

and social structure are responsible for framing people's experience. At the same time he claims that constructionist views fail to notice the multi-dimensional and layered nature of situations: 'It is not just that different people might have different definitions of the same situations, but that each participant can be in several complex layers of situational definition at the same time' (Collins 1988: 58). Goffman's avoidance of complete relativism (as seen in his recognition of the primary importance of the physical and social worlds, and his interest in analysing the organization of experience) parallels the dynamics of memory approach's insistence on the reality of the past while, at the same time, adding to it the assertion that people do indeed interpret the past (Schudson 1997: 15). Since people continuously project their expectations and perceptions, or frames of reference, into the past, and since they continuously build frames upon frames, the past is reconstructed in a more complicated way than the simple assertion that the present influences the past would suggest.

According to Goffman (1959: 247), the reality and sincerity of frames is protected by the use of various procedures that anchor frame activity and induce in us a belief that what appears to be real *is* real; yet it is the material world that is the ultimate grounding, while all transformations of it are secondary. His approach allows us to view forgetting as the result of the disappearance or change of frameworks due to shifts in social conventions. The fact that there can be many frames and that they are constructed upon each other, with primary frameworks at the beginning of the process, results in the multiple nature of reality. While engaging in the process of framing, people prove themselves to be capable of dealing with many frames without any problems. They are also capable of adjusting frames to 'fit' the actual occurrence itself in such a way that the definition of the event, as provided by the framework of shared memory, becomes confirmed. Such a construction of the social world ensures our conventional conduct, which in turn is understandable only in terms of the frame. When the fit is imperfect 'the past is at once an idealization and critique of the present world' (Schwartz 2000: 253). In other words, in order for collective memory to inspire and mobilize, the fit must be imperfect, leaving enough discrepancy to allow for the evaluation of the present. The workings of primary frameworks become most visible when discussing generational memories and groups traditions.

Generational memory: imprint of a 'spirit of the times'

The idea of generation is very old. It was used, for example, in ancient Greece and features in the Old Testament, where it is conceived in a genealogical sense as the measure of distance between parents and children. Despite its long history, the notion of generation has had a brief and not very successful career as a scientific concept. However, attempts to elaborate the

idea are interesting because they tend to transcend the arbitrary limits of conventional academic disciplines. For example, Marias' (1970) formulation of the concept of generation, while relying on historical method and tracing the theory back to Ibn Khaldun's fourteenth-century writings, incorporates philosophical, literary and sociological insights. Seeing generation as 'the concrete unit of authentic historical chronology', Marias emphasizes that it requires more than merely biological or biographical information, since we 'must also know the structure of the world at that time' (p. 101). Following Ortega's idea of generation as 'the visual organ with which historical reality can be seen in its real and vibrant authenticity', Marias defines generation as 'systems of prevailing conventions' and therefore as 'a fundamental ingredient of each of us' (1970: 102, 101, 83). He points out that affinity between members of a given generation 'does not arise so much from themselves as from being obliged to live in a world of a certain and unique form' (p. 104). Since to live is something 'that happens in the form of coexistence' (p. 79) and since generation is our historical world, it is from this generational basis that we face reality in order to mould our lives.

Such assumptions about the importance of generation and a 'spirit of the times', which leaves its imprint on the collective memory of a given generation, have energized various perspectives, from ideas of generation as a way to explain the feeling of 'destiny' among a specific group of people, to perspectives arguing that generation 'alone could help to compose a dynamic portrait of a society' (Renouard in Nora 1996b: 505). The majority of these theories seem to stress the uniqueness of each generation and their mutual distance, yet in reality generations have much in common and tend to resemble each other (de Tocqueville 1968). In the same vein, Halbwachs ([1926] 1950) argues that there is a 'living link' between generations which ensures that the past is handed on via parents and grandparents and goes beyond the limits of individual experience. While the generational gap is perceived as providing a basis for changing the present, generational continuity is regarded as a source of stability and legitimacy. In other words, as generation follows generation, each receives an inheritance from its predecessor, and this intergenerational transmission, or tradition, is a foundation of societal continuity.

It was Mannheim who injected a more sociological perspective into the notion of generation. His classic essay on 'The Problem of Generation', originally published in 1928, is still the main point of reference for all the more recent contributions. By insisting that in order to share generational location in a sociologically meaningful sense an individual must be born within the same historical and cultural context and be exposed to experiences that occur during their formative adult years, Mannheim endorsed the conceptualization of generations as something more than merely collections of age cohorts. His description of links between the generations as a social

category and memory suggests that theories of social memory should be a central part of the sociology of knowledge (Plicher 1994). Mannheim's theory of generation, designed as part of his theoretical strategy to understand 'the existential basis of knowledge' and develop an alternative approach from Marxism to social change, sees generation as 'one of the fundamental factors in the unfolding dynamic of history' (1972: 288–90). The specificity and uniqueness of each generation's experience results in the different character of their respective collective memories. Moreover, Mannheim uses this notion in 'a surprisingly contemporary way to encompass all types of knowledge a person might acquire, that is conceptual knowledge of words, world knowledge, skills as well as memories' (Conway 1997: 21).

Stressing the difference between appropriated and personally acquired memories, Mannheim argues that the memories we acquire for ourselves in the process of personal development are real memories which we really possess and which are the basis of our generational identity, since this type of knowledge is generally better preserved in our memory and has real binding power (1972: 296). He further specifies that it is the period of late adolescence and early adulthood which is the formative one for the constitution of a distinctive memory and personal outlook. The concept of 'the inventory experience', which is an experience absorbed from the environment in early youth, allows Mannheim to argue that young people's fresh encounters with the wider world in this critical stage of their lives become 'the historically oldest stratum of consciousness, which tends to stabilise itself as the natural view of the world' (p. 296). In this perspective, experience from adolescence and early adulthood is carried forward with self-awareness and contributes to differences in generational views of the world.

However, for a generation to be a key aspect of the existential determination of knowledge, its members need to share more than just demographic characteristics. Mannheim believed that belonging to the same generation becomes sociologically significant only when it involves participation in the same historical and social circumstances which 'endow the individuals sharing in them with . . . common mentality and sensitivity' (p. 291). A unique generational memory, a result of its members' common exposure to social and intellectual processes, is dependent on the tempo of social change. The quicker the pace of social and cultural change, the greater are the chances that a generation gap will emerge, resulting in older generations controlling the reigning conceptions of history, while the young quickly acquire 'new strategies of action' for coping with life in unsettled times (Swidler 1986).

The growing tempo of change, together with the spread of democracy, can be seen as responsible for today's new interest in the idea of generation. With the decline of the importance and visibility of old divisions, knowledges and bonds, generational identifications become more important and

hence it can be said that the 'generation is the daughter of democracy and the acceleration of history' (Nora 1996b: 508). Furthermore, in this era of electronic communication, globalization of popular culture and the importance of mass media, it is predicted that 'generations will exist more easily across social space because they will be able to share more easily a collective culture' (Eyerman and Turner 1998: 97). Emerging generational links and solidarities simultaneously simplify and complicate the network of social allegiances, as recent developments impose new limits and enhance new types of connection. These new trends have shifted attention from previous studies of generations as a variable which can help to predict future behaviour, to current investigations of generation as a collectivity constituted by the historical dimensions of the social processes predominant in that generation's youth. This recent interest in generational memory has helped to clarify some uncertainties connected with attempts to identify a concrete 'generation'.

New investigations of the collective memories of generations has solved the problem of how to define a generational cohort, as this type of research assumes that memories will be structured along the age dimension in ways that allow us to identify various generations. Unlike the traditional approach, new research 'starts with memories and works backwards rather than forward from generations' (Schuman and Corning 2000: 915). The importance of links between generation and memory, so prominent in the new studies, can be seen as a result of researchers' realization that, in order to assume that members of a cohort in terms of age adopt a certain line of action, there is a need to identify what earlier experiences are carried forward in memory by that cohort.

Several studies examine the existence of generational differences in memory by comparing the meaning of adolescent memories with those that occur in other periods of life (e.g. Schuman and Scott 1989; Schuman and Corning 2000). In order to verify hypotheses extrapolated from Mannheim's theory, this type of research investigates intergenerational effects, seen as the result of the intersection of personal and national history, examines the role of various stages in individual lives for memory encoding, and analyses whether adolescence and early childhood are the primary sources of political and social memories. In one such study, following Mannheim's suggestions that adolescence and early adulthood are stages of life uniquely open to gaining knowledge about the wider world and that those from an older generation are likely to interpret events in terms of their previously well developed view of the world, Schuman and Scott (1989) asked a cross section of Americans to identify any two 'especially important national or world events or changes'. Their research results show that memories are structured by generational divisions and that attributions of importance to national and world events of the past half century tend to be a function of an individual having experienced an event during adolescence or

early adulthood. By examining the existence of generational differences in memory, Schuman and Scott's study proves that knowledge personally gained is more important, as people do not tend to regard those events and changes that occur after their early adulthood as important. For example, older generations were significantly more likely to mention World War II as one of the major events in the last 50 years than younger people, who did not personally experience it.

In addition, the *meaning* of events differs for various cohorts, which confirms Mannheim's position. However, some types of event, due to their 'objective' importance, are seen as significant by all generations, including those who were not adolescents at the time. That said even in cases where the surface memory of an event does not vary according to age, the '*meaning* of the event . . . will be different for different cohorts' (Schuman and Scott 1989: 361). For example, the Vietnam War generation, who experienced the distrust and divisions of the 1960s, viewed World War II, which they did not personally experience, as the 'good war', while older Americans' perception of World War II is constructed around its impact on the world.

Those who chose an event that happened during their adolescence showed a strong tendency to explain their choice in terms of straightforward personal experience during that time (Schuman and Scott 1989: 370–3). For example, even though most Americans over 50 shared a memory of John F. Kennedy's assassination, this was identified as an important event predominately by people who were in their teens to early mid-twenties in 1963, when the assassination took place, while older people mentioned the assassination less frequently and in less personal terms. The younger people clearly remembered Kennedy's assassination 'in terms of either a specific "flashbulb" image of hearing of the event itself or a more general report of its being memorable' (Schuman and Scott 1989: 373). For instance, a woman aged 33 at the time of the study said 'I remember it vividly. I was in my sixth grade class when the principle came in to announce it' (p. 373).

Also of interest at this point are the studies undertaken by cognitive psychologists, whose work on autobiographical memories revealed the existence of what they termed the 'reminiscence bump' or 'peak'. These investigations illustrate the importance of adolescence and early adulthood as the critical stages for memory encoding (Rubin *et al.* 1998). A recent study by Schuman *et al.* (1997) focuses on actual knowledge of the past, rather than on the spontaneous recollection of past events. By checking their respondents' knowledge related to 11 political, social and cultural events spread over the past 60 years (many of which occurred midway in the life cycle of present older adults) Schuman *et al.* confirmed Mannheim's general prediction that it is during adolescence that 'life's problems begin to be located in a "present" and are experienced as such' (1997: 47).

If we combine the discovery that youth experiences focus memories on the direct personal meaning of events with our previous observation that people

tend to share their emotionally loaded experiences with others, we can say that it is the sharing of memories among young people which ensures the persistence of memories from the period of adolescence and early adulthood. At the same time, young people's sociability and their sharing of experiences produces an affective basis to their generational identity. Generational memory allows people to have a certain social identification, both on an individual and a societal level. As people remember sharing memories and remembering together, a generational identity is constructed. In other words, a generational identity is produced through collective practices, established in response to traumatic or formative events which demand the sharing of memories: 'Generational memory grows out of social interactions that are in the first place historical and collective and later internalised in a deeply visceral and unconscious way so as to dictate vital choices and control reflexes of loyalty' (Nora 1996b: 526).

The most important moments for a generation tend to be unusual historical events since the more an event generates emotions, the more it elicits social sharing and is hence better remembered. A generation is a product of memory because of the formative role of memories of historical events from adolescence and early adulthood in the creation of a generational culture. Memory of the past is always intersubjective, a recollection of a past time lived in relation to other people. However, generational memory is historical not only because it consists of remembrances of historical moments: 'It is historical above all because it is first imposed from without, then violently internalised' (Nora 1996b: 523). People remember special emotional experiences from when they were young adults because, in order to make sense and reflect on these experiences, they talk about them with others. In turn, this mnemonic socialization, through which we learn what we should remember and what we can forget, provides bases for generational culture and identity. Generations, while being products of memory, are at the same time the main relationship in the production of history. This argument comes from Davis' (1989) reflection on Lision-Tolosana's ethnographic account of generational relations in a small town in Spain in the period 1900–61. By demonstrating how each new generation takes its inheritance from its predecessor, reacts against it, and – in response to the particular historical situation – creates a new environment that again is the object of reaction, Lision-Tolosana establishes that each generation had substantial autonomy to remake history.

Generational identifications are constructed out of generational cultures that provide a set of embodied practices, tastes, attitudes, preferences and dispositions, which are sustained by collective memories and enforced by control, through rituals of exclusion, of access to collective resources (Eyerman and Turner 1998). Such a perspective, emphasizing the importance of collective cultural experiences, allows for the adoption of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* to express the uniqueness of a given generational memory.

Using this concept, Eyerman and Turner modify Mannheim's original conceptualization and define a generation as 'a cohort of persons passing through time who come to share a common habitus'. Sharing a collective culture and habitus provides members of a generation 'with collective memory that serves to integrate the cohort over a finite period of time' (1998: 91). Habitus is a system of durable dispositions to act which are produced by objective structures and conditions but are also capable of producing and reproducing those structures (Bourdieu 1977: 72). Habitus comprises strategies and practices through which social order 'accomplishes itself' and makes itself 'self-evident' and 'meaningful' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127–8), as the dispositions to act are incorporated in social interaction within a historically formed social context. Being made up of 'the cognitive structures which social agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world' (Bourdieu 1984: 468), habitus organizes the way in which individuals see the world and act in it. As such, it is at the heart of the dialectic between the objective and the subjective, because dispositions and frames of perception are at once historical, social and individual. Although people internalize 'the immanent law of the structure in the form of habitus' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 140), they are still capable of creativity within the limits of the structure. In a similar vein, Marias (1970: 92) argues that prevailing conventions, which define generations, are imposed on us but our reactions to them are not. Recent studies of generational memory also suggest that people increasingly develop greater independence and sophistication in their thinking, frequently acquiring knowledge beyond officially available information, and this places limits on the kind of elite manipulation of collective memory visualized by the presentist approach (Schuman and Corning 2000).

The concept of habitus, as 'a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles' (Bourdieu 1977: 82), also allows us to identify the importance of collective memory in creating a generational culture. Being a 'principle of continuity and regularity' (1977: 82), habitus is a system of practice-generating schemes which expresses identities and memories constituted by structural differences. Bourdieu's main focus is on the role of class location in the structuring of habitus. However, while examining the construction of collective identity and memory in contemporary societies we should emphasize the structuring role of generation as a mode of distinction based on age differentiation. Other dimensions of classification, such as class, gender or ethnicity, are also important as structuring forces and, moreover, all four of them often overlap. Nevertheless, in modern society, as Eyerman and Turner (1998) observe, there is a shift in favour of generation. From the perspective of generational habitus, all significant social, political and cultural events that a given generation experiences at first hand can be perceived as part of the social space in which

that generation defines its collective identity. Within this space the marks of generational distinction are realized and generational memory is constructed. Of course, while the main events provide a space for self-production of a generational identity, 'the commercial mass media amplified and, at the same time, commodified it' (Eyerman and Turner 1998: 103).

Thus, generational identity can be conceptualized as a social identity linked to cultural differentiation, based on age distinction. Generational habitus, which is the foundation of generational memory, and therefore identity, can be seen as a system of practice-generating schemes rooted in the uniqueness of the sociohistorical location of a particular generation. Generational memory is to some degree a question of understanding human variations by means of history since, as Nora (1996b: 528) notes, generation is the 'spontaneous horizon of individual historical objectification'. While any classification of those generational variations needs to start with habitus, it should be followed by attempts to grasp the nature of the 'secondary variation' or 'vital sensitivity' of a given generation (Ortega in Marias 1970: 93). As generations 'with greater or lesser activity, originality and energy' constantly fashion their world they apply their unique sensitivity, rooted in and carried forward by their habitus, to interpret and make sense of later developments (Mannheim 1972: 300). The uniqueness of generational memories and differences expresses itself through a given generation's choice of meaning from the past to interpret the present.

However, despite unquestionable distinctiveness, no generation creates its own beliefs, norms and perspectives. Moreover, some events are so important that no single generational cohort develops greater knowledge of them than another, while, on the other hand, some occurrences 'stick' in the memories of people of different ages but who are related by other social characteristics, such as race, gender, social status or occupation. The study by Schuman *et al.* (1997), while confirming that early adulthood is a stage of life uniquely open to gaining knowledge about the wider world and that knowledge of a past event decreases with cohort distance from that event, also discovered that some social characteristics interfere with demographic division in terms of what is remembered. For example, African Americans in all age groups tend to know more about the historical events significant in the history of race relations, while women of all ages attach more importance to memories of events related to women's rights movements. World War II is now not only widely recalled, but the generational effect is less sharp and less visible due to the saturation of popular culture with various recollections of the war and the emergence of many memories of the Holocaust (Schuman *et al.* 1997: 71).

Such wider national remembering as well as cases of more narrowly defined intergenerational communication focus our attention on the essence of the notion of tradition, understood as a process of handing down from one generation to the next a set of practices, beliefs and institutions.

Traditions, while referring to the social transmission of cultural inheritance within a group, and therefore resembling Halbwachs' notion of collective memory, allow us to grasp the complexity of the links between groups and their respective memories without assuming that the shared experiences directly imply shared memories. This allows us to analyse how traditions constitute groups and to examine how groups, ranging from occupational to national, reaffirm their identities by constructing their memories through rituals, celebrations and narratives. In what follows, we employ the notion of tradition to further explore how groups remember.

Tradition: a chain of memory

Writing about tradition as being eroded has itself become 'tradition' (Luke 1996). There is a well established tradition of thought according to which tradition is something static, backward and conservative, something impervious to change and devoid of reflection, as well as connected with ignorance, dogma and irrationalism. This perspective is a result of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment which proclaimed tradition to be 'merely the shadow side of modernity' (Giddens 1999: 2). As Enlightenment thinkers sought to destroy the authority of tradition, itself being a creation of modernity, they established yet another tradition – the classical tradition in sociology with its focus on the problem of social order (Nisbet 1966). Following widespread criticism of this classical approach, since the late 1960s sociology has become preoccupied with the uniqueness of modernity and its main feature: change'. As a result, it is now common for writings about tradition to start with an observation about the absence in sociological literature of any analysis of the nature and mechanism of tradition (Szacki 1971; Shils 1981; Thompson 1996; Giddens 1999).

Apart from sociology's preoccupation with modernity, the present lack of interest in tradition can also be seen as a result of the widespread treatment of the concept – on the one hand, as something of the past which, by its very nature, is homogeneous and unproblematic, and on the other as something inherently ambiguous, almost too difficult to conceptualize. Consequently, as the main approaches to tradition confuse facts with values and diagnoses with appraisals, the appeal of the notion suffers. This confusion is present, for example, in the two opposite attitudes towards tradition in the history of European thought: traditionalism, expressing itself in attachment to and the idealization of the past, and utopianism, advocating future orientation (Szacki 1971: 279). Further ambiguities connected with this notion are due to the fact that traditions can be tied to different interests. For instance, radical thought, on the one hand, views traditions as 'inextricably embroiled in the legitimation of the *status quo*', and therefore necessarily conservative, while on the other hand, it admits that 'to be really radical, i.e., to go back to