



„Wychowanie w Rodzinie” t. XXXI (2/2024)

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## I enjoy looking at family memorabilia: on the institutionalization of family memory

Lubię oglądać rodzinne pamiątki –  
czyli o instytucjonalizacji rodzinnej pamięci

### Abstract

**Introduction.** The literature identifies three types of “institutions” (*i.e.*, established, regularly realized patterns of social roles and behaviours) that serve to maintain family memory. The third of these institutions is the “family treasury” containing memorabilia. Memorabilia is always associated with some situation from the past: an event, or a family member. The memory of these situations is not always present, but thanks to memorabilia we can remember and reminisce, because they are “reminders.”

**Aim.** The aim of the article is to show the importance of family memorabilia in the institutionalization of family memory among high school students, history teachers, and Polish people.

**Methods and materials.** The following tools were used in the work: analysis of the results

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of two representative quantitative and qualitative studies. The basic research technique was questionnaire interviews conducted with three groups of respondents – high school students (N=3718), Poles over 20 years of age (N=1068) and high school history teachers (N=1115). The material was enriched with quantitative research of 8 group interviews with Poles over 20 years of age, 8 interviews with teachers working in high schools and 16 group interviews with high school students.

**Results.** The analysis shows that the greater the interest in viewing family memorabilia, the greater the tendency to attribute patriotism, an interest in politics, a higher level of civic attitudes, a larger collection of books and a higher level of historical knowledge. Additionally, a correlation was found between being a woman, older age, higher education and an interest in viewing family memorabilia.

**Conclusion.** The link between viewing family memorabilia and patriotism, an interest in politics, a higher level of historical knowledge or greater civic engagement can be used to classify individuals as “strong families” - *i.e.*, well-rooted in the past. Possessing and viewing family memorabilia can be a motivating factor for civic engagement. Memories under the influence of browsing (possessing) memorabilia shape the sense of identity and belonging, which in turn can inspire actions for the common good.

**Keywords:** collective memory, family memory family, family memorabilia, intergenerational transmission.

### Abstrakt

**Wprowadzenie.** W literaturze przedmiotu można wyodrębnić trzy typy *instytucji* – czyli ustalonych, regularnie realizowanych wzorów ról i zachowań społecznych – służących podtrzymaniu pamięci rodzinnej. Trzecią instytucją jest tzw. rodzinna skarbnica, zawierająca pamiątki, które zawsze wiążą się z jakąś sytuacją z przeszłości: jakimś wydarzeniem czy też członkiem rodziny i dzięki nim możemy pamiętać i pamiętamy, gdyż są one „bodźcami przypominania”.

**Cel.** Celem artykułu jest ukazanie znaczenia pamiątek rodzinnych w instytucjonalizacji pamięci rodzinnej wśród uczniów szkół średnich, nauczycieli historii oraz mieszkańców Polski.

**Metody i materiały.** W pracy zastosowano następujące narzędzia: analiza wyników dwóch reprezentacyjnych badań ilościowych i jakościowych. Podstawową techniką badawczą były wywiady kwestionariuszowe przeprowadzone z trzema grupami respondentów – uczniami szkół średnich (N=3718), Polakami powyżej 20 roku życia (N=1068) oraz nauczycielami historii z szkół średnich (N=1115). Materiał wzbogacono badaniami ilościowymi: 8 wywiadów grupowych z Polakami powyżej 20 roku życia, 8 wywiadów z nauczycielami pracującymi w szkołach średnich, a także 16 wywiadów grupowych z uczniami szkół średnich

**Wyniki.** Z analizy wynika, że im większe zainteresowanie oglądaniem pamiątek rodzinnych, tym większa skłonność do przypisywania sobie patriotyzmu, tym większe zainteresowanie polityką, wyższy poziom postaw obywatelskich, większy księgozbiór oraz poziom wiedzy historycznej. Dodatkowo stwierdzono zależność pomiędzy płcią, wiekiem i wykształceniem a zainteresowaniem oglądaniem pamiątek rodzinnych.

**Wnioski.** Związek pomiędzy oglądaniem pamiątek rodzinnych a patriotyzmem, zainteresowaniem polityką, wyższym poziomem wiedzy historycznej czy też większym zaangażowaniem obywatelskim może stanowić podstawę do zakwalifikowania jednostek do „mocnych rodzin”, czyli dobrze zakorzenionych w przeszłości. Posiadanie i oglądanie pamiątek rodzinnych może być czynnikiem motywującym do zaangażowania obywatelskiego. Wspomnienia, które pojawiają się pod wpływem przeglądania (posiadania) pamiątek kształtują poczucie tożsamości i przynależności, co z kolei może inspirować do działań na rzecz dobra wspólnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pamięć zbiorowa, pamięć rodzinna, rodzina, rodzinne pamiątki, przekaz międzypokoleniowy.

## Introduction

As a rule, our memory is selective – it is limited to certain elements and therefore, both individually and collectively, some content is erased by others. However, some objects stimulate memory, including the memorabilia present in our homes. Memorabilia are always associated with a past situation such as an event or a family member, and through them, we can and do remember, as they are “stimuli of recollection.” As Marek Krajewski (2013, p. 124) indicates, “[...] an individual thus needs mementoes to honour himself and to nurture his own identity, because integral to it is a unique way of remembering what has happened.”

They can be incorporated into our biographies in different ways. We acquire them through commodity exchange (between our family members or purchase), we receive them as gifts or inheritance, and we find them in places associated with our family members or in places where our family functioned. It should be noted, however, that we become owners of family mementoes – in most cases – through non-economic social relationships/bonds between family members, and mementoes are very often located in the home (Miller, 2008).

Agnieszka Chmielewska (2004 a) suggests that we can distinguish between the following types of memorabilia: private, local and patriotic. The first relates to deceased family members, the second is connected to the history of the locality or region and the third relates to the “big story.” Dariusz Śnieńko, in *Modi mem-*

*oradi-lexicon of the culture of remembrance* (2014), wrote that memorabilia-objects include family mementoes, national mementoes, relics, souvenir trophies, tourist mementoes, media mementoes, and corporate mementoes. It is worth pointing out that what allows us to be distinct from other people is not only the possession of an heirloom that no one else has, but above all the unique link that the individual has with the ancestors through it. As Igor Kopytoff (2004) points out, the objects we use have their own “biography of things,” i.e., they move from collective (generation) to collective (generation), thus changing ownership, cultural status, meanings, roles and functions. Of particular importance is status, i.e., movement between different systems of exchange, inclusion or exclusion. An example of this is an object that may initially be a gift and later become a family heirloom to remember the person(s) who are no longer with us. In general, “[...] each way of understanding the term places the memento in the context of time, the past and memory” (Śnieżko 2014, p. 322).

Issues of collective memory and historical consciousness were brought into scientific discourse by Maurice Halbwachs at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was then that the topic of memory – previously considered mainly by psychologists and historians – was initiated for sociology. In his reflections, the author paid attention to the social dimension of memory, including how individuals reconstruct the past through participation in various types of groups. General considerations of the social framework of memory culminated in concepts relating to the family, religious groups and social classes. In his reflections, M. Halbwachs (2008) indicated that:

[...] sometimes a more or less enigmatic symbol of the common ground, from which the family draws its distinctive features, is its country or place of origin, or a certain characteristic figure of one of its members. In any case, from the various elements of this kind preserved from the past, family memory creates a framework which it tries to keep intact and which is a kind of traditional armour of the family. Although this framework consists of facts that were of a certain date, and images that lasted for a certain time, when one finds the judgements that the family and the people around it had about them, one transfers into this framework something of the nature of those collective notions that do not fit into a specific moment and that seem to reign over time (p. 225).

Barbara Szacka (2010, p. 85) writes about the importance of the family in memory processes and points out that “[...] it [author’s note] is a filter of information that becomes embedded in memory.” As Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatkowski (2005)

notes, the institutionalisation of family memory is important. “Based on research, it is possible to identify three ‘types of institutions’ (i.e., established, regularly performed patterns of social roles and behaviour) for the maintenance of family memory” (p. 240). These are, firstly, the customs of remembering the fate of the family, secondly, the institution of the family custodian and the family treasury – family memorabilia. The literature indicates that this family treasury, which is the family archive, is usually analysed as texts, photographs, and documents relating to family history (Barrett, Stallybrass, 2013; Piejko, 2008); nevertheless, it can also be formed by objects such as blankets, toys, and even plants when they relate to a past associated with the family (Gerlich, Gerlich, 2012; Evans, 2012; Pearce, 1998). Research (Miller, 2008) has shown that the family treasury that is created fulfils symbolic value by conferring legitimacy and authenticity to those who are represented in the treasury. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (1981, p. XI) point out that objects (memorabilia) are very important in identity formation and are an integral part of the process by which people create meanings, to the extent that objects “create the ultimate purposes of an individual’s existence.”

Increasingly, attention is being given not only to physical mementoes but also to digital ones held by family members (Petrelli, Whittaker, 2010). Teresa Sołdra-Gwiżdż (1993), describing the possessions (mementoes) of displaced persons from the former Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic and the first years of their stay in the Opole region, points out that mementoes were not numerous due to the conditions associated with the movement, but constituted an important element of identity formation. Julia Sałacińska-Rewiak (2014), analysing three generations of Poles in Kazakhstan, makes a similar statement: “The preservation of mementoes, which, although they testify to the dramatic past, also serve to rebuild the endangered sense of familiarity and ensure a sense of continuity of identity for Kazakh Poles” (p. 216). It is worth mentioning that the process of renewal of memorabilia is also observed, serving not only to preserve tradition but also to adapt to changing social and cultural conditions. Through the renewal of owned resources (mementoes), families assign new meanings and interpretations to the past, enabling the continuation of family history in a changing society (Türe, Ger, 2016).

## **Methods and materials**

The project entitled *Edukacja dla pamięci. Przekaz wiedzy historycznej w kontekście postawach Polaków wobec ich przeszłości* [Education for remembrance. Transfer of his-

torical knowledge in the context of Poles' attitudes to their past] was developed by researchers from the University of Rzeszów for the Institute of National Remembrance, and the contractors selected in the form of a tender procedure were the companies: *ASM Centrum Badań i Analiz Rynkowych Sp. z o. o.* – quantitative research and the consortium of companies *Instytut Badawczy IPC Sp. z o. o.*, *Grupa WW Sp. z o. o.*, *Quality Watch Sp. z o. o.* – qualitative research. The text presents the research conducted in 2022. The basic research technique consisted of questionnaire interviews conducted with three groups of respondents. CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) surveys were conducted with Poles 20+ and teachers, while CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) surveys were conducted with students of secondary schools, technical schools and lower secondary trade schools.

The sampling of secondary school students (N=3718) was done by division:

- 16 voivodeships,
- type of secondary school (general secondary school, technical secondary school, or lower secondary school),
- and year – grades I to V.

160 establishments and a reserve sample were drawn from the Educational Information System. In each school, it was assumed that interviews would be conducted in one class. The collected results allow the results to be generalised to the student population with a 2% error. The next category of respondents – history teachers (N=1068) – was drawn from the Educational Information System database with a breakdown:

- voivodships,
- types of secondary schools,
- level of professional promotion (+/- 2% with the following proportions: 6% interns, 19% contractual, 20% appointed, and 55% certified).

The survey was conducted in 160 schools (the same schools in which the student survey was conducted) and an additional 200 establishments were drawn. A maximum of 3 interviews could be conducted per school. Maximum error 3%. The last group of respondents were Poles over 20 years of age, i.e., born before 2002, 1 January (N=1068). They were selected using a random method (PESEL database) ensuring that the distributions of basic socio-demographic characteristics in the sample were consistent with the distribution presented by the Central Statistical Office. The maximum margin of error is 3%. The survey proper in each group of respondents was preceded by a pilot study conducted among: 150 students, 50 Poles over 20 years of age and 50 teachers. The quantitative data collected was subjected to statistical analysis. In addition, focus group interviews were

conducted with each group of respondents. Taking into account the territorial distribution of respondents, 8 focus group interviews were conducted with Poles aged over 20 (69 people), 8 interviews with teachers working in secondary schools (67 people), and 16 focus group interviews with secondary school students (134 people in total). This article serves to answer the question: What are family mementoes and what is their place in society? In addition, it allows us to understand whether there are any correlations between attitudes towards the family treasury and civic activity in the widest sense.

### Family memorabilia – their possession and use

Family mementoes kept in the home provide an important perspective on family memory and its relationship to history. They are one form of institutionalisation of family memory, which is why Polish sociologists have asked about them in their research since the beginning of inquiries into attitudes towards the past—see Table 1 for details.

Table 1

*Possession of family mementoes by Poles*

Possession of family mementoes (%)	1970	1999	2003
Yes, there are still such mementoes today	41	52	47
Yes, there used to be, but there are no such mementoes today	17	8	6
There are no such mementos	36	38	40
Difficult to say/don't know	6	2	6

*Source:* Kwiatkowski (2005).

Analysing the data from 2022 (Table 2), it was found that the largest family treasure trove is in the families of teachers, or at least this group declared knowledge of their possession. More than a third of the students do not know if any mementoes are kept in their families. The study observed that women, residents of larger settlement units, people with better material conditions, and students attending general secondary schools were more likely to declare possession of memorabilia. Analysing the data, it can be concluded that the trend in possession of family mementoes in Poland shows a decrease in the number of people who have them and an increase in people who used to have mementoes but do not have them. It is worth noting that the percentage of respondents who have never had such mementoes (if we refer

to previous surveys) remains relatively stable. The increasing number of people who find it difficult to answer this question may result from the changing nature of family ties and societal traditions.

Table 2

*Possession of family memories by adult Poles, students and teachers*

Possession of family mementoes (%)	Poles 20+	Students	Teachers
Yes, there is still such memorabilia today	22	16	62
Yes, there used to be, but there are none now	26	28	11
There are no such memorabilia	36	21	24
Difficult to say/don't know	16	36	3

Source: Malicki, Wilk, & Żuk (2023).

Respondents were asked what type of souvenirs they had (details of the distribution of responses are presented in Table 3).

Table 3

*Type of memorabilia possession*

What important family mementoes are kept in your family?	Type of respondent		
	Pole (A)	Student (B)	Teacher (C)
Photographs, albums	93.3%B C	68.5%	75.0%B
Documents	16.4%B	9.0%	37.7%A B
Medals, orders, distinctions	8.0%	15.4%A	18.8%A
Letters, postcards, diaries, recordings of memories	13.4%	9.3%	11.0%
Old coins	2.1%	4.2%C	1.7%
Postage stamps	1.7%C	0.8%	0.1%
Jewellery	3.4%	5.1%	3.6%
Tableware, porcelain, crystal, ceramics, cutlery	3.4%	1.7%	2.9%
Paintings, works of art	4.6%	2.4%	4.0%
Books and maps	5.0%	2.7%	3.2%
Clothing	1.7%	1.5%	1.2%
Uniform, helmet, uniform items	0.4%	3.6%A	2.7%



What important family mementoes are kept in your family?	Type of respondent		
	Pole (A)	Student (B)	Teacher (C)
Weapons, ammunition	0.8%	3.4%	1.9%
Devotional items (prayer book, cross, rosary, etc.)	1.3%	0.7%	2.0%
Clock, watch	1.3%	1.9%	1.0%
Everyday items, tools, household utensils	1.3%	3.7%	4.5%
Furniture	2.5%B	0.5%	1.4%
Music CDs, films, musical instruments	0.8%	0.8%	0.3%
Other memorabilia	0.8%	2.5%	1.4%

*Note:* The table includes the percentage results for N=1521 (people claiming to have family mementoes). Percentages do not add up due to the possibility of selecting multiple responses. A, B, and C next to the percentages indicate that the value is statistically significantly different from the value in the indicated column (A, B, or C).

*Source:* Author's own research.

The most frequently kept family mementoes, especially among Poles over the age of 20 (93.3%) compared to students (68.5%) and teachers (75.0%), are photographs and albums. More often than other groups, teachers keep documents (37.7%). Medals and decorations are more popular among teachers (18.8%) than adult Poles (8.0%). Students are significantly more likely to have old coins (4.2%) and uniforms (3.6%). The results suggest that teachers have more diverse and formal memorabilia, while students and Poles over 20 generally prefer more personal and everyday items. Respondents are most likely to keep photographs, also mentioned during the focus group interviews.

(FGI\_Adults in Poland, Katarzyna, 34 years old, Małopolskie Voivodeship): At my place, for example, it is all tucked away. We have quite a big family, so when we meet at my aunts' house we like to look at photos. I know what it looked like, my mum's aunt, my cousin. Some are still alive today, we just don't keep in touch with them. However, well, we get to know who is who. In the same way, the children are curious about what grandpa's dad looked like, for example, grandpa's mum. So for us, these photos are lying around, but they'll certainly never be thrown away, because there's always an opportunity to look at them. Then some memories stir up differently. And the children get to know their grandparents' family. And I think it's going to be preserved that way simply. These photographs will be passed on\*.

\* Statements from the research are quoted in the original, not edited linguistically.

(FGI\_ Students, Dominika, secondary school student, Świętokrzyskie voivodship): At my place as well. As for the photos, I... have such a... suitcase... and it's in this suitcase that there are albums, but there are also loose photos and a lot of those black and white photos where my siblings and I used to look at them. My mum showed us recently so that was the wow and that's where you could see my grandparents in their younger days. My grandmother just goes back to those photos often and I'm sure she wouldn't let it go in her life either, she keeps it in her wardrobe.

Based on the analyses undertaken, there was a relationship between interest in viewing family mementoes and various correlates (characteristics). Detailed statistical data are provided in Table 4.

Table 4

*List of main correlations with the question: I like to look at family memorabilia (e.g. photos, albums)*

Category of respondents: Variable (measure of relationship):	Poles 20+	Students
Gender (chi-square)	(( $\chi^2$ , df = 4) = 22,978, p<0.001, V Cramera = 0.147	( $\chi^2$ , df = 8) = 216.336, p<0.001, V Cramera = 0.169
Age (Spearman's rho)	p<0.001, rho=0.097	ns
Education (Spearman's rho)	p<0.001, rho=0.102	ns
Attitude towards faith (Spearman's rho)	ns	p<0.001, rho= -0.113
Type of school (chi-square)	Not studied	( $\chi^2$ , df = 8) = 217.230, p<0.001, V Cramera = 0,169
Number of books owned at home (Spearman's rho)	rho, p<0.001, rho=0.218	ns
Considering oneself to be a patriot/s (Spearman's rho)	p<0.001, rho= -0.265	p<0.001, rho=- 0.124
Way of understanding patriotism (chi-square)	ns	( $\chi^2$ , df = 4) = 37.415, p<0.001, V Cramera = 0.071
Interest in politics (Spearman's rho)	p<0.001, rho=-0.195	p<0.001, rho= -0.106
Level of citizenship (Spearman's rho)	p<0.001, rho=0.286	p<0.001, rho= 0.331
Level of historical knowledge (Spearman's rho)	rho, p<0.001, rho=0.167	rho, p<0.001, rho=0.134

Category of respondents: Variable (measure of relationship):	Poles 20+	Students
Membership of an organisation/association/ union (chi-square)	$(\chi^2, df=4) = 11.094,$ $p < 0.026, V \text{ Cramera} =$ $0.102$	ns

*Note:* ns – not statistically significant.

*Source:* Author's own study.

Among Poles over 20 years of age, a greater interest in viewing family memorabilia was found among women. Also, a greater interest in viewing family mementoes was found among people with secondary and higher education than among those with a basic vocational or lower education. The analyses conducted indicate that viewing of family memorabilia increases with age. Respondents were asked: Do you consider yourself a patriot/patriot? After analysing the responses, it was found that the greater the interest in viewing memorabilia, the greater the tendency to attribute patriotism to oneself. The survey also asked the question: What is your interest in politics? In this case, the results indicated that the greater the interest in looking at family memorabilia, the greater the interest in politics.

The questionnaire included a set of questions on civic activities such as going to the polls, getting socially involved in initiatives for my local community, organising/coordinating a charity collection for people in need, donating financial or in-kind support to a charity collection for people in need, participating in community protests and signing a petition to the authorities. An index of civic attitudes was created based on the collected responses. Correlating the civic attitudes index with viewing the family treasury, it was found that the greater the interest in viewing family memorabilia, the higher the level of civic attitudes. Thus, the correlation between possession of mementoes and civic engagement would be confirmed. Another proxy that correlates with viewing memorabilia is the home library. It was found that the greater the interest in viewing family memorabilia, the greater the book collection held at home. Knowledge of dates, figures or historical events is considered the basis for forming judgements about one's own country's past. The study tested the level of historical knowledge based on 28 questions relating to events in the period from the baptism of Poland to its accession to NATO. Juxtaposing the results of the test with family memorabilia, it was found that the greater the interest in viewing the memorabilia held, the higher the level of historical knowledge. A greater interest in viewing family memorabilia was also found in those belonging to non-governmental organisations. The analyses carried out do not allow for a correlation with variables such as:

- political orientation,
- way of understanding patriotism (heroic, civic, heroic-citizen),

- place of residence,
- financial situation
- religion.

Analysing the correlations between the characteristics of secondary school students and the statement: “I like to look at family memorabilia (e.g., photos, albums),” it is possible to observe the existence of correlations between the variables (Table 4). As in the group of Poles aged 20 and over, greater interest in looking at family mementoes is found in women, those showing greater interest in politics, with higher levels of civic attitudes, higher levels of historical knowledge (measured by the same 28-question test), and a tendency to ascribe to patriotism. Greater interest in viewing family memorabilia was found in students who understood patriotism in a heroic way (love of the homeland, respect for national symbols, readiness to fight, and raising children in the Catholic religion). The collected research material allows us to conclude that higher interest in browsing the family treasury is found in high school students, lower interest in technical school students, and lowest interest in students of trade schools. Additionally, it was found that the greater the interest in viewing family memorabilia, the more positive the attitude toward religion. Viewing family mementoes does not correlate with variables such as:

- political orientation
- size of place of residence,
- material conditions.

Very weak correlations were found for book ownership and membership in community organisations.

## **Conclusion**

The results of research (Szacka, 2010; Malicki, 2012) indicate that in many families, conversations are conducted in two streams: the first, related to participation in a great history, and the second, relating to the family’s private memory. Objects (family mementoes) are an element that allows memory to be reconstructed and recalled. Family memory of the past undergoes – like many other phenomena of social life – processes of institutionalisation. A manifestation of this is the possession of a family treasury of memorabilia. The intergenerational transmission (Dyczewski, 2003), both at the level of symbolic and material culture, becomes the basic medium enabling families to persist. Direct contact with the objects in one’s possession allows one to experience family membership and bonds with ancestors (Dyczewski, 2002),

who used (left behind) these objects. Jan Szczepański (1970) wrote that “[...]cultural heritage tends to become idealised, it becomes a set of sacred values, symbols surrounded by emotional attitudes, and therefore a factor of integration of groups, a centre of their concentration, a factor of their continuity and permanence in crises” (p. 48). Possessed memorabilia become symbols through which we belong to the family and thus foster identification and integration of family members. Collected mementoes are connectors between generations and become little vehicles that carry history into the future. It is worth pointing out, however, that there are times when mementoes (the family’s remaining possessions) become a “burden” for the heirs or lose their significance for subsequent generations (Woodham King, Gloyn, Crewe, & Blair, 2017). An example of this situation can be seen in the statement of one participant in the focus group interview quoted below.

(FGI\_Students, Aleksander, high school student, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship):  
Such memorabilia, in my opinion, are important because they are such a tangible history of what happened in our family. The only problem is that nowadays we mostly live in flats, in limited places, and we have nowhere to keep such things, to store them from generation to generation, and where will they go? It doesn’t make sense. The important things are usually small, handy and can be stored in such a place that they don’t interfere with normal life. So, for example, the crockery I mentioned earlier, the glassware, it’s impractical, there’s nowhere to keep it. If it’s a medal or a piece of jewellery, it can actually find its place. That is my opinion.

Photographs are the most common type of memorabilia kept by respondents. This may indicate their high emotional and symbolic importance to the respondents. Photos help preserve memories and document important events in the lives of family members. The possession of photographs may reflect the need to connect with the past and strengthen intergenerational bonds through visual memories. Their ubiquity may also be due to their simplicity of production, ease of storage or small size.

As the research indicates, the declaration related to viewing family memorabilia is related to, among other things, greater patriotism, civic attitudes or historical knowledge. Such a relationship may serve to qualify individuals as “strong families” – well-grounded in history (Bojar, 2003). Expanding on her concept, Hanna Bojar points to different types of families: traditional, traditionalist, inbred, bridging and alienated. The civic activity of family members is particularly evident in traditional and bridging families. Particularly in the traditional family (Bojar, 2013) there is

[...] a long family memory stretching back many generations and its strong connection to local memory [...] these particularly strong links of the family to the history of the local community and its civic traditions are indicated by the rich collections of family memorabilia, which are not infrequently made public and become a “common” heritage of the past, an element that builds the collective memory of local community residents while maintaining and strengthening family traditions of public activity (p. 281).

Seeing and keeping family memorabilia can help build a connection to the history of one’s family, local community, or country. Viewing family memorabilia that document ancestors’ involvement in civic or community activities can be inspiring. Those browsing may feel encouraged to continue their family heritage through their involvement in civic activity. Browsing family mementoes can help develop empathy towards, and understanding of, other people and their life stories. This, in turn, can lead individuals to engage in social activities for the benefit of others or local communities or to help those in need. To conclude, it should be stated, following Harriet Bradley (1999), that “[...] what we find in the archive [the memorabilia we possess – author’s note] is ourselves” (p. 119), and thus there is a link between possessions and a sense of identity, of who I am (we are).

Using our home treasury of memorabilia helps us to understand the dialectical nature of the relationship between past and present and thus our own position in this relationship.

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