LOOKING AT AMBIVALENCES: THE CONTRIBUTION OF A "NEW-OLD" VIEW OF INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS TO THE STUDY OF THE LIFE COURSE

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter has its origins in the kind invitation to present, at the PaVie-Colloquium, an idea that is receiving increasing attention in the study of intergenerational relations. Its essence can be summarized in the following hypothesis: Intergenerational relationships, especially among adult children and their parents, imply the experience of ambivalences and, consequently, require dealing with ambivalences.[1] Thus, my point of departure does not seem to be a major issue of life course research. However, at second glance, one may recall that embeddedness in intergenerational relations is crucial for personal development. Most human beings are conceived in and born into familial contexts, and parent–child relationships – as diverse as they may be – are in many ways important for the unfolding of personal abilities

1   and the consciousness of the self. Youth is a formative phase in the life
course where intergenerational relationships are of importance, simply be-
3   cause their dominance may be challenged by other relationships, such as
those among siblings and peers. This is also true for early adulthood. Later,
5   through partnerships and marriages, and thus the acquisition of in-laws,
there is an increase in the number of elders with whom close and intimate
7   relationships become possible or are even expected and required. In mid-life,
nowadays, most adults belong to genealogical networks involving three or
9   even four generations. Later, obligations for the care of the very old may
emerge. The rules and the practice of inheritance once more accentuate the
11 social and material importance of intergenerational relationships and their
impact for the conduct of personal lives. In addition, the institution of
13 inheritance reminds us that any life course may also be comprehended as a
link in a chain of generations.
15   Indeed, the study of the life course may profit from taking into account
the interplay with the study of intergenerational relationships, and conse-
17 quently from recent developments in this field. To this obvious statement, I
would like to add two points. First, because of their omnipresence, inter-
19 generational relations are at the core of the processes of socialization and of
human sociability. This is why insights from the study of intergenerational
21 relationships are of foremost interest for the analysis of social relationships
in general, be it with regard to what they have in common with other
23 relationships, or to where they differ from them, for instance from market
relationships. My second remark is meta-theoretical. Because of the great
25 relevance of intergenerational relations, their understanding is usually
bound to moral judgments. Such normative views often penetrate scholarly
27 descriptions. For instance, it is quite common to idealize intergenerational
relations – positively – with reference to the concept of solidarity, or to
29 deplore them – negatively – as a notorious source of conflict. As I will show,
a well-grounded theory of ambivalence allows us to overcome these biases,
31 because it simultaneously takes into account and analyzes both perspectives.
In this way, a high degree of social authenticity can be achieved, and re-
33 spective normative orientations can become a deliberate topic of analysis.
Moreover, we recall that the general assumptions about human nature un-
35 derlie the concepts used in social science research, especially about such
fundamental issues as the conduct of human lives and their social organ-
37 ization.
However, at this point I cannot present a comprehensive account of the
39 importance of ambivalence for the study of the life course. I must limit
myself to outlining the meanings of this concept as such, and I will present

the conceptual frame that I and other researchers have developed. Taking this as a point of reference, I will also illustrate the usefulness of this approach by presenting some exemplary results of recent research. I shall concentrate on issues closely related to the study of the life course and of connected lives, and I will suggest further applications in this field.

2. AMBIVALENCE IN INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS: THE REDISCOVERY OF AN OLD EXPERIENCE

The idea of drawing on the concept of ambivalence for the study of intergenerational relationships has two sources. First, an awareness of the usefulness of ambivalence as a theoretical concept arose from a critical evaluation of the existing literature on intergenerational relationships, which in the 1990s was aptly characterized as data-rich and theory-poor (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998). In particular, we criticized the dominance of the so-called solidarity perspective, because it presents a picture of intergenerational relationships that pays too much attention to positive aspects and too little to the innately darker ones. The solidarity perspective arose in reaction to Talcott Parsons's (1942, 1949) portrayal of the nuclear family as isolated. It holds that, to the contrary, extensive family solidarity does exist. (Shanas et al., 1968; Littwak, 1965; Sussman, 1959). Since the early 1970s, Bengtson and co-workers have continued to develop this approach in an influential series of articles and books (cf. Roberts, Richards, & Bengtson, 1991; Bengtson & Harootyan, 1994; Bengtson, Giarusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002). The solidarity perspective has also been adopted by other researchers in the United States (Rein, 1994; Rossi & Rossi, 1990) and serves as a reference point for many European authors, although not without critical reservations (Attias-Donfut, 1995; Bawin-Legros, Gauthier, & Strassen, 1995; Donati, 1995; Finch & Mason, 1993; Szydlik, 2000). However, at the same time as scholars in the solidarity tradition have emphasized mutual support and value consensus, another line of research has focused on isolation, caregiver stress, family problems, conflict and abuse (Marshall, Matthews, & Rosenthal, 1993). The image of weakened family ties and the abandonment of the elderly continues to be widely held in popular opinion and in portrayals of the family in contemporary fiction and theater. Thus, some scholars, as well as the public at large, appear reluctant to accept that intergenerational relationships include solidarity and are characterized by shared values and

1 reciprocal help. As Marshall et al. (1993, p. 47) have succinctly put it, "the
   substantive preoccupations in gerontology over the past 30 years point to a
3 love–hate relationship with the family." In a somewhat different mode,
   Lalive d'Epinay and Bickel (1994), summarizing their comprehensive de-
5 scription of the aged and their familial networks in Switzerland, refer to the
   tensions created between the potentials of family solidarity and the limi-
7 tations imposed by contemporary social conditions. In view of such ac-
   counts, Karl Pillemer and I have proposed that the study of parent–child
9 relations in later life must move beyond a "love–hate relationship" (Lüscher
   & Pillemer, 1998). The vacillation between images of mistreatment and ne-
11 glect, on the one hand, and comforting images of solidarity, on the other,
   are not two sides of an academic argument that will ultimately be resolved in
13 favor of one viewpoint.
     Second, parallel to this theoretical evaluation, we conducted a research
15 project at the University of Konstanz on the reorganization of families after
   divorce in later life, e.g. an important event in the life course (Lüscher &
17 Pajung-Bilger, 1998). Data were collected in semi-structured interviews with
   103 persons in 65 families. These interviews included questions about the
19 way all the subjects experience intergenerational relations. Our goal was to
   distinguish different degrees of mutual solidarity in the aftermath of what in
21 many cases represents a "turning point" in the lives of the individuals in-
   volved and their experience of intimate relationships. Yet, even a differen-
23 tiation in terms of everyday concerns, and by content and types of
   relationships, did not yield conclusive results regarding the relevance of
25 solidarity. Family members reported both instances of support and of ne-
   glect. This led us to search for a concept with which we could take into
27 account the existence of both solidarity and conflict in the process and the
   understanding of intergenerational relations. The notion of ambivalence in
29 the everyday sense (being torn in two directions) was a first and natural
   choice.
31   In the course of work along these lines, we became aware, however, that
   references to the experience of ambivalence in social relationships, and es-
33 pecially in personal relationships, which involve dependency and intimacy,
   have long been a topic of popular wisdom and of literary writings, even
35 before the term existed. Indeed, insights into what we call in modern lan-
   guage "ambivalence" between parents and adult children can be traced back
37 to the beginnings of human society. In Greek mythology, some of the
   greatest sagas depict what we now refer to as ambivalence. The best known
39 of these is the tragic drama of the relationship between Oedipus and his
   father and mother. Reinharz (1986) gives an informative overview on "lov-

ing 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. Hamlet as well, she tells us, can be read as a portrait of intergenerational relations. Peter von Matt (1995) presents a comparable and very colorful overview of the theme 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 Struwwelpeter* (Shock-headed Peter – a classic of moralizing German children's literature) and recalls the complex relationships described in Theodor Fontane's *Effie Briest* and in Kafka's tale ''The Metamorphosis.'' We may add, as one more illustration certainly known to many readers, Philip Roth's novel *American Pastoral* as an example of ambivalence in recent American literature.[2] Furthermore, ambivalence can be seen as an ongoing theme in the life-script or biography. Kierkegaard could serve as one of many examples. An impressive study with ambivalence as a latent theme is Lee's (1998) study of generativity in the life course of the dancer Martha Graham.

In everyday life, ambivalences are often experienced, for example, in negotiations over caregiving. They can also be found by examining the overall history of a given relationship. Seen this way, ambivalence is a conceptual tool for evaluating specific situations, as well as for studying the development and institutionalization of the self in the life course. This brief account of recent approaches to the study of intergenerational relations (and given the already-mentioned interplay: to the study of the life course) that draw upon the idea of ambivalence illustrate why it is appropriate to speak of a ''new–old perspective.'' However, in order to become a useful tool for contemporary social research, a complete, detailed conceptualization is needed.

3. CONCEPTUALIZING AMBIVALENCE

3.1. Elements of a Comprehensive Definition

In the light of the foregoing, it seems reasonable to start with a brief look at the original formulation of the term. As far as we know, ambivalence was conceived and first introduced by the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler (1910) as one of four core symptoms of schizophrenia . Yet, soon thereafter he argued that ambivalence is not merely a symptom of mental illness, but

1 can also be experienced and thus observed in everyday life. He distinguishes
between affective and cognitive ambivalence and points out that the two are
3 closely intertwined (Bleuler, 1914, p. 98). His text already contains a ref-
erence to ambivalence in intergenerational relationships (p. 103). Freud first
5 used the concept in an article on the theory of transference (e.g. also with
regard to social relationships!). Later, he included it in his theory of the
7 Oedipus complex, as is concisely and clearly demonstrated in a short essay,
''Some reflections on schoolboy psychology'' (Freud, 1914). Freud thus ap-
9 plied ambivalence to the analysis of an exemplary intergenerational phe-
nomenon, as well as assigning it a role in the life course.

11   This is not the place for a more detailed history of the concept, its re-
ception and its adaptation in different scholarly discourses. Taking into
13 account the major contributions and arguments in the existing literature,[3] I
would list the following elements as constituents of a comprehensive un-
15 derstanding of ambivalence:

17 • The experience of diametrically opposed (polarized) structures and forces
   in the dynamic fields of individual (and collective) actions and respective
   relationships.
19 • The insight that these experiences are relevant for the identities (selves) of
   the actors (individuals, in certain contexts also collective actors). In other
21   words, the experience of ambivalence and the ability to cope with it can be
   understood as an aspect of human agency.
23 • The assumption that these polarizations will be interpreted as irreconcil-
   able as long as the actors belong to a certain field of action (or situation)
25   and are concerned, in this context, with the reflection of these tasks. This
   field of action can be brief, e.g. a turning point, or extend over a longer
27   period of time (for instance becoming a parent).[4]
29 • The assumption that the experience of ambivalences and the ways
   of dealing or coping with them can be systematically connected with
31   the aspects of psychological functioning, of the logic of social rela-
   tions and social structures, including the regulation of social control and
33   power.

   In view of the background of the concept's history and its acceptance in
35 the social sciences, I would like to propose the following *definition*: For
purposes of sociological research on intergenerational relations, it is useful
37 to speak of ambivalence when polarized simultaneous emotions, thoughts,
volitions, social relations and structures that are considered relevant for the
39 constitution of individual or collective identities are (or can be) interpreted
as temporarily or even permanently irreconcilable.

1   Taking this attempt at a comprehensive analytical definition as a refer-
ence point, we find, in scholarly texts, two different usages. First, the term
3   can serve as an interpretative (or explanatory) concept. This is, in fact, its
primary use in macro-sociological texts as, for instance, in the widespread
5   characterization of "post-modernity" as pervaded by ambivalence. Refer-
ences to social reality are confined to generalizations, based mostly on
7   highly aggregated, generalized data. Descriptions are sometimes presented
in the form of "ideal-types" or "model personalities" such as Bauman's
9   (1997) proposed "tourist" or "player." This usage is also common in re-
search reviews, for instance in Cohler's text about young adults "coming
11 out" as gay or lesbian and their parents (see below). Second, the concept of
ambivalence may be used as a "research construct." Here, the goal is to
13 apply the concept in research, such as in surveys, experiments, observations
and the analysis of documents. For this purpose, an explicit definition is
15 necessary – one that can serve as the reference point for formulating specific
hypotheses and constructing research instruments.
17   We can hypothesize that people must live with ambivalences and that they
can cope with them in more or less competent, productive ways. People can
19 even create ambivalences, as mentioned above with regard to the works of
creative writers and artists. Deliberately constructing ambivalences can also
21 be a strategy in social interaction. This possibility is another reason to view
ambivalences as both opportunities and as burdens. In this regard, the un-
23 derstanding of ambivalence suggested here differs from other usages where –
more or less explicitly – the term bears a negative connotation. This is true,
25 for instance, of the term's usage in characterizing styles of attachment be-
tween mothers and children, as well as in other typologies.
27   Closeness and intimacy may reinforce or strengthen the susceptibility to
ambivalence. An important precondition of ambivalence is dependency
29 (Smelser, 1998), which begins with birth (or even during pregnancy), con-
tinues through childhood and youth into adulthood, and in many cases even
31 into the later phases of the life course. It manifests itself very early in the
needs for nurture, care, protection and education. Beyond these immediate
33 obligations, and in the course of fulfilling them, parents develop and acquire
specific information and particular knowledge about their individual child
35 as a person. This knowledge reinforces the parents' power to control and to
discipline the child, not only while he or she is young, but also in later life
37 phases. Over the intergenerational life course, the direction of dependency
between children, parents and older or younger generations may become
39 more complicated – support and care are specific instances explored in this
book. Yet the authority of older persons, established early in life, may

1 persist as another source of ambivalence, even as situations arise that lead to
   a potential or actual reversal of dependency. Cohler and Grunebaum's
3 (1981, pp. 120ff., 197ff.) studies of the relationships of mothers and daugh-
   ters in Italian immigrant families provide many convincing illustrations of
5 this process (see below). More generally, ambivalences in the past and the
   present may offer an interesting topic in the study of life reviews, both in
7 scholarly work (Staudinger, 1989) and in the curricula of courses offered on
   practical gerontology.
9   The contemporary relevance of ambivalence can be deduced from a close
   examination of the structural and cultural conditions of present Western
11 (postmodern) societies. On the macro-sociological level, population dynam-
   ics have created a frame in which ambivalence easily emerges. The rise in life
13 expectancy, attributable to improved living conditions for increasingly large
   segments of the population, was accompanied by a decrease in infant mor-
15 tality. As a child's chances of survival increased, the possibility of seeing it as
   an individual person also increased. A decrease in the birth rate was a logical
17 consequence. Childhood and youth soon came to be seen as specific phases
   of the life-course calling for their own institutions – for instance, public
19 schooling. The same observation can be made with respect to the other end
   of the life course via the recognition of aging as a life stage calling for its
21 own institutions. The demarcation of different periods or segments of the
   life course has led to a heightened consciousness of the importance of re-
23 lationships between age groups, or in other words, between generations.
   This has been true especially in the realm of the family, and also in society as
25 a whole. The development of social welfare was another factor contributing
   to this demarcation of life stages and of intergenerational relationships. In
27 many instances, structural conditions for both dependence and autonomy
   were thereby created. Seen in this way, the concept of ambivalence is an-
29 other possibility to relate the analysis of the life course to the study of
   contemporary society and the dynamic interplay of generations and their
31 cultural manifestations (see for example Edmunds & Turner, 2002a, b;
   Blossfeld, this volume).
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35   *3.2. Proposal for a Research Module*

37 The foregoing discussion represents a background for new applications in
   research and respective operationalizations.[5] The concern shared by the
39 study of intergenerational relations and life-course analysis for the devel-
   opment of personal identity (or the self) through interaction and institu-

1 tionalization is a major point of reference and allows us to concomitantly
   pay attention to social relationships. This approach is compatible with a
3 two-dimensional view of personal identity, particularly with G.H. Mead's
   (1938) notion of the self as emerging from the interplay between "I" and
5 "me," where "I" refers to spontaneous subjectivity and "me" refers to gen-
   eralized others or, more generally speaking, to the interplay between a sub-
7 jective and an institutional component of the self. Many interpersonal
   models of personality explicitly refer to Mead. For example, Leary (who
9 developed a circumplex model that describes personality as located between
   the poles of love vs. hate and dominance vs. submission) speaks of Mead as
11 a "creative watershed to which later theories of interpersonal relations can
   trace their sources" (Leary, 1957, p. 101).
13   We can see in the juxtaposition between the subjective and the institu-
   tional dimensions a *primary* condition for the experience of ambivalences. In
15 addition, within the module presented below, a *secondary* condition is sug-
   gested by hypothesizing that both dimensions of an intergenerational re-
17 lationship, the subjective as well as the individual, can be influenced and
   shaped by fundamental polarizations. Thus, the module is based on a
19 "twofold" notion of ambivalence. This implies a departure from the eve-
   ryday understanding of the term.
21   The "personal" or "subjective" dimension can be characterized as fol-
   lows: Parents, children and the members of other involved generations share
23 a certain degree of similarity. While some of this similarity can be attributed
   to biological inheritance, no inheritance is total, insofar as individual par-
25 ents and individual children are never genetically identical. Their similarity
   is reinforced by the intimacy of interactive learning processes, which creates
27 a potential for closeness and subjective identification. At the same time, the
   biological equipment of each organism is different. Sociologically speaking,
29 processes of maturation increase difference and diversity. Ultimately, chil-
   dren develop different personal identities than their parents. In order to
31 create a schematic representation that can be used in different contexts, two
   rather abstract labels are needed. To account for not only the socio-spatial,
33 but also for the socio-temporal aspects, we propose – for the subjective
   component – the terms "convergence" and "divergence." These two po-
35 larities can serve as umbrellas for a variety of attributes. Convergence in-
   cludes such relational attributes as loving, warm, solicitous, reliable and
37 close. Divergence is characterized as cool, easy-going, indifferent and su-
   perficial.
39   For the structural–institutional component, we can conceive of a polar
   opposition between a desire to preserve the traditional social forms or

1 structures of relationships and a desire for dramatic change. Neither is fully
realizable. For instance, although children may choose a way of organizing
3 their private lives that is vastly different from that customary in their family
of origin, some ties to childhood experiences may remain, even if only in
5 that they provide a negative background. As technical designations, taking
into account again the socio-temporal as well as the socio-spatial aspects,
7 the terms "reproduction" and "innovation" appear useful to express the
idea of a dynamic polarization. Here, reproduction includes relational
9 attributes such as inflexible, restrictive and "stuck in a rut." Innovation
is expressed by terms such as open to new experiences, changeable and
11 so on.
    We can represent these considerations in the form of a module (or di-
13 agram). In this way, it is possible to analytically deduce four basic modes
of experiencing and dealing with intergenerational ambivalences. Referring
15 to empirical findings and their discussion, as well as to conceptual con-
siderations, we went through different phases of representation.[6] We
17 also took into account criticisms that representation in the form of a
circumplex-model suggests a static typology, in other words, one where a
19 certain way of dealing with ambivalences is viewed as finite. Overcoming
this limitation is highly desirable in the field of life-course studies. It seems
21 likely that individual modes of experiencing ambivalences and coping with
them change as people move through different contexts and segments of
23 their lives.
    In order to visualize the dynamics of development e.g. the possibility to
25 move from one type of experience and of coping to another, we suggest
using the geometric form of a spiral. As for characterizations of the modes
27 of ambivalence, the already-existing descriptions seem still useful. Thus, the
modified module (graphic representation) can be presented and commented
29 on in the following way (see also Lüscher & Pajung-Bilger, 1998; Lüscher &
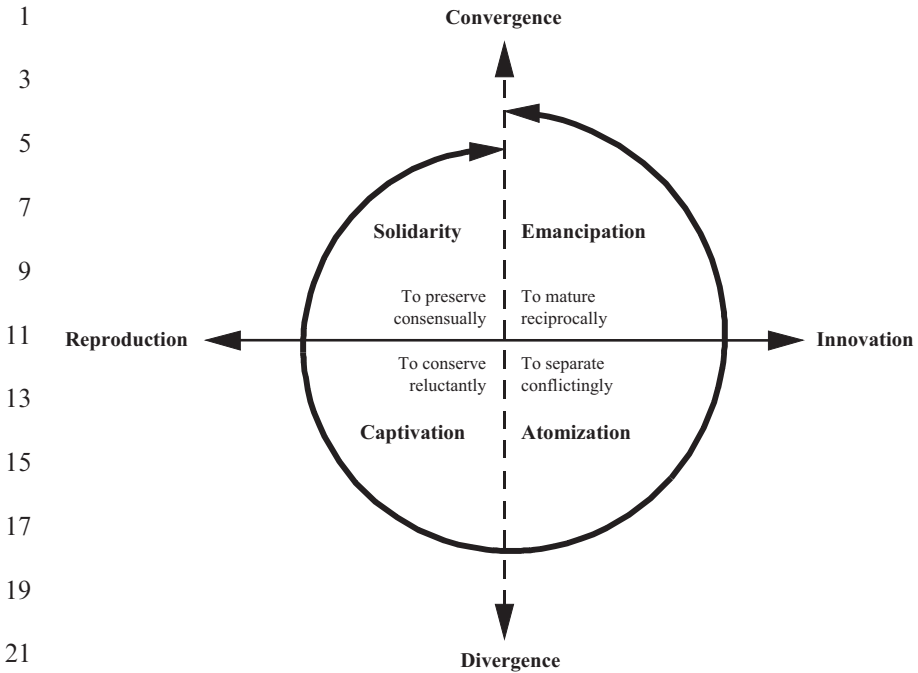Lettke, 2002, 2004; as well as Lang, 2004; Brannen, 2003):

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Convergence

Solidarity   **Emancipation**

To preserve   To mature
consensually   reciprocally

Reproduction ←——————————————→ **Innovation**

To conserve   To separate
reluctantly   conflictingly

Captivation   **Atomization**

Divergence

- - - - - Subjective (personal) dimension: Convergence vs. Divergence

——————— Institutional dimension: Reproduction vs. Innovation

Intergenerational Ambivalence: A research module

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" may also 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 continually negotiated.

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 the 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 claims 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 appeals without, however, basing its claims on a sense of personal solidarity. The guiding maxim here is to "conserve reluctantly," whereby family members may try to "instrumentalize" each other, not respecting each other as subjects, but using each other as "means to an end" or as objects.

I would like to underscore the heuristic character of the module. It is used in an attempt to synthesize and visualize certain 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 macro-systems are embedded in a social ecology of action. The module, so far, emphasizes the experience of ambivalences in relationships. Metaphorically, we can evoke the image of a "dialogue with significant others.". Along this line, we can think of other modi. Thus, we can comprehend the experience of ambivalences in the form of a "dialogue with oneself," and furthermore as a

1 "dialogue with generalized others," namely as a quarrel with general normative (societal) expectations, or prescriptions.

3 As a general schematic representation, the module encourages further differentiations and adaptations to specific research topics. Such specifications seem to be necessary, especially in applications to life-course analysis.

5 Thus, I offer the foregoing conceptual ideas as a proposal to analytically structure the field of research in terms of the concept of ambivalence, par-

7 ticularly in studying intergenerational relationships. Existing studies can be characterized by the way, and to the extent that, they refer to elements of

9 this conceptualization, or use alternatives. The conceptualization represents one of several possible approaches.

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4. CURRENT STATUS OF RESEARCH

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4.1. Methodological Preliminaries

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19 Although this is not the place for a detailed methodological discussion (for this see Lettke & Klein, 2004 and the literature discussed there), I will start with a brief comment on the possibilities to assess the experience of am-

21 bivalences and respective actions. In general, it seems more reasonable to use qualitative methods. But we should not ignore the fact that they require

23 highly elaborate interpretative strategies in order to achieve inter-subjective validity, especially when studying accounts given in everyday language and

25 experiences that are not always conscious. Beside the well-established research techniques in the social sciences, advances may also be possible

27 through cooperation with literature studies. For instance, Zima (2002) provides a complex demonstration of ambivalence on the level of syntax, on one

29 hand, and on the level of semantics and content, on the other. In quantitative research, a major obstacle lies in the general orientation of many

31 scaling techniques, insofar as they strive for clarity, in an effort to strictly avoid contradictions. In the available research on ambivalence, the follow-

33 ing approaches, techniques and methods are found:

35 1. *Interview techniques addressing the awareness of ambivalence*: Respondents can be asked about their awareness of ambivalences in a more or less

37 direct way, by using the term itself or by presenting circumscriptions such as "feeling torn in two directions."

39 2. *Assessment of relationships with regard to covert ambivalence*: Subjects can be invited to characterize their relationships with polarized attributes

1   presented separately, such as warm or loving for convergence, indifferent
    or superficial for divergence. If the answers are contradictory, because
3   both of the two opposing attributes are simultaneously judged applicable,
    they can be transformed into indicators of ambivalence. Currently, the
5   most widely used procedure is one proposed by Thompson, Zanna, and
    Griffin (1995).
7   3. *Use of vignettes*: Subjects are presented with situations in which they have
    to make ambivalent choices.
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    In the following overview, I concentrate on contents. It is not meant to be
11 comprehensive, but rather illustrative. Its focus is on findings and studies,
    mostly of a quantitative nature, which highlight aspects that may be espe-
13 cially relevant for transfer from the analysis of intergenerational relations to
    life-course research. The systematization is not a strict one, insofar as some
15 studies obviously concern different topics.

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                    4.2. Assessment and Differentiation of Ambivalences
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    Ambivalences, formulated in direct or circumscribed ways, are part of eve-
21 ryday life and are therefore commonplace experiences for men and women,
    parents and (adult) children. This finding has frequently been confirmed.
23 For instance, an exploratory study by Pillemer and Suitor (2002, p. 609)
    demonstrates, ''that direct measures of ambivalence toward children can be
25 used effectively...and that ambivalent assessments of the relationship are
    sufficiently widespread to be of scientific interest.'' In another analysis of the
27 same data, concerning mothers' general assessments of parent–child rela-
    tionships, Pillemer (2004, p. 128) concludes that the ''data offer convincing
29 evidence that parental ambivalence regarding adult children is sufficiently
    widespread to be of scientific interest.'' Similar conclusions can be drawn
31 from studies by Connidis (2001), Jekeli (2002), Spangler (2002), and Will-
    son, Shuey, and Elder (2003) and others.
33   Coenen-Huther, Kellerhals, and von Allmen (1994) made a survey of the
    relations among kin in a representative sample of families. They discovered
35 that a majority of relations, approximately 60%, were experienced and
    judged positively. However, one third (36%) referred to ambivalences, and a
37 small minority (4%) judged their relationships negatively. More interest-
    ingly, the intensity of dilemmas rose with the frequency of mutual help.
39 Ambivalent judgment that are considered important can be detected in
    about half of the cases. The authors conclude: ''Intensive solidarity is not

1 self-evident'' (Coenen-Huther et al., 1994, p. 334). Reluctance is apparent, especially in long-term relations.

3 The ongoing studies at Konstanz (Lüscher & Lettke, 2004) confirm that if one asks about them directly, using everyday expressions, experiences of
5 ambivalence turn out to be almost commonplace. A similar picture emerges from data concerning the answers to contradictorily formulated statements
7 about relationships, such as, for instance, the following statement: "[Name of other person] and I often get on each other's nerves, but nevertheless we
9 feel very close and like each other very much."[7]

In addition, these studies yield a finding that is particularly relevant for
11 life-course research: The experience of ambivalence is not judged, per se, as negative. Of importance seems to be the level, the intensity and perhaps the
13 context of ambivalent experiences. In other words, dealing with ambivalences may be understood as a challenge, hence in the context of the life
15 course as a "developmental task." Here, a connection exists to the origins of the concept and its elaboration in psychotherapy, where several authors see
17 the acceptance or the "tolerance of ambivalence" as a criterion of growth and maturity and stipulate it as a goal of therapeutic efforts.

19 We also find the idea of an optimal level in the experience of ambivalence, for example in a study by Mayer and Filipp (2004). This questionnaire study
21 explored middle-aged adults' perceptions of their parents' generativity and the interpersonal consequences of these perceptions. The subjects assessed
23 the typicality of behaviors indicating generativity for their mother or father and evaluated the parent–child relationship on several measures (affection,
25 manifest and latent conflicts). Some of those relations were moderated by adult children's positive regard for parental advice. Affection was highest at
27 intermediate levels of perceived generativity, but was also linked with moderate levels of manifest parent–child conflict. In the understanding of the
29 authors, these results "suggest to analyze effects of generativity under the aspect of intergenerational ambivalence" (Mayer & Filipp, 2004, p. 166).[8]

31 The idea of an optimum level is useful to interpret nonlinear variations and correlations as the expression of the interplay between contradictory
33 forces. Such a view encourages a secondary analysis of existing research. Empirical research on kin networks shaping the life course suggests that the
35 effect of support networks on conjugal quality is curvilinear (Holman, 1981), i.e., extremely cohesive networks might be detrimental to conjugal
37 functioning. The interference model (Johnson & Milardo, 1984; Julien, Markman, Leveille, Chartrand, & Begin, 1994) states that social networks
39 and conjugal relationships may actually compete. Developing relationships create anxiety in social networks, because the time and energy devoted to

1   other relationships are thereby reduced. Thus, social network members may
    try to hold or regain some influence on their ego by interfering with conjugal
3   relationships. In this perspective, strong networks may not buffer the effects
    of conjugal conflict, but may actually increase them, because the emergence
5   of conjugal problems opens doors to further interference by network mem-
    bers with a couple's relationship. These examples also invite us to look at the
7   dynamics of conjugal relationships as a field of overt and covert ambivalent
    feelings and behaviors.
9   In the Konstanz studies, as outlined in the conceptual part of this chapter,
    we emphasize the analytical distinction between an institutional and a sub-
11 jective dimension of ambivalence. The data suggest evidence for the fruit-
    fulness of this idea. In general, ambivalences on the institutional dimension
13 seem to be more pronounced than on the subjective dimension (Lettke &
    Lüscher, 2001, p. 527ff.). This is true for both parents and adult children, a
15 finding which suggests, in addition, that the so-called ''generational stake''
    hypothesis is questionable with regard to ambivalences. Overall, then, am-
17 bivalent experiences seem commonplace, yet they differ in character. In
    other words, the concept of ambivalence should be differentiated. This is an
19 idea that can be traced back to Bleuler, who distinguished ambivalences of
    feelings, cognitions and volitions. Other authors also adopt this view in their
21 current work (see for instance, Lorenz-Meyer, below).   QA :2
       Brannen (2003), in a small-scale study of four-generation families, pro-
23 vides a typology of intergenerational relations with respect to the transmis-
    sion of material assets, childcare and elder care, sociability, emotional
25 support and values. It examines two a fortiori conditions that are thought to
    shape intergenerational relations: (a) occupational status continuity/mobil-
27 ity and (b) geographical proximity/mobility. Four types of intergenerational
    relations are generated by this examination: traditional solidaristic; differ-
29 entiated; incorporation of difference; and reparation in estrangement. The
    authors look at families holistically and draw on the concept of ambivalence
31 to describe the forces which encourage family members to preserve family
    patterns and divisive forces that lead them to strike out on their own. It
33 shows how, whatever the type of intergenerational pattern, each genera-
    tional unit seeks to make its own particular mark.
35

37   *4.3. Diversification of Contexts*

39 In the wider horizon of a comparative study, Fingerman and Hay (2004, p.
    145ff.) ''revealed that parents and their offspring do seem to experience

1 greater ambivalence toward one another than they experience in many other
   social ties." However, other relationships are also considered ambivalent, in
3 particular ties to romantic partners and ties to siblings. The authors'dis-
   cussion hints at another topic of interest in the possible application of the
5 ambivalence perspective to the study of the life course. Since nearly all the
   romantic partners of adults older than 20 in the Fingerman and Hay study
7 were spouses or cohabiting partners, they hypothesize that "proximity may
   play a role in the experience of ambivalence with romantic partners and
9 siblings. When siblings grow up and no longer live in the same household,
   there is a precipitous drop in the likelihood that they will be classified as
11 ambivalent; teenagers classified their ties to siblings as ambivalent, whereas
   individuals in their 20 s did not. It may simply be the case that individuals
13 are more likely to experience ambivalence when they occupy the same life
   space. This pattern regarding proximity was not the same for parents and
15 children, however. Adult children in their 20 s who do not reside in their
   parents' households were more likely to consider their ties to their parents
17 ambivalent than were teenagers who lived with their parents. Therefore,
   ambivalence between parents and children may reflect different factors than
19 does ambivalence in other social ties" (*ibid.*). The conclusion that suggests
   itself is plausible: The experience of ambivalences may change over the life
21 course, but this is certainly only the starting point for a range of propo-
   sitions still to be developed.
23   In an extension and follow-up of the survey done at Konstanz (see above)
   using as far as appropriate the same instruments, interviews have been made
25 of two types of families facing specific tasks and difficulties. In one group,
   an adult child suffers from schizophrenia, in the other group, an adult child
27 is on drugs. In both instances, the child was living in a clinical institution at
   the time of the research. This design allows, among others, a comparison
29 between statements concerning the relationship to the sick child and to other
   children in the same family. The data show, as hypothesized, a higher fre-
31 quency of ambivalence in the relationship with the sick child, and a lower
   relationship quality. Surprisingly enough, there is no significant difference in
33 feelings of connectedness to the children in the families (Brand, 2004;
   Rudorf, 2004; Burkhardt, 2005).
35   Taking into account additional findings of the study, the conclusion is
   justifiable that most parents distinguish among their children in many ways,
37 yet they feel close to and committed to all of them. These results give rise to
   certain doubts and criticisms of the holistic view of families propagated by
39 some popular systemic approaches used in family therapy. More generally,
   we may again observe that the usage of indicators of ambivalence, i.e. the

1   ambivalence perspective, promises an understanding of families that reflects
their internal dynamics and therefore comes close to real life. The subjective
3   attitudes and orientations of family members are taken into account without
neglecting the role of institutionalized bonds.
5   The concern for parent–child relationships in exceptional families is also
reflected in studies of families with gay or lesbian children. A large body of
7   research is available; Cohler (2004) offers a comprehensive overview draw-
ing upon the interpretative power of the concept of ambivalence. Among the
9   many topics covered, of particular interest in the life course perspective is
the process of "coming out." It is subject to several forms of ambivalence
11   and requires different strategies of coping, e.g. with regard to personal
sameness and difference, to traditional and new life styles. Parents may also
13   have the task of revealing their child's sexual orientation to kin and friends.
    On another level, a kind of institutional ambivalence may be implied in
15   the way legislation deals with homosexual partnerships. Should they be
treated as just another form of marriage, or should a special legal institution
17   be created (e.g. civil partnerships or civil unions, as is the case in most
European countries)? Do gays and lesbians themselves want to accept rules
19   derived from traditional marriage, especially with regard to the dissolution
of the relationship? Quite to the point, the German author Lautmann (1996)
21   uses the notion of "ambivalences of the law."
    Extending the horizon, it is easy to propose other family configurations as
23   breeding grounds for latent and manifest ambivalences. In single-parent
families, relationships with the absent father or mother and struggles for
25   custody may bear all the features of an enduring conflict, putting the child in
an ambivalent position. In the case of foster families, the child as well as
27   those who have institutional responsibilities for the arrangement, such as
social workers, may find themselves caught up in struggles between the
29   biological mother and the so-called social parents (or legal parents). Here
too, legal regulations and procedures may be relevant to the search for a
31   way of pragmatically coping with ambivalences. In Germany, this is the case
for the legal obligations of adult children to support their parents when they
33   are poor and need institutional care (Hoch & Lüscher, 2002).
    Divorce at all stages of marital and generational biographies may accen-
35   tuate, often over a longer period or for an entire lifetime, overt and covert
ambivalences. One is reminded of the proposal by Cherlin (1981) to view re-
37   marriage as an incomplete institution. In these and comparable cases a
specific and elaborate operationalization of the concept of ambivalence is
39   needed if one wants to go beyond simple plausibility. As a result of these
efforts, one can expect, as mentioned above, at least a higher level of au-

1 thenticity with regard to the diversities and the dramas of everyday life. One
should also strive for findings, which systematically illuminate the conse-
3 quences of different levels of awareness and of different strategies in dealing
with ambivalences. Practical interests may lie in the evaluation of thera-
5 peutic interventions that strive to heighten the awareness of ambivalences
and to establish specific ways of dealing with them.
7

9   *4.4. Ambivalences at Turning Points and Transitions*

11 The notion of turning points refers to phenomena, experiences and actions
where the awareness of ambivalences may be especially promising and
13 where the interplay between generations and the life course is quite perti-
nent. A turning point may be understood, metaphorically speaking, as an
15 interruption in a person's development. It coincides with the necessity, or at
least the possibility, to reflect upon personal relationships and the commit-
17 ments they involve. Changes may be requested and importance attributed to
particular relationships, or persons may be asked to restructure their rela-
19 tionships. New commitments and obligations may emerge that compete with
ongoing concerns and ties. In reality, ``turning points'' may extend a certain
21 period of orientation and search, hence it is also appropriate to speak of
transitions. They can be seen as fields of action entailing an accentuated
23 experience of ambivalences.
    Perhaps the most obvious turning point at the intersection between in-
25 tergenerational relationships, the life course and the social context is the
transition to parenthood. This appears in many ways and, not surprisingly,
27 there is still no comprehensive theory of generative behavior and decision-
making. Several attempts, however, refer to the notion of ambivalence,
29 mostly using the word in an everyday meaning. More elaborate studies
along this line point out that decisions are reached only through a lengthy
31 process that takes the form of oscillations typical of ambivalences. A good
illustration is the phenomenon of late first motherhood (see Engstler &
33 Lüscher, 1991).
    The experience of ambivalences (as defined above) is bound to the self and
35 personal identity. In addition to their search for the subjective meaning of
motherhood, many women are confronted with or exposed to normative
37 expectations, traditional or progressive, by others who are close to them,
and also by society at large, as represented by subcultures such as religions
39 and ethnies, not to speak of economic pressures and the contemporary [QA :3]
organization of the labor market. This topic also illustrates what is referred

1 to above as the experience of ambivalence "in the dialogue with generalized
others."
3   An attempt to draw upon the concept of ambivalence and to further
explore its relevance for a typological differentiation of generative behaviors
5 is offered as part of in an analysis of the Swiss Family Survey (Le Goff,
Sauvain-Dugerdil, Rossier, & Coenen-Huther, 2005). Ambivalence is used
7 as an alternative to the notion of rational choice in discussing fertility be-
havior in low-fertility countries like Switzerland. It serves as a key concept
9 to distinguish between four main types of the fertility project: The familialist
subculture, either sequential or simultaneous articulation between labor
11 market participation and motherhood, and childlessness. Future trends are
discussed in the light of the pressure to change exerted by those women who
13 experience a high degree of ambivalence between their own life aspirations
and normative expectations, while also possessing high levels of personal
15 resources.
     With regard to motherhood as such, a treatise by Parker, with the sug-
17 gestive title "Mother Love, Mother Hate," written from a psychoanalytical
perspective, merits special attention. Parker (1995, p. 6) refers to Melanie
19 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
21 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
23 fruitfulness for mothers and children resides." The major mechanism can be
described as follows: Given the fundamental dichotomy and the awareness
25 of love and hate, mothers are able even in desperate situations to reactivate
the forces of love. More generally, mothers search continuously, even under
27 difficult situations, for arrangements that serve the well-being of their chil-
dren. This fundamental ability to cope with ambivalence creatively can be
29 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
31 ambivalence can be compatible with feminist thinking. This field is sensi-
tized to possible ambivalences in gender relations and to constructive, as
33 well as destructive, strategies for dealing with them.
     Referring to a later phase in the life course, Pillemer and Suitor (2002)
35 focus on the tension between autonomy and dependence and find that a key
dilemma leading to intergenerational ambivalence is the conflict between the
37 norm of solidarity with children and the normative expectation that children
will develop independent lives in the case of the so-called "off-time tran-
39 sitions" – here in the lives of children. As a general finding, the authors
showed, "that adult children's failure to achieve and maintain normative

adult statuses and financial independence, and mothers' developmental stage predict ambivalent assessments of the relationship. Regression analyses supported these hypotheses and also revealed that the variables predicting ambivalence differed from those that predicted closeness and interpersonal stress'' (Pillemer & Suitor, 2002, p. 602). In particular, heightened ambivalence can be anticipated when adult children have not attained (or maintained) adult statuses. When parents face such unexpected circumstances, they are likely to experience mixed emotions involving a desire to protect and assist the child, as well as disappointment at the child's situation and self-doubt regarding parenting. This study, like the one mentioned before, makes explicit use of the concept of ambivalence. It is not difficult to imagine other turning points that display preconditions for the experience of ambivalences, such as occupational choice, or – at the end of a professional career – the period of retirement. Work in these areas would require – and could stimulate – further efforts in the conceptualization of ambivalence.

The example suggests viewing non-normative (or even deviant) behavior as a cause of ambivalence. From a theoretical point of view, there may be a linkage with the analysis of stigma, such as that of Goffman (1963). Interestingly enough, although the latter does not use the term ambivalence, he describes behaviors that can be interpreted as strategies for coping with ambivalences.

If attention is directed toward specific features of the life course, trauma is certainly an experience that can generate ambivalences in several ways. Under the impact of personal and structural violence, the self is threatened, and this may remain so for a long time, or even lifelong. Thus, the traumatic experience becomes part of the personality. On one hand, it is so subjective that it cannot be shared with others, but on the other hand there may be a strong desire to share one's experiences, not least of all in the hope of receiving therapeutic support. This holds true for personal traumatic experiences such as child abuse. Traumas can also be collective, as in the case of wars. The Holocaust is a unique case of the experience of collective trauma for which an extensive body of literature exists (see for example Ludewig-Kedmi, 2001, 2004). The twofold experience of ambivalence in connection with personal and collective trauma is concisely summarized by Smelser (2004, p. 53) in the following passage:

One of the peculiarities that have been noticed in connection with acute psychological traumas is a very strong dual tendency: to avoid and to relive…At the ideational level one main defense is some form of amnesia (numbing, emotional paralysis)…, actual forgetting, denial, difficulty in recalling, or unwillingness to contemplate or dwell on the traumatic event. At the same time, the trauma has a way of intruding itself into the mind,

in the form of unwanted thoughts, nightmares and flashbacks. These apparently an-
tagonistic tendencies have presented themselves to some as a paradox… At the behavi-
oral level, the same double tendency has been observed: A compulsive tendency to avoid
situations that resemble the traumatic scene or remind the victim of it, but at the same
time an equally strong compulsion to repeat the trauma or to relive some aspect of it…
When seeking an analogy at the socio-cultural level, we discover such dual tendencies –
mass forgetting and collective campaigns on the part of groups to downplay or 'put
behind us', if not actually to deny a cultural trauma on the one hand, and a compulsive
preoccupation with the event, as well as group efforts to keep it in the public con-
sciousness as a reminder that 'we must remember', or 'lest we forget', on the other. A
memorial to an event…has both reactions…[we can speak of] the compulsion to re-
member and the compulsion to forget.

4.5. Ambivalences Concerning Specific Fields of Action

4.5.1. Caring

The experience of ambivalences may be greater in tasks where tensions and
contradictions cumulate. This is certainly the case in caring. For caregivers,
and in reference to the subjective component of relationships, sympathy and
antipathy are at play, and many caring activities include intimate behaviors
that may be embarrassing. From an institutional perspective, normative
expectations may exist which juxtapose the commitment of a woman as the
daughter of elderly parents with the duties of husbands and wives. Men, too,
may be burdened in this way, but caring is still considered a primarily female
obligation. These traditional gender ideologies may add to the pressures and
thereby further the likelihood of ambivalences. Seen from the point of view
of the care-receivers, ambivalent feelings and attitudes may exist as well,
since they realize the tensions between insight into apparent dependency and
the wish for interdependency.

   This is the topic of a monograph by Cohler and Grunebaum (1981) which
is cited here as an example of a study that analyzes the phenomenon of
ambivalence without using the concept itself. The authors focus on mother–
adult daughter relationships in four families of Italian Americans. Their
point of departure is the "paradox in contemporary society where, on the
one hand, it is believed that adults will strive to become both psychologically
and economically autonomous and self-reliant, while, on the other, findings
from systematic investigations of family life show that dependence across
the generations is the typical mode of intergenerational relations, including
the interdependence of very old parents on their middle-aged offspring"
(*ibid*., p. 10). In the concrete case, for the mothers, the acceptance of the
daughters commitments are in conflict with the mothers desire to continue

1 to lead their own lives. The authors describe as an illustrative example the relationships of one mother (Mrs. Scardoni) and her daughter (Mrs. Russo)
3 in the following way:

5 Mrs. Russo's continuing emotional involvement with her mother is both a source of support as well as a source of considerable discomfort and strain. Neither Mrs. Scardoni nor Mrs. Russo can tolerate any disagreement or disharmony, for neither mother nor
7 daughter can admit to their own mixed feelings. On the one hand, Mrs. Russo is very dependent on her mother for help with even the most minute aspects of her life, such as
9 recipes for supper or advice on her problems with her daughter or her husband. On the other hand, she is afraid that her mother will forget about her if she does not maintain continual contact. Burdened by her mother's demand that she and her brother provide
11 Mrs. Scardoni with the identity that she had never achieved for herself and unable to derive any sense of security or satisfaction from their relationship, Mrs. Russo feels
13 frustrated, resentful, and then guilty. Finally, she becomes so distraught that she can only continue to function by swallowing large doses of the several 'tranquilizers' that her family doctor has prescribed for her. (*ibid.*, p. 120)
15

A similar study of fathers and sons in later life has been published by
17 Nydegger and Mitteness (1991). Their analysis also contains colorful descriptions of ambivalences without using the term itself. There are certainly
19 more studies which contain an implicit and consequently not yet elaborated reference to the idea of ambivalence. It may be worthwhile to reanalyze
21 them in the light of the emergence of a theory of ambivalences.

In this regard, a secondary analysis of data from the Berlin Aging Study
23 (BASE) by Lang (2004) merits special attention. It also contains an explicit connection to the life-course approach. Data are available from responses
25 by adult children (mean age 54.4 years) to a mailed questionnaire on personal networks and the quality of relationships with parents. Ultimately,

27 …four distinct patterns of adult children's relationship styles towards their parents were identified based on indicators of support exchange, personal norms and affective
29 strength: close exchange, resilient giving, strained altruism, and detached distance. The four relationship styles were associated with motivations for seeking contact with parents and the inconsistency of relationship satisfaction with parents. Each of the four
31 relationship styles reflects an individual response to the challenges of the filial task in midlife.
33

In the interpretation of the author (Lang, 2004, p. 199ff.),

35 The four observed styles of adult children's relationships with their older parents are most consistent with the assumptions of the heuristic model of intergenerational am-
37 bivalence (Lüscher, 1998). According to this model, ambivalence is conceived as an implicit and underlying structure that may be experienced within any intergenerational relationship. For example, adult children may respond to ambivalence with detachment
39 from their parents, referred to as atomization. This response is well reflected in the detached-distant relationship style of adult children's attitudes towards their parents.

1   Another prototypical response described in the heuristic model of ambivalence is cap-
    tivation, which refers to feelings of being obligated to take responsibility, while at the
    same time feeling strained by such responsibility. This response pattern is well reflected
3   in the strained-altruistic relationship style of adult children. A third prototypical re-
    sponse to intergenerational ambivalence according to the heuristic model of ambivalence
5   is the expression of normatively taking responsibility and close supportive exchanges
    with the aged parent. This response pattern may be characterized as solidarity and is best
7   reflected in the group of adult children who display a style of close exchange with their
    parents characterized by strong emotional closeness and much supportive exchange with
    parents. The relationship style of close exchange with parents comes closest to the
9   concept of family solidarity, at least with respect to the constructs of normative, func-
    tional and affective solidarity. Adult children in this group were mostly satisfied with
11 their relationship to their parents and displayed the strongest level of consistency across
    different ratings of satisfaction. A fourth prototypical response pattern refers to eman-
13 cipation, which involves a pragmatic attitude of keeping an affective distance to one's
    parent while at the same time giving what is needed. Again, this response pattern is
    reflected in the group of adult children who displayed a style of resilient giving towards
15 their parents. Adult children of this group gave much support because they felt obliged
    to do so, but also showed relative affective neutrality towards their parents....Manifes-
17 tations of personal ambivalence as indicated by the degree of inconsistency in ratings of
    satisfaction with parents were differently distributed across the four relationship styles.
    In particular, the strained-altruistic and the resilient-giving relationship styles were
19 found to have the greatest potential for perceptions of ambivalence (i.e. inconsistency).
    Both styles were associated with a basic and strong attitude towards giving support to
21 one's parents.

23 Lorenz-Meyer (2004) has explored, through narratives of young adults in
    Germany, the generation of ambivalences and strategies of dealing with
25 them in relation to prospective parental care. In her own words, "the anal-
    ysis shows that in contemporary Germany the (anticipated) transition of
27 parents requiring personal care is perceived as a structurally ambivalent
    situation for many adult children that simultaneously values two opposing
29 courses of actions and leads to decisional ambivalence of children between
    personally supporting their parents in old age and placing them in a nursing
31 home. Participants' reflections on viable and consensual care arrangements
    that can be interpreted as an attempt to deal with decisional ambivalence
33 involved a multifaceted process of taking stock of (a) the personal rela-
    tionship between parents and children, often in comparison with the rela-
35 tionship between parents and siblings; (b) the living situation of older
    parents; (c) the respondent's own living situation; (d) past family care ar-
37 rangements; (e) cultural-normative guidelines; (f) care institutions; and (g)
    expected commitments of other siblings (and partners)." (ibid., p. 246f). The
39 interviews also show, "that research participants interpreted ambivalences
    not just in a biographical, but also in a socio-historic context. Participants'

localization of intergenerational positions and relationships in concrete historical conditions can serve to de-personalize and possibly mitigate personal ambivalences'' (*ibid.*, p. 248).

In the context her analysis, Lorenz-Meyer also focused on points of connection and differentiation with the four strategies of dealing with ambivalence identified in the Konstanz studies. "Displaying inaction and not planning for parental care needs, for example, was not considered as contradicting a solidaristic orientation (and could even be interpreted as "emancipation" in the Konstanz typology, if previous familial care arrangements were not reproduced and personal contact maintained). This was a strategy of dealing with ambivalence that was used mainly by men. The assumption that other siblings, usually a sister, would provide co-residential care tended to facilitate inaction and mitigate decisional ambivalence. Conversely, it was exclusively women (with intermittent employment) who committed themselves to providing co-residential care (that can be interpreted as "solidarity" or, if the initiation of alternative arrangements had failed, as "captivation"). Women were also the majority of those who explicitly anticipated accommodating the parent in a home while committing themselves to complementary emotional care (which can be interpreted as "emancipation" if elder care had been provided in the family). For both groups of women the perceived absence of care commitments from other siblings increased decisional ambivalence. A crucial factor for planning residential (rather than co-residential) care was the availability of material resources to afford quality care among women (and some men) with more continuous employment that thereby had a mitigating effect on decisional ambivalence." (*ibid.*, p. 249).

Lorenz-Meyer distinguishes between multiple, personal and structural ambivalences that underlie decisional ambivalence in the following way:

- Personal ambivalences refer to the simultaneity of opposing feelings and orientations such as closeness and distance that came to the fore when participants imagined co-residential living arrangements with their parents.
- Structural ambivalences refer to the simultaneity of opposing offerings, directives or guidelines for action inherent in institutional structures, such as state agencies or social policies.
- The notion of *multiple ambivalences* refers to overlapping personal and structural ambivalences that constitute multiple sources, rather than a single cause for decisional ambivalence.

As part of the already-mentioned OASIS project, an extensive comparative study on the care of the elderly and the role of family support systems, complemented the traditional focus on solidarity with an analysis of ambivalences. The authors summarize the results of the quantitative and the qualitative analysis as follows (Lowenstein & Ogg, 2003, p. 223):

> Correspondence analysis of the ten questions relevant to inter-generational conflict, ambivalence and solidarity resulted in categorizing parent–child relationships into four distinct styles. Harmonious relationship styles were categorized, for example, by getting along extremely well but with an acceptance that conflict and ambivalent feelings could and did occur but without altering the essentially positive relationship experience. Distant family styles were conversely evidenced by emotional distancing, differences in view and the experience of conflict and ambivalent feelings in a way which could or did have a deleterious effect on family relationships. – In the qualitative data, dyads who experienced their relationships as effective and essentially harmonious tended to identify ambivalence or conflict as a part of the process of their relationship. Transitions created by changes in parental health for example, brought about the possibility of negotiating or redefining roles and responsibilities without impinging on participants' views of the overall quality of the relationship.

4.5.2. Inheritance

If one is searching for phenomena that seem in the light of experience to be breeding grounds for ambivalences, inheritance is undoubtedly a major candidate. Thus, we may use this topic as an illustration of how the new orientation, namely the interest in ambivalences, sheds light, encourages, stimulates new research interests, close to daily life, and also recalls the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation. Certainly a core phenomenon in the field of generations, inheritance has found surprisingly little attention in the field of social science. This is also true for its relevance for patterns of life courses, individual lives and personal ties.

The chapter by Plakans (2004) in Pillemer and Lüscher (2004) is a good starting point. The author recalls how important the regulations concerning inheritance were in the past and how much they could influence the life courses of the rich, including aristocrats, as well as peasants and artisans. Major sources of ambivalences can be assumed on a structural level in the juxtaposition of institutional rules and customs, and the desire of the donators to express their personal sympathies, or to reward a child (or another person) for support and attention. Another conflict which most likely induced everyday ambivalences has to be seen in the self-interest of the old in their role as heads of households, as opposed to the desire of the young to have a family of their own and to become autonomous. Ambivalences may also be nourished by the rivalries among siblings.

To this Plakans offers concrete illustrations. Ehmer and Gutschner (2000) confirm the overall fruitfulness of the concept of ambivalence for the study of inheritance and more generally speaking for the social history of the family and its implications for personal biographies. They see a major advantage or function of the concept in that it serves to deconstruct the idealizations that have long dominated family rhetoric.

An attempt to include the concept of ambivalence in a study of present-day processes of inheritance has been made by Lettke in the Konstanz Inheritance Survey (Konstanzer Erbschafts Survey – KES), which is representative of the German population age 40 and above, using the method of telephone interviewing. His findings confirm, first, that about a third of the subjects refer to ambivalences – a number which seems lower than one would expect at first glance, and with regard to the usual socio-demographic variables, those with lower levels of education show a significantly higher rate of ambivalence. A more detailed analysis reveals that those who have already received an inheritance are significantly more ambivalent, which suggests that actual experience turns out to entail more difficulties than anticipated. Strong correlations exist between the experience of ambivalences and the responses in terms of motivation. The following instances appear to be of significant importance: the intention to reward those who have provided care, who are especially sympathetic, by whom one wants to be remembered and with whom one shares common convictions and beliefs. Ambivalences also arise if a person wants to support children who have a family of their own and those who are in need. More generally, ambivalences seem to increase if the testator has reasons to deviate from the rules stipulated by the law and by a general societal idea of equity. With regard to the dimensions of the module suggested above, inheritance seems to be a field of action where the tensions between the subjective or personal and the institutional dimensions seem of particular relevance.

5. OUTLOOK

In this section, I offer some proposals for a greater rapprochement between the study of intergenerational relationships and the study of the life course, especially with regard to its institutional embeddedness. Such an orientation refers back to the older issue of the interplay between biology and culture, which is fundamental both to the concept of human development and generational succession. A major focus is the understanding of personal identity and the self.

1   Drawing upon recent calls for more theory in the field of generational studies, the concept of ambivalence is introduced. This is appropriate and
3 attractive for at least three reasons. First, this concept too is relevant for a deeper understanding of personal identity in a non-metaphysical and non-
5 normative way. Second, if used in the sense of Mead (1938), identity development can be understood as advanced by ongoing dialogues with one-
7 self and with significant others. Third, such dialogues imply the possible experiences of being torn in two opposed directions and oscillating between
9 them.

   With regard to a life-course perspective, ambivalences are presumed to
11 activate, or at least to stimulate, the human potential for action in social structures. In other words, dealing with ambivalence requires "agency."
13 Thus, it is fruitful to view ambivalences as "neutral," i.e. as possible preconditions for acting. Research on ambivalence should therefore focus on
15 awareness *and* coping. We can hypothesize, first, that people cope with ambivalence in more or less competent, productive, or even creative ways.
17 Second, the deliberate construction of ambivalences can be a strategy in shaping and organizing social interactions. Third, the personal experience of
19 ambivalences depends on aspects of interactions and social structures and on the embeddedness of ambivalences in role models and collective iden-
21 tities.

   We can expect that ambivalence will be especially manifest at "turning
23 points" and that it will likewise be apparent throughout the biographical histories of the relationships between parents and their children. Ultimately,
25 dealing with ambivalences can be conceptualized as a "meta-task" of the personal and social organization of intergenerational relations (and other
27 kinds of social relations) over the life course (and vice versa).

   In addition, we may hypothesize (beyond the existing frameworks) that
29 ambivalences, in a life-course perspective, may be experienced in introspection ("inner dialogues"), as suggested by the idea of "life review" or "life
31 reflection" (Staudinger, 2001). They may be experienced (and have to be dealt with) in social relationships ("dialogues with others"). Finally, one
33 may consider the impact of generational politics (and politics in general) as creating conditions that can generate ambivalences ("dialogues with gen-
35 eralized others"). Recalling the frame of reference presented at the PaVie Colloquium Lausanne, we may ask where the experience of ambivalences
37 can be expected to occur and where we may discover specific strategies of coping. I offer the following overview:
39

	Perspective of Subjects	Perspective of Researcher/ Structures
Trajectory	Life reviews	Socio-biological foundations
		Conflict nature/ nurture
Stage Transitions	Reproductive behavior	Stages of development
	Leaving home	Developmental tasks
	Retirement	Generativity (Erikson)
Events/tasks/roles	Caring Grandparenthood	
	Inheritance (multiple sense)	
	Trauma	

Newly introduced concepts also engage us to adopt a new perspective in examining existing theories and their interconnections. In this regard, further explorations within the field of intergenerational relationships, as well as the field of life-course analysis, may well be undertaken in regard, for instance, to Erikson's well-known theory of identity. His schema of eight stages in the development of identity can certainly be read as a sequence of dilemmas with ambivalent qualities. However, Erikson's theory would have to be linked systematically to descriptions of conduct, social relationships and roles and their possible relevance for the emergence of ambivalence. Another bridge can be built to the theory of generativity. In a recent, very concise summary of its substance by McAdams and Logan (2004), at least the second proposition points to a logical structure of the concept which comes close to ambivalence: ''Generativity may spring from desires that are both selfless and selfish'' (p. 18).

If we want to strive for a closer integration, we should be aware that the focus here has been on relationships. This focus may be welcome in studies of the life course. The linkages between lives merit greater attention. Quite obviously, this draws attention to the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The idea of ambivalence, as obvious as it may be in the case of

1 intergenerational relationships, can certainly be enlightening for other per-
sonal relationships, such those between partners or husband and wives,
3 siblings and even friends and comrades. Their dynamics over a life course
may be quite meaningful and consequential.
5   Despite the importance of the concept in relationships, a self-critical ob-
servation may well be appropriate. At the present stage of the development
7 of the ambivalence perspective, concern with the consequences of ambiv-
alent experiences is unexplored. The distinction of four different modes in
9 dealing with ambivalences may well be a first step. Yet, more work is need-
ed. As one direction, I would like to offer the following argumentation. The
11 experience of ambivalences – it has been said – should be seen as relevant for
the development of the self or personal identity. (This connection is also
13 useful to distinguish ambivalences from trivial experiences of tensions and
choices in daily life). Within the framework of a theory of social action, the
15 reference to the self or personal identity implies a close connection to the
concept of agency, insofar as it may be understood as the locus of action and
17 of control (see also the chapter by Marshall, in this volume). Therefore, we
should pay greater attention, on one side, to the extent to which the pos-
19 sibility (or the inability) to control one's own behavior with regard to others,
and therefore to shape relationships, is a source of ambivalences, and in
21 what ways the mastering of ambivalences goes together with the exercise of
power. Preliminary considerations along this line have been presented by
23 Connidis and McMullin (2002). Other behavioral consequences of dealing
with ambivalences may be considered as well. In short, a closer intercon-
25 nection between the study of ambivalences, agency and social control seems
desirable and promising.
27   I would like to finish on a more general note by referring to Smelser (1998,
p. 13). Exploring the deeper meanings of the ambivalent, he states that, "we
29 are dealing with a fundamental existential dilemma in the human condition.
It is communicated in various dichotomies – freedom versus constraint,
31 independence versus dependence, autonomy versus dependence, maturity
versus infancy, and more – but ever the dichotomy, the dilemma appears to
33 be insoluble." In a time, when professional and even economic interests play
a major role in the enterprise called "social science," a reminder of some
35 basic humanistic issues may well be appropriate – not least with regard to
the question of how we organize and can organize our lives over the life
37 course and master – as chances and as burdens – the ambivalences occurring
in social relationships.

39

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Belsky (1984); Pyke & Bengtson (1996); Robertson, Elder, Skinner, & Conger (1991).

NOTES

1. Note the deliberate formulation as a general heuristic hypothesis: It is not suggested that intergenerational relationships are *per se* ambivalent, or that they always require dealing with ambivalences, but several reasons and observations, as shown below, speak for the assumption that this may often be the case.

2. From a systematic point of view, this reference to literature implies an important insight: Insofar as fictional works are or can be seen as constructions of imagined worlds, one also may see the ambivalences as deliberately constructed. This may be done on the assumption that these ambivalences are also experienced by readers or viewers in their personal lives. The deliberate creation of ambivalences is also used as a technique in certain psychotherapeutic methods. e.g the so-called "paradoxical intervention"

3. For a more detailed, yet still preliminary overview see Lüscher, 2004. Some references to the role of the concept in different discourses can be found in Smelser (1998). The reception of the concept in psychotherapy is outlined in Otscheret (1988) and Knellessen (1978).

4. Thus, we could also say that the concept of ambivalence refers to "decision-making as a process" for which the metaphor of "oscillation" seems quite appropriate, or as an alternative image, a "tug-of-war."

5. Due to spatial limitations, I will focus only on the broad outlines. For a full presentation, see Lüscher & Lettke, 2004. The research instruments developed at Konstanz, in partial cooperation with Karl Pillemer, are available in English and German under: http://www.uni-konstanz.de/FuF/SozWiss/fg-soz/ag-fam/famsoz-i.html.

6. Here, a note about the methodological status of a diagram may be in order. Following an idea by Bogen & Thürlemann (2003), diagrams represent a unique category of "text," which stems from the combination of words and graphics. Due to a certain degree of ambiguity and of openness, this kind of representation encourages further interpretations and can thus serve as a means to develop new ideas and even hypotheses.

7. This example is taken from the questionnaires used in the Konstanz studies, see footnote 5.

8. There is a parallel to the finding of Pyke and Bengston (1996). In a qualitative research project on family elder-care, they coined the concept of "overcare," defined as care exceeding recipients' actual needs which thus may have negative consequences, both relational and developmental. Close-knit networks may not always facilitate parent–child relationships, especially when the expectations of parents and other network members about the child are inconsistent (Belsky, 1984), or when network members are perceived by parents as competitors rather than as supporters

in the parenting process (Robertson, Elder, Skinner, & Conger, 1991). It might well be worthwhile to reanalyze these studies in the light of the emerging theory of intergenerational ambivalence.

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AQ1	In Bleuler (1911),please confirm the year of publication is 1910 or 1911.	
AQ2	Lorenz-Meyer (below) is not clear, please check	
AQ3	Is it "ethnics"?	
AQ4	Please provide page range in Brannen (2003).	
AQ5	Please provide vol. no. in Lalive d'Epinay and Bickel (1994).	
AQ6	Please check if it is vol. no 29 in Lüscher (1998).	
AQ7	Please provide vol. no. Lüscher and Lettke (2002)	
UCRef	If references appear under section "Uncited References", then cite at relevant places in the text. In case of un availability of citation the corresponding reference will be deleted from the reference list	