

**PEHPP 2019****Pedagogical Education: History, Present Time, Perspectives****THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEMORY OF RELATIVES IN  
MAINTAINING INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONS**

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*Abstract*

The article discusses the attitude of young people to the memory of their ancestors, their understanding of intergenerational family relations, and the awareness of their family identity. Any family appears as a continuation of the patrimonial experience, formed by a number of previous generations. Each family member, child or adult, being part of it, voluntarily or involuntarily becomes a guardian of a part of the family memory or of all of it. Most often, this is what they acquired in the family through emotions, feelings, events, what they have seen, heard, experienced, and what was transmitted to them through objects, testimonies, or stories. The ir own family identity is fueled by this memory. Based on the analysis of research by international and Russian scientists, a characteristic of such concepts as “social memory”, “family-patrimonial memory”, and “memory of relatives” is presented. The author considers sources of memory of relatives, its components: cognitive, emotional, behavioral. The work analyzes the results of a diagnostic study of young people's ideas about this phenomenon, its content, the importance of memory of relatives in maintaining intergenerational family relationships. The study was conducted among 1-2 year students of Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University in February-March of 2019.

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**Keywords:** Social memory, family-patrimonial memory, memory of relatives, intergenerational relations, sources of memory of relatives.



## 1. Introduction

The family as a social indicator is the first and the most sensitive social organism to all changes in society (socio-economic, demographic, cultural), which are reflected in family ties. Almost every family in Russia has a “blank spot” in the memory of their ancestors. This was facilitated by the socio-political events of the 20th century (revolution, civil war, famine, dispossession, the resettlement of peoples, etc.). The younger generation was increasingly being placed in a situation of uncertainty as their place in the family, and silence and ignorance about family roots. Therefore, there is a transformation of the young people's attitude towards the older generation in the direction from a traditionally respectful attitude to an unconventional, not typical for the Russian mentality, condemning, denying, and this does not depend on kinship or unrelated relations (Saporovskaja, 2012).

Nevertheless, interest in family roots, genealogy and the history of the family tree, the revival of family traditions, and the preservation of material and spiritual relics belonging to their ancestors, are growing. Unfortunately, the relationship of a person with their kin and the integrity of family memory in most cases are broken. Often the line of kin/family is limited to those whom people personally know or knew. Understanding one's own life in the context of the family and the kin helps to build a holistic image of oneself as a connecting part of several generations, being the basis for a person to realize involvement and responsibility not only for them self, but also for the memory of their family as a whole.

In modern studies, the positive role of maintaining intergenerational relations in preserving the integrity of the family, in the formation of the ability to overcome difficult life situations, to successfully adapt to changing social conditions, based on the experience of previous generations of the family, is noted.

## 2. Problem Statement

In the works of international and Russian scientists of recent decades, two main approaches that explain the current trends in the functioning of families and the peculiarities of the formation of family identity of young people are identified. Some scholars draw attention to the isolation and isolation, instability and fragility of interpersonal relationships in many modern families (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Gorodilina, 2017; Gurko & Orlova, 2011). A number of studies voiced “the problems of violation of the continuity of family traditions, rituals and practices, leading to a violation of the stability and integrity of families, to maladaptation in times of crisis, to a decrease in the psychological well-being of its members” (Gorodilina, 2017, p. 14). Other researchers focus on family continuity issues (Brannen & Nielsen, 2005; Costa, 2013; Lezhnina, 2011). In particular, Rosalina Costa believes that the value of family and kinship has not disappeared, but continues to exist (Costa, 2013). Intra-family intergenerational relations are of great importance in maintaining the value of family and kinship. According to Gorodilina (2017), “Key family life events and experiences are accumulated in the collective memory of the family and are transmitted through stories... An analysis of family stories reveals the key beliefs of the family, which are passed on from generation to generation and which make up family identity” (p. 14). However, in a situation where nuclear families prevail, the influence of ancestors and their life experience has diminished. In this situation, we can talk about isolating a special sphere or layer in the value consciousness of family members – family memory. For example, a family keeps a thing inherited from their grandparents, but no one knows

the “history” of this thing. Or photographs stored in a family album: which of the older relatives is depicted in the photograph.

The study of the phenomenon of social memory is carried out from the point of view of various approaches in the study of this phenomenon: structural-functional; socio-psychological; phenomenological; informational; cultural-semiotic; structuralist approach. In the context of the study, we distinguish two approaches – structural-functional and phenomenological. With the structural-functional approach, the social group appears as the object of study, which leads to the identification of the concepts of “social memory” and “collective memory”. In this approach, the main emphasis is on the function of the union, which the collective memory performs (Gryaznova, 2015). With the phenomenological approach, a conformity between the totality of social memories (in our case, memories of relatives) and the person’s real world is established. Researchers who rely on this approach believe that the common memories formed in social groups are social in nature and create the conditions for the successful implementation of communication in people's lives (Gryaznova, 2015). The memory of relatives, or family memory, can be considered one of the types of social memory.

In modern Russian works there are various terms that characterize the phenomenon we are studying: “family-patrimonial memory” (Logunova, 2014), “family memory”, “memory of relatives” (Zvyaglova, 2018). However, despite insignificant differences in the formulation of this phenomenon, scientists identify common essential points in the influence of memory of relatives on the personality of a child or an adult family member:

- Help in social education and personal development. Turning to the experience of older generations, an adult or a child builds socially desirable behavior for society.
- Moral education of the family. Careful preservation of memory of relatives, expressed both in material (things, books, etc.) and spiritual (letters, photographs, memories, etc.) forms are life lessons not only for individual family members, but for the whole family, and sometimes for more than one generation.
- The presence of the information field “stock of knowledge” in the family. When migrating, people carry with them the memory of their ancestors. Everyone can “connect” to the “data bank” of family-patrimonial memory and get information about both the past and the future. Such an experience cannot be destroyed. If the kin dies away, then the field is saved, “archived”, mythologized, encrypted so that its knowledge will serve the future generations (Logunova, 2014).
- Protective properties of the memory of relatives. Human actions can be destructive. The function of the memory field is help in creating, which was provided by the ancestors for their grandchildren.
- A sense of psychological security. “The value of knowledge of the history of the family as a whole gives a person an idea of personal destiny in the family and in life in general, contributes to the emergence of self-confidence, a sense of security, comfort, support, growth of spiritual strength, “non-loneliness” and faith in the future” (Petrova, 2006, p. 55).

Sources and forms of memory about relatives can be: oral and written memories of relatives and friends, passed on from generation to generation (stories, anecdotes, curious cases, individual episodes);

photos carefully kept by people; diary entries, old letters; documents (birth certificates, certificates and diplomas, awards); genealogy schemes (family tree), etc. (Zvyaglova, 2018). However, all this can be completely useless if people do not want to remember the traditions of their family, their ancestors

### **3. Research Questions**

To clarify the attitude of young people to their family and kin, including previous generations, the following questions were identified:

- What do students include in the concept of “memory of relatives”?
- How close to them is their perception of family history, reflected in various sources of memory (photographs, stories, relics)?
- What gives them the memory of their relatives in cognitive, emotional, behavioral terms?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to identify the attitude of modern youth to family memory, the young people’s acceptance of the connection between generations within the family.

### **5. Research Methods**

**5.1.** Theoretical analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature to determine the concepts of “memory of relatives”, “family-patrimonial memory”, identifying the components that determine its potential in the formation of the life energy of an individual.

**5.2.** A questionnaire was conducted on the basis of Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University (NovSU) to identify students' perceptions of such a phenomenon as the memory of relatives, the sources of this memory, and the emotional perception of family history through photographs.

**5.3.** 64 students of 1-2 courses of various areas of learning (bachelor students) took part in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire compiled by the author of the study included 18 closed- and open-type questions. The questions were composed in such a way as to identify the cognitive component (how the concept defines what they know about relatives, their work, living conditions), the emotional component (what feelings they have towards their ancestors), the behavioral component (how the memory of relatives is preserved in their life).

### **6. Findings**

#### **6.1. Students definition of the phenomenon of “memory of relatives”**

An analysis of the answers to the question “What do you include in the concept of “memory of relatives”?” has already made it possible to identify all three components of our phenomenon:

- on the cognitive level – “the passage of information from generation to generation (who they were, what they did),” “knowledge about the history (life) of their family and their families, about what they went through, what bothered them,” “know and remember their relatives, to pass this knowledge on to their children”, etc.;
- on the emotional level – “the warmest: love, support, respect”; “this is spiritual love, the love which remains with a person forever, memories associated with relatives”; “respecting them, being proud of their successes, even after their death, and valuing their contribution to the family tree”; “fond memories of time spent together”; “important words and relatives’ edification, love for the near and dear and sadness, if they are far away, things that they left behind”, etc;
- at the behavioral level – “studying the genealogy, studying their destinies”, “visiting the places where they used to be, visiting their graves”, “talking about them, prayer remembrance”, “do not forget about their good deeds”, etc.

## **6.2. The attitude of students to the role of memory of relatives and the history of their family**

To the question “Why do you think you need to know the history of your family?” the following answers were given (the most interesting, in our opinion, are presented below):

- “Kin is the roots of every person. Everyone has a desire to belong to something bigger, and the kin (if you know yours deeply) is the biggest thing in a person’s life, it’s their moral strength”;
- “The history of the family is an important part of every person’s life. It would be strange to know the world's history while forgetting the history of those who gave you your life”;
- “By studying the history of your family, you can find answers to any of your questions.”
- “Because this is our history, too, everyone must know the their family's story”;
- “If everyone knows their roots, then we will significantly reduce genocide. Learning about our relatives, we can learn a lot about ourselves”;
- “This is experience, this is the reason who I am now, this is communication,” “knowing your roots, it’s easier to understand who you are and to find your place in life”;
- “If a person does not know their past, they have no future. Knowing the history of their family, a person can not only tell their children and grandchildren about it, but also learn from the experience and traditions of past generations”;
- “And what if someone asks you about your family, and you can’t answer”; “everyone should know the history of their family, because firstly, it is very interesting, secondly, we must remember and know our relatives"; "so that we can tell our children, grandchildren about them and keep a memory of them forever" ; "it is very exciting, you can find out why you’ve got this surname” ; “family history is the history of the country, its experience”.

93% of respondents confirmed their interest in the history of their family, and only 7% are not interested (4 people).

Unfortunately, the questionnaire revealed a weak intergenerational connection not only with grandparents, but also with parents. In response to the question “Would you like to know more about the history of your family in several generations?” 63 out of 64 people answered yes. This question was related

to how often parents/grandparents tell stories about the past of the family. Students' answers showed that the families of 16 students tell often, 11 – not often, families of 28 students – sometimes, 5 – rarely, 4 – never. Thus, we found a discrepancy between the increased desire of students to learn the history of their family and the insufficient desire/attention of their parents/grandparents to this aspect.

### **6.3. Students' knowledge of their ancestors and their lives**

Having asked the question, “Have you ever drawn up the family tree of your family? If so, to which generation did you manage to compile it?” we got the following results: 40 (62.5%) of the respondents had drawn up a family tree, of which 9 people made it up to the 5th generation; and 2 people – up to the 6th generation.

All respondents (100%) know their grandparents/great-grandparents; 55 people (86%) know that their great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers participated in the Great Patriotic War and keep their memory of them in the form of letters, diplomas, clothes. Unfortunately, the difficult moments in the history of the country and families in general – the Stalinist repressions – turned out to be a “blank spot” in the students' knowledge of their relatives: only 15 people (23%) know about relatives who were subjected to Stalinist repressions.

### **6.4. The emotional and educational aspect of family photographs and relics**

The block of questions regarded such a source of memory about relatives as photographs. Each family has family albums, however, are the young people interested in them and do they influence their desire to keep in touch with their late ancestors and remember them?

Most students (54 people) like to look at old photographs: “it is interesting to see how everything was before”, “it is interesting to know how my family lived”, “I especially like photographs of my grandfather, who is not with me any more. It’s because of my affection, love and memories of him”, “in order to get some good emotions and admire the beauty of the youth of my loved ones”, “basically, when I want to see those who are no longer around, to make some images, memories come to life. Sometimes it helps to somehow get away from sad thoughts”, “to know the faces of my relatives, as well as to see the reflection of some important or not very important family events”.

What emotions and feelings do respondents experience while viewing the photographs? “Joy”, “inspiration”, “sadness that the happy moments cannot be returned”, “sorrow”, “tenderness”, “pride”, “warmth”, “tremulous feelings”, “nostalgia”, “empathy”, “warmth and a peace of mind”, etc. Thus, the emotional component of the memory of relatives, contained in photographs stored in the family, gives respondents strong feelings of perception of their family, kin, and past generations. One of the girls wrote: “It’s as if I am immersing myself in the photograph, especially if I am being told the stories of this photographs while I am viewing them”.

In response to the question “Are there any relics in your family and can you name them?” the respondents named “diplomas, medals, embroideries of grandmothers, watches, icons, a ring we pass on along the female line, a newspaper about the act of bravery of my grandmother, a dinnerware set, furniture, the great-grandfather’s military uniform, which even I found, the great-grandfather’s medal for

participating in the Great Patriotic War (posthumous), a crystal pointer and a crystal deer carved by my grandmother's brother", etc.

### 6.5. Behavioral component of the memory of relatives

In response to the question "Do you visit the graves of your near and dear ones and why?", 56 respondents said yes, 8 said no. The reasons for the visits were named as follows: tribute to the memory of them; on holidays, on orthodox holidays, to honor their memory, to put things in order, out of respect, on church holidays, on their birthdays, on anniversaries and holidays; "this is because I always remember about them and will never forget".

## 7. Conclusion

Analysis of the scientific literature on the issue and the results of the study allowed us to formulate the following conclusions:

- The memory of relatives helps preserve the traditions of the family, especially in the context of intergenerational interaction.
- Being a stabilizer of the family, the memory of relatives helps the family to create and continue blood-related social ties.
- In the process of preserving memories of the life and work of late relatives, rules and patterns of normative behavior are formed and fixed in the consciousness of generations.
- The memory of relatives carries an emotional burden in the processes of intergenerational interaction, improves the daily life of the family community.
- The memory of relatives has a powerful potential that determines the degree of a person's social success.

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