the meanings of ambivalence. Adopting the "pragmatic" ideas of Peirce's semiotic triangle (Rohr, 1993), we first pay attention to the term, its epistemology and its history, then to the phenomena that are of interest, and third to the perspectives, theories, and disciplines that connect term and phenomena by way of interpretation. This process of semiotic "triangulation" establishes and uncovers contextualized meanings of ambivalence.

This kind of analysis provides a basis for definitional considerations. Staying faithful to the "pragmatic" orientation (in the sense of pragmatism as a school of thought), definitions are understood – or we could say are "defined" – as tools to guide systematic inquiries. This kind of definition contains heuristic, hypothetical elements. Such contextual definitions are also means to promote discourse between disciplines and between approaches within disciplines.

With both functions in mind, we can formulate a comprehensive definition that explicitly labels the major elements relevant for analyzing ambivalence in the context of social sciences – particularly for the study of parent-adult child relationships. Such a proposal is ambitious because it may invoke dimensions or aspects that cannot be taken into account in specific research endeavors since any project, in practice, has to limit its scope. The attempt to produce a comprehensive definition may nevertheless be appropriate for theoretical reasons. In the context of this volume, it facilitates the comparison between the different approaches and the different research findings.

The chapter also addresses questions about the "operationalization" of ambivalence for the study of intergenerational relations. Here, one particular line of argumentation is presented. It departs from the general analysis of the notion of social relationship. The analysis, in combination with the key elements of the definition of ambivalence – namely the experience of simultaneous polarization interpreted as at least temporarily irreconcilable – leads to the design of a schematic model. It proposed heuristically, in the micro- and the

macro-levels of conduct, four basic strategies of dealing with intergenerational ambivalence.

Critics may accuse this model of being static and too abstract. Such criticism, however, misunderstands the underlying intentions and the function of schematic models – at least of the kind presented in this chapter. The model is not static because it is not a guide to how to categorize personality traits or behaviors. It refers to strategies, to "considered actions" or "guidelines for conduct" that are called into play by having to deal with ambivalence. The abstract structure of the model is a consequence of its source in theoretical deduction (as contrasted with models based on induction in the form of empirical generalization). Most theories are based on comparatively simple assumptions, and representational models serve to recall these assumptions. At the same time, the simplicity can be read as an invitation for further differentiation.

One line of differentiation is contained in the proposed research strategy of "uncovering." Its point of departure may be found in the fact that "feeling (or being) ambivalent" is now part of everyday language. Furthermore, we have many virtually synonymous idiomatic phrases such as "being torn between x and y" that also express the state of being involved in enduring, irresolvable conflicts that must be dealt with. These common popular expressions make it feasible to ask direct questions about the awareness or experience of ambivalence. Several survey instruments do, in fact, make good use of this opportunity. (See, for example, research reports in chapters of this volume by Pillemer, Lüscher & Lettke.)

But this procedure, although easy to do, has its price. The common ways that people understand ambivalence are rather simplistic. They often evoke broad, unspecified references to "feelings." It is difficult in such situations to distinguish between dimensions or types of ambivalence, not to mention the specific problems in scaling and measurement to which such imprecision gives rise. It is also difficult to locate situations in specific social contexts.

It is therefore necessary to develop indirect measures of ambivalence, measures that require larger and more complicated sets of questions. Such instruments can more easily be used in personal interviews or in experimental studies. Under such circumstances, it also may become possible to operationalize the link between the experience of ambivalence and the awareness of personal identity or the impact of ambivalence on a person's sense of self. As briefly mentioned above, making this link to the notion of self – of personal identity and personal development – is, from a theoretical point of view, a highly desirable aspect of a fuller comprehension of ambivalence.

One important line of differentiation involves trying to clarify the interplay of social roles. To date, most empirical studies rely on reports concerning the experience of and the coping with ambivalence from the point of view of one

respondent. However, it is highly desirable to assess the views of both people in a dyad and, if possible, of all members of a family. Indeed, a still to be explored domain concerns the element of "perspectivity" in viewing and experiencing ambivalence by the involved persons and groups. To what extent do different persons and generations, in concrete situations, agree or disagree in their awareness of ambivalence?

Moreover, it would be highly desirable to shed light upon the processes of negotiation involved in these relationships. This is a strong desideratum also in the argument of Connidis and McMullin (2002a). Some preliminary efforts have been made in the Konstanz study (see this volume, Chap. 7). Yet, the practical difficulties of gaining access to all members of a family, or even to bringing them together in a common meeting, are well known. On this point, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods may lead to some progress. Also, new typologies concerning the strategies of dealing with ambivalence would have to be developed, based, for instance, on theories of communication, of rhetoric, and of small-group research. The insights from family therapy may also be a source of further hypothesis.

Another task of differentiation that lies before us concerns the interplay of more than two generations. Indeed, in the realm of family and kin, any generation is a link in a chain. Processes of transfer and of inheritance guarantee – in different degrees – the passing on of goods of material and of symbolic value, as well as of experiences, skills, and family memories. Bronfenbrenner (1995) makes a strong suggestion to expand the study of intergenerational relations beyond the parent-child dyad. This would be also a fruitful approach to differentiating the theory of intergenerational ambivalence. Questions that come to mind include: Does the experience of ambivalence between two generations have an impact on the relationships among other generations? Are the applied and learned strategies of dealing with ambivalence passed on from one generation to the next as the concept of "delegation" as introduced into family therapy by Stierlin (1984) suggests? To what extent and in what way are ambivalences present in grandparent-grandchild relationships?

Another field of differentiation concerns the study of ambivalence in regard to specific activities. One important example is in the area of caregiving, as can be deduced from the large body of literature on care provided by adult children (mostly women) to their parents or parents-in-law. (See Lang in this volume and references there to recent publications.) Less attention has been given to the possible ambivalences embedded in the care of small children. Parenthood (and of late particularly motherhood) is an important field for research in which a focus on ambivalence may stimulate new insights. Parker's aforementioned essay on "Mother love, mother hate" is an excellent example of this; such work is also

important for the theory of ambivalence itself, insofar as it shows that dealing with ambivalence can stimulate social creativity. In the domain of early socialization, more attention also should be paid to the implications of the presently so popular attachment theories and the overt as well as covert attention they give to ambivalence.

Care for the elderly as well as for small children is, to date, provided mostly by women. This draws attention to the correlations between gender and generations. Several studies uncover ambivalence between mothers and daughters. (See the already mentioned pioneering study by Cohler & Grunebaum, 1981, and in this volume Lorenz-Meyer and recent literature mentioned there, as well as the case study by Spangler, 2002.) Rare are studies on father-son dyads (still relevant: Nydegger & Mitteness, 1991).

Several contributions to this volume (Chaps by Fingerman & Hay; Lorenz-Meyer & Lang; Pillemer, Lüscher & Lettke) explore gender-based experiences of ambivalence, yet a profound analysis of this experience remains to be done. Specific studies on the experiences of gays and lesbians from the ambivalence perspective are already available, not least among them concerning their relationships to their parents (see in this volume Cohler and recent literature mentioned there; Connidis, 2001; Jekeli, 2000). The structural aspects of such ambivalence are particularly relevant in light of recent developments attempting to register and legalize homosexual partnerships (Lüscher & Grabmann, 2002).

The results of studies which already use the concept of ambivalence explicitly (in a more or less elaborated way), or those which report experiences and behaviors that lend themselves to being seen as indicators of ambivalence, demonstrate that ambivalence exists in intergenerational relations in different dyads, in different circumstances, and at different points of the life course. Our broad hypothesis is confirmed (as it should be, given its heuristic status) in a broad variety of ways. There are also findings that show that ambivalences seem not to exist.

From a theoretical point of view, we may even consider the idea that dealing with ambivalence is a "meta-task" in the context of intergenerational relations – a task that pervades all the concrete tasks around which intergenerational relations are organized. Ambivalence can be understood as a "dimension" which can precede or underlie any concrete action. This again is compatible with understanding intergenerational relations as an anthropologically assigned task that must be fulfilled, and one which is carried out in different ways. The modes of dealing with ambivalence can be seen as learned and internalized, and models about different strategies can eventually be comprehended as culturally transmitted "mental representations." Paradoxically speaking, this universal and abstract quality of ambivalence may be a major reason why doing research

with this concept promotes the approximation to social realities – at least if we consider everyday experience, in analogy to everyday language – as their ultimate reference.

Still, a broad expanse of theoretical work lies before us. More efforts (and discussions) are needed to clarify in principle and in detail the similarities and the differences between the theories of intergenerational ambivalence and intergenerational solidarity, as referred to in the introduction of this book. Of special interest would be a closer look at the interplay between the dimensions of solidarity and patterns of dealing with ambivalence (Bengtson, Giarusso, Mabry & Silverstein, 2002). Further investigations are also necessary to clarify the structural embeddedness of ambivalence. This is also important in order to explore the fruitfulness of the concept for broader issues of social policy, such as ageing (Tesch-Römer et al., 2000), or the conceptualization of social policies for children (Lüscher, 2002). The idea of ambivalence as a bridging concept between the micro- and the macrosocial spheres (which is in agreement, for instance, with the intentions of Connidis & McMullin, 2002a), needs more elaboration, especially in regard to research. It may be a fruitful domain for cross-cultural research. Finally, the question may be asked about the extent to which we can use ambivalence as a construct that is applicable to social relations in general, or at least to specific types of social relationships. In turn, such a widening of perspective may promote our understanding of specific details of intergenerational relations.

Indeed, throughout this chapter, as in the following chapters of this book, there are many references to the relevance of the concept of ambivalence to basic issues of contemporary social science and the analysis of contemporary societies. Given the attention also paid to the concept of ambivalence in other disciplines, our studies may – in addition to helping us strengthen the professional and interdisciplinary quality of intergenerational studies – contribute to broaden intellectual horizons and promote further discourses between disciplines and between theory, research, social policy, and social practice.

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