

**DEFINITION OF GUSTISM  
– THE APPLICABILITY OF THE GENERATION-BASED  
BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH  
ON THE BUCHAREST SCHOOL OF SOCIOLOGY –**

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**Rezumat**

În prezenta lucrare doresc să aplic diferite definiții ale generației cu scopul de a determina apartenența membrilor școlii sociologice de la București prin intermediul cercetării biografice. Mă interesează în mod particular să văd dacă definițiile generației pot delimita o grupă de indivizi care, deși diferiți în ceea ce privește multe aspecte, au creat o generație omogenă numai pentru a fi adepții monograției sociologice în calitate de discipoli ai profesorului Dimitriei Gusti.

Pentru a răspunde la această problemă voi prezenta mai întâi o scurtă abordare teoretică a generației și apoi voi aplica categoriile stabilite, școlii sociologice de la București.

Grație acestei abordări doresc să consider discipolii profesorului Gusti ca făcând parte dintr-o generație care a existat cu adevărat, după toate rigorile și cu toate caracteristicile prezentate în diferite abordări teoretice. Putem afirma că această generație este cea care a constituit, în perspectiva lui Mannheim, o unitate de generație a anilor 1920-1930. Excepțând „unitatea de bază” dirijată de profesorul Gusti, câțiva membri au continuat să coexiste atât ca parte a aceleiași generații, dar și alături de alți unități.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Dimitrie Gusti, școala sociologică de la București, cercetarea biografică, teoria generației

**Abstract**

In the current paper I am going to apply different approaches of the “generation” aspect, in order to determine the belonging of the members of the Bucharest School of Sociology from the biographical analysis perspective. I am particularly interested in the question whether, through the definition of generation, is possible that a group of people, very different in many aspects, could create a homogeneous generation, only because they were adepts of the monographic method and followers of the Professor Dimitrie Gusti.

To answer the question, I am going to present the main theoretical approaches in the conceptualization of the notion of generation, after which I will apply these definitions to the different categories affiliated with the Bucharest School of Sociology.

From this point of view, I will consider the followers of D. Gusti as belonging to a single generation, a generation existent by the above mentioned theoretical points of view. As for this particular generation, it could be affirmed that they formed, in the Mannheimian perspective, a generation unit in 1920-1930, and afterwards, beside the existence of a

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“core” led by the Professor, some representatives of the initial group went on coexisting as a part of the same effective generation, but in different generation units.

**Keywords:** Dimitrie Gisti, Bucharest School of Sociology, biographical research, generation theory

### Résumé

Dans le présent ouvrage je vais appliquer les différentes définitions de la génération, afin de déterminer l'appartenance des membres de l'École Sociologique de Bucarest par le biais de la recherche biographique. La question qui m'intéresse particulièrement c'est de voir si par la définition de la génération on peut délimiter un groupe d'individus qui, bien que très différents par bien des aspects ont créé une génération homogène uniquement pour avoir été les adeptes de la méthode de la monographie sociologique en tant que disciples du Professeur Dimitrie Gisti.

Pour répondre à la question posée, d'abord je présenterai brièvement les approches théoriques de conceptualisation de la notion génération, puis j'appliquerai les différentes catégories établies sur l'École Sociologique de Bucarest.

Grâce à cette approche je vais considérer les disciples du professeur Dimitrie Gisti comme des personnes qui ont fait partie de cette génération, une génération qui a réellement existé avec toutes les rigueurs et traits caractéristiques présentés dans les différentes approches théoriques. On peut affirmer sur cette génération que c'était celle qui a constitué, dans la perspective de Mannheim, une unité de génération des années 1920-1930. Excepté „l'unité de base” dirigée par le Professeur, certains membres ont continué à coexister en tant que partie de cette même génération effective, mais jointes à d'autres unités.

**Mots clés:** Dimitrie Gisti, École Sociologique de Bucarest, recherche biographique, théorie de la génération.

Beyond the quantitative – qualitative antithesis, the biographical research appears as a method of the contemporary sociology with a very high explanatory power, helping us to understand the analyzed subject by the context of the social reality perceived by the social actor. This approach can "reconstruct" a person, not in the psychological sense of the word, but from the sociological perspective, where people are seen as social constructs. If these constructs are similar in case more people, we can formulate the hypothesis that – at least for people with similar bibliographical characteristics – they share a particular "habitus" in the sense used by Bourdieu.

In this paper I will verify the applicability of the different definitions of generation, whose conceptualization was conducted by Staiculescu and Jitcov referring to the French society (Staiculescu and Jitcov 2005, Staiculescu 2012). In my paper, I will use this approach to determine the appurtenance of the Bucharest School of Sociology members in the light of biographical research. I am particularly interested in whether the definition of generation can define a group of people who, though very different in many aspects, created however a homogeneous

generation only because they were followers of the sociological monograph method and disciples Professor Dimitrie Gusti.

To answer the question, I will present in short the theoretical approaches to conceptualizing the notion of generation, and then apply the established categories to the Bucharest School of Sociology.

Continuing the idea presented at first, following the idea of habitus, I get very close to the definition presented by Staiculescu (2012), being attributed to Claudine Attias-Donfut to conceptualize generation.

In Staiculescu's approach, the definition of generation is more comprehensive than the definitions based on demography, where the main landmark is the age or the year of birth, i.e. the word generation is used as a synonym to cohort. In a wider approach, generation receives a symbolic side, which is composed of the following three traits:

- collective memory, in the sense that it is produced and maintained by the group members participating in its development,
- generation awareness, i.e. the common experiences of historical events that will later become landmarks of the social time spent together,
- "the time stamp on the generations regards the level of social production of knowledge and ways of thinking, at the interface between individual and social time" (Staiculescu 2012).

Applying this model to address the Bucharest School of Sociology, we can state that the members of this group, who were not necessarily interconnected during the actual existence of this institution, in the physical sense of the word, can be considered a generation. This can be said despite the fact that in the demographic perspective, focusing our attention only on the dates of birth, it seems that even the main collaborators of Professor Dimitrie Gusti were never part of the same generation. For example, while the Professor was born in 1880, his closest and most renowned collaborators in the Bucharest School of Sociology, such as George Vlădescu-Răcoasa (1895-1989), Henri H. Stahl (1901-1991), Mircea Vulcănescu (1904-1952), Traian Herseni (1907-1980), and Anton Golopenția (1909-1951) were 15-30 years younger. In this demographic context, we can even identify two distinct generations, the first being the founding Professor, while his collaborators, or more precisely his disciples would be a distinct second generation.

If we look beyond the limits of the cohort, applying the model of Attias – Donfut, then the members of the Bucharest School of Sociology can be considered a distinct generation because all three above listed traits prove to be valid in their case. Every discussion, every monographic campaign helped in developing and maintaining a collective memory. The feeling of being part of Dimitrie Gusti's team has created a sense of "being the best", which first materialized in an internal contest between participants to the monographic researches. Un example of internal competition, rendered by Marcela Focșa was the differentiation that took place in the Fundul Moldova monographic campaign where participants formed

two camps: those from Fundul de sus, and those din Fundul de jos, where the criteria for participation were not purely random, but: "in (f)undul de sus were all guys who surrounded Gusti, and had the most friendly and professional relationship with the Professor: Stahl, Nel Costin, Mitu Gheorghescu, Vulcănescu" (Rostas 2003, p. 129).

Also from the accounts of participants in the first monographs we know that after the formalized work, which ended with the evening meetings, for the young participants then began a second program of relaxation and cheerfulness, which further strengthened the generation consciousness, who united the young, but also distanced them from the Professor. This distinction appears again in Marcela Focșa's stories, which say that, after Gusti learned about the youth's nightly meetings, he also wanted to participate. After a few nights, everyone realized that the presence of the Professor had a negative effect on the atmosphere, and therefore the Professor retired from these meetings of his colleagues.

After institutionalizing the village work by the introduction of the Social Services, the generation awareness of young intellectuals who were forced to participate in the work in order to get their bachelor's degree was formalized. The time stamp appears, at least in my opinion, in the confessions of the participants in the monographic campaigns who, after many years, regardless of the path they followed after 1920's, were all convinced of the extraordinary experiences of the monographic movement and of the intellectual and organizational excellence of Professor Gusti. This situation is not diminished either by the fact that some members of the School, such as HH Stahl or A. Golopenția had reformatory ideas on the monographic method or on the methods of publishing the results (Rostas 2000, Sandu 2012, Golopenția 2012).

Another method of distinguishing social generations is the one of F. Mentré (Staiculescu 2012), who introduced two categories:

1. the spiritual generation, where the affiliation to the group is provided by the physical presence in the same space at a certain time (class, group of volunteers etc.), and
2. the historical generation, "which characterizes the creative periods, fertile in great men, heroes or prophets of a generation" (Staiculescu 2012).

If the above presented model can be again seen a significant differentiation for the Bucharest School of Sociology. If we accept the first option to define the generation, it is clear that there are two or even more generations, the first being made up by the Professor, and the latter by his collaborators or disciples who, being involved in various projects of the School can be in turn considered also different generations. For example, from this point of view, I consider the people who started working with the Professor in the first monographic researches, and the people who conducted field work within the Social Services as different generations. Another differentiation in the generations can be also applied in case of the institutional development of the monographic method led by Professor,

starting from members of the Association for Science and Social Reform, the members of the Romanian Social Institute, the members of the Royal Cultural Foundation "Principele Carol", members of the Romanian Institute of Social Sciences, and members of the National Council for Scientific Research.

On the other hand, if we apply the definition of historical generation on the Bucharest School of Sociology in the interwar period, then all the people who participated in the Professor's projects, even if they parted from this methodological orientation after a certain time, constitute a single generation, as the periods of creation and public affirmation overlap.

A third model to define the generation presented by Staiculescu (Staiculescu 2012) is the one developed by Karl Mannheim. To follow the changes of generations, Mannheim distinguishes "four tiers that successively include: the potential generation, the actual generation, generation units and specific groups. Moving from one tier to another is conditioned by social processes through which social change and social interactions occur" (Staiculescu 2012). Therefore, the first tier is the one of the demographic perspective, i.e. the belonging to a specific cohort. Yet, the birthday itself has a marked effect because it actually represents that particular social context, through all its complexity, to which one must adapt as a member of that society. In this respect, even if people differ, for example in terms of their social origins, they still share the same context in which they interpret the perceived reality. Returning to the previous idea, a group membership without any personal influence or volition does not create an "actual" generation. For the latter, after exposure to the ideas, ideological and intellectual trends of that characteristic time, the members of this cohort will be integrated in different groups of antagonistic ideas, where between the members of each group are links which ensure that the group coherence of an actual generation will be created. These groups are called "generation units" by Mannheim, which differ from a generation itself, the difference being given by the fact that "Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation, while those groups within the same actual generation, which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways, constitute separate generation units" (Mannheim 1998, p. 184).

Using these four tiers to analyze the Bucharest School of Sociology on the "natural data" → "class consciousness" → "actual generation" → "generation units" axis can be said that the members of this group constituted an actual generation and even a single generation unit in the 1920's. Expanding and developing the Monographic School implicitly led to the increasing of the volume of people participating in monographic campaigns. To support my claim is enough to look at the members participating in various monographic campaigns chronologically "Goicea Mare, Dolj county, 1925 ... , 11 participants ; Rușețu, Brăila county, 1926, ..., 17 participants; Nerej, Putna county, 1927, ..., 41 participants, Fundul Moldovei, Câmpulung-Bucovina county, 1928, ... ,60 participants; Drăguș

Făgăraș county, 1929, ..., 89 participants; Runcu, Gorj county, 1930, ..., 67 participants; Cornova, Orhei county, 1931, ..., 55 participants" (Rostas 2003, p.13).

As evident from the data presented, the pinnacle of the monographic campaigns was reached in 1929, after which the splits within the School, which was polarizing into several factions followed, "... at the same time with the deepening of the «sociological monograph» reform, the institutional expansion of the Romanian Social Institute, the refuge of its members in folklore and the deepening conflict between the Iron Guard dissidents and the rest of the monographers." (Larionescu 2006, p. 342) As a result of the events described, I think that in the 1930's the actual generation of the 1920's fell apart and turned into several generation units as presented from the perspective of Mannheim.

Following these models of generation conceptualisation, the answer to the question raised at the beginning of the essay would be: first we must distinguish two successive generations, the first being the one of the Professor, and the second that of his disciples. This delineation is beneficial and acceptable because the existence of a School implies a mentor – mentored link, as representatives of two different generations, the latter being interested in maintaining this relationship in order to be part of that institution. If the case of the youth (here by youth I refer to Professor's disciples who were born after 1900) there is a distinction:

- a. They may be characterized as a generation in all three models as follows:
  - applying C. Attias-Donfut's category, due to the presence of a collective memory, generation consciousness, and a common time stamp;
  - a historical generation by F. Mentré's definition, as the public display period and the intellectual fruition was manifested in the same period;
  - an actual generation by K. Mannheim's definition, because within the Gusti School all were in direct contact with the ideas and ideologies that circulated within the institution, while having an interpersonal connection between them.
- b. since the 1930's, remaining at K. Mannheim's definitions, one can say that there were more parallel generation units, and therefore they can not be considered the same generation.

In this paper, I accept the arguments presented at point a., and I consider Professor Dimitrie Gusti's disciples as people who were part of the same generation, a generation that truly exists, with all the rigors and characteristics shown in various theoretical approaches. About this generation it can be said that they have formed, in Mannheim's perspective, a generation unit in the 1920-1930 years, after which, in addition to the existence of that "core" unit, led by the Professor, some members continued to coexist as part of the same actual generation, but in different generation units.

Also, as a final clarification, I should mention the following fact: for the Bucharest School of Sociology to be truly considered a School also from the theoretical point of view, the relationship between the founder and his disciples,

despite any differences should not follow the "Matthew effect in Science" coined by Robert Merton (Merton 1968), and presented by Stan as a feature of the relationship between teacher and Petre Andrei (Stan 2012).

According to this effect, after the master accepts the disciple as a collaborator, after the latter proves his extraordinary capabilities, he is trying to express himself, even by leaving, or attacking his mentor's paradigm with which he initially realized himself. Since this approach automatically leads to the dissolution of the link between mentor and disciple, I will consider as a generation unit only those people who, even though they had some differences with the teacher, remained his followers.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, applying the different theoretical approaches of the generations presented in this paper, we can say that in the Bucharest School of Sociology there were at least three distinct generations:

The first generation is the Professor and mentor Dimitrie Gusti, who both demographically, specifically in terms of cohort and in terms of social and scientific role of occupies, as sole participant this generation, the generation of the founder.

The second generation consists of those persons who were the first and the foremost disciples of the Professor, and even with some modifications, became the persons responsible for certain activities or institutions initiated by Gusti.

The third generation is that of those persons who, either learning the methods of the Bucharest School of Sociology indirectly, by means of the second generation, or were the Professor's collaborators after the first monographic campaigns and helped in strengthening the existing institutions or participated themselves, as starters of new institutions initiated by Dimitrie Gusti.

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