

Abstract: The objective of this study is to analyze the motivation of the lay public in collecting, writing down, or compiling family documents, in particular memoirs, recollections, and family chronicles. We posited the question of whether there are specific subconsciously created templates of writing down memories that delimit and conceptualize the method of their remembering, or whether the resulting texts are purely individualized. One particular level of consideration is the very addressees of the family recollections, who do not just work with the texts as a “family treasure” but who also have an interest in preserving them for the broader public. What are their motivations for making these to a large extent intimate texts public, and in what way can these highly personal and specific recollections be useful to researchers?

Historická demografie, 2023, 47:2; 167–188

DOI: 10.21104/HD.2023.2.05

Key words: family memory, ego-documents, everyday life history, transmission of memory, family history

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Introduction

*Motto: “Human life is a memorial...
It is purely up to you how you describe it...”^[1]*

A lot has changed in recent decades in terms of relations between the elderly and their children or grandchildren; and between the young and older generations. Never before in history have the members of several generations lived together at the same time whose experiences, values, and behaviour have been shaped so differently by the period in which they lived. The average age has gone up and so it

[1] Historický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, Databáze dějin všedního dne, <https://ddvd.kpsys.cz/> (November 22, 2023) (further as DDVD), Svoboda, p. 5.

is commonplace for grandparents to experience their grandchildren's adolescence, and live on until they become adults (Chvojka, 2002). Three-generation families have become the standard form, registered, described, and analysed by fields such as sociology, psychology, and (historical) demography. In recent times, however, three-generation families have also been noticed by schools within general historical science that works with subjectivity in a broader sense, and more specifically by those schools that emphasize the reflective aspect of historical knowledge.^[2] The core premise for all these considerations is the collective conditionality of historical reflection, whether we consider this in a conservative "Hroch" way (Hroch, 2014), or whether we look at it through the conjunctural, perhaps inflationary, prism of memory studies (Feindt et al., 2014; Erll – Nünning, 2008).

As regards the genesis of collective identities, many historians have focused on large collectives such as the nation, this has meant that the smallest communities, such as families, have remained out of the spotlight of Czech historians. Yet the family is the major primary context for human experience from birth to the end of life (Sobotková, 2018), and so the most common collective frame of reference. "...if we find ourselves alone, we act and think as if we were still living under the pressure of the group [for example family, V. K.]" (Halbwachs, 1992: 73). In our considerations, we shall treat the family not as a biological unit, but rather as a cultural unit (Geertz, 1976), as a key to understanding the historically-conditional values of the individual (Horský – Seligová, 1997: 5–6). In contrast to most of the other studies published in *Historical Demography*, and so primarily focused on the methods and concepts of this discipline while using essential sources of information stored in administrative documents, in particular official registers, we have chosen a type of source which is entirely different, specifically ego-documents (Greyerz, 2010). Today few historians doubt their importance as a source for discovering the past. They are not perceived solely as illustrative additions to an interpretation of "great" history, but thanks to a "new reading of the source" are seen as a separate, authentic, and fully-fledged epistemic tool (Lenderová – Kubeš, 2004: 5).

The stories and images of the past presented in ego-documents such as memoirs and recollections are usually gratefully processed for their narrative structure. However, in contrast to the many biographies of great men of history, they do not contain dynamic passages rich in events. Ego-documents are not just used as an aid in the writing of biographies of significant figures, but have become themselves a basis for academic research, such as for the history of everyday life,

[2] Here we mean a wide range of approaches, the French "histoire vue d'en bas", Italian "microstoria", English "oral" or "case history", German "Geschichte von unten", etc. All of these movements abandon structure-oriented social history, focus their research on those who belonged to the so-called "silent majority" in the past, or offer a new perspective on the middle and upper classes and their activities.

research into emotions in history (Švaříčková-Slabáková, 2008; in general Frevert, 2011: 255) and as a demonstration of period discourse. It is also true that probably more than in any other genre of literature, in analysing memoirs and recollections (and ego-documents in general), it is important for readers to perceive the boundaries between what is revealed and what is hidden. Sometimes a lot is hidden between the lines. Some topics are suppressed and taboo. Their selection and ordering often do not correspond to a simple diachronic line and are rather a reflection of the author's deep-seated cultural and social standards (Soukupová, 2021: 18). In this regard, two types of analysis are discussed. A descriptive analysis involves the use of texts as testimonies to the past world, and sources of information on events, people, and places we are interested in. In contrast to this type, we make use of a perspective analysis, in which we look at the authors as representatives of particular social groups, interests, and historical contexts (Purvis, 1992: 276).

The texts do not just reflect the author's own experiences, but they are also often presented as parts of personal memories of a story and reflections of events that are based on the interpersonal knowledge of the shared past of family members (Bietti, 2010: 499). In the concept of historians of everyday life (or more generally all the above-mentioned schools emphasizing subjectivity), the family is perceived as a network of symbols and their significances, formulated by family members themselves on the one hand, and on the other hand by external determinants. Thus, instead of sociologising structures or demographic statistics, these historians began to investigate stances and behaviours, focusing on concepts such as childhood, parenthood, and kinship (Kohoutová, 2018: 116). The objective of our study is to look at opportunities for studies based exclusively on the use of sources of a personal nature, and their mutual comparison. The first question is whether in reading such texts we can see a template for the culture of writing ego-documents, whether the same topics are found in them when looking back at a specific event or a period of life. Their advantage is the authenticity of individual texts. However, this is influenced by the author's self-censorship, and in some cases by joint authorship with one of the descendants, who has guided the witness from the position of an "insider" (meaning a person with family ties). We posited the baseline questions:

- 1) Based on our narrow sample of ego-documents, can the thesis that ego-documents function in the intergenerational transmission of memories be confirmed (in the sense of communicated memory, see Bertaux – Thompson, 1993)?
- 2) Are there any subconsciously created templates of those remembering that delimit and conceptualize the method of their remembering, or are the resulting texts purely individualized (Hämmerle, 1991)?
- 3) Are family members represented by memoirists as certain literary archetypes?

Corpus of Sources

The basis for our study is the collection of texts held by the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Science (further CAS) called the History of Everyday Life Database.^[3] While this collection is relatively old, its fully-fledged version accessible to the public only began to be put together around five years ago (Hlavačka – Kessler – Smrček, 2020: 1–5). In the early 1990s, sociologist Jana Losová set out a challenge to the public in which she motivated witnesses to the past to write down and send in texts about their lives, or else the lives of their ancestors. This was not solely a personal initiative. The idea was based on the work of the Austrian historian of the family and the history of the everyday, Michael Mitterauer (Dressel, 2022: 288; Mitterauer, 1982; Mitterauer, 1991; Mitterauer, 1997; Mitterauer, 2009), who had endeavoured to present a similar project within the Czech context, which had been in operation at the University of Vienna's Department of Economic and Social History since the 1980s under the title *Dokumentation lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen* (Mitterauer – Müller, 2013; Müller, 2012).^[4]

In the months and years following the announcement of the above challenge, those interested in contributing to the collection began contacting Jana Losová and historian Milan Hlavačka at the Institute of History of the CAS, proposing recollections, diaries or other types of ego-documents, including the estates of parents and grandparents. Gradually, a large collection of texts began to take shape, recalling the lives of so-called ordinary people from the end of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. These sources were often complemented by reflections on the lived present, i.e. the period of the 1990s. In their correspondence with the collection initiators, contributors often revealed the motivations that led them to take this step. As well as an immediate response to the public challenge, these also involved the desire of witnesses to preserve their perception of events experienced for future generations, to inform them of their perspective, and last but not least also a need to leave something “permanent” behind them as a kind of personal legacy.

The ego-documents themselves were produced without any external interference or subsequent modifications. They are thus authentic and subjectively conceived texts. They often feature highly personal, almost intimate, information that the authors of the texts considered noteworthy, and this information revealed both their virtues and in some cases also their weaknesses. The only restriction that defined the boundaries of the events and experiences written down was the mental framework of each of the witnesses. From this perspective, the forms filled

[3] <https://www.hiu.cas.cz/en/database-of-the-history-of-the-everyday> (November 18, 2023).

[4] <https://wirtschaftsgeschichte.univie.ac.at/forschung/doku-lebensgeschichten> (November 18, 2023).

in which are part of most texts are important.^[5] These forms add information on the authors of the texts, and we can find information in them about what social background they came from, in what social group they mixed during their life, and what their religious faith was. All this information helps to get a better understanding of a particular text, the mental world of the author, and the events they experienced.

A large number of texts within the collection offers the opportunity for a more complex study of the history of everyday life,^[6] which is something we want to highlight in the following study. One of the decisive criteria for the selection of texts was the memories of the family environment in memoirs, memories, and family chronicles. We considered that the description of the family environment, the relationships between family members, and the author's position in the family are the basic parameters for the transmission of family memories. A purposeful sampling method was used to create a corpus of approximately 40 texts that included a systematization using the keyword "family" and possibly variations thereof (e.g., family relationships, etc.). These selected texts were then subjected to content analysis. Through a more thorough investigation of the sources, 21 texts were finally selected whose content could offer answers to the questions we posed. At the same time, the selected texts perceived the theme of the family at a structural and relational level, i.e. they were not mere descriptions of family members without connections to other members or even to the narrator. The presence of either a dedication or a dedication was also a key parameter of the selection and thus implicitly contained a "message" to family members in younger generations.^[7] The setting of the texts is the countryside, regardless of

[5] <https://ddvd.kpsys.cz> (November 18, 2023).

[6] The project has its own publishing series at the Historical Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences called *History of Everyday Life*. So far, three publications have been published in this series already (Kessler – Šrámek, 2020; Kessler – Smrček, 2022; Losová – Kessler – Kršková, 2023). Another one is in print (Kličková, 2023). The unorganised collection was used as a source base from the 1990s by the Viennese organisation *Dokumentation lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen* for publications as part of a specialised book series of publishing house *Boehlau* (Chvojka, 1992; Vošahlíková, 1994; Vošahlíková, 1998; Losová, 1996).

[7] DDVD, Abzoltovská, Vlasta – Rodinná kronika Klichů a Poláků; Beranová, Zdeňka – Jak žili naši předkové; Bidlas, Vladimír – Rodinná kronika aneb něco o tom, co bylo dříve a co potom; Böhm, Basil Věslav – Rodinná kronika; Cifka, Josef – Rodinná kronika; Čábelová-Strnadová, Maruše – Rodinná kronika; Daněk, Adolf – Vzpomínky; Daněk, Jaroslav – Vzpomínky; Dudík, Eduard – Rodinná kronika rodu Dudíků a příbuzných rodů; Fialová, Liběna – Mé vzpomínky na prarodiče; Fojt, Lev – Kronika mého života aneb 20. století z mého pohledu; Harašta, Bohuslav – Moje paměti; Haas, Bedřich – Vzpomínky na dětství; Hora, Josef – Rodinné album rodiny Horových; Horová, Růžena – Vzpomínky; Hronová, Věra – Rod Vaněčků, Rod Hronů; Chlebounová, Anna – Mé paměti; Chroust, Evžen – Vzpomínka na členy našeho rodu; Chroustová, Marie – Kronika rodu, Vyprávění z historie rodiny E. Vodňanského; Jirka, Jan – Kalendář mého života, Druhá moje polní výprava na bojiště; Knapová, Petra – Vzpomínky na dětství; Kodaj,

whether the author is from a town or a village because most authors had at least some family members in the countryside. Chronologically, the texts range from the 20th century, with memories going back to the 19th century, to the early 21st century. Most of the texts were produced in the 1990s and written a considerable time after the figures and events were recalled. In terms of type, they are recollections, memoirs, and chronicles. We are aware of the differences between different types of sources, but nevertheless, the authors incorporate information on their relatives in their recollections, memoirs, and chronicles which they themselves remember, and so the genealogical approach and form of personal memories in family chronicles smoothly transition into memory forms enhanced with an emotional dimension of the recorded information.

Authors' Motivation for Writing Family Memoirs, Family Chronicles

One of the accompanying, and to some extent determining, questions in analysing the content of a text is the individual motivations of the author in writing down family recollections, memoirs, or chronicles or more simply writing down information about their ancestors. Roughly a third of texts feature an introductory section in which the authors explicitly explain what the immediate impetus for recording the experienced events was. *“Submitted by Ing. Jan Kodaj according to extracts from registers and randomly acquired documents and from the stories of family members,”*^[8] or *“Dear reader! Perhaps you are reading my memories after many years. I shall try to tell you about times long past so you can find out how your ancestors and the people around them lived and suffered. Perhaps you shall recognize the awful hand of justice in my notes and you shall understand that punishment will surely come for many evil acts. Perhaps you are thinking about the pain long ago felt of sorrows that have burnt away, or of the modest simple joys which are today almost foreign to us. Such joys were never many in number. I would also like to lift humorous scenes from the depths of the forgotten, which might at least bring a brief smile to your lips, as I loved joy.”*^[9] Introductions like these are very important to gain an understanding of the subsequent text. In them, the

Jan – Rodina Šlerkova ve městě Žďáře na Moravě č. p. 298; Koblížek, Jaroslav – Rodinná kronika rodiny Kuželů; Krajčová, Marie – Štěchovský památníček; Králová, Josefa – Vzpomínky, Češi na Kavkazu; Machart, Karel – Výpis z Archivu země České, Rodinná kronika; Mejzlík, Jan – O mém životě a mé dílo; Míšková, Božena – Vzpomínky na dětství; Papírník, Jiří – Jak v Třebíči žila na konci minulého století ševcova rodina; Paroulková, Soňa – Můj život; Patočková, Anna – Vzpomínky, Rodinná kronika; Pokorná, Marie – Vzpomínky na rodinu; Polák, Bohumil – Rodinná kronika Poláků; Pošvář, Jindřich – Veselosti mého života; Štarha, Jan – Pojednání o rodině Suchánkových; Šantl, Hynek – Paměti; Ulrich, Josef – Rodinná kronika; Zeman, Jaroslav – Paměti.

[8] DDVD, Kodaj, p. 4.

[9] DDVD, Paroulková, p. 2.

authors reveal the purpose or function of the entire text, and also to whom the text is dedicated, i.e. whom its model reader is meant to be. Often very intimate reasons are found, such as returning to an idealized childhood, memories of a family member long dead, but especially an endeavour at preserving and passing down the legacy of ancestors to the writer's own descendants. Author Vlasta Abžoltovská, for example, formulated her own motivations in this way: *"It is the duty of parents to tell their children of the past, to arouse their interest in it. That's why we decided to write down this family chronicle of the Klichs and Poláks. It incorporates a brief biography of several of my mother's and father's ancestors, and where they provided us details, also close family members."*^[10] Thus, the authors took an active part in creating and preserving their family histories, in which the essence of their activities was not the truthful recording of events, but rather their own subjective reflections on them.

In most cases, the authors themselves decided to record events experienced, with only some of them admitting that their offspring asked them to do so. Some references can even be found to "pressure" from children or grandchildren to write down their recollections, memoirs, or family chronicles, as was the case, for example, for Jindřich Pošvář, who noted in his dedication: *"Dedicated to my wife Hanička and my parents, without whom the topic of a happy life would be just a set of empty pages, and also to my grandson Vojta, who bothered me for so long about my recollections because of a school project that he unwittingly became the initiator of the following records."*^[11] Most dedications are to the writer's own descendants or relatives. There are also texts, however, which contain the more general formulation "to future generations", in which the authors want to portray the era of their ancestors, their everyday way of life as they remember it, or how they present and reconstruct it based on the stories of ancestors.

For texts that do not have an introduction, the motivation is nevertheless implicitly scattered throughout various parts of the text. The very decision to record the family's oral tradition in writing can be interpreted as an attempt at preserving the legacy of ancestors for future generations. Considering the often advanced age of the authors (especially for texts produced in the 1990s, the authors are mostly older than 80 years of age), the motivation may be a desire to return to their childhood years, which, for many reasons, are mostly perceived positively.

Even so, complicated life circumstances resulting from both individual causes and from the context of the time are not left out. One of the authors, for example, writes: *"A common topic of discussion is how today's women are overworked, having to bring up their children and take care of the household in addition to an often-difficult job. My granny managed all this as a matter of course, and she*

[10] DDVD, Abžoltovská, p. 23.

[11] DDVD, Pošvář, p. 2.

also selflessly helped all those who came to her with problems.”^[12] The function of comparisons like this in these texts, however, is more or less exemplary. It serves as an example of what obstacles the author’s ancestors faced in their lives, and how they responded to the situation. In other words, the author is telling us that our ancestors were worse off and they dealt with their circumstances.

Last but not least, family tradition played a role either in the writing of memoirs or in genealogical research and the creation of family chronicles. In this regard, we should also note the author’s ambivalent role in the process of recording family traditions – the author is their recipient, and also their bearer and the transfer of this information takes place through the written codification of the author’s version of the stories. Until the moment of recording, family memories had as many versions as there were witnesses or narrators. The author’s motivation, then, might simply be an endeavour to produce a fixed form of traditional family narratives and memories in order to eliminate their distortion as affected by the memory and narrative skills of individual family members.

Definition of the Family Based on Sources

The tree (see Fig. 1) is a metaphor for family relationships between close and distant relatives. The roots represent ancestors, without whom the family, like the tree, could not have grown and given forth branches, which symbolize subsequent generations. *“We all have roots in the past, and we could wither away like such a tree should we not know of them.”*^[13] If the authors write of their roots, they are referring to the broader pool of genetically related family members. Although the authors rarely speak explicitly of genes, we can often encounter attributes that are characteristic of the particular family, revealing an awareness of kinship. The only exception here is the already mentioned Lev Fojt, who grew up in an adoptive family, and although he knew his biological mother, Věra Vodáčková, he considered the Fojts, who had adopted him at the age of two, to represent his roots, regardless of genetics.^[14] *“For most of us, the family represents a micro-world in which a significant part of human life plays out. It provides us with our first information on how the world works and especially relationships between people. It creates a space where we learn and practice methods of communication. It gently introduces us to relationships between people, peers, and different generations.”* (Vrzgulová – Voňanská – Salner, 2017: 8).

We often encounter a model of very broad family ties, in which the closest family that had an immediate influence on the author’s childhood included not

[12] DDVD, Horová, p. 2.

[13] DDVD, Abžoltovská, p. 23.

[14] DDVD, Fojt, p. 2–4.

just siblings, parents, and grandparents but also the parents' and grandparents' siblings.

In general, this is a multigenerational family model which either directly at the home or else nearby, remains in active, if not always daily, contact with distant relatives (siblings of parents, grandparents, etc.). What glued these socio-familial ties together was an awareness of genetic kinship, which strengthened connections between individual family branches. Marie Pokorná, for example, remembers: *“My cousin was raised by my mum because I wouldn't be born for a long time.”*^[15] It was common, then, that children could be taken to one of their “aunts” to be raised, and although they had never seen them before, their “blood relationship” with the particular person was important. All the authors except for one,^[16] spent time with grandparents, a notable finding considering the high death rate during the period looked at.

During the observed period, a significant number of authors experienced the loss of at least one parent who was of working age.^[17] As a result, a recurring pattern is for the author to be brought up by older siblings or, for example, to stay for extended periods with parents' siblings. Almost all texts mention that the authors were in daily contact with a broad circle of relatives, such that a large section of the family lived in one place, or else in neighbouring villages or towns. *“It is difficult to forget our wonderful family life, with the entire family living and based in the immediate vicinity of each other, in Tovačov, Kojetín, Oplocany, Krakuce, with all the kids of the families living together, and partially raised together, all healthy, happy, hard-working and loving of each other.”*^[18]

Divorces were an exception over the period being looked at and considering the setting of the memories. We only encountered one such case in the corpus of texts, in which the author mentions the divorce of her husband's parents: *“The parents' divorce – it was an unnecessary affair. First of all, it cost twenty thousand during a period of war when there was poverty and little money, and secondly, it was an assault on the child's feelings... Those two – my father-in-law and mother-in-law – did not fit together, did not understand each other, did not deal with the household together, my father-in-law paid no tax, the bailiffs were called in, they took almost everything in granny's home, she had to show documents and accounts, that the sewing machine and furniture was her dowry: she felt ashamed about the situation, she blamed grandpa, they lived in constant strife.”*^[19] As this example

[15] DDVD, p. 7.

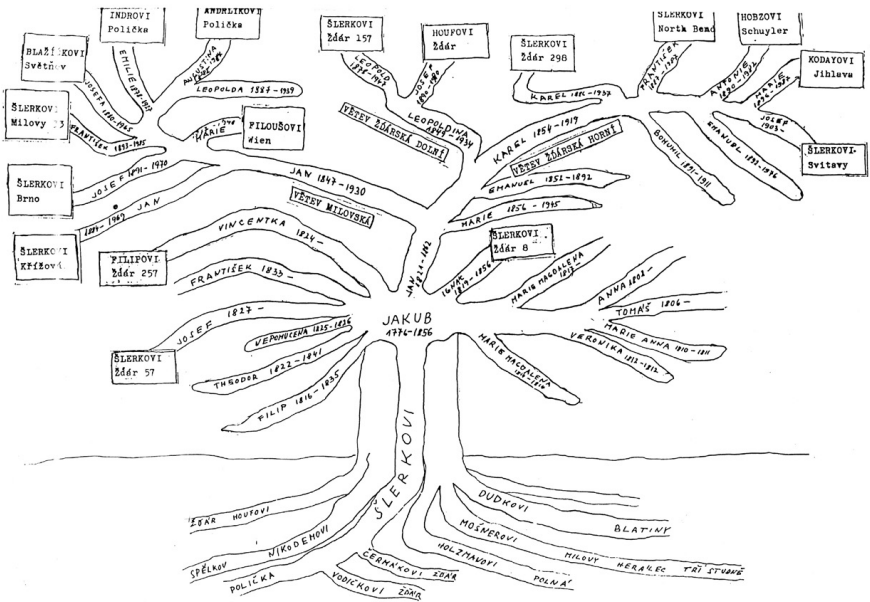
[16] DDVD, Harašta, p. 17.

[17] See for example: DDVD, Böhm, p. 17; Harašta, p. 19; Haas, p. 3.

[18] DDVD, Dudík, p. 9.

[19] DDVD, Čábelová-Strnadová, p. 53.

FIGURE 1. A DRAWING OF A FAMILY TREE IN A FAMILY CHRONICLE. JAN KODAY: ŠLERK FAMILY IN ŽDĀR NA MORAVĚ NO. 298.



Source: DDVD, Koday, p. 4.

also demonstrates, divorce required serious reasons which to some extent destabilized and disturbed the life of the family and home.

In some cases, family relationships are described positively and perceived as beneficial, such as for Bohuslav Harašta, who thanks to his family managed to avoid some of the orders of his despotic father: “Mum often resolved it: sure, she was my mum. Her three sisters lived in the suburbs, and so when there was a meal I didn’t like, I found asylum with one of my aunts.”^[20] On the other hand, we also see negative manifestations of family relationships, which were in most cases related to inheritance or division of assets: “There was a split after my mum’s death. My mother had inherited several fields, which became a subject of contention. The fields were in an area where there was builder’s sand, and this was going to be mined. This made the purchase price go up, of course. My uncles had plans, and I managed to thwart them with the help of some good people. They sent me to the orphan’s court which decided that my uncles should not make the decision to sell, but rather the court should until my coming of age. The family gold had also

[20] DDVD, Harašta, p. 17.

been lost after my mother's death if it was not a lot, plus other things. The matter went to court, and I went into exile: the family expelled me from its centre like a pernicious element."^[21]

The family's tie to a specific place was also an important moment in the recollection process. Almost every text begins with a description of the family village or family town. Most memories are set in the countryside. While some authors came from towns or cities, many of their memories are set in the family village of one of their parents. These cases mostly involve summer holidays, which many of the witnesses spent with their grandparents or other family members. This localization represents a unique message to recipients; like all narratives, even family stories must be set within carefully described scenes.

Typology of Figures

Following on from the previous topic, we analysed descriptions of individual types of figures and their relational ties to other family members. There is a clearly identifiable division of characteristics, which we have chosen to call "urban", which is linked to the background from which the author and his family come. Characteristics typical for a rural environment at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, for example – working hard and saving – are also prescribed to parameters used to describe individual ancestors, and which the authors force onto them in transmitting memories, and the resulting transfer of values. In an urban society, emphasis is placed on education more than on labour. The symbolic capital here is held more in functions, relationships, and contacts, while in the rural environment, it is held in land tenure, farmland, piety, and in the ability not to "cause gossip". Where there was a blending of these two worlds, this often involved specific representatives and symbols of the idea of the old, perhaps archaic, world of the members of their grandparents' generation (Chvojka, 2003: 322). We still need to emphasize that these conclusions can be related solely to the set of texts we have collected, or they can be expanded and generalized to family history reflections in texts in general. The general validity of social, psychological, and demographic conditional phenomena in an ontological sense can certainly not be described here.

Besides this division, we can also see a different typology in descriptions of gender roles. While men are mostly attributed the typical characteristics of working hard (*"In the family, grandpa was more appreciated (hard-working and a better disposition than granny); granny was quite ill, angry all her life, grandpa did a lot of 'women's work' for her"*)^[22], being strict (*"I grew up with discipline and obedience strictly enforced; my dad hated lies and complaints or us saying we couldn't*

[21] Ibid., p. 32.

[22] DDVD, Chlebounová, p. 3.

do something and so on. He was strict and fair as the head of the family, although I often didn't grasp his justice"),^[23] fairness, wisdom ("Dad was always the model of a noble, honest man for us [...] he taught us without admonishment to love goodness and condemn any injustice just through his example."),^[24] entrepreneurship, and progressiveness ("Dad was a learned and progressive man. He was one of the first to get electricity on the farm, then mains water and drinking troughs in the stables"),^[25] while for women authors noted their caring nature, and ability to do housework well ("Marie [the author's mother] was a good housekeeper and experienced cook. She took good care of the home and brought up her children. She also found time for manual work, which she enjoyed doing, making two hand-embroidered carpets [...] In the garden, she was good at growing flowers.")^[26], love for their children, sacrifice ("I don't have many memories of her [the author's mother] – she was a simple woman, she lived in seclusion and sacrificed herself for her family, and so I don't have the interesting stories about her that I do about my father. She was a loving and caring woman.")^[27] and so on. Perceptions and generalizations associated with gender roles evolve and change over time.

In older texts from the corpus, mothers, grandmothers, and aunts are generally portrayed as obedient and passive wives, usually without their own opinions, or holding the opinions of their husbands. Often these characteristics are part of a kind of "social cohesion genetics" and a role learned from their ancestors: "For my mum, my granny – Veronika Tesařová – a quiet, hard-working, kind-hearted figure, represented a fine example of maternal love, care, modestly and also necessary resolve. Her entire being expressed a desire for well-being, justice, tranquillity, peace, and inner poise. She had a strong sense of the needs of others and was always ready to help anybody who needed it."^[28] Another example is given by Eduard Dudík: "Her daughter – our mother Marie – was a faithful image to her [the author's grandmother]."^[29] This subconscious "passing of the torch" (transferral of role) is even reflected in the following recollection. Very often, for example, the author's mother is recalled in the texts as the grandmother of the author's children. Any reader can grasp this aspect in their own experiences if they remember the time when they stopped addressing their parents in their parental roles, newly renamed them grandparents following the birth of their offspring.

[23] DDVD, Harašta, p. 16.

[24] DDVD, Patočková, p. 6.

[25] DDVD, Papírník, p. 13.

[26] DDVD, Koday, p. 107

[27] DDVD, Harašta, p. 20.

[28] DDVD, Krajčová, p. 5.

[29] DDVD, Dudík, p. 7.

Regarding grandmothers, we encounter a specific “breaking” of a common stereotype. While authors can portray a supposed stereotypical image of how a traditional grandmother should behave, what she should look like, and what to expect from her, they also always note that their own grandmother did not fit in with this. Here the question arises as to whether the remembered reality is actually being described, or whether the memories are not already overlain by the “nose” of one’s own value ranking, based on the contemporary context, charged to the period when the text was written. It is thus very necessary to distinguish not only the period described but also the “time gap” between the remembered phenomenon and the memory itself. One example is a comment from Jiří Papírník: *“It was not common at all in those days for a rural woman to read and even express her own opinion. Granny could do this – perhaps because she was hard of hearing from childhood, she found pleasure in prayer and books.”*^[30]

Independent women are more of an exception. This position does change a little, however, if not by much, as the narrative moves chronologically to later periods. This perspective changed in the second half of the 20th century, and women who appear in these later texts are characterized as decisive, running the family: *“Mum was the very pragmatic and tough leader in our family. Our mum Liduška once went home from work across a building site, for example, where there was a mislaid shovel – so she simply put it in the pram (her method of transporting items for many years) and continued home.”*^[31]

Wherever the above-listed stereotypes were broken and one of the figures was significantly outside one of these “boxes”, they were mostly considered black sheep. Surprisingly, such figures are found in almost every text. They are perceived in a negative or tragic light, and as a glaring warning not to follow, or there was an implicit suppression of either their existence directly or else their uniqueness. One example is a recollection of Marie Krajčová: *“We kids accepted our ‘Young Uncle’s’ physical disability as a given and didn’t speak about it.”*^[32] As well as such sad and suppressed cases, there were often also contrastingly told jolly stories linked to such “black sheep”, which within the family served, for example, to provide fun and entertainment at gatherings: *“Aunt Mařenka is part of our family, who by chance was born on 17 November (if a “few” years earlier). And by chance, our aunt was taking part in a trip of Pozořice Farming Co-operative members to Prague on 17. 11. 1989. Because it was her birthday, Uncle Tonda (her husband) gave her pocket money for the ‘dizzying’ sum of a hundred Czechoslovak crowns so she could really enjoy her birthday in Prague. And she probably did, because although Mařenka returned home to the bosom of the family that night*

[30] DDVD, Papírník, p. 13.

[31] DDVD, Pošvář, p. 4.

[32] DDVD, Krajčová, p. 45.

in a relatively orderly fashion, the next day we found out that a coup d'état had started. Important here is that this was the aunt who in a local bar in Hostěnice at one time had hit the chandelier with a chair in defending the good name of her children during 'some discussion'."^[33] Mostly, however, these were not covered-up cases, nor funny stories, but rather examples of how not to behave and what "not to end up like": *"Mum spoke about Uncle Josef with a certain bitterness. She said that he had caused her parents a lot of suffering and headaches. He hadn't wanted to finish his studies, had left grammar school in Year 7 and went to do blacksmithing."*^[34]

Visualization of Memories and Memory Aids

Family memoirs comprise not just the texts themselves, but also material memory bearers as integral components. These may comprise reminders, small objects, and also often furniture which is handed down in families from generation to generation and are often linked to the stories and figures of ancestors. Photographs play a specific role in such objects. Often, they are an integral component in the writing down of memory texts, whether incorporated into the texts or as part of a separate family album. Regardless of the economic background of individual families, they all without exception had photographs of their ancestors. The later the text, the more photographs it contained. Group family photos or photos of individual ancestors fulfill a double role in ego-documents. Firstly, they serve to visualize memories, and secondly, they help the authors to remember a historical reality that is long past. In looking at the composition of the image, the author may remember not just what their family members looked like, their clothes, and the hairstyles of the time, but if the author is also in the photo, he can reconstruct the circumstances of how it was taken. This induces other memories which the author would likely not have recalled without the visual cue. Such an album can represent a metaphor for the family itself, and this is something the authors themselves were aware of, including Josef Hora: *"Between roughly 1870 and 1930, an album of photographs of family and friends was displayed in a place of honor in the best room, lounge or dining room of every 'better' home. This was usually a thick book about 20x27 cm, with a leather or papier-mâché cover, fitted with decorations and often also a clasp. ... The popularisation of photography led to the end of this type of photo album. There were too many pictures, photographs were being taken of absolutely everything, and so albums had to adapt to capacity, price, and practicality. New fashion led to their absolute end (keeping family albums at the bottom of the cupboard), as did the curious hands of kids destroying if accidentally, the delicate mounts of now-worn paper. The final blow was dealt*

[33] DDVD, Pošvář, p. 10–11.

[34] DDVD, Chlebounová, p. 14.

during the totalitarian regimes: under Nazi occupation, there was no interest in showing off your relatives in their Sokol uniforms, never mind the uniforms of Russian, Italian, or French legions. During socialism, this applied to any ancestor or relative wearing anything better than a worker's smock (and I'm not saying anything bad about the working class, and even the workers at this time dressed up in their 'Sunday best' for photographs). And so, this 'glory to the fathers' usually ended up in the waste bin or the best cases in a second-hand or vintage goods store. And my contemporaries today are worrying that our offspring might treat us as we treated our ancestors. But who were all these people in the photos? What is our family relationship with them? What were their life stories? Do their haircuts and fashion deserve our ridicule?"^[35]

A deeper analysis of photographs as a historical source is not possible here due to time pressure, which is why we are limiting ourselves to their role in transmitting family memories. Most of the photos are portraits of individual family members, and most are taken at the closest studio to their place of residence. There are also less common photographs, which portray important rites of passage – weddings, baptisms, promotions, returning from military service, etc. There were very few family, or group photographs in earlier periods, which is entirely understandable considering the inaccessibility of cameras for everyday use. In the second half of the 20th century, photographs portraying a larger number of family members became a common component of all memory texts and family chronicles. The style of the visual portrayal of figures also changes. While in the earlier period, the ideal placing of objects, usually in profile, is typical, in the later period we see more authentic genre photos which portray the momentary impression of an instant.

Transmission – passing on memories

The main topic of our research is the transmission of family memories in ego-documents, in what manner this occurs, and what the authors want to communicate to their offspring and future generations. There are methods of transmitting family memories that cannot be captured through standard methodological-historiographical research, and which come more under sociology or psychology. In almost all families, family memories are transmitted through oral traditions, whether this involves the telling of stories from one's own life (a typical example might be a grandfather talking about his military service), or through recounting memories of ancestors no longer alive.^[36] Author Anna Patočková, for example, notes telling such stories to her family: "*Most of what I write to you, you*

[35] DDVD, Hora.

[36] Family interviews can be considered a specific case of collaborative reminiscence practices (Harris et al., 2008).

know from my stories. I have always enjoyed looking back on times experienced in a happy home, and these memories have often given me support in later life. With deep feelings and gratitude for our dear parents, I recall various experiences."^[37] The written records in family chronicles, recollections, and memoirs thus form just a fraction of what is transmitted from generation to generation orally, i.e. in unwritten form. It is therefore a specific and generally marginal type of transmission, which results in the family memory being converted into a permanent form which essentially limits the modification of individual stories affected by the individuality and memory of individual family members. In this way, the living active family memory essentially becomes passive, no longer able to develop or be added to. "*Focusing specifically on family narrative interactions may be particularly important: important because in recounting the past, family members reconstruct their personal and shared experiences, in this process reinterpreting and re-evaluating what happened and what it meant* (Bohanek et al., 2009: 490)."

The process of transmission can be divided into two phases, which we have labeled explicit and implicit. The former refers to the conscious transmission of family memory, and this includes the decision to write down orally handed-down traditions and the motivation to write a text which the author includes in his introduction, where the previously-mentioned dedication paragraph is very often found. An important moment in the process is mentioned in the memories of Anna Chlebounová, for example, who admits herself that her text is subjective and calls upon her descendants to expand upon it: "*And that's why my memories, which I confer to paper, are mainly written for my family. They are given as I remember them, and nothing has been made poetic or embellished upon. It would be pointless to write down something which was not based on the truth. So, I ask my own children especially not to criticize them and to add to them what they remember.*"^[38] This is essentially a request that her offspring get actively involved in the process of transmitting family memories, turning them from recipients and bearers to the medium. This request represents a key moment in the whole process of transmission, which assumes not just passive receipt of information, but also its transmission to future generations. We also encounter cases, however, in which the author him- or herself provides information on the role of recipient, bearer, and medium of family memory, such as Maruše Čábelová-Strnadová, who recounts of her grandmother: "*We put beds in the corners of the room, to the left and right of the window, and before going to sleep we talked and remembered. A film of years gone by once again played before my eyes, a time that was incredibly*

[37] DDVD, Patočková, p. 5.

[38] DDVD, Chlebounová, p. 11.

beautiful and happy for me. There were also granny's memories. I listened to her quietly as a mouse, and found out many things which I can utilize today..."^[39]

The second phase of transmission is subconscious. It comprises the chosen topics, the characteristics the author attributes the described figures, the perspective from which they view the events, and even what is not written down, i.e. hidden self-censorship. It often involves established wisdom as told by ancestors, or the life values they followed, as, for example, Vlasta Abžoltovská notes: "*Václav Klich used to say: The best dowry I can give my children is to teach them to work and save. Giving a young person money is like giving a child a knife. And children: don't look at what I have, a storm can take it all away. But nobody can take away from you that you have learned.*"^[40] Apparently, banal discussion of the author's grandmother's activities fulfils the role of setting up the right way of life in family memories, as in Jan Kodaj's text: "*Instead of relaxing, she continued to seek out gainful employment; she helped in the kitchen, she tidied up and raked in the garden, and as late as a month before she died she was knitting stockings.*"^[41] The image of the family and its individual members transmitted thus becomes a conscious or subconscious construct of social, emotional, and especially cognitive relationships, to a greater extent than a collection of data from registry offices. And just as applies generally to the process of remembering, so transmitting family memory involves processes for necessary updates.

Even apparently objectivist genealogical overviews of ancestors^[42] within the linked narrative text become a kind of overview of archetypal models in a subjectivized form which the particular author of memories considers "transferable". As well as "positive" figures, "black sheep" figures are also constructed, with both groups serving to shape the author's values in their well-mastered roles. In this context, so-called "cascading memories" are of particular value, if somewhat rare. We have used this term to describe cases where recollections and memories are written by different members of different generations within a single family. One such example is the memory texts of authors Adolf and Jaroslav Daněk (father and son), with occasional notes from Tomáš Daněk,^[43] who was the grandson and son of the former mentioned. In these texts, we can observe the changes in values and in the way of thinking in general which occur across the generations.

[39] DDVD, Čábelová-Strnadová, p. 89.

[40] DDVD, Abžoltovská, p. 50.

[41] DDVD, Kodaj, p. 67.

[42] For example see DDVD, Kodaj; Patočková; Čábelová-Strnadová; Cifka.

[43] DDVD, Daněk, A.; Daněk, J.

Conclusion

Going back to the introduction, we can respond in the affirmative to the first and third baseline questions, i.e. whether ego-documents have the function of intergenerational transmission of memories, and whether figures act as archetypes. As we have demonstrated in our previous analysis, ego-documents play an important role in intergenerational transmission, and as media of family memory, they are also conceived within their intentionality. The authors themselves state that they want to preserve their own experiences and those of their ancestors for future generations. Many of them are aware of the role they are playing in this memory transfer, and so they offer their memories of historical reality to their readers, as viewed from a subjective perspective. It is not about what ancestors were really like, but rather what impression they gave to their descendants, and how they are remembered. This also relates to the role of ancestors in family memories. We can actually see certain archetypes which individual family members represent for their descendants, and which future generations should follow. There are clearly defined characteristics that ancestors had which are presented as good examples to follow.

The final question remains, of whether there are any templates for such recollections, or whether all the texts are completely different. We can observe diachronic narration for the individual texts, from the oldest preserved or remembered ancestors, up to the author. We can also observe several topics that repeat across the texts, such as the impact of war on daily life, the rhythm of rural life, working children, festivals, relationships within the family, important figures, the death of a parent, etc. Each text, however, also contains topics that are not unique but which nevertheless are missing in the other texts. Essentially the authors of the other texts did not consider them to be noteworthy. In this perspective in particular, we can see the real value of ego-documents: not just in the number of topics that can be analysed in the pages of recollections, diaries, and family chronicles, but in particular in their individuality, which makes them an irreplaceable resource for discovering the lives of our ancestors. These texts provide insight into the way of life in the Czech lands during the late 19th and early 20th century. They reveal details such as national festivities, allowing us to better understand the cultural practices of that period.

Although, as we have stated above, we can see a certain pattern that many of these texts follow, we still see that all the topics are presented differently, emphasizing different and distinctive moments. As such, the texts do not serve merely as an explicit source of information on the people and situations that the author records in them, but they also reveal a lot about the author himself or herself. In the submitted analysis, we have endeavoured to bring both these aspects together. The question of the usefulness and usability of ego-documents in academic research is one which continues to crop up within historiography. In some extreme

cases, their relevance is questioned, with arguments that the individually portrayed descriptions of historical events make them distorted or even false. We can certainly concede all these apparent shortcomings, but this does not make them worthless pieces of paper. Instead, a whole range of opportunities is opened to us regarding how to work with these sources, what questions to posit about them, how to present them, etc.

The research of family memory in Czech historiography is a relatively new discipline that draws on established methodological concepts. This analysis solely relies on written ego-documents to contribute to the current body of research. Its aim is to enhance the existing research in this field. Sources such as ego-documents present opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, which is crucial for the growth and enhancement of individual fields. There is a plethora of topics that could be investigated using an extensive and comprehensive corpus of ego-documents, and we have only been able to outline a few of them. Individual topics also offer potential for interdisciplinary research, encompassing history, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. They can contribute to research in the history of emotions, daily life, economic history, etc. Let us hope, then, that there will be increasing interdisciplinary studies, and our generation will be motivated to write down “family chronicles for future generations”.

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