

Intergenerational Transmission

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ABSTRACT

There has been recent and rapid growth in management and organizational research dedicated to the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission—the process through which organizations and other social systems reproduce and reconstitute themselves across long periods of time. This growth has resulted in several different research communities dedicated to understanding how organizational life transcends the involvement, tenure, and lifetimes of individuals. Yet, while assumptions about the nature of intergenerational transmission processes are coherent within research communities, such assumptions also diverge widely across such communities, resulting in contradictions and conceptual challenges. In this manuscript we identify four latent conceptualizations of the process of intergenerational transmission, which we label: taken-for-granted persistence, effortful maintenance, incremental adaptation, and discontinuous reinvention. We theorize that these processes represent different modes of what we term *sociotemporal transcendence*—different ways through which organizational life extends through time beyond the involvement or lifetimes of individuals. Based on these insights, we identify future research directions for a transcendence-based view of organizational life.

INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational transmission is the process through which organizations and other social systems reproduce and reconstitute themselves across long periods of time (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Halbwachs, 1950; Mannheim, 1952; Shils, 1981; Schönplflug, 2008). Although organizations typically attend to short-term temporal dynamics that occur within the tenure and lifetimes of their members (e.g., planning cycles, project timelines, budget decisions, policy changes, program coordination, operational disruptions, etc.), they are also embedded in longer-term, supra-individual processes that extend beyond the involvement, or even lifetimes, of any of their members.

These deeper historical currents include, for example, demographic shifts, cultural evolution, socioecological dynamics, durable power structures, and enduring inter-group tensions. Such temporally extended forces fundamentally impact present organization members, yet they reflect processes that transcend the lifespans of individuals and unfold across generations. Because of such processes, long-term organizational dynamics often become entangled with the broader social systems in which their members are embedded. Intergenerational transmission, thus, occurs in the human dynamics that flow between organizations and their environments.

Intergenerational transmission is what allows organizational and social life to transcend the boundaries of a single generation. Through it, organizations inherit traditions and practices, carry forward institutions, and shape futures that present organization members may never see. It is the bridge that binds past, present, and future, making continuity and change in organizational life possible across time.

Yet this bridge is increasingly fragile. In many organizational contexts, the ability of social systems to transmit themselves across generations has weakened (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

Generational divides deepen (Herring, 2019; Twenge, 2023), confidence in inherited institutions declines (Edelman Trust Institute, 2025), and organizations once expected to transcend lifetimes now often disappear in mere decades (Bakker & Josefy, 2018; Garelli, 2016). The social fabric that once carried stability and meaning for organizations across time appears, to many observers, to be fraying, leaving uncertainty in its wake (e.g., Haidt, 2024; Putnam, 2016).

At the same time, some intergenerational social systems display remarkable stability—sometimes to the benefit of organizations and society, other times to their detriment. Some of the most consequential challenges facing contemporary organizations are rooted in inherited, deeply institutionalized social systems that undermine long-term organizational resilience, yet seem almost inexorable in their ability to persist and reconstitute themselves across generations. Organizations confront inherited technological systems that wreak havoc on social-ecological systems (Moldavanova, 2016; Wade-Benzoni et al., 2008), cultural systems that stubbornly reproduce harmful biases (Amis, Mair & Munir, 2020), and economic systems that compound advantage upon advantage for some actors across generations while making access to critical resources and opportunities difficult for others (Barrios-Fernandez, Neilson, & Zimmerman, 2024; de Pina-Cabral & Lima, 2020). Many organizations are also entangled with intergenerationally durable structures that sustain valued forms of continuity, such as communities that transmit traditional ecological knowledge (Berkes, 1977), institutions that preserve long-cherished values (Kraatz et al., 2010), and forms of leadership that carry forward higher social purposes through time (Selznick, 1957).

Whether it supports or undermines organizational resilience, intergenerational transmission is rapidly becoming a core challenge for contemporary managers and organizations. Yet management and organization scholars conceptualize this phenomenon in markedly different, and

at times contradictory, ways. Despite its growing practical importance, research on intergenerational transmission remains fragmented across several scholarly communities, each approaching the phenomenon from distinct theoretical and empirical standpoints. For example, scholars of institutionalization (e.g., Zucker, 1977) study how ideas and practices that are transmitted across generations become taken-for-granted in organizations, while scholars of socialization (e.g., Bauer et al., 2025) examine how a new generation of organization members internalize established norms and practices. And while scholars of succession (e.g., Berns & Klarner, 2017) study leadership transitions and their impact on organizational continuity, scholars of generational relations explore how identity is established and managed across organization member cohorts over time (e.g., Joshi, Dencker, Franz & Martocchio, 2010). Other research communities, such as those focused on tradition (e.g., Dacin, Dacin & Kent, 2019) and legacy (e.g., Radu-Lefebvre, Davis & Gartner, 2024), explore how the decisions and cultural practices of past generations shape present-day organizational realities.

While diverse approaches offer valuable insights, they also reveal inconsistencies in how scholars conceptualize processes of intergenerational transmission. This fragmentation is not merely terminological or semantic but reflects varying underlying assumptions about the processes through which intergenerational transmission occurs. Across these literatures, we see a wide variety of implicit assumptions about the nature and ontology of intergenerational transmission processes (e.g., as inertial vs. effortful or as stabilizing vs. transformative). Such diverse assumptions reflect the complexity of intergenerational transmission as a phenomenon.

While such diversity of thought should be generative to the field, this potential is muted either (1) when parallel conversations about intergenerational transmission remain siloed or (2) when concepts are combined without underlying ontological assumptions being made explicit. The

primary risk with the former (1) is that paradigmatic assumptions become totalizing and limit our understanding of the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission. For example, scholars studying institutionalization processes may come to adopt strong assumptions about the degree to which intergenerationally transmitted practices are taken-for-granted, which can leave them ill-equipped to explain strategic processes of transmission that can also occur in organizational life.

By contrast, the primary risk with the latter (2) is ontological slurring, in which terms and concepts with distinct (or even incompatible) assumptions are unproblematically mashed together without making explicit the underlying conceptual underpinnings that originally supported them. For example, scholars may combine concepts that imply transmission through unconscious persistence (e.g., imprinting or institutionalization) with concepts that imply conscious custodianship (e.g., tradition or legacy) or generational transformation (e.g., succession or generational gaps) without making explicit that these accounts rest on different assumptions about the basic nature of the transmission process.

By systematically integrating insights and assumptions from across diverse research communities, this review seeks to enable future integrative research that can reflexively address fundamental questions about how intergenerational transmission shapes organizational life. While the rapidly growing empirical research on intergenerational transmission sheds light on the dynamics of intergenerational transmission in diverse contexts, there is a need for a more theoretically sensitive and, therefore, cohesive framework that accounts for the complex, messy, and often paradoxical nature of intergenerational transmission. Thus, we review the literature guided by the question: How is the process of intergenerational transmission conceptualized in management and organization studies?

Our integrative literature review provides grounds for greater rigor, precision, and construct clarity that can enable further theoretical elaboration and practical knowledge regarding the dynamic and contemporary challenges involving intergenerational transmission in organizational life. This goal, we argue, is best understood by zooming out to understand management and organizations from a more transcendent temporal perspective, as we now explain.

PHILOSOPHICAL GROUNDING

The Problem of Sociotemporal Transcendence in Organizational Life

Intergenerational transmission is a process of social organization in its own right. It is a historically distributed process of organizing that involves organizational and social systems that operate in ways that transcend the experience, awareness, or temporal duration of any given individual within that system. Although organizations are enacted by finite members, they are also embedded in broader social systems composed of meanings, relationships, and practices that precede those members and may continue after they leave. Such extended time horizons require a view of organizational life that is not reducible to what happens inside the formal boundaries of an organization but is embedded in broader social systems, such as families, professions, trades, communities, religions, and other enduring institutions. In this way social systems often precede current organization members and may continue after they leave.

We introduce the term *sociotemporal transcendence* to refer to those aspects of an organization or other social system that extend through time beyond the involvement of its individual members. Transcendence, in this sense, refers to a relation between temporally limited actors and social worlds that exceed them: individuals inherit worlds they did not create, while contributing to social futures they may never inhabit. The notion of transcendence is thus used to explain that which goes beyond (i.e., “transcends”) the individual human experience or

consciousness (e.g., Blackburn, 2016). The problem of sociotemporal transcendence is that this extension depends upon the actions, interests, and interpretations of individuals whose own participation is necessarily temporary. Intergenerational transmission is one of the primary processes through which this problem is negotiated. Intergenerational transmission, thus, links predecessors and successors into temporal relations through which inherited meanings, relationships and practices may be reproduced, revised, or abandoned.

Predecessors, Successors, and Intergenerational Transmission

Management and organizational scholarship focusing on processes of intergenerational transmission can trace its roots back to foundational social theories of the early nineteenth century that similarly sought to explain how social systems transcend individual experience. For example, Max Weber's (2019) early conceptualizations of social action focused on how people orient themselves toward "the past, present, or future anticipated action of others [who may be] individual and familiar, or indefinitely numerous and quite unfamiliar" (p. 99). Weber (2013; 2019) developed theories of human organization that situated individual actors (with finite mortal lifespans) within meaning systems, relationships, and artifacts that transcend these individual lifespans—that existed before they were born and that may also be there after they died.

Transcendental phenomenologist Alfred Schütz (1962 [1932]) also extended these ideas to emphasize interactions between past and future generations as a central (and perhaps even defining) characteristic of human social groups. His key argument was that the experiences in one's conscious life stem not just from what one directly experiences but also in relation to what happened in history and what may happen in the future. He focused specifically on "the activities of consciousness (*Bewusstseinsleistungen*) of the transcendental subjectivity within which this life-world is constituted" (Schütz, 1962, p. 120). However, he also argued that we are not aware

of all the historical inheritances in our conscious lives because of our “naivety” (Schütz, 1962, p. 133).

In other words, the world of “predecessors” is always available to us as an interpretive background, but can be accessed only when we become interested. Similarly, the world of our “successors” is open and indeterminate but can become a part of our world when we think and behave considering the direct and indirect impact we may have on future generations (Schütz, 1962, p. 134). In this vein, he suggests that what he called “attention to life” (Schütz, 1962, p. 212) becomes a crucial regulative force in our lives that determines what is relevant for us and what past, present, or future-oriented experiences mean for our lives. Accordingly, Schütz (2013, p. 245) writes, “in the succession of ages, the world of the present changes into the world of predecessors while the world of successors becomes the world of the present.”

Schütz helps clarify that organizational actors are never located only in the present: they inherit a world from predecessors, share one with contemporaries, and act toward a world that may be inhabited by successors. Yet this temporal structure is marked by partial awareness, as what is transmitted across generations may be carried forward as background common sense, habitual practice, or an unquestioned condition of action.

Intergenerational Transmission and the Durability of Social Reality

Berger and Luckmann (1966) were probably the most obvious inheritors of Schütz’ ideas. The authors adapted Schütz’s phenomenology to develop a processual explanation of the origins and reproduction of social structures. They argued that the social order is an “ongoing human production” (p. 69) in which past human activities connect with the present-day ongoing production of social realities. They contended that it is impossible to understand institutions without the intergenerational transmission processes through which they are created and

maintained. In particular, they suggested that to explain processes of transmission, there needs to be an intergenerational social apparatus involving “transmitters” and “recipients” (p. 88). They write, “[...] only with the appearance of a new generation can one properly speak of a social world.” (p. 79).

In contrast to Schütz’s (1962) emphasis on intergenerational consciousness, Berger and Luckmann (1966) theorized that intergenerational transmission was a process whereby the subjective social world “gains massivity” (p. 79), “thickens”, or “hardens” (p. 76-77) to become objective reality for both the predecessors and successors. They theorized that intergenerationally transmitted reality becomes taken for granted and gains legitimacy. Zucker (1977) extended these ideas to theorize that culture is reproduced in organizations through a transmission process by which cultural understandings are communicated “from one generation to the next” (p. 727). Thus, within the constructionist tradition of scholarship, “generations” often serve as the central unit through which the social world is institutionalized.

This constructionist insight provides a powerful account of how sociotemporal transcendence is accomplished through intergenerational transmission. Social realities endure not because they exist independently of human action, but because they are transmitted to successors who encounter them as part of the world. Yet this account is also limited as an explanation for intergenerational transmission processes. While meanings, relationships, and practices can flow smoothly down across generations, in practice this is actually more rare than common.

Generations and the Tension Between Continuity and Change

The role that generations play in organizations and in society is not limited to linear processes of historical accretion that result in stable social institutions. Generations are rarely smooth channels through which social reality is reproduced; they are messy, historically situated

sites at which inherited realities are received, reinterpreted, and sometimes transformed. Mannheim's theorization shifts attention from the flow of transmitted realities across generations to the complex, contested, and negotiated dynamics involved in their interactions.

In his essay "*The Problem of Generations*," Mannheim (1952 [1928]) conceptualized generations as distinctive cohorts that share consciousness because of the alignment between human biological rhythms (e.g., of birth, death, life span, and aging) with transformative historical events. Generations help to locate individuals in the evolving social structure of groups, organizations, or societies and help to explain why intergenerational transmission is often experienced as a challenging, nonlinear process of interacting across generational divides. Mannheim also differentiated between generational locations, or the potential for shared consciousness among cohorts born in the same historical period, and generational identities, or groups within that cohort who develop distinct worldviews in response to key historical events (see also Kertzer, 1983; Leccardi, 2016).

While we might intuitively associate notions of transmission with a process of unidirectional flow from sender to receiver, processes of intergenerational transmission complicate this view. Because generations are cohorts whose shared experiences differ from one another, intergenerational transmission is a complex process that involves both continuity and change—suggesting that either continuity and/or change will prevail within any given process of intergenerational transmission. In this way, generations are not only vehicles for social stability but are also dynamic social forces that influence and are influenced by historical change, helping to explain shifts in culture, politics, and ideology over time.

Accordingly, we adopt a process-based approach to conceptualizing intergenerational transmission that focuses explicitly on processual dynamics that mediate the relationship between

ancestors and their descendants. Abrams (1970) argues that while “age groups” are ephemeral, “generations” have the power to maintain and/or transform cultures through processes of intergenerational transmission. Intergenerational transmission can act as a mechanism for social change—providing a way for cohorts to differentiate themselves from one another over time (Ryder, 1965). Each generation has the chance to start anew and has the choice to continue or discontinue the past and renew the world of their ancestors (Shils, 1981). Such change can be either a cumulative process that consists of minor adaptations (e.g., Boyd & Richerson, 2005) or a more radical process of continually remaking the world in the ongoing present (Ingold, 2016).

Taken together, these perspectives show that intergenerational transmission is an important problem for organization theory that links finite organizational actors to social worlds that precede and outlast them. From Schütz we learn that intergenerational transmission is a central condition for human experience generally that involves interactions between predecessors and successors. From Berger and Luckmann we learn that it is a constitutive process that creates the social world. And from Mannheim we learn that it is also a complex, negotiated process. Our review builds on each of these core insights to systematically examine how different research communities in management and organization studies conceptualize the processes through which organizations and other social systems reproduce and reconstitute themselves across generations.

METHODS

To address the question of how the process of intergenerational transmission is conceptualized in management and organization studies (and to, thereby, advance a more reflexive and cohesive theoretical framework) we conducted an integrative literature review. Our approach combined George and Cronin’s (2024) and Rousseau’s (2024) guidelines for integrative reviews with intellectual history analysis (see, for example, Glynn & D’Aunno (2023)) to guide our inquiry.

By employing this method, we sought not only to capture the breadth of perspectives on intergenerational transmission in organizational life but also to critically examine patterns of alignment and divergence, as well as shifts in emphasis and underlying assumptions that shape the field. Our methodological choices were guided by the goal of ensuring rigor, transparency, and replicability in the review process. To do so, we followed four major stages (for a detailed overview, see Appendix 1).

Stage 1: Identifying Research Communities

We started the review by working to identify articles focusing on intergenerational transmission. First, we quickly realized that research on intergenerational transmission in organization studies does not share a common terminology, necessitating exploratory analysis to identify communities of research practice and document their key concepts.¹ Accordingly, following Rousseau (2024), we began by holistically investigating the terminology used in research on intergenerational transmission by conducting experimental, iterative searches and categorizing the resulting literature into fifteen potential research communities. This finding prompted us to undertake a validation step, where we cross-checked the identified fifteen research communities with other domain-specific experts and examined the foundational works that would serve as the basis for a historical analysis. The purpose of interviewing the experts was to ensure both the accuracy of our categorization and the relevance of the foundational works selected. We shared with the experts our proposed categorization of the general areas of inquiry and invited their reflections. We asked whether they agreed with the classification of their work within each proposed category, whether the naming of the categories resonated with them, and if they might

¹ For example, we conducted initial keyword searches in top management journals using the terms “generation”, “transmission”, “inheritance” (and related variations). However, we noted that the resulting corpus of 989 articles was substantially limited in terms of relevance (many resulting articles were on unrelated topics) and in terms of publication outlets—necessitating a more rigorously inductive and inclusive analysis from diverse outlets.

suggest additional foundational or particularly significant works that should be included in our review.

Accordingly, we refined our initial categorization by merging some communities and renaming others to better reflect their focus. For example, as suggested by one of the experts, we merged a preliminary category ‘generational identity’ (which we determined to be a variant of other research communities) into categories of ‘generational relations,’ ‘institutionalization,’ and ‘legacy.’ These interactions also allowed us to identify “exemplars” (Davis & DeWitt, 2021) and classical, paradigmatic work within each community. Based on these interviews, we conducted further exploratory analysis, which enabled us to consolidate our preliminary set of 15 communities into *nine core research communities*: (1) Institutionalization, (2) Imprinting, (3) Tradition, (4) Legacy, (5) Organizational socialization, (6) Intergenerational social position, (7) Succession, (8) Transgenerational entrepreneurship, and (9) Generational relations.

We settled on these nine research communities because they allowed us to highlight much of the diversity of assumptions and research approaches taken to studying intergenerational transmission while also providing clear definitional distinctions. Table 1 provides an overview of the prevailing conceptualizations of intergenerational transmission across each of the nine research communities. Helpfully, even though each of these research communities advances a conceptually distinct approach to the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission, they also share many overlaps. The overlaps enabled us to offer a general definition of intergenerational transmission as *the process through which organizations and other social systems reproduce and reconstitute themselves across generations*.

**Table 1: Conceptualizations Of Intergenerational Transmission
Across Nine Research Communities**

Research communities	Conceptualizations of intergenerational transmission
Institutionalization	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as a process through which practices, meanings, and social arrangements become objectified, naturalized, and reproduced across generations as institutional facts.
Imprinting	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as a process whereby characteristics that are “stamped in” during “sensitive periods” endure over time.
Tradition	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as a process through which past practices obtain added meaning when they are communicated across a generational chain.
Legacy	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as a conscious process of perpetuating the influence of legators (i.e., legacy senders) to legatees (i.e., legacy receivers).
Organizational socialization	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as a process of bringing new cohorts into an existing social and cultural system within an organization.
Intergenerational social position	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as the way in which social positions are transmitted across generational cohorts within a society and how actors within a generation are able to improve their social position.
Succession	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as a process involving transfers of power, position, or ownership within cohorts in the upper echelons of an organization.
Transgenerational Entrepreneurship	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as a process of fostering entrepreneurial mindset and behaviors within a social group (e.g., a family or ecosystem) across generations.
Generational relations	Intergenerational transmission here is conceptualized as a process whereby members of different generations work to bridge generational gaps.
General definition	Intergenerational transmission is the process through which organizations and other social systems reproduce and reconstitute themselves across generations.

We now summarize each of these nine research communities in turn, elaborating their key similarities and differences and providing illustrative examples.

Institutionalization. In the institutionalization research community, intergenerational transmission refers to how practices, meanings, and social arrangements become objectified, naturalized, and reproduced across generations as institutional facts (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It involves intergenerational dynamics through which people carry forward cultural practices, values, and rules through habitual enactment and taken-for-granted assumptions.

Generations transmit culture by acting out established routines, reinforcing shared identities, and reproducing norms that feel natural rather than intentional (e.g., Zucker, 1977). Scholars in this stream show how values, ties, and identities endure as individuals learn and repeat existing cultural patterns within shifting social contexts (e.g., Calvillo, 2019; Phillips, 2005), allowing cultural systems to survive organizational change, demographic turnover, and structural shifts (Harrison & Carroll, 1991). For example, Ocasio (2023) argues that institutionalization develops across multiple, interconnected levels, ranging from everyday practices within organizations to broader community, field, and societal contexts.

Imprinting. In imprinting research, intergenerational transmission emerges when formative periods stamp enduring characteristics onto actors and organizations (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). Stinchcombe (1965) noted that organizations carry lasting influences from their founding context across generations. Imprinting research originated as “structural imprinting”, where founding conditions shape enduring organizational forms. Some of the more recent work on imprinting has shifted toward “founder imprinting” (e.g., Becker, 2025), emphasizing the persistence of founder’s values in organizations. In imprinting research, generations transmit structures, routines, and cognitive frames from early environments onto later cohorts who unconsciously reproduce and reinforce them. For example, Ellis et al. (2017) show that environmental conditions at the time of founding imprint values, norms, and behavioral orientations that persist across organizational generations, as these environment-based imprints are inherited and reproduced through lineage-based transmission long after the original conditions have changed. Similarly, Mathias, Williams & Smith (2015) show that environmental conditions and experiences during sensitive periods imprint enduring cognitive schemas and mindsets that

guide entrepreneurial decision making over time, shaping how individuals recognize, evaluate, and pursue opportunities even as contexts change.

Tradition. In the research on tradition, intergenerational transmission represents a process through which past practices obtain added meaning when they are communicated across a generational chain (e.g., Shils, 1981). Research on tradition differentiates between *what* gets transmitted (sometimes referred to as *traditum*) and how such intergenerational transmission takes place (sometimes referred to as *tradere*) (Suddaby & Jaskiewicz, 2020). Generations carry forward customs, symbols, and narratives, granting them renewed meaning through continued practice. Scholars, thus, show how custodians maintain, protect, and sometimes adapt traditions across time and contexts (Cattani et al., 2025; Dacin, Dacin & Kent, 2019; Sasaki et al., 2020), treating tradition as active stewardship rather than passive inheritance. For example, Mathias, Solomon, & Hutto (2024) show that long-standing traditions encourage performers to act as “custodians” who pass practices to the next generation, fostering cooperation, while innovation-oriented mindsets encourage competition.

Legacy. Scholars studying legacy define intergenerational transmission as a process of perpetuating the influence of prior generation legators (i.e., legacy senders) to subsequent generation legatees (i.e., legacy receivers). Such research, thus, emphasizes transmission from a given (often conscious) point of origin. Generational cohorts may occur within a family (e.g., “family legacies”) (see Radu-Lefebvre, Davis & Gartner, 2024), within an organization (e.g., “founder legacies”) (see Bednar and Brown, 2024), or within a society (e.g., “colonial legacies”) (see Decker, Estrin & Mickiewicz, 2020). Research on legacy assumes that the world tends toward entropy and focuses on the processes through which past actors are carried forward to influence present social systems (Foroughi, Casey & Coman, 2025; Suddaby, 2016).

Organizational socialization. In organizational socialization research, scholars understand intergenerational transmission as a process of bringing new cohorts into an existing social and cultural system within an organization (e.g., Van Maanen and Schein, 1977). It involves how newcomers are integrated into an organization's existing cultural or relational system (e.g., Cable *et al.*, 2013). In this context, the idea of 'generations' is usually implicit and is not tied to age, but rather to the point at which individuals join the organization (e.g., Gilmore & Harding, 2022). Organizational socialization can be seen in how newcomers learn and enact organizational values through stories about others in the organization. For example, Martin (2016) shows that narratives about employees' moral behavior shape whether new hires adopt helping behaviors or engage in deviance.

Intergenerational social position. Work on intergenerational social position focuses on the ways in which social positions (including capital and status) are transmitted across generational cohorts within a society and how actors within a generation are able to improve their social position. In this way, intergenerational social position studies the patterned reproduction of advantage and disadvantage across generations, wherein social positions (such as status, poverty, class, inequality, bias, etc.) are understood as outcomes that may be shaped by intergenerationally transmitted structures. Families and institutions accumulate and deploy economic, social, and cultural capital to maintain or improve social position over time (Bourdieu, 1990). This community also shows how actors inherit traumas, burdens or inequalities through conflict, misconduct, or stigma across generations. For example, studies of first-generation and lower-class students show how educational and professional pathways can involve both identity threat and value adjustment as individuals navigate institutions shaped by more privileged social groups (Enoch, 1989; Gray *et al.*, 2018).

Succession. In succession research, intergenerational transmission refers to a planned and relational handoff of authority, roles, and control, typically focusing on the upper echelons of an organization. Research on succession in corporations has focused on governance, insider–outsider origins, and performance implications of CEO transitions (e.g., Berns & Klarner, 2017; Joshi, Hambrick & Kang, 2021). For example, Hambrick and Lee (2025) focus on generativity and succession in top management teams. Succession in family firms has focused, for example, on the role of intra-family generational dynamics and their role in the governance of family firms (e.g., Long & Chrisman, 2014; Miller, Steier, & Le-Breton Miller, 2003; Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2000).

Transgenerational entrepreneurship. Work on transgenerational entrepreneurship views intergenerational transmission as building entrepreneurial capacity and orientation across generations, by, for example, fostering entrepreneurial mindset and behaviors within a social group (e.g., a family or ecosystem). Some mechanisms influencing the generational transmission of entrepreneurial action are relational; for example, the study by Mishkin (2021) shows the sibling and gender dynamics in transgenerational entrepreneurship. Other mechanisms are more cultural, as shown by Eze et al. (2021), exploring the role of religion and tradition in transgenerational entrepreneurship. Families and communities transfer skills, values, networks, and resources that encourage entrepreneurial behavior over time (Habbershon, Nordqvist, & Zellweger, 2010; Jaskiewicz, Combs & Rau, 2015). Scholars in this stream emphasize how generations cultivate and expand entrepreneurial activity, often beyond the original venture (De Groot et al., 2022).

Generational relations. In the generational relations literature, intergenerational transmission involves active interaction between members of different generations to bridge generational gaps (e.g., Mannheim, 1952). Transmission occurs as generations exchange experiences, negotiate meaning, and recognize distinct historical and technological contexts.

Scholars in this community study intergenerational conflict and/or how to foster mutual respect and collaborative engagement as generations co-construct shared understandings (e.g., Joshi, Dencker, Franz & Martocchio, 2010). For example, McElroy & Morrow (2010) show that employees from different generations reacted differently to a redesigned office environment, with younger and older cohorts perceiving workspace constraints and distractions in distinct ways. Montgomery, Wolske & Lyon (2021) similarly explain how millennials' shared experiences lead to distinct generational practices (in this case, driving behaviors influencing the automobile industry), demonstrating how generational cohorts can act as collective agents that shape organizational fields.

Stage 2: Ensuring Comprehensiveness

Having identified and defined the nine relevant research communities, we then worked to generate a comprehensive corpus of works sufficient for an analysis of intergenerational transmission in management and organization studies writ large. We conducted keyword searches using the terms “generation”, “transmission”, “inheritance” (and related variations) as well as with keywords associated with the specific research communities that we had identified (e.g., “socialization,” “succession,” “tradition,” “legacy,” etc.) across three databases: Web of Science (305 works), Scopus (408 works), and Business Source Ultimate (119 works). After removing duplicates across these three databases (as well as from the initial 989 articles from Stage 1, footnote 1), this resulted in 1,632 works from diverse outlets in the fields of management and organization studies, sociology, and other related fields. We found (based on an analysis of abstracts and/or introductions) that many of these works used our terms to refer to unrelated phenomena, such as “genetic inheritance”, “generation of ideas”, and “transmission of electricity.”

After excluding such articles, we were left with a corpus of 271 works that focused specifically on intergenerational transmission.

Finally, to ensure that our literature review was as comprehensive as possible, we also analyzed the citation patterns for foundational works for each of the research communities identified (see Stage 1 above). We were, thereby, able to add 192 additional works (including books, book chapters, dissertations, etc.) that did not appear in any of the database keyword searches. We considered these additional works to be important because they reflect our observation that processes of intergenerational transmission per se are often implicit in much of the relevant research in management and organization studies (such that relevant works may not always appear in keyword searches). In this way, by triangulating between keyword searches, interviewing the experts, and analyses of citation patterns, we were able to ensure greater comprehensiveness of our review, resulting in a final corpus of 463 works.

Stage 3: Historical analysis

As co-authors we divided and reviewed all 463 works, conducting a focused reading of the full papers and constant comparative analysis (e.g., Glaser, 1965) to examine assumptions regarding how processes of transmission unfold across generations. While management and organization scholars have long been concerned with the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission, research on this topic has grown exponentially within the past few years (see Appendix B). Given this context, our intellectual history analysis enabled us to observe how research on intergenerational transmission processes has been consolidated over time into a division of labor wherein different research communities come to adopt foundational assumptions about the nature and ontology of generations and intergenerational transmission.

Following Kuhn's (1997) work on the evolution of scientific disciplines (in which "paradigms" emerge based on foundational works that enable subsequent confirmatory analysis that he labeled "normal science"), we identified research communities in terms of their relative stage in the paradigm formation process. This meant that some long-standing research communities had clear foundational works, while other more recent research communities did not. We observed that some research communities—such as "Succession," "Legacy," "Tradition," and "Transgenerational entrepreneurship"—were less paradigmatic—perhaps due to the emergent consolidation of these bodies of work. Whereas others such as "Imprinting," "Institutionalization," "Organizational socialization," "Generational relations," and "Intergenerational social position," were more paradigmatic. This does not imply, however, that established paradigms are losing their relevance or vitality or that new paradigms emerge without reference to earlier foundational works. For example, research on "imprinting" relies heavily on early ideas developed by Stinchcombe in the 1960s; however, much of the research dedicated specifically to imprinting as a mechanism of intergenerational transmission has been conducted more recently. In contrast, much of the contemporary research focusing on the topic of tradition in organizations has drawn on broader works of social theory (e.g., Shils, 1981; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012) in a more recent and gradual move toward Kuhn's notion of paradigm. Appendices B and C depict the growth and consolidation of research on intergenerational transmission into research communities at differing phases of the paradigm formation process.

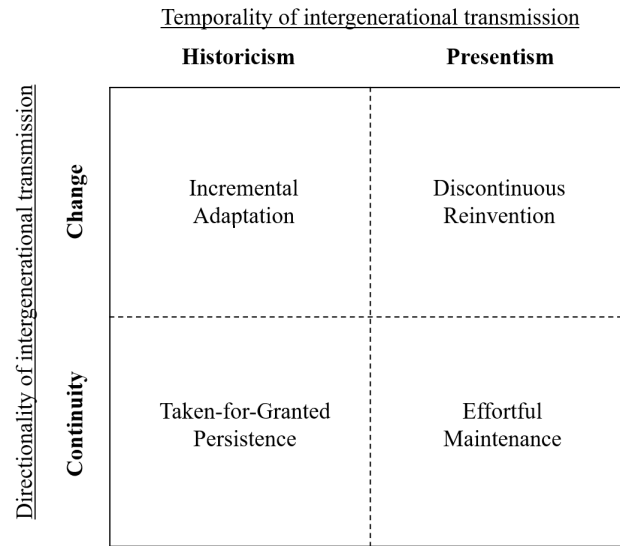
We additionally observed that the paradigm formation process resulted in an ontological division of labor among research communities. This division of labor involves a tendency for research communities to provide different answers to ontological questions regarding the process of intergenerational transmission. For example, research communities tend to differ as to whether

intergenerational transmission is a gradual, accretive process that occurs over periods of historical time or whether it is a more protean process that occurs in the ongoing present. Moreover, research communities tend to have different assumptions about whether intergenerational transmission will result in either continuity or change. Accordingly, we conducted a systematic thematic analysis of all 463 articles to explore these observations.

Stage 4: Thematic analysis

The result of our thematic analysis is a novel typology that we developed to explain variability in underlying, latent conceptualizations of intergenerational transmission in the literature in terms of *temporality* and *directionality*. Regarding temporality, we focused on when intergenerational transmission is an incremental, accretive historical process as opposed to a process that is managed by organizations in the present; we labeled these two aspects as ‘historicism’ and ‘presentism’. Regarding directionality, we sought to understand when intergenerational transmission would result in ‘continuity’ vs. ‘change’ in organizations and other social systems. We thus coded each study along these dimensions of temporality (i.e., historicism vs. presentism) and directionality (i.e., continuity vs. change), ensuring rigor by coding separately and then comparing emerging insights until reaching consensus (George & Cronin, 2024).

Figure 1: Four Processes of Intergenerational Transmission



Temporality. The first dimension of this typology (*temporality*) draws a distinction between “historicism” and “presentism” (e.g., Koselleck, 2004; Novick, 1988) which are labels that we took from debates in historical theory where these terms are used to explain two different ontologies of time in historical research. In such debates “historicism” refers to a school of historical research wherein the aspiration of the historian is to represent the past “as it really happened” (e.g., Von Ranke, 2023). By contrast, “presentism” refers to a school of historical research wherein the aspiration of the historian is to construct a narrative that is compelling and useful in the present (e.g., Hartog, 2015). In other words, historicists see history as the objective passage of time from one era to another, whereas presentists see history as a more malleable narrative about the past that is told in the present.

In our usage, we extend this distinction between historicism and presentism to refer to different latent conceptualizations of the temporality of intergenerational transmission in both research and practice. Historicism, on the one hand, is a construal of time as incremental, accretive, or otherwise unfolding over the objective, exogenous passage of historical time (e.g., Von Ranke,

2023). Presentism, on the other hand, is understood to be a construal of time as a process that gives ontological primacy to events that occur in the ongoing present—in which historical time is continuously constructed and reconstructed by actors in the ongoing present (e.g., Hartog, 2015).

Historicism, thus, captures the idea that social reality is embedded in evolving historical contexts that accumulate across generations (e.g., Berger and Luckmann’s [1966] concept of “sedimentation” across generations or Boyd and Richerson’s [2005] concept of cultural inheritance as an evolutionary process that unfolds across generations). In our analysis, the research communities of institutionalization, imprinting, intergenerational social position, and succession tend to adopt historicist assumptions about the temporality of intergenerational transmission (See Appendix D for our detailed analysis and coding of assumptions across research communities.)

In contrast, presentism emphasizes how reality is continuously constructed and reconstructed in the ongoing present (e.g., Zerubavel’s [2003] and Halbwachs’ [1950] concept of “collective memory”). In our analysis, research communities of generational relations, legacy, organizational socialization, tradition, and transgenerational entrepreneurship tend to adopt presentist assumptions about the temporality of intergenerational transmission. Indeed, our analysis suggests that presentism seems to be somewhat on the rise in recent decades of intergenerational transmission research. Established research communities, such as succession, have gradually become more presentist in orientation. And relatively new research communities, such as transgenerational entrepreneurship, tradition, legacy, and generational relations, tend to adopt increasingly presentist perspectives over time. (See Appendix E for additional detailed analysis of this historical evolution of assumptions regarding temporality in research communities.²)

² Specifically, our analysis in Appendices E and F clarifies how processes of intergenerational transmission are conceptualized over time (e.g., Glynn & D’Aunno, 2023). This step was conducted in R software, with our coded

Directionality. The second dimension of the typology focuses on directionality. By *directionality*, we refer to the direction in which reproduction unfolds across generations. We find the metaphor of direction to be suitable for describing intergenerational transmission processes because it captures the ways in which organizations and other social systems are not only static entities but also travel through time in linear or non-linear ways. As a metaphor of organizational trajectories of continuity and change through time, directionality thus evokes a sense of reproduction as an enduring accomplishment, which can apply to either historicist or presentist construals of temporality.

Directionality seeks to differentiate between processes of intergenerational transmission that would result in ‘continuity’ vs. ‘change’ in organizations and other social systems. Continuity describes how the focal organization or institution is perpetuated and maintained across generations (e.g., Shils’ [1981] work on the preservation of tradition or Zucker’s [1977] observations about the inheritance dynamics of cultural persistence). In our analysis, research communities of institutionalization, imprinting, legacy, organizational socialization, and tradition tend to focus on processes of intergenerational continuity (see Appendix D). Change describes how the focal organization or institution is altered when it is transmitted to new generations (e.g., Mannheim’s [1952] work on generational gaps or Miller and colleagues’ [2003] work on the evolutionary dynamics of intergenerational succession in family businesses). In our analysis, research communities of generational relations, intergenerational social position, succession, and transgenerational entrepreneurship tend to focus on processes of intergenerational change. It is worth noting that the emphasis on change in processes of intergenerational transmission is

dataset—comprising the analyzed 463 papers—imported for analysis to identify temporal patterns in the data. This step allowed us to reveal which perspectives on intergenerational transmission gained prominence, which declined, and how new approaches emerged in response to shifting theoretical, social, and historical contexts.

relatively new. Most of the research emphasizing change has been conducted within the past two decades. (See Appendix F for additional details on our historical analysis of continuity and change over time in research communities.)

We coded each study along these dimensions, ensuring rigor by coding separately and then comparing emerging insights until reaching consensus (George & Cronin, 2024). Our core insight in this respect is that, across these two dimensions, management and organization research has implicitly theorized four latent processes³ of intergenerational transmission. These processes can be understood as four distinct ways in which organizational life transcends the experience, tenure, and temporal duration of particular individuals, as follows: (1) *Taken-for-granted persistence* (Historicism + Continuity): referring to intergenerational transmission as an inertial process of continuity over time; (2) *Effortful maintenance* (Presentism + Continuity): referring to intergenerational transmission as a process of active preservation that occurs in the ongoing present. (3) *Incremental adaptation* (Historicism + Change): referring to intergenerational transmission as a process of change in the form of a continuous sequence that unfolds across generations. And (4) *Discontinuous reinvention* (Presentism + Change): referring to intergenerational transmission as an active process of alteration that occurs in the present. (See Table 2 and Appendix D for additional comparison and elaboration of these four processes.) We now explain each of these four processes in turn, focusing on the research communities most squarely dedicated to studying each.

³ Note that the four latent processes that we develop are “ideal types” (Swedberg, 2018) and are, thus, meant to be indicative rather than exhaustive. For example, while the majority of works we reviewed primarily adopted one of these four latent conceptualizations, we noted that some works resisted such classification due to having assumptions that aligned with *both* historicism *and* presentism or *both* continuity *and* change.

Table 2 – Conceptual Table of Four Latent Processes of Intergenerational Transmission

Category	Taken-for-granted persistence	Effortful maintenance	Incremental adaptation	Discontinuous reinvention
Definition	Intergenerational transmission as an inertial process of continuity over time	Intergenerational transmission as a process of active preservation that occurs in the ongoing present	Intergenerational transmission as a process of change in the form of a continuous sequence that unfolds across generations	Intergenerational transmission as an active process of alteration that occurs in the present
Temporality	<i>Historicism:</i> Social reality as embedded in evolving historical contexts	<i>Presentism:</i> Social reality as continuously constructed and reconstructed in the ongoing present	<i>Historicism:</i> Social reality as embedded in evolving historical contexts	<i>Presentism:</i> Social reality as continuously constructed and reconstructed in the ongoing present
Directionality	<i>Continuity:</i> The maintenance of the focal entity across generations	<i>Continuity:</i> The maintenance of the focal entity across generations	<i>Change:</i> The alteration of the focal entity across generations	<i>Change:</i> The alteration of the focal entity across generations
Associated research communities⁴	Institutionalization; Imprinting	Organizational socialization; Legacy; Tradition	Intergenerational social position; Succession	Generational relations; Transgenerational entrepreneurship
Mechanisms	Diminishing awareness, or naturalization of transmitted practices as they become cognitively embedded over generations	Laborious, intentional work to curate, transmit, and reinterpret practices across generations	Making evolutionary, step-by-step adjustments (e.g., through variation, selection, and retention) to inherited practices across generations	Conscious, punctuated, and reconstitutive efforts to depart from inherited practices across generations
Outcomes	Taken-for-granted persistence stabilizes practices and enhances legitimacy across generations, but may also produce inertia by perpetuating outdated, ineffective, or harmful patterns.	Effortful maintenance preserves valued traditions and supports coherence, alignment, and knowledge transfer, but may concentrate interpretive authority and inhibit transformative change.	Incremental adaptation enables gradual renewal and continued relevance through stepwise adjustments, but may frustrate actors seeking more immediate or radical transformation.	Discontinuous reinvention enhances adaptability through decisive breaks from inherited practices, but may undermine legitimacy, institutional memory, and cohesion by creating instability.
Exemplary papers	Barley & Tolbert (1997); Berger & Luckmann (1966); Frake & Harmon (2024); Greve & Rao (2012); Johnson (2007); Marquis & Tilcsik (2013); Perkmann & Spicer (2014); Phillips (2005); Zucker (1977)	Ashforth (2025); Sweet et al., (2023); Bednar & Brown (2024); Cancellieri, Cattani & Ferriani (2022); Colquitt et al. (2023); Dacin et al. (2019); Israelsen & Suddaby (2025); Radu-Lefebvre, Davis & Gartner (2024)	Gomez-Mejia et al. (2011); Kish-Gephart et al. (2023); Lumpkin & Brigham (2011); Miller, Steier & Le-Breton Miller (2003); Sasaki & Baba, (2024); Wu et al. (2024); Wyrwich (2013)	Jaskiewicz, Combs & Rau (2015); Joshi, Dencker, Franz & Martocchio (2010); Lippmann & Aldrich (2016); Lubinski & Gartner (2023); Noh, Lyle & Do (2025); Zellweger, Nason & Nordqvist (2012)

⁴ Note that the associated research communities do not perfectly fit into the four categories, but rather each community tends to emphasize one over the others as detailed in Appendix D.

FOUR PROCESSES OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

Historicism + Continuity = Taken-for-Granted Persistence

A friend preparing to cook a ham cut off the ends before placing it in the oven. When I asked why they cut the ends off, they replied that their parents had always done so. We asked the parents who explained that they too had followed this cooking ritual from the previous generation. Finally, when we asked the grandparents the explanation emerged: the ham had originally been cut only because the oven available at the time was too small to hold it whole (Adapted from Ziglar, 1977).

As this wry anecdote about intergenerational cooking practices illustrates, many social forces are hidden even to their own participants. Taken-for-granted persistence describes a mode of sociotemporal transcendence in which organizational life extends beyond individuals through the sedimentation of practices, meanings, and structures that come to appear natural, inevitable, and, therefore, scarcely visible. Some organizational research describes how certain practices gain stability and acceptance not because their members approve of them, per se, but because they perceive them to be natural, necessary, and inevitable. In some cases, such taken-for-granted practices become so deeply ingrained that they become almost invisible, such that alternatives are hard to imagine.

Max Weber (1968) famously observed that one very effective way of establishing legitimate authority is through customs that are seen as “valid of yore” (p. 227). Anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski (1926) similarly noted that narratives that contain the implicit, ontological givens of a community are sanctioned through intergenerationally transmitted practices that give them binding force, leading them to be experienced as natural, unquestionable, and socially necessary. Berger and Luckmann (1966; see also Zucker, 1977) theorized that hidden forces at play in the social world that arise when practices are transmitted from one generation to the next—and in the process of socialization are received as if they were objective truths. Meyer and Rowan

(1977) extended such observations to describe “rational myths” in organizations that operate as taken-for-granted rules that provide a sense of “the way things are done.”

Research communities that tend to study taken-for-granted persistence. The research communities of *institutionalization* and *imprinting* tend to assume that intergenerational transmission occurs through processes of taken-for-granted persistence. These research communities achieved internal coherence through foundational works that were based heavily on historicist assumptions of unconscious or mimetic reproduction (e.g., Zucker, 1977; Stinchcombe, 1965). For example, of the articles that we identified as belonging to the institutionalization and imprinting research communities, we coded the vast majority as adopting historicist temporal assumptions. (See Appendix D for a full overview of our coding of research communities by assumptions about the temporality and directionality of intergenerational transmission.) In some respects, assumptions of taken-for-granted persistence are necessary for the internal coherence of these research communities. The core logic of imprinting (as a historical process of “stamping in”) assumes that the past is ontologically real and accumulative, such that past practices adhere to institutions (following the logic of historicism as a theory of temporality). Similarly, the concept of institutionalization (as a temporally extended process) is challenging to conceptualize and study without similar historicist assumptions. For example, it is difficult to conceptualize imprinting and institutionalization under presentist assumptions that hold that only the ongoing present is ontologically real. In this sense, taken-for-granted persistence relies heavily on a historicist view of temporality to identify mechanisms that explain inertial persistence over the exogenous, objective passage of historical time.

Mechanisms of taken for granted persistence. The core challenge for sociotemporal transcendence addressed by taken-for-granted persistence is how social systems endure beyond

individual actors without requiring actors to consciously recognize or preserve what they reproduce. This challenge is addressed through sedimentation and naturalization, as transmitted practices become embedded over time and gradually recede from awareness. Continuity, in taken-for-granted persistence, reflects the accumulation, lock-in, or sedimentation of real events across generations. The key mechanism here is taken-for-grantedness, through which awareness of transmitted practices diminishes as they become embedded over time. The result is that actors are unwittingly bound to the past, unable to conceive of alternative possibilities. For example, Phillips (2005) examines how genealogical persistence in Silicon Valley law firms has contributed to gender inequality over successive generations of organization members. In family businesses, the intergenerational transmission of values and identities shapes successors well before formal succession (García-Álvarez & López-Sintas, 2008; Shanine et al., 2023; Vallejo, 2008, 2011; Vallejo-Martos, 2016). And family-supporting cultural frameworks such as religion (Discua Cruz & Hamilton, 2025), kinship systems (Song, Campbell & Lee, 2015), and political embeddedness (Duran, Ortiz & Carney, 2024) act as background institutions that stabilize legitimacy and cohesion of a family business. In such ways, social systems can sometimes thrive across multiple generations through deeply internalized patterns of value transmission and cultural reproduction that remain unquestioned yet shape intergenerational outcomes.

Research on imprinting and institutionalization documents similar processes of intergenerational sedimentation. Founder imprints become naturalized over generations as templates for culture, structures, and logics (Ahn & Greve, 2025; Johnson, 2007; Mathias, Williams & Smith, 2015; Schein, 1983). Institutionalized rules and routines reinforce generational uniformity and resistance to change (Zucker, 1977), creating inertial succession patterns (Ocasio, 1999) and control systems transmitted more at the output-rule level than the behavior level (Ouchi,

1978). These same processes can also transmit maladaptive legacies, such as misconduct normalized in subcultures and copied downward across generations (Frake & Harmon, 2024; Vermeulen, 2018). Institutions are reproduced through structuration across levels (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Ocasio, 2023) and anchored in enduring logics (Scott, 1987; Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2015; Weik, 2015). Organizational genealogies silently reproduce group cultures and inequalities (Marquis, 2003; Phillips, 2005). Neighborhoods, fields, and nations transmit contexts and constraints through processes of imprinting (Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006; Klüppel, Pierce & Snyder, 2018; Qiao & Xia, 2025; Sharkey, 2008).

Outcomes of taken for granted persistence. Taken-for-granted persistence fosters intergenerational stability by perpetuating deeply embedded practices within organizations and institutions. This habitual transmission can enhance legitimacy and reduce generational friction by normalizing established routines and cultural traditions across generations. However, as Meyer and Rowan (1977) observe, taken-for-grantedness can preserve the superficial appearance of continuity while the system itself stops reproducing its core. Paradoxically, such automatic continuity can generate inertia, locking social systems into outdated (Ocasio, 1999; Zucker, 1977) or even harmful (Frake & Harmon, 2024; Phillips, 2005) patterns. Adaptive practices that are stabilized in one era can become misfits in their environments at later points in time (e.g., Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006; Sharkey, 2008). Without critical reflection, organizations and communities alike risk perpetuating practices that are ineffective or detrimental to organizational persistence and survival (Weber, 1968). And, while cognitive invisibility is often theorized as an extremely powerful form of social control (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Malinowski, 1926), it also exposes a system to structural weaknesses across generations that can be difficult to address once they become visible and contestable to participants (e.g., Barley & Tolbert, 1997).

Notably, however, some social systems transition from processes of taken-for-granted persistence to more active processes of effortful maintenance. Such a shift requires an ability to recognize when inertial forces are insufficient to preserve a system and to, then, reconfigure an organization's traditions and heritage through the process of effortful maintenance of historical continuity with past generations. Sasaki and colleagues (2024) demonstrate how this shift from taken-for-granted persistence to effortful maintenance occurs in practice. They studied how middle managers in a 200-year-old Japanese craft firm were able to mobilize support for new understandings of history, socialize members into a more active stance vis-à-vis the traditions and, thereby, coalesce active support for processes of intergenerational transmission.

Presentism + Continuity = Effortful Maintenance

Ise Jingū (a sacred Shinto shrine) is never allowed to grow old. The shrines are rebuilt every twenty years. Cypress trees are harvested and prepared decades in advance. Apprentices learn from master craftsmen the precise joinery methods needed to raise the new halls. Farmers, craftsmen and women, local citizens, and priests and priestesses each contribute their part. More than thirty ceremonies mark the process of never-ending rebuilding. As the priests consecrate the structure, the workers shout 'A building for a thousand years! Ten thousand years! A million years and forever!' This cycle embodies the principle of Tokowaka, a Japanese notion that continuity is achieved through constant renewal rather than preservation. So far the shrine has endured for over 1,300 years because each generation undertakes demanding work, ensuring that both the structures and the skills to build them live on. (e.g., Jingushicho, 2025)

As the above anecdote about a Shinto shrine illustrates, a completely different set of considerations arises when the process of intergenerational transmission shifts from a seemingly inevitable, natural process to something that must be actively and effortfully preserved. When such a process ceases to be inertial and becomes a quest to consciously carry forward practices that otherwise might be lost to new generations, intergenerational transmission shifts from a passive reception of the world to an active effort made by descendants as torch bearers, keeping the ancestral flame alive in a darkening world. Effortful maintenance, thus, describes a mode of sociotemporal transcendence in which organizational life is carried beyond individual lifetimes

through present-day acts of preservation, narration, ritualization, teaching, and custodianship. Maurice Halbwachs (1950) distinguished between “habitual memory” (a taken-for-granted process of collective recollection) and “commemorative memory” (an effortful form of social memory requiring conscious effort to preserve the past). Edward Shils (1958) extended this insight to argue that when traditions no longer reproduce themselves automatically, they can survive only through deliberate veneration and active transmission. In this vein, Shils (1981) considers generations to be more conscious agents of the transmission process compared to processes of taken-for-granted persistence.

Studies within this perspective embrace a presentist view of intergenerational transmission, emphasizing how practices are continuously reinterpreted and reconstructed in the ongoing present. This reinterpretation generates a dynamic form of continuity, where the meaning of past events is actively shaped by present needs and concerns. An example of this is Dacin and colleagues’ (2019) notion of tradition in organizations as custodianship, where traditions are deliberately carried forward and preserved in contemporary contexts. Another example is Ashforth’s (2025) study on the normalization of newcomers into extraordinary work settings through organizational socialization.

Research communities that tend to study effortful maintenance. Research communities dedicated to studying *tradition*, *legacy*, and *organizational socialization* tend to adopt a perspective of intergenerational transmission as effortful maintenance. These communities typically share a common conceptualization of transmission as a conscious process in which past practices are actively maintained and curated, although the carriers of such historical consciousness tend to differ. For example, in the context of legacy, it is typically carried by the present legatees, whereas in the context of organizational socialization, it is typically carried by

the mentors and managers who guide newcomers. In our analysis, about half of articles that we coded as part of the legacy research community adopted purely presentist assumptions about temporality, whereas others of these articles combined historicist and presentist assumptions. By comparison, organizational socialization and tradition research tend even more strongly toward assumptions of effortful maintenance (we coded the vast majority of organizational socialization and tradition articles in our corpus as presentist; see Appendix D for a full overview of our coding).

Mechanisms of effortful maintenance. The core challenge for sociotemporal transcendence addressed by effortful maintenance is how social systems prevent valued meanings, relationships, and practices from fading when automatic reproduction weakens. This challenge is addressed through organized custodial work, including narration, ritualization, teaching, and reinterpretation, that makes inherited practices meaningful and transmissible for successors. These mechanisms are often mobilized when inherited traditions, identities, or memories are perceived as vulnerable to erosion, forgetting, or displacement. UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage program, for example, was created in 2003 to safeguard and legitimate endangered practices (Hafstein, 2018). Some organization scholarship similarly addresses how communities sustain continuity by deliberately tending to traditions, identities, and memories. Rituals, domestic traditions, and craft imaginaries institutionalize cultural patterns (Dacin, Munir & Tracey, 2010; Lockwood & Glynn, 2016; Bell, Dacin & Toraldo, 2021), and stewardship of painful memories transforms wounds into resilience (Tcholakian et al., 2023; Crawford et al., 2022). Custodianship practices in Balinese, Chinese, and Japanese craft traditions show how heritage is preserved through spaces, artifacts, and embodied work (Putra, 2021; Song et al., 2019; Holt & Yamauchi, 2023). Similarly, legacy-related efforts in organizations manifest in renewed and resilient organizational identities, actively managed through rituals, heritage branding, and collaborative

traditions (Colquitt et al., 2023; Trice & Beyer, 1984; Di Domenico & Phillips, 2009; Hibbert & Huxham, 2010).

Effortful maintenance, as a process for intergenerational transmission, assumes that endurance rests less on inertia than on intentional work to curate, transmit, and reinterpret the past as a living foundation for the future. In this way, the long-term prosperity of any organization and/or institution may depend less on an automatic process of transmission and inheritance than on ongoing, labor-intensive practices of stabilization and renewal.⁵

Outcomes of Effortful maintenance. Effortful maintenance supports coherence, knowledge transfer, and strategic alignment by actively preserving and reinterpreting valued traditions across generations. Yet this same custodial work can also concentrate interpretive authority among recognized custodians and inhibit more transformative forms of change. Moreover, for organization members, effortful maintenance frequently brings about cohesion represented in calibrated trust, emotional alignment, and a sense of belonging, which support coordination and cooperation (Hartmann & Meier, 2023). However, these same socialization processes can become destructive when cohesion is pursued through exclusionary or harmful practices such as hazing (Sweet et al., 2023). More broadly, effortful maintenance positions legacy as both an asset and a constraint: it can strengthen continuity, purpose, and commitment by anchoring present actions in inherited values, while also generating tensions when established traditions limit adaptation (Foroughi et al., 2025). In socialization contexts, new members come to internalize organizational values, develop commitment, and align their self-concepts with the

⁵ Zimmerman (1947) even argued that effortful maintenance across generations in families determines whether other societal institutions—such as schools, churches, the state, the economy, etc.—can function effectively. When families are strong, these institutions reinforce shared values; when families weaken, other institutions tend to compete with one another to fill the gap in socialization, each promoting its own vision of norms and priorities, leading to social fragmentation rather than cohesion.

organization, leading to smoother integration and reduced uncertainty (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Jones, 1986; Sluss et al., 2012).

However, there are also cases in which intergenerational transmission is less a process of continuously reproducing social systems and more a process of changing the very essence of that system. Whether such reinvention will be a process of evolutionary, incremental, and accretive change or of revolution is the question for the remaining two processes of intergenerational transmission—incremental adaptation and discontinuous reinvention. We begin with the former.

Historicism + Change = Incremental Adaptation

Marriage in nineteenth century Europe was often arranged or strongly guided by parents and often revolved around pragmatic considerations such as family wealth and kinship ties. By the early twentieth century, industrialization and urban life had loosened parental control, giving rise to the “companionate marriage,” where affection and partnership mattered alongside duty. Another generation later, in the postwar era, many believed marriage should be based solely on love and personal choice. Each generational shift built on the last as families reinterpreted what marriage meant in changing social and economic contexts (e.g., Coontz, 2006).

As illustrated by the stepwise generational shifts involved in the historical evolution of European marriage customs, intergenerational transmission can also be a process of gradual, generational transformation that we label *incremental adaptation*. Incremental adaptation describes a mode of sociotemporal transcendence in which organizational life endures not by remaining unchanged, but by being gradually reinterpreted and modified across successive generations. Studies adopting this perspective view intergenerational transmission as a driver of change, which, within this historicist view, is seen as an outcome of an accretive, incremental sequence that unfolds through successive, ontologically real events across generations. One exemplar of such scholarship is Miller, Steier, and Le-Breton Miller’s (2003) study of evolutionary processes of succession across sociobiological generations in family businesses. Another example is Griffin and colleagues’ (2017) analysis of the incremental change of gendered workplace

expectations across cohort generations based on evolving depictions of women's work in Disney animations.

Incremental adaptation involves gradual adjustments to inherited practices across generations within organizations and other institutions. In this perspective, present generations are understood as being shaped by the influence of previous generations and as shaping the next generations in a step-by-step manner (Boyd & Richerson, 2005; Schönplflug, 2008). This process facilitates continuous renewal and fosters enhanced strategic relevance—supporting incremental improvements to collective well-being over time. Nevertheless, the paradoxical constraint inherent in incremental adaptation lies in its pace: gradual changes can frustrate individuals and cohorts who demand or require more immediate or radical transformation. This tension may provoke intergenerational conflict, particularly when new generations perceive incremental adaptations as inadequate responses to pressing social or organizational challenges.

Research communities that tend to study incremental adaptation. Research communities devoted to studying *succession* and *intergenerational social position* tend to conceptualize intergenerational transmission as a process of incremental adaptation. In our analysis, the research on succession tends to focus on processes of change (with about half of the articles coded as change and additional articles coded as both change and continuity) that occur gradually over time, following a historicist view of temporality (with the vast majority of articles coded as historicist). Similarly, the research on intergenerational social position also tends to explain processes of change (with about half of articles coded as change and an additional half coded as both change and continuity) while drawing on historicist temporal assumptions (with more than half of the articles coded as historicist and an additional half coded as both historicist and presentist; see Appendix D for a full overview). In this way, while the research on intergenerational social position

and intergenerational succession deal with remarkably different phenomena, they tend to share a common conceptualization of transmission as a process of incremental adaptation, characterized by incremental shifts and transitions.

Mechanisms of incremental adaptation. The core challenge for sociotemporal transcendence addressed by incremental adaptation is how social systems can be carried forward while maintaining the connection to the past. This challenge is addressed through cumulative adjustment, whereby actors modify inherited values, practices, and resources while keeping them recognizable across generations. Studies within the research community of succession, for example, show how in family businesses parents model entrepreneurial behavior (Hoisl, Kongsted, & Mariani, 2023; Vladasel, Lindquist, Sol, & van Praag, 2021), successors reinterpret institutionalized practices during leadership transitions (Chung & Luo, 2008), and households create conditions for entrepreneurship without coercion (Prigge & Klein, 2021; Tessema, Brunninge, & Cestino, 2024). Indigenous entrepreneurship likewise layers innovation onto traditional knowledge (Peredo, Anderson, Galbraith, Honig, & Dana, 2004).

Within the incremental adaptation process, organizations survive by layering gradual changes onto intergenerationally inherited structures; early opportunity sets and cultural patterns can lock firms into evolutionary paths (Molly, Laveren, & Jorissen, 2012; Rowlinson, 1995) or founder identities (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). Reay (2019), for example, theorizes family routines are the core accretive mechanism explaining the next generation's engagement in family firms. Studies within the research community of intergenerational social position discuss the identity work strategies that actors with diverse social identities engage in to gradually advance in workplaces across generations (Belmi, Raz, Neale, & Thomas-Hunt, 2024; Gray, Johnson, Kish-Gephart, & Tilton, 2018). In the incremental adaptation process of transmission, prosperity across

generations is thus understood to rest neither on the laurels of the past nor on the achievements of the present generation, but on the negotiated evolution between them.

Outcomes of incremental adaptation. Incremental adaptation enables gradual renewal and continued relevance through stepwise adjustments to inherited practices, but may frustrate actors seeking more immediate or radical transformation. It can serve as a process for sustaining long-term organizational performance across cohorts of members and other stakeholders. The research community of succession, for example, shows how long-term intention for transgenerational control of the firm (Magrelli, Rondi, De Massis, & Kotlar, 2022) and balanced continuity and change in transgenerational approaches to management (Zellweger, Kellermanns, Chrisman, & Chua, 2012) can lead to long-term wealth creation. Similarly, Sands' (2025) study of the Michelin Guide's entry into New York City illustrates incremental adaptation by showing how an inherited evaluative tradition was gradually adjusted as Michelin selectively embraced and distanced itself from elements of its past to engage a new environment. The capacity to interpret, transmit, and transform knowledge and competencies across generations fosters dynamic capabilities (Shimada, 2011; Suddaby, Coraiola, Harvey & Foster, 2020), and accumulated adaptations help organizations withstand irresponsibility or shocks (Chung, 2009; Vives-Gabriel, Schrempf-Stirling, & Coraiola, 2024).

Incremental adaptation can also preserve wider institutions by layering small shifts onto inherited norms and practices. The evolving meaning of "freedom" in American history illustrates this process, as successive generations added emancipation, suffrage, civil rights, and economic ideals onto earlier definitions, producing both cohesion and recurring challenges (Foner, 1998). In turn, Wyrwich's (2013) study shows how prolonged socialism in Eastern Europe had a multi-generational adversarial impact on the entrepreneurial orientation and opportunity-taking

behaviors of the entrepreneurs in these countries, such that economic development processes took place only incrementally. Incremental adaptation thus holds the potential to balance stability and change, potentially enabling or preventing resilience and competitiveness for organizations seeking enduring performance and survival.

In this way, in the intergenerational incremental adaptation process, change unfolds step by step, wherein accretive systems evolve in ways that keep the past recognizable and accessible in the present (e.g., Boyd & Richerson, 2005). Such incrementalism satisfies the appetite for intergenerational change to a point. However, when constituents feel that the need for change is particularly dire or immediate, incremental adaptation may be the wrong strategy. Social systems sometimes engage in much more revolutionary processes of change, which we label discontinuous reinvention.

Presentism + Change = Discontinuous Reinvention

Ancient Egyptian pharaohs often sought to secure their power by erasing the memory of those who came before them. They chiseled away the names of their predecessors, smashed or reworked their statues, and left their temples to decay or rebuilt them in new forms. By reshaping monuments and suppressing earlier cults, these rulers not only asserted their dominance but also redefined the religious and political order to align divine favor with their own reign (e.g., Assmann, 1995).

As the above anecdote about ancient Egyptian pharaohs illustrates, intergenerational transmission is not always a smooth process and can even involve volatile acts of historical destruction. Despite this, transmission occurs as a revolutionary process of discontinuous reinvention of an organization or social system. Discontinuous reinvention describes a mode of sociotemporal transcendence in which organizational life persists through selective rupture: later generations carry a social system forward by actively redefining what will count as worth transmitting. This perspective assumes that the present generation plays a dominant role in breaking from (and, to a lesser extent, carrying forward) the past. Research adopting these

assumptions tends to conceptualize intergenerational transmission less as a matter of continuity and more about the active construction and reconstruction of meaning in the present. A defining example is Mannheim's (1952) analysis of generational gaps, where generations develop distinct perspectives and collective memories that define their social realities. Mannheim (1952) even argued that generations themselves are engines of upheaval; generations are formed when a generational gap is created, typically due to major societal destabilization (Mannheim, 1952). Discontinuous reinvention involves transforming inherited norms and practices within social systems, explicitly empowering newer generations within organizations and other social entities to break from established norms and practices. This approach can significantly enhance adaptability and resilience, enabling rapid and responsive adjustment to disruptive changes in the external environment. Paradoxically, departures from established norms and practices risk alienating stakeholders deeply invested in continuity, resulting in legitimacy crises and intensified intergenerational conflicts. Furthermore, frequent and drastic reinventions may produce instability, undermining the development of sustained capabilities, institutional memory, and cohesive identities.

Research communities that tend to study discontinuous reinvention. Research communities devoted to studying *generational relations* and *transgenerational entrepreneurship* tend to assume that intergenerational transmission processes are comprised of change processes that occur in the ongoing present. At times, such discontinuous reinvention can involve deep frictions and pronounced generational gaps. In other cases, the discontinuity is more benign. Either way, many of the research articles we analyzed in these research communities adopted both presentist temporal assumptions and sought to explain processes of change. We coded about half of the articles dealing with generational relations as focusing on change (as well as additional

articles focusing on both change and continuity). Generational relations articles also had a strong tendency toward presentist construal of temporality (we coded half of these articles as having presentist assumptions and many additional articles as having both presentist and historicist assumptions). Transgenerational entrepreneurship similarly tends to explain processes of intergenerational change (the vast majority of these articles focused on change) from a predominantly presentist temporal ontology (with more than half coded as presentist plus several others as both presentist and historicist; see Appendix D for a full overview).

Mechanisms of discontinuous reinvention. The core challenge for sociotemporal transcendence addressed by discontinuous reinvention is how social systems preserve a recognizable trajectory when inherited practices, identities, or authority structures no longer provide viable continuity. Studies within the research communities of generational relations and transgenerational entrepreneurship suggest that this is addressed when organizations depart from inherited practices or identities to re-create themselves, with cohort, age, and incumbency shaping interpretations of continuity and rupture (Joshi, Dencker, Franz, & Martocchio, 2010; Joshi, Dencker & Franz, 2011). Indeed, the research community of transgenerational entrepreneurship focuses on how firms can recreate new value in financial, social, and human capital across generations (Diaz-Moriana et al., 2020; Habbershon, Nordqvist, & Zellweger, 2010), while maintaining core values (Ge, De Massis, & Kotlar, 2022). Studies in the domain of generational relations highlight that generations transform culture (Abrams, 1970) and bring the opportunity for social change to occur (Ryder, 1965). Support for the punctuated change often involved in discontinuous reinvention can be secured through innovating inherited knowledge and tacit skills (Rondi et al., 2024), through the skillful use of historical myths, narratives, and socio-cultural

resources in the institutional environment that provide symbolic fuel for revolutionary transformation (e.g., Noh, Lyle, & Do, 2025).

Discontinuous reinvention is also employed when generational cohorts, immigrant groups, or activist collectives destabilize inherited norms and forge new trajectories. Generational cohorts can band together to challenge inherited norms and institutions, as reflected in cohort-based shifts in consumption, mobility, and political participation (Montgomery, Wolske, & Lyon, 2021). Immigrant enclaves illustrate how intergenerational capital and identity can break established patterns to pursue novel entrepreneurial strategies (Fairchild, 2010; Ndofor & Priem, 2011). Social movements likewise ignite radical change by mobilizing generational identities, from Spain's *15M* protests (Schwarz, 2022) to shifting activist repertoires in the women's movement (Whittier, 1997).

Outcomes of discontinuous reinvention. Discontinuous reinvention enhances adaptability and responsiveness by enabling decisive breaks from inherited practices, but may also undermine legitimacy, institutional memory, and cohesion by creating instability. Under certain circumstances, discontinuous reinvention can contribute to long-term organizational performance. The research community of transgenerational entrepreneurship suggests that discontinuous reinvention can support family business longevity, for example, when families deliberately break with inherited practices, redefining their trajectory rather than preserving it. Such ruptures may be triggered by early disruptions, sibling competition, or parental roles that redirect skills and values into new paths (Andric, Hsueh, & Zellweger, 2024; Li & Tong, 2023; Mishkin, 2021; Xu, Chan, Xie, Chen, & Agarwal, 2024). They can also emerge when shifting identities become resources for recasting leadership and ambition (Hytti, Karhunen, & Radu-Lefebvre, 2024). By transforming established legacies and starting afresh, organizations risk destabilization; but they also open space

to build renewed forms of capital, values, and cohesion that can sustain prosperity across generations. Studies in the research community of generational relations put forward how discontinuous reinvention can also operate as a process for the preservation or transformation of wider institutions, depending on how each generation “permit[s]” such change (Ryder, 1965, p. 844). In the discontinuous reinvention process, organizations risk instability by discarding parts of their past, yet such dramatic acts of reinvention can, under select circumstances, enable profound renewal—giving the organization another chance at life.

FUTURE RESEARCH ON INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION: TOWARD A TRANSCENDENCE-BASED VIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE

In this review, we have analyzed various streams of research dedicated to explaining intergenerational transmission in organizations. We have introduced sociotemporal transcendence as an overarching concept that explains how organizations and other social systems reproduce themselves to achieve duration that extends beyond the involvement of any of their participants. Our transcendence-based framework thus conceptualizes organizations and other social systems as processes that extend beyond the experience, tenure, and temporal duration of any particular individual. From this sociotemporal transcendence perspective, organizational life is not reducible to the intentions or actions of present members alone, but is constituted through intergenerational processes (both inside and outside of organizations) that are carried forward, revised, and sometimes disrupted across time. By identifying four latent processes of intergenerational transmission (taken-for-granted persistence, effortful maintenance, incremental adaptation, and discontinuous reinvention), our review provides conceptual vocabulary for bringing otherwise fragmented research communities into closer dialogue.

This framework creates two distinct avenues for future research. First, it can help scholars improve and integrate existing research on intergenerational transmission by clarifying the

assumptions that underpin different research communities and by enabling more reflexive theorizing across them. Second, it can help scholars imagine new lines of inquiry by directing attention to aspects of organizational life that become visible only when organizations are understood as co-evolving alongside social systems that transcend generations.

(1) Using a transcendence-based view to improve and integrate existing research on intergenerational transmission

A first contribution of a transcendence-based view is that it can improve and integrate existing research by making visible the latent assumptions that organize different research communities. Existing work on intergenerational transmission is rich, but also conceptually uneven. Different communities emphasize different temporalities, different directions of continuity and change, and different loci of agency, often without making these differences explicit. By distinguishing among taken-for-granted persistence, effortful maintenance, incremental adaptation, and discontinuous reinvention, future research can use the transcendence-based framework as a reflexive tool for comparing and connecting communities that have typically evolved in relative isolation. Such work would advance the broader ambition of early theorists of intergenerational transmission, such as Schütz (1962) and Berger and Luckmann (1966), to explain how organizational life remains intelligible across generations even as successive cohorts reinterpret what the inherited past means in the present.

One implication is that future research can examine which combinations of assumptions are theoretically compatible when scholars seek to bridge across research communities. For example, generational divides are most commonly studied through the logic of discontinuous reinvention in research communities such as generational relations and transgenerational entrepreneurship, where emphasis is placed on the agency of present generations, the self-definition of cohorts, and the ways in which new generations distance themselves from inherited

understandings. Yet generational divides could also be studied in areas such as organizational socialization, tradition, or legacy, where intergenerational transmission is more often construed as a process of effortful maintenance. This opens new questions: How do organizations enable intergenerational transmission in contexts of generational divides? Under what conditions do generational differences stimulate more deliberate forms of custodianship, translation, or socialization rather than simply disrupting continuity? And how do such divides facilitate and/or inhibit the transmission of meanings, commitments, and influence across cohorts?

The sociotemporal transcendence framework also suggests promising opportunities to integrate research communities that have not often been placed in direct conversation. On the one hand, it seems analytically fruitful to combine the assumptions of incremental adaptation and effortful maintenance in areas such as succession and organizational socialization. Doing so directs attention to how continuity is not merely preserved or broken, but actively co-constructed through gradual change. Future research could, for example, ask: When and how can a successor claim a lineage of cultural authority that extends back across generations of past leaders? How can charisma be routinized (e.g., Hatch, 1993; Trice & Beyer, 1984; Weber, 2019) for new and existing organization members in processes of succession? How do newcomer experiences within an organization change over extended periods of time and across generational cohorts, even as the organization seeks to maintain coherent identities and practices?

On the other hand, the transcendence-based framework also cautions against combining assumptions too quickly. The same pairing of incremental adaptation and effortful maintenance may be less promising in the study of legacy if it encourages scholars to conceptualize legacy as though it were an objectively persisting substance with stable properties across time. Such an approach risks reifying the agency of past actors and minimizing the retrospective, interpretive,

and subjective role of present-day legatees. More broadly, the framework suggests that future research should be mindful of the ontological commitments embedded in different literatures: some combinations of assumptions will be theoretically generative, whereas others may collapse distinctions that are central to the phenomenon under study.

Taking account of these risks, we envision future research dedicated, for example, to the role of taken-for-granted persistence vs. effortful maintenance in the intergenerational continuity of enduring organizations. Under what circumstances do such organizations tend to rely on inertial vs. effortful processes in the coordination and synchronicity of succession, tradition, socialization and/or legacy? We also suggest that future research can fruitfully explore how entrepreneurial organizations combine dynamics of incremental adaptation with discontinuous reinvention. Under what conditions do organizations engage in processes of incremental adaptation vs. discontinuous reinvention in their efforts to realize intergenerational change, manage generational gaps, and shape the broader social systems in which they are embedded? By enabling such integrative analysis, a transcendence-based view can enrich dialogue across paradigms and provide a more reflexive and comprehensive account of how organizations endure, change, and matter beyond the lifetimes of any particular generation.

(2) Using a transcendence-based view to imagine new avenues for future research

The promise of a transcendence-based view, however, is not only integrative. Its deeper promise is generative. By conceptualizing organizations and other social systems as extending beyond the involvement, tenure, and lifespan of any particular individual, a transcendence-based perspective enables scholars to ask questions that are otherwise difficult to conceptualize and motivate. It directs attention to the longer-term moral, social, and human consequences of

intergenerational transmission, including those that unfold gradually, indirectly, and often outside the awareness of the actors who help set them in motion.

Understanding the transcendence of moral emotions in institutions. A first promising avenue concerns the role of intergenerational transmission in the moral emotions of institutions. Future work might trace how intergenerational processes construct, transmit, and challenge shared moral sentiments of good and evil, right and wrong, value and waste. A particularly fruitful but overlooked area of research in this regard involves the intergenerational processes through which moral emotions are transmitted across generations. We know very little, for example, about how compassion (as a moral emotion oriented toward feeling the suffering of others) is stretched across extended temporal durations and how the systems of meaning are transmitted that define how suffering is conceptualized, toward whom it should be directed, and how compassion should be expressed. The transcendence-based view we have developed in this paper can help to explain, for example, how organizations like the Red Cross are able to routinize and reproduce the compassion of nineteenth-century founders, Henry Dunant and Charles Moynier, to elicit similar feelings of compassion across generations of humanitarians. Similar research could be conducted on the sociotemporal transcendence of other moral emotions (with both positive and negative valence) such as guilt, shame, empathy and gratitude. Such work geared toward the intergenerational dynamics that extend and shape moral emotions over time may help to address key challenges involved in value-based differences, polarization, and tensions in organizations and other social systems.

Understanding intergenerational meta-capabilities in organizations. A second promising avenue concerns intergenerational meta-capabilities that enable organizations and other social systems to navigate challenges and issues that arise within individual lifetimes while maintaining

awareness of broader dynamics that transcend them. Such meta-capabilities may help actors determine what should be preserved, adapted, relinquished, or reinvented across generations. Future research could examine potential meta-capabilities such as wisdom, stewardship, and generativity, which share an orientation toward longer temporal horizons and may help explain how organizations manage sociotemporal transcendence dynamics. Wisdom combines generationally accumulated knowledge with judgment about what should be preserved, adapted, or relinquished across changing circumstances (e.g., Elangovan & Suddaby, 2019). Stewardship highlights actors' responsibility to protect, develop, and pass on inherited resources, purposes, and practices for the benefit of future successors (e.g., Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997). Generativity describes the capacity to care for, guide, and contribute to the flourishing of future generations (e.g., Erikson, 1950). Research on intergenerational transmission could illuminate how such capacities are cultivated, transmitted, and transformed across generations and how they shape organizational efforts to enact taken-for-granted persistence, effortful maintenance, incremental adaptation, or discontinuous reinvention.

Understanding intergenerational social contribution in organizations and society. A third promising avenue lies in reimagining the social contribution of organization members and other stakeholders across generations. Intergenerational transmission means that actors do not simply inherit a world from their predecessors; they also shape worlds that will be inhabited by successors they will never meet. Future research could therefore examine how leaders, custodians, successors, entrepreneurs, and other organization members contribute to continuity and change through taken-for-granted persistence, effortful maintenance, incremental adaptation, and discontinuous reinvention. Such work would move the study of intergenerational transmission

toward an understanding of transmission as a site of stewardship, responsibility, and future-oriented social contribution.

Prevailing theories of social contribution in organizations and society are constrained by short time horizons associated with the immediate role structures of organizations rather than the broader institutional and societal impacts of values-based leadership that weave human lives and hearts together across organizational settings and across long time horizons (e.g., Christensen, 2010). From a sociotemporal transcendence perspective, even stakeholders who are not members of the formal organization (and whose contributions may otherwise be overlooked, such as the values imparted by parents or the overlooked labor of caregivers) can ripple across generations in unpredictable and profound ways. For example, Mahatma Gandhi's mother, Putlibai, had tremendous influence on contemporary organizations and society through transmitting to her son her religious and personal values of non-violence, self-discipline, inter-religious unity, and emancipation of the poor and marginalized.

Understanding human dignity and transcendence in organizations and society. While corporations tend to be narrowly entrained around quarterly cycles, they also gain their value and significance within broader social systems that transcend lifetimes, suggesting that the social impact of leaders and organizations in society can unfold across generations in unanticipated ways (e.g., Christensen, 2010). Future research could deepen understanding of the nonlinear, mysterious, and often invisible pathways through which dignity, creativity, and moral influence are transmitted over time. This view is supported by Viktor Frankl's (2006) theorization of human contribution, value, and dignity, not as immediate organizational utility or perceived usefulness in society, but as an expression of agency in a common struggle for human dignity. From a sociotemporal transcendence standpoint, intergenerational transmission foregrounds people and their dignity as

this constitutive process through which organizational life extends beyond the lifespans of individual persons. This transcendence-based view of organizational and social systems invites deeper, human-centric inquiry focusing, for example, on how organizations can help individuals, groups, and organizations to overcome the trauma of multigenerational violence, so that such trauma does not get transmitted across generations. By adopting a transcendence-based view of organizational life, scholars can study the existential identities and values that people inherit, what they choose to pass on, what they allow to perish, and the role of organizations in such processes.

Conclusion. Overall, the transcendence-based perspective can help us as management and organization scholars to build theories that can help the next generation of managers, leaders, entrepreneurs, and other organization members to contribute positively to their systems in ways that transcend the duration of their own involvement. By foregrounding supra-individual processes involving compassion, wisdom, and human dignity, the transcendence-based perspective we have developed in this manuscript can provide a basis for future research to understand the reciprocal individual-whole dynamics involved in organizational life over generations. In a world increasingly divided by moral and cultural conflict, research on intergenerational transmission can help scholars and leaders better understand how organizations and social systems reproduce and reconstitute themselves across generations. It can also inspire the next generation of leaders to see their work as embedded in inherited social systems: things that were there before they were born and that, if they are good stewards, will be there after they die.

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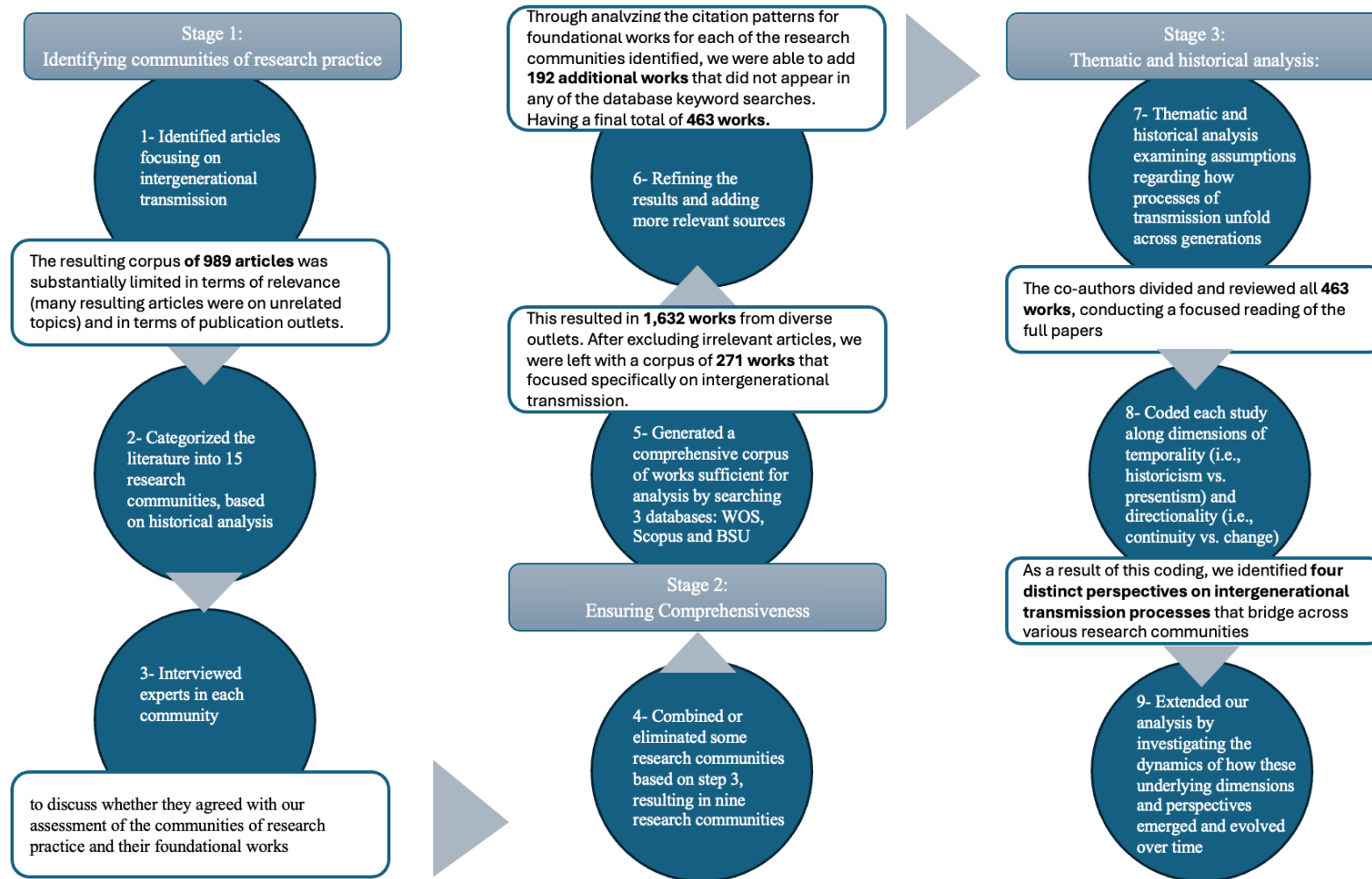
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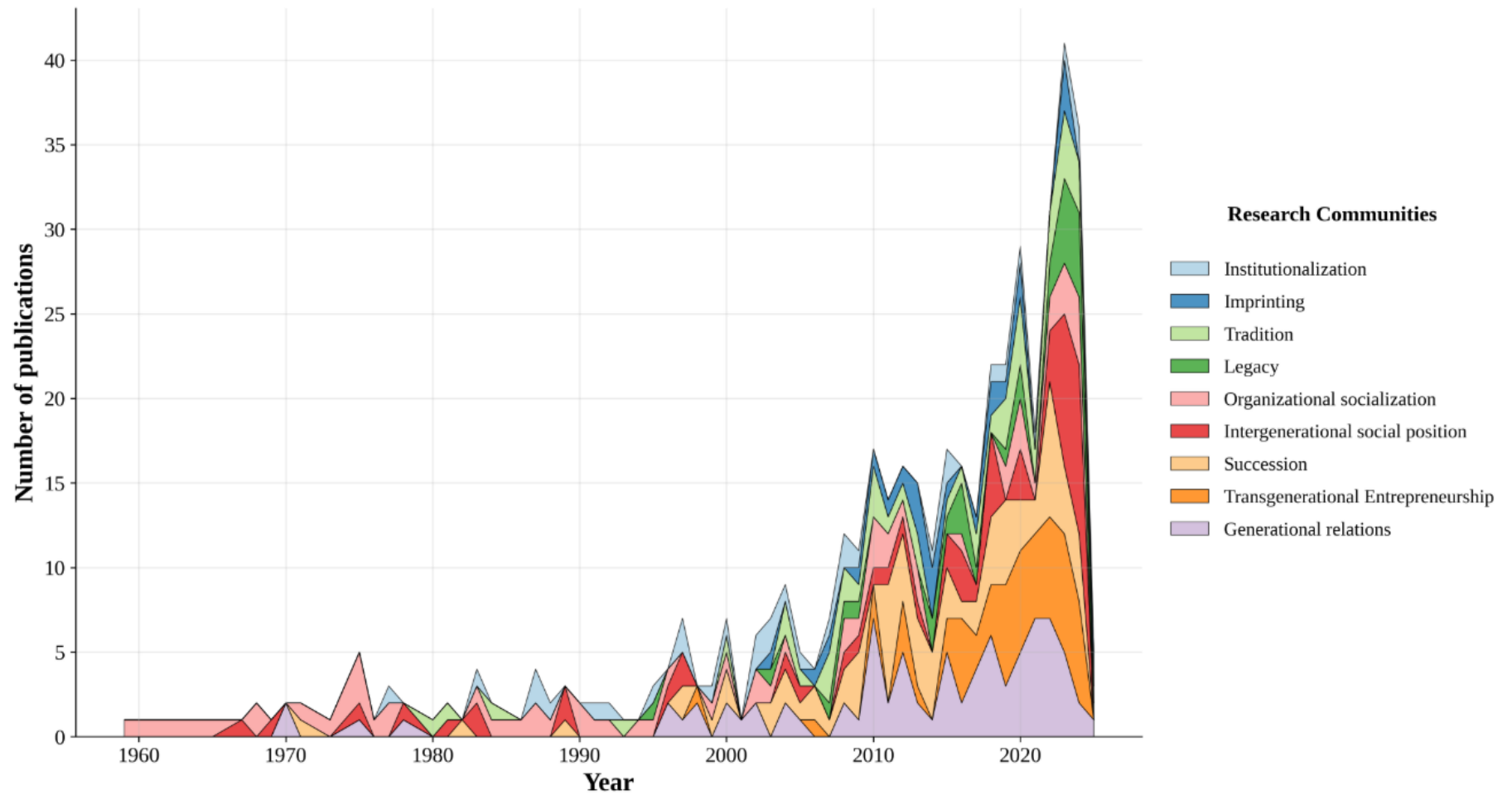
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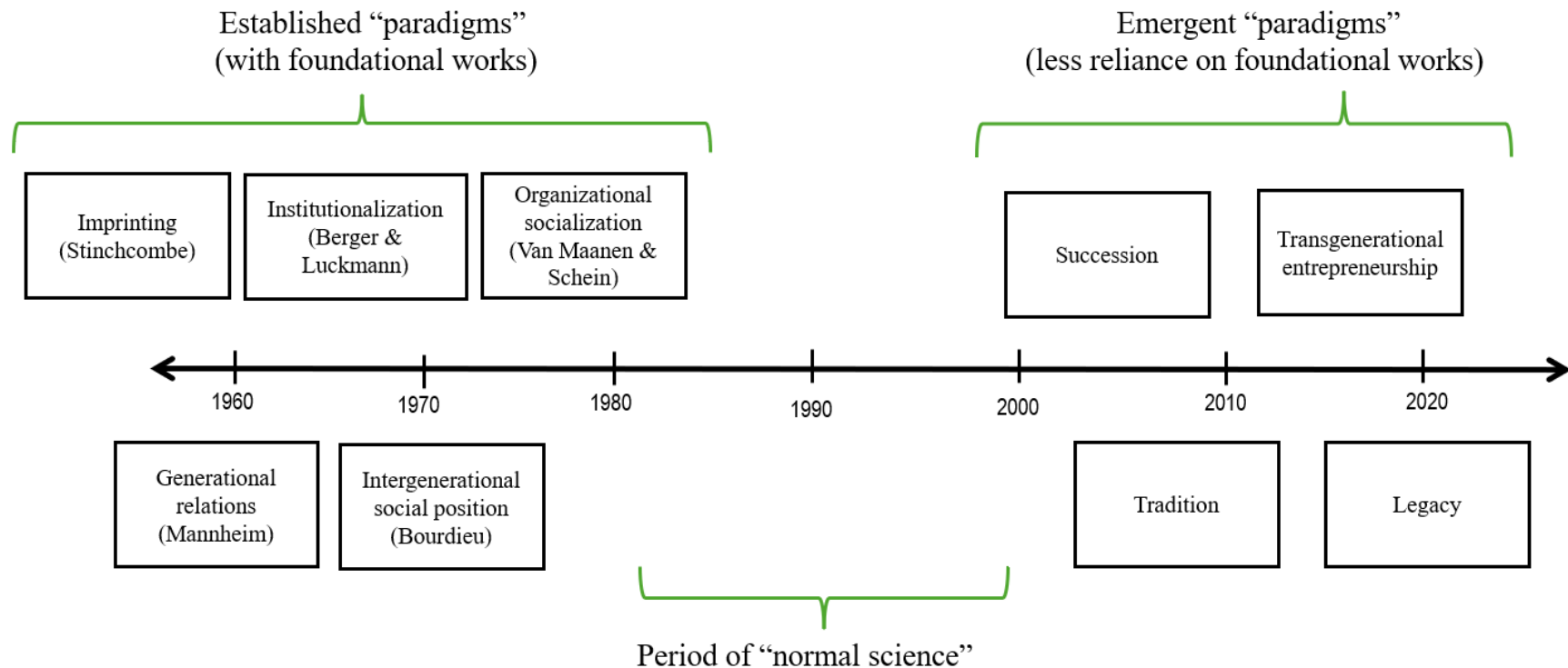
Appendix A: Research Scope and Process



Appendix B – The Exponential Growth of Research on Intergenerational Transmission in Management and Organization Studies



Appendix C: Historical Analysis of Paradigm Formation Processes Regarding Intergenerational Transmission

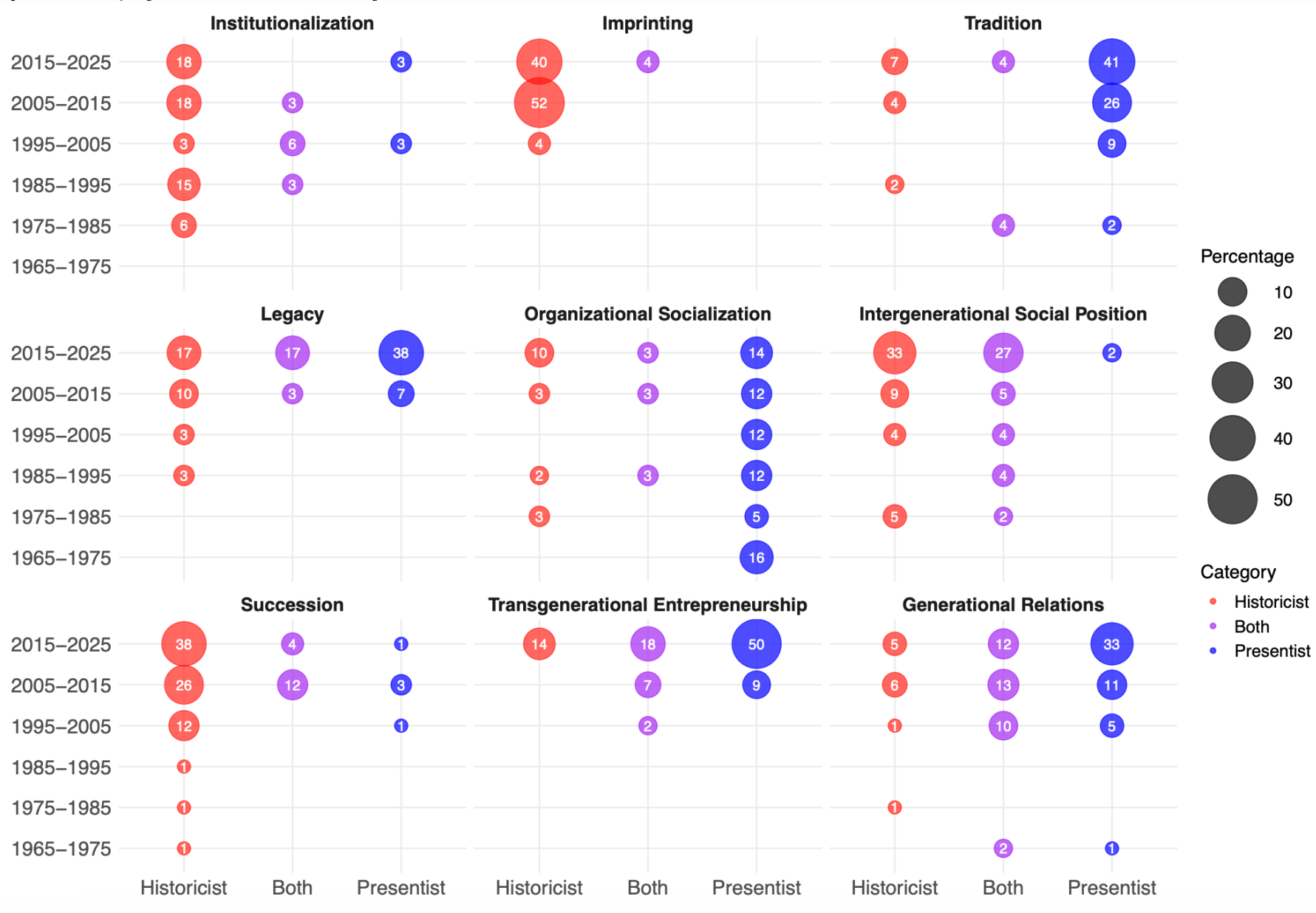


Note: This timeline represents an intellectual history-based analysis inspired by Thomas Kuhn’s (1997) theory of the processes of paradigm formation in scientific research communities. Consistent with Kuhn’s (1997) model, we note that some research communities are based on established “paradigms” that involve foundational works of social theory that enable confirmatory analytical processes he labeled “normal science” followed by new or emergent processes of paradigm formation. This does not imply, however, that established paradigms are losing their relevance or vitality. For example, research on “imprinting” relies heavily on ideas developed by Stinchcombe in the 1960s. However, much of the research dedicated specifically to imprinting as a mechanism of intergenerational transmission has been conducted more recently. On the other hand, much of the contemporary research focusing on the topic of tradition does have a deeper intellectual history that involves broader works of social theory (e.g., Shils, 1981; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012) that approximate (but may not yet fully constitute) the function of foundational works in Kuhn’s notion of paradigm.

Appendix D – Descriptive Table of Nine Research Communities and their Respective Conceptualizations of Intergenerational Transmission

Research Communities	Research Community Relative Size	Temporality of intergenerational transmission			Directionality of intergenerational transmission		
Total articles = 463	100%	Historicism (41%)	Both Hist. & Pres. (22%)	Presentism (37%)	Continuity (43%)	Both Cont. & Change (22%)	Change (35%)
Institutionalization (n=33)	7%	82%	12%	6%	79%	18%	3%
Generational relations (n=84)	18%	13%	37%	50%	25%	27%	48%
Imprinting (n=25)	5%	96%	4%	0%	88%	4%	8%
Intergenerational social position (n=55)	12%	54%	44%	2%	24%	29%	47%
Legacy (n=29)	6%	34%	21%	45%	41%	45%	14%
Organizational socialization (n=58)	13%	19%	10%	71%	84%	12%	3%
Succession (n=77)	17%	79%	16%	5%	23%	30%	47%
Tradition (n=46)	10%	13%	9%	78%	72%	20%	9%
Transgenerational Entrepreneurship (n=56)	12%	14%	27%	59%	5%	11%	84%

Appendix E – The Historical Evolution of Latent Conceptualizations of the Temporality of Intergenerational Transmission (historicism vs. presentism) by Research Community



Appendix F – The Historical Evolution of Latent Conceptualizations of Directionality of Intergenerational Transmission (Continuity vs. Change) by Research Community

