

### Chapter 3.3.

## DOING FAMILY MEMORY IN THE CASE OF EMIGRATION EXPERIENCE

*Laima Žilinskienė*

### Introduction

This chapter analyses the construction of communicative family memory in the light of emigration experience.

The globalization processes under way adjust mobility scenarios which are influenced by emigration. Mobility and emigration change the habits and methods of communication and relationships among family members. The construction of the family as a collective unit, i.e. of the 'we-ness', happens not only through direct communication but also by means of various alternative communication means. Family memory and its communication demonstrates family solidarity. On the other hand, communication influences family solidarity and family integrity, especially when relationships in the family are determined not only by common practices but also by the communicative family memory. Morgan (2013) ascribes family memory to familial practices. Narratives convey the experience of family or kin members and behavioral patterns. The communicative family memory not only contributes to the development of the family memory archive but may also have an impact on life scenarios or behavioral models irrespective of political, economic and social contexts in which the life experiences had developed. The communicative family memory, when constructed in the light of emigration experience, may have an impact on the solidarity of the family and the continuity of family memory. Family memory requires to be supplemented and updated with new knowledge. The need to be interested in family memory is encouraged by various reasons, including emigration experience.

Memory studies allow to determine the ways of constructing family memory and its traditions. Two components are important in the construction of family memory: information channels and the contents of information being communicated. Information channels show the relationship among family and kin members, while the contents of the information being communicated shows what family practices in different

social, political and cultural contexts are in the center of attention. Family and kin members, being the narrators of their life stories, choose what information they will communicate, in what context will provide it and what information they should refrain from disclosing. Information can be provided differently and selectively. This means that the construction of family memory is a process which is in the state of constant (re)construction.

### **Theoretical Background**

In memory theory the functioning of memory discourses in the public domain is often referred to with the help of Aleida and Jan Assmann's terminology of cultural or collective and communicative memory. In these concepts, cultural memory describes past representations and their functioning in fixed cultural forms and practices, while collective memory is an unofficial communication method transferred to different generations presently living in the society or a social group (Assmann, 2008: 117). However, in the contemporary society the differentiation of and interaction between these levels is aggravated by the fact that both the communicative and personal memories are often articulated and passed down via fixed contemporary communication forms and these two levels frequently seem intertwined into a complicated mutual interrelationship (Assmann 2006: 214). However, in all cases the communicated memory has social applicability. Rosenthal (2016: 32) describes memory construction as more or less voluntary 'work' by the individual in the existing situation. Therefore, time dimension is important in memory construction. Life in different political, social and cultural contexts creates different experiences which may be passed down selectively. Another peculiarity is that memory communication practices tend to be repeated and information may change while performing the practices subject to the historical context and its evaluation in the public domain. Memory is an individual process, while the communication of family memory is targeted at the development of the collective memory of the family (Rosenthal, 2016: 32).

In memory typology, the family is singled out as a separate type with a special memory (Halbwachs, 1992: 63). Family memory is a typical memory of generations. According to Bengtson and Black (1973), family members representing older generations have an individual, family and social memory that is passed down to younger generations. This process is obvious and accepted as universal common sense. Intergenerational relations play a key role in the formation of psychosocial identity and the continuation of family members' socialization. Attias-Donfut and

Wolff (2003) analyze the interplay among intergenerational relations, personal lives and generational memories among family generations. The underlying idea is to capture some of the processes of transmission and continuity of the 'living history', i.e. the experienced and embodied history, through social and family interactions. They exploit the results from the cross-sectional data set at a macro-social level. In respect of the French society, the French empirically differentiate successive family generations and cohorts with their respective memories. According to them, memories are gendered. Men and women perceive the history of their generation differently, whether relating to the same events or emphasizing different ones. The impact of generations on family memory is reciprocal because narratives allow to identify oneself with recounted experiences. Such reciprocity directly influences the memory of the generation since it may help identify oneself with the time period of the parent or the child's cohort. Hagestad (1986) states that life stories of successive generations are intertwined in the family. This intertwining allows generations to remember the same things; in other words, the memories of generations coincide. The age plays a certain role here. The author states that political events or big changes experienced by twenty-year-old or younger individuals are particularly important in the process of cohort formation. Hagestad calls that 'generational imprinting'. He analyzed which historical events the representatives of different generations remember. The things experienced by parents may be part of younger family members' life as the recounted life stories are part of family memory.

The knowledge about the collective past of the family and passing down of this information to other family members constitutes memory construction. Not only the experiences undergone together but also the ones obtained previously are incorporated in family memory. Family memory is passed down by means of communication - in interaction with those who had acquired the experience in the past. Keppler (2001: 139) calls such interaction 'family conversations at the table'. She argues that memories build a certain family 'frame'. These 'frames' develop through communication and from life stories rather than through a single initiative. The peculiarity of family memory communication lies in the fact that this is an informal 'conversation at the table'. The (re) construction of family identity happens through such conversations. 'Conversations at the table' play the role of the formation of family relationships and family solidarity. Every family as a separate group of people has its memory. Keppler (2001: 144) calls it a separate 'generational memory' phenomenon. According to Keppler, 'conversations at the table',

construct the 'frames' of the family influencing family integrity. Because family memory is a typical generational memory, different generations create their own communication strategies in memory communication which are determined by the historical and cultural contexts. In different contexts, behavioral practices may be treated as positive or negative, hence the revision of family memory, which may entail the reconstruction of the memory. The communication of family memory has its own rules which determine what should be remembered during a specific period, what and to whom things can be told. Certain family experiences may attract bigger attention, while other experiences may be left unmentioned. Therefore, family memory requires the repetition and update of information, because the family is not a static group of people, it constantly receives new members (through marriage, births etc.) or loses family members. Therefore, the construction of family memory is a process requiring communication. Family memory communication, as per Keppler (2001), has its topics which may be developed further or left unmentioned. Middleton (1991) calls it 'conversational remembering'.

The transfer of the 'collective' memory of every family member, just like of any social group (Middleton calls such transfer (1991, 166–167) as 'something'), has a cultural, social and historical background. Therefore, the memory is both individual and collective. The memory of an individual is in communication and interaction with the memory of other members of the group. Keppler (1994) calls this 'the character of dialogical stories'. According to Assmann (1992, 167), the subject of memory is the person who tells stories in certain 'frames'. However, the stories (memories of events) that are told to family members are not just a picture of the past, but also a model of the group's common posture. Stories not only reproduce the past, but also define the present, family as a group, commonality, difficulties, and obstacles. This is how the moral 'background' of the family develops. With historical fractures, cultural memory highlights the specifics of the past and reveals family history.

The communicative family memory is much more than a means of communication - stories help us shape our identities, understand the world and mobilize others to action. According to Ricketson (2001), communicative family memory develops, over time, a sense of community, an understanding of what it is and a sense of identity.

## Research Methodology

The research carried out earlier (2010–2012; 2015; 2017–2019<sup>110</sup>), where biographical methodology was applied, show different levels of activity of family members in the construction of family memory. This is influenced by the historical context, by family structure as well as the closeness of relationships. Biographic material allows analyzing behavioral and communication models, but it does not allow evaluating memory construction at the national level. In this chapter, the construction of family memory is being analyzed on the basis of the representative study of Lithuanian residents (2018) carried out within the framework of Researchers' groups project 'Global migration and Lithuanian family: family practices, circulation of care and return strategies' (2017–2019) funded by the Lithuanian Research Council (LMTLT). The representative study data allow us to evaluate how the construction of family memory happens and what the prospects of memory continuity are. According to Keppler (2001: 139), the family memory archive is created by several storytellers through 'family table conversations'. Based on this methodological approach, the participants of family memory communication have been divided into three channels: 1) the familial channel consisting of parents, grandparents, parents-in-law and siblings; 2) the network channel consisting of uncles/aunts; and 3) the initiative channel, when the individual tells stories to other family and kin members himself/ herself. Apart from that, Keppler (2001: 139), Rosenthal (2016: 32) and Welzer (2001) emphasize that narratives have their own topics. Taking into consideration that family memory is a typical generational memory, the topics have been classified as follows: 1) the achievements of family or kin members or traumatizing experiences during different historical periods; 2) the revision of the family network: family festivities (weddings, baptisms, etc.) and the events causing grief (diseases, funerals, etc.); 3) family togetherness (good and painful relationships); 4) the content of 'common' information. The family communicative memory, called by Keppler 'conversations at the table', is being analyzed irrespective of the means of communication used for memory construction. The construction of family memory is being analyzed in the light of emigration experience of family (myself, spouse/ partner, other family members) and network members (friends, acquaintances) and of those with no such experience.

<sup>110</sup> Projects: 'Remembrance of Soviet times in life stories: relationship between public and private discourses' (2010–2012); 'Late Socialism in the life stories: the first generation of the Soviet Era' (2015); 'The last Soviet generation in the contexts of changing modernity' (2017–2019).

## **Peculiarities of emigration experience in Lithuania**

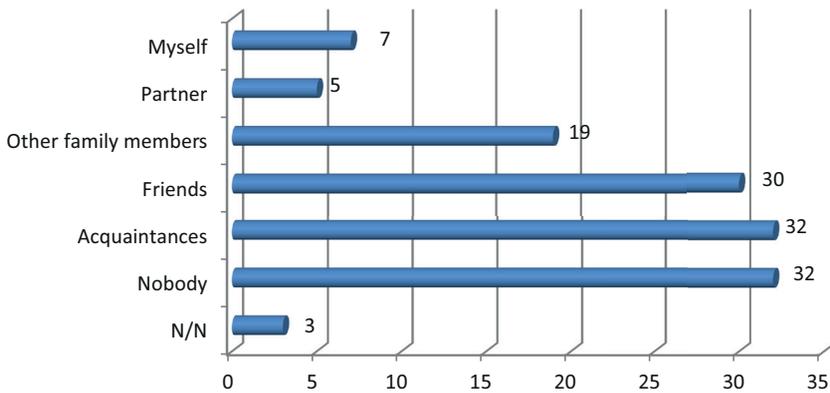
The following aspects should be emphasized in the construction of family memory: the role of gender (Attias-Donfut and Wolff, 2003), the significance for younger generations of communication by the representatives of the older family generation (Bengston and Black, 1973), the reciprocity of communication among generations (Hagestad, 1986), the initiatives on the part of narrators and listeners of life stories as well as the contents of the narratives (Keppler, 2001; Rosenthal, 2016). Migration is one of the factors which may alter the traditions of family memory construction. Migration is an indispensable condition of the changing world and a global phenomenon. Having escaped the grip of the closed Soviet system, Lithuania became a participant of the global migration process.

In this chapter, emigration experience is understood not only as the direct experience of an individual, but also as the experience of family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances. The participants of the study have been divided into three groups according to their emigration experience: 1) the family emigration consisting of himself/ herself, spouse/ partner and other family members; 2) network emigration consisting of friends, acquaintances, and 3) persons without emigration experience.

The group of individuals with emigration experience covers those individuals who have emigration experience of at least 6 months after 1990, or their family members, relatives, friends or acquaintances have such experience. Individuals who have never emigrated themselves and, apart from that, no one from their environment has, are considered as persons without emigration experience.

The data presented in Figure 1 show that two thirds (65%) of Lithuanian residents (myself, partner, other family members, friends, acquaintances) have had direct or indirect emigration experience since 1990. One third (31%) of Lithuanian residents have family emigration experience due to their own emigration or that of their spouse/ partner or other family members. An exclusively high share of 30–40-year-old males have emigration experience. Women, individuals under 50 years old and town residents have been exposed to their spouse's emigration more frequently than other groups<sup>111</sup>. As regards the emigration of other family members, women, individuals over 50 years old as well as town and country residents have experienced it more often than other groups. Town residents emphasize their relatives'

<sup>111</sup> The places of residence are classified into the city, the town and the country/ rural area.



**Figure 1.** Emigration experience of Lithuanian residents since 1990 (in percentages)

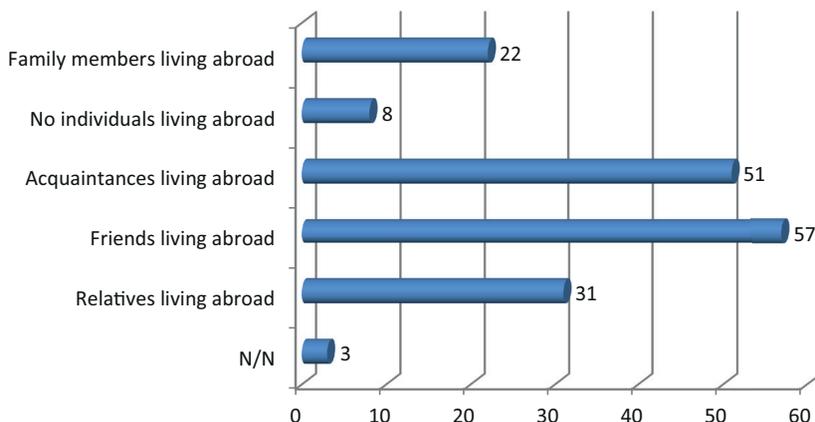
*Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).*

emigration experience. Individuals under 50 years old as well as town and city residents have experienced their friends' emigration more often than others. Males under 50 years old and town and city residents have more acquaintances with emigration experience in their environment.

One third (32%) of Lithuanian residents have no emigration experience. Neither are there people with emigration experience in their environment. This is typical of individuals over 50 years old and rural residents.

Migration can happen due to various reasons: financial, family reunification or political. Migration is classified into labor migration, return migration, chain migration and asylum migration (Jennissen, 2004); the reasons for return migration are mainly related with the family.

The most frequently mentioned reason of returning from emigration is missing home and family. This reason was mentioned by males and individuals under 30 years old. Others say that they returned to Lithuania after they earned money. This reason was emphasized by women and individuals in the age group of 30–50 years old as well as rural and city residents. Nostalgia for the motherland is emphasized by males and individuals under 30 years old as well as rural residents. Another reason for returning to Lithuania is the expiry of the employment contract in another country. The following reasons for returning to Lithuania have also been mentioned: adaptation problems in a foreign country, health problems, difficult work, parents' health problems requiring care of parents, divorce, household problems while in emigration, problems with law enforcement



**Figure 2.** Emigration experience in one's environment (in percentages)

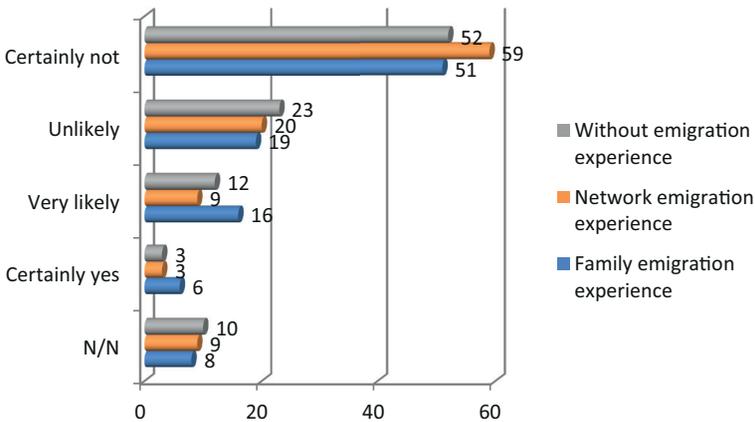
*Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).*

while in emigration, intention to finish studies in Lithuania, an offer of a promising job and salary in Lithuania.

Emigration plans are influenced by the emigration experiences of the representatives of family or network channels especially when they have family members, relatives, friends or acquaintances in their environment living abroad.

Most individuals with family or network emigration experience state that their friends (57%) and acquaintances (51%) live in a foreign country. One third of the representatives of this group (31%) have relatives living in emigration, every fifth (22%) individual from this group states that their family members live abroad. 8% of people have no emigration experience in their environment (see Figure 2).

Every fifth Lithuanian resident intends to emigrate during the coming three years for a period of several months to several years. 12% of respondents mentioned their intention to emigrate within the next three years (certainly yes or very likely). Emigration intentions are emphasized by males under 30 years old as well as rural and town residents. Those under 50 years old, those with higher than average monthly family income as well as city residents have not yet made a firm decision. Rather, they are only considering such a possibility (20%). More than half of Lithuanian residents (56%) do not intend to emigrate and live abroad. These attitudes are typical of women, people aged 50 or above, and individuals with lower than the average monthly family income.



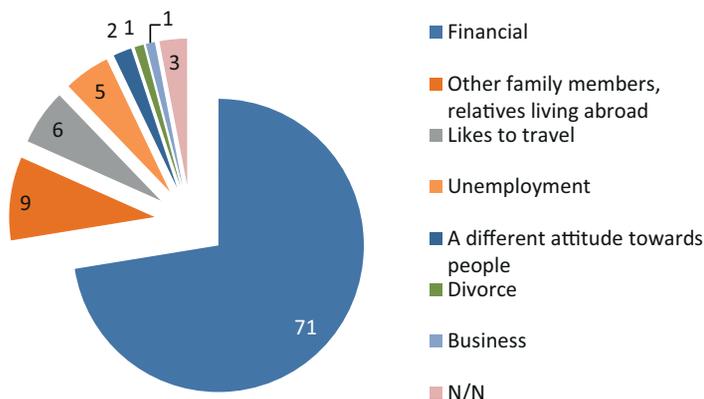
**Figure 3.** Intentions to emigrate in the light of emigration experience (in percentages)

Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).

The emigration experience of the representatives of family or network channels influences emigration decisions (see Figure 3).

Individuals who have emigration experience themselves, or whose family members have emigration experience, tend to be very certain about emigration, or tend to emigrate faster. Intentions to emigrate are related with various reasons (see Figure 4).

Based on the migration typology of Jennissen (2004), a bigger share (71%) of those who intend to emigrate may be ascribed to the type of labor migration. Women and individuals in the age group of 30–50 years old emphasize financial reasons. These reasons are more relevant to town and rural residents. Apart from that, intentions to emigrate are related to the family situation, when other family members and relatives live abroad. 9% of those intending to emigrate may be ascribed to the type of chain migration. They intend to emigrate because other members of their family or relatives live abroad. Intentions to emigrate are related to travel pursuits, desire to study, to the belief that foreign countries offer better conditions. Intentions to emigrate are also related to unemployment in Lithuania and to a different attitude towards an individual. Moreover, they are related to the situation in the family, when the family falls apart and when no ties keep the individual in the country of origin any longer. The emigration experience of the family or network as well as the lack of emigration experience adjust the reasons for the intentions to emigrate.



**Figure 4.** Reasons for the intentions to emigrate (in percentages)

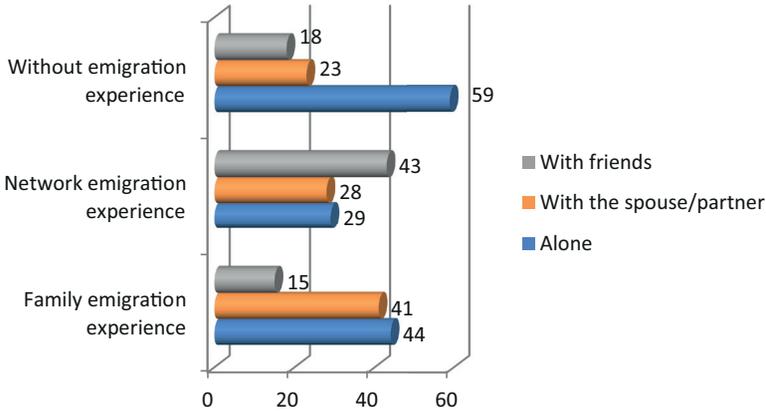
*Source: Representative survey data, a proportion of those intending to emigrate (N = 119 respondents).*

The largest share of individuals with emigration experience in the family or network as well as those with no such experience intend to emigrate due to financial reasons. However, the representatives of the family network are considering emigration because of other family members or relatives living abroad. They also mention difficulties with finding a job and family problems. Intentions to emigrate are related to business or simple travel pursuit.

Individuals with network emigration experience also mention, apart from financial problems, the difficulties with finding a job and the travel pursuit. Those with no emigration experience intend to emigrate due to financial reasons as well. Apart from that, they state that the intention to study abroad is one of the reasons to emigrate.

The financial reasons determining the intentions to emigrate are also reflected in individuals' plans on who their emigration 'partners' are going to be. According to the research data, most of the individuals intending to emigrate (43%) do not seek to have a 'partner', they would emigrate alone. One third (32%) of the representatives of this group intend to emigrate with their spouse/ partner. Friends as emigration 'partners' occupy the third place (23%). 16% of the representatives of this group intend to emigrate together with their children. According to the respondents, parents, acquaintances and relatives would be chosen as emigration partners the least frequently.

Emigration experiences also have an impact on emigration scenarios. The data presented in Figure 5 show that emigration scenarios differ depending on the emigration experience. Persons with family emigration



**Figure 5.** Emigration ‘partners’ (in percentages)

*Source: Representative survey data, a proportion of those intending to emigrate (N = 119 respondents).*

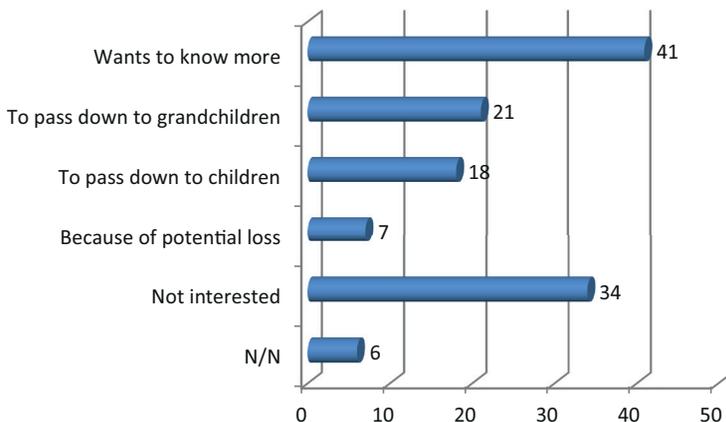
experience are most likely to emigrate alone (44%) or with the spouse/partner (41%). Emigration ‘partners’ – friends – are selected by 15% of this group. In the meantime, those who have network emigration experience usually choose friends as emigration ‘partners’ (42%). Among them, 29% plan to emigrate alone, and 28% intend to emigrate with the spouse/partner. Among those with no experience in emigration, the preferred scenario is to emigrate alone (59%). 23% of this group intends to emigrate with the spouse/partner and 18% with friends.

According to the research, emigration experience is mostly related to the financial situation and the aspiration to improve it. Therefore, individuals choose to emigrate on their own for a certain period of time. Another scenario of emigration is related to family reunification. These individuals fall in the group of chain migration (Jennissen, 2004).

These peculiarities of emigration experience not only adjust the communication among family members, the methods and contents of this communication but also adjust the process of family memory construction.

### **The Channels of Family Memory and Emigration Experience**

According to Keppler (2001), both story tellers and listeners are important in the construction of family memory. Emigration experience adjusts the circle of the participants of ‘conversation at the table’, their communication traditions as well as their interest in the life stories of



**Figure 6.** The reasons of interest in family memory (in percentages)

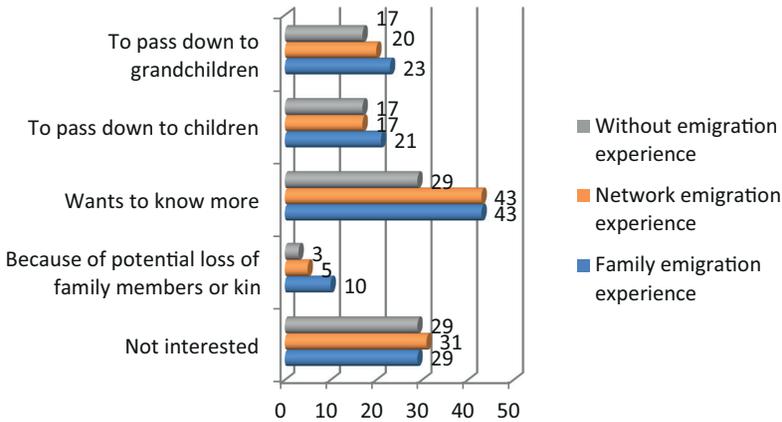
*Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).*

their family members and relatives. The research data show that the stories about their family and relatives' lives are important to two thirds (60%) of Lithuanian residents. Some are interested in them because they want to expand the family memory archive, to have more information on the experience and practices of their family and kin members. Others are more interested in the continuity of family memory and have intentions to pass the memory down to younger generations of family members. The rest do not consider family memory important.

The need to expand the family memory archive and to have more information about the experience of family and kin members has been expressed by over a third of Lithuanian residents (41%). Others are interested in the continuity of family memory, i.e. they intend to pass this information down to their grandchildren (21%) and children (18%). The possibility to lose one's next-of-kin also encourages individuals to be interested in collective family memory (7%). Women, individuals over 30 years old and town residents are mostly interested in the collective family memory (see Figure 6).

One third of respondents (34%) do not consider family memory as something worthy of attention. Such attitude is prevalent among individuals under 30 years old.

Emigration experience influences people's interest in the life stories of their family or kin members.



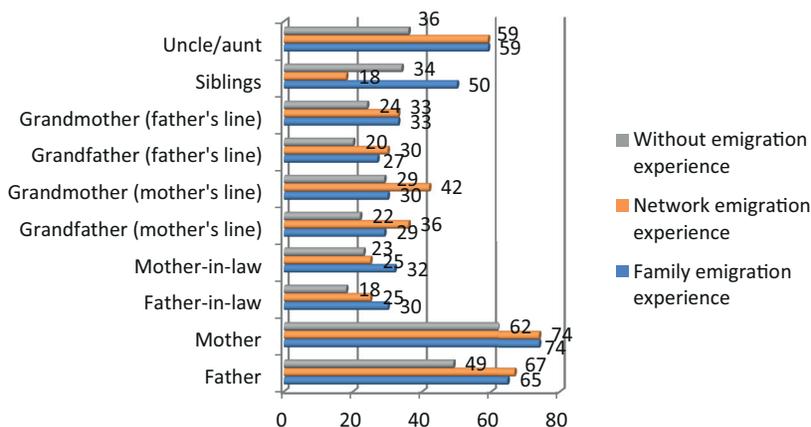
**Figure 7.** The reasons of interest in family memory in the light of emigration experience (in percentages)

Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).

Different emigration experience adjusts people’s interest in the life stories of their family or kin members. Those with family emigration experience want to know more about life experiences of their family or kin members and intend to share this information with their children and grandchildren. They want to accumulate more information also due to the potential loss of their next-of-kin. Those who have network emigration experience as well as those who have family emigration experience also find it important to replenish their memory archive with the life stories of their family members and relatives. However, they are less interested in the expansion of family memory due to the potential loss of their next-of-kin and in the continuity of family memory, i.e. in passing it down to children and grandchildren. Family memory is relevant the least to those individuals who have no emigration experience (see Figure 7).

### Communication channels of family memory and emigration experience

According to Keppler (2001: 144), every family as a separate group creates its own memory. Various storytellers participate in the construction of family memory (Keppler, 2001: 139). These storytellers represent different channels of the communicative family memory. Their contribution in the construction of family memory is also different.



**Figure 8.** The construction of family memory and emigration experience (in percentages)

Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).

The research data show (see Figure 8) that irrespective of emigration experience, parents as the representatives of the familial channel are the main participants in the construction of family memory. On the other hand, the individuals with emigration experience participate in the ‘conversations at the table’ about the experiences and practices of family or kin members more frequently. They are better listeners than the individuals with no emigration experience. In the familial channel, parents are the individuals who pay most attention to family memory. They tell the largest number of stories about the lives of family and kin members during different historical periods. Grandparents as the participants of the familial channel are less active, however emigration experience influences the intensity of communication with grandparents on the topics of the lives of family and kin members. Individuals with emigration experience are more active listeners of those stories than those with no such experience. The role of parents-in-law in the construction of family memory is considerably smaller than that of other participants of the familial channel. This indicates that the collective family memory is only modestly supplemented with the life stories of ‘new’ family members. However, in case of emigration experience, the life stories of ‘new’ family members merit more attention. This means that the stories of their families and kin are incorporated into the common archive of family memory. Apart from that, ‘conversations at the table’ take place more frequently among the individuals with emigration experience and ‘new’ family members.

The aunt/ uncle as the participants of the network channel also play an important role in the construction of family memory. The role of the aunt is distinguishable in this communication channel of family memory. The aunt is a more active participant of 'conversations at the table' than grandparents as the representatives of the familial channel. In case of the individuals with emigration experience, the role of the network channel in the construction of family memory is much more significant for them in comparison with those who have no emigration experience.

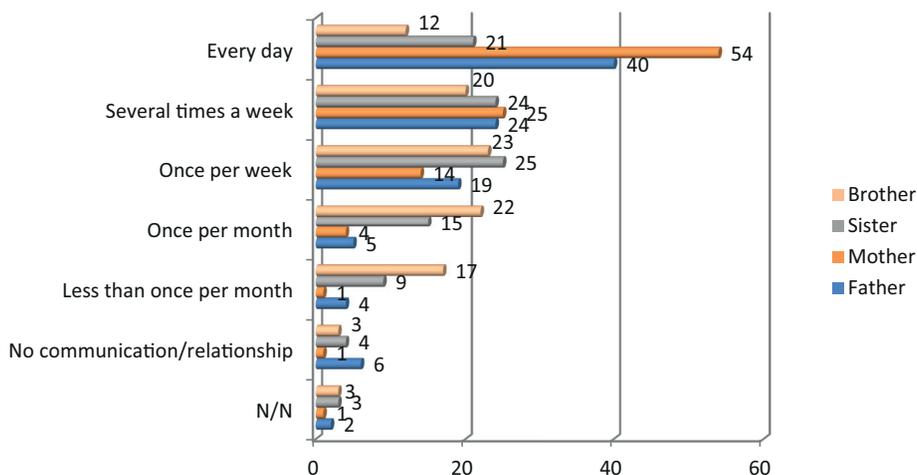
In case of emigration experience, siblings as the participants of the familial channel also make a noteworthy contribution in the construction of family memory. 'Conversations at the table' take place much more actively among siblings. Every second respondent with emigration experience mentions a sibling as a participant of 'conversations at the table'.

The continuity of family memory is ensured through the initiative channel. Memory continuity requires another action – the will to share family history with younger family generations. The initiative channel demonstrates the level of interest in ensuring the continuity of the 'conversations at the table' tradition. In this case there are also differences among those individuals who have emigration experience and those who have none.

'Conversations at the table' (which happen with bigger or lesser frequency) with other family members are more often initiated by the individuals having family (75%) or network (70%) emigration experience. Those with no emigration experience are more passive in organizing the 'conversations at the table' (70%). These conversations are also influenced by the peculiarities of communication with family members. More specifically, the frequency of conversations between storytellers and listeners are important in family memory formation. Communication habits with family members and traditions of communication between family members are important in family memory formation process via family channels by all means of communication.

The data presented in Figure 9 show that more than half of those with emigration experience communicate with their mothers on a daily basis. Communication with the father is in the second place in terms of frequency. Communication with the sister usually takes place once or several times per week. However, communication between the sister and the brother happens less often, once per week or month, or less frequently.

The channels of the communicative family memory dictate their own topics of 'conversations at the table' which they consider important.



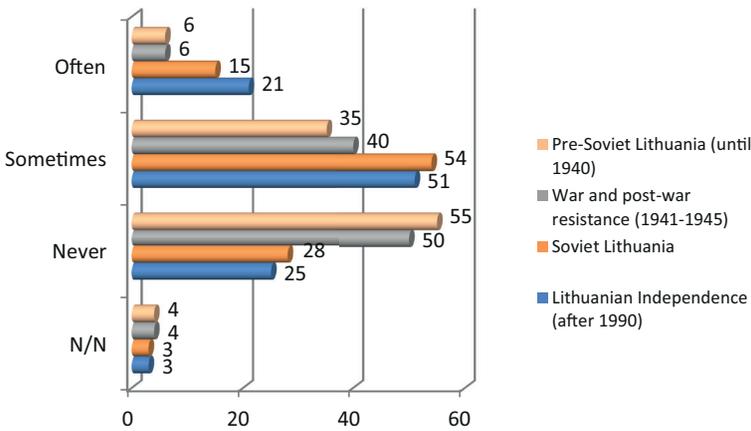
**Figure 9.** Communication with family members (personally, by phone, by letters, by email or otherwise, in percentages)

*Note: A proportion of those whose mother (N = 506) and father (N = 358) are alive. A proportion of those who have brothers (N = 379) and sisters (N = 392) older than 15 years. Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).*

### Family Memory Contexts

According to Keppler (2001), family memory communication has its own topics which may be given lots of attention or, on the contrary, little attention. These topics have the cultural, social and historical context.

The research data show (see Figure 10) that 41% of Lithuanian residents mention ‘conversations at the table’ about the experiences and practices of family or kin members during the period before Lithuania became part of the Soviet Union. Discussions on this topic are more prevalent among women and individuals over 50 years old. Discussions on the life experience during the war and after the war attracts similar level of attention. Less than half (46%) of the respondents declare that they discuss these topics very often, often or sometimes. The stories from this period are more frequently mentioned by women and the individuals over 50 years old. Men and the individuals under 30 years old participate in the ‘conversations at the table’ on this topic less. The topic on the life during the Soviet period attracts more attention. Two thirds (69%) of Lithuanian residents declare that they hold ‘conversations at the table’ about the life of family or kin members in Soviet Lithuania. Individuals over 50 years old discuss this topic more frequently. Individuals under 30 years old tend to ignore the experiences



**Figure 10.** The construction of family memory during different historical periods (in percentages)

Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).

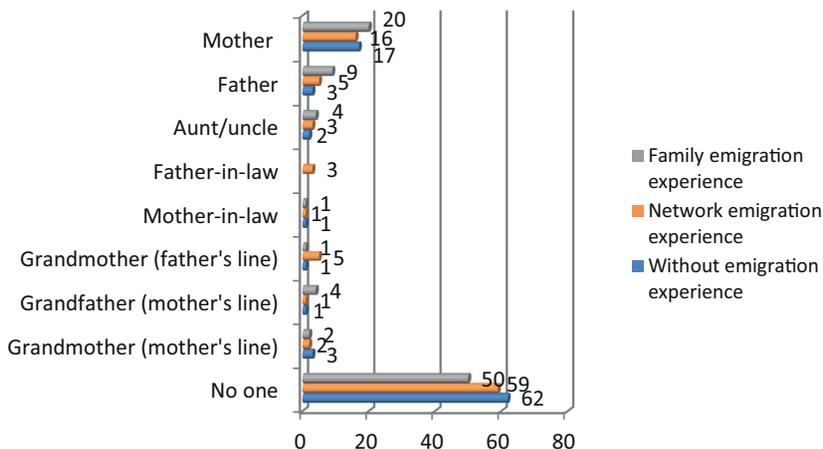
of this period. The discussion about life experiences of family or kin members since the restoration of independence merit most of attention. 72% of the respondents discuss these experiences. Individuals over 30 years old as well as city and town residents emphasize the ‘conversations at the table’ on this topic. Those under 30 years old mostly declare that they do not discuss this topic.

The experiences of family or kin members may be related to both traumatic events and to achievements during various historical periods.

The results of the research show that the discussions on the traumatic experiences during different historical periods are practiced little. More than half of the individuals with family or network emigration experience or those with no emigration experience declare that they hold no ‘conversations at the table’ on this topic. Every second individual with family emigration experience declares this; while there are almost two thirds of such individuals declaring this among the respondents with no emigration experience. The mother as a participant of the familial channel is the initiator of the ‘conversations at the table’ on this topic (see Figure 11).

During ‘conversations at the table’, the achievements of family or kin members during different historical periods attract more attention.

According to the research data (see Figure 12) every third individual with family emigration experience discusses with his/ her mother the



**Figure 11.** Traumatic experience of family or kin members during different periods in the light of emigration experience (in percentages)

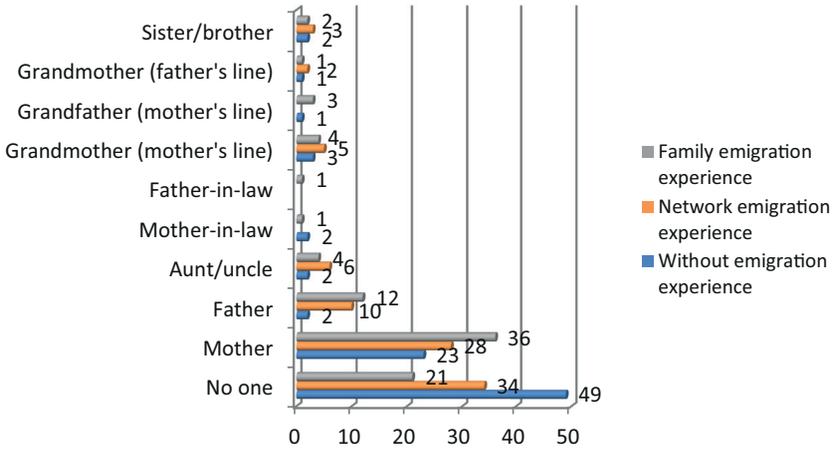
*Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).*

achievement of family or kin members during different historical periods. The least frequency of such conversations has been observed among the mother and the individuals with no emigration experience. The ‘conversations at the table’ among the father and the individuals with family or network emigration experience happen more intensively than among those without such experience.

Family or kin revision has been classified into two thematic groups: festivities (weddings, baptisms or other festivities of family or kin members) as well as misfortunes and losses (diseases, funerals and other grief). These topics of ‘conversations at the table’ expand the family memory not only with the practices of family members but also with those of kin members. Such information increases awareness in the wider network – the kinship network.

The topics of family network revision (the festivities of family or kin members, weddings, baptisms or diseases, losses and other misfortunes) attract more attention than the discussions about life experiences during different historical periods.

In the construction of family memory, the ‘conversations at the table’ on kin revision issues are more often held between the mother and the daughter, among the mother and the children between 30 to 50 years old as well as among the mother and the children living in towns or cities. The



**Figure 12.** The achievements of family or kin members during different periods in the light of emigration experience (in percentages)

Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).

father plays a less significant role here (44%). ‘Conversations at the table’ with the father are emphasized by their children under 50 years old and living in the town or the country.

The revision topic of the weddings, baptisms or other festivities of family or kin members is a more attractive topic of ‘conversations at the table’ than the discussion on life experiences during different historical periods.

The topics of family revision (festivities, weddings, baptisms, etc.) in the light of emigration experience also receive different attention. The individuals with family or network emigration experience are more interested in the conversations on this topic. The mother is the most frequent contributor in the construction of family memory on the issues of family network revision. Every second person with family or network emigration experiences mentioned that there were ‘conversations at the table’ with their mother on this topic. The father is in the second place in this respect. However, conversations with a father are more common among those with family emigration experience. The role of the aunt as the network channel comes in the third place. The aunt’s role is emphasized by those who have network emigration experience. Moreover, this topic is discussed in the family between spouses. Communication on this topic is more likely to occur among siblings with network emigration experience or without emigration experience. The role of grandparents is even less

significant than that of aunts, siblings, except parents-in-law. One third of those with no emigration experience mention that there is no 'conversations at the table' on this topic.

The revision of family or kin on the topics of losses, diseases or misfortunes attracts less attention. The individuals who have emigration experience in their family or network have more information about the misfortunes of their family or kin members than those who have no such experience. In respect of this topic, the mother is the main information contributor again. Other participants of family and network channels are only passive participants of 'conversations at the table'. However, 'talk at the table' with the father is more often mentioned by those with family emigration experience. Aunt's and sibling's role is more often emphasized by those who have network emigration experience. Those without emigration experience usually mention that such 'conversations at the table' do not take place (35%).

The topics of family relationships are classified into two thematic groups: good relationships and painful (bad) relationships among family and kin members. In the family, good relationships among family or kin members are most actively discussed among the mother and her children with family emigration experience. Such practice is mentioned by every second representative of this group (48%). The representatives of the network with emigration experience discuss these issues with their mother less frequently. The least frequency of such conversations has been observed among the mother and her children with no emigration experience. Other family or network representatives with emigration experience play an insignificant role in this respect. Although the role of other participants in family or network channels is insignificant, still the emigration experience has an impact on the formation of family memory. The research data show that the role of the father increases in the case of family emigration experience, while aunt's role – in the network's emigration experience. Conversations between siblings on this subject are more common among those without emigration experience. It is noteworthy that more than one third of individuals with no emigration experience (40%) declare that nobody tells them these stories, while there are much fewer individuals with family or network emigration experience declaring that.

The conversations about bad relationships among family or kin members take place much less frequently than about good relationships. In this topic of family memory construction, the mother as a participant of the familial channel plays the most active role again. 'Conversations at the table' with their mother is more often mentioned by those with family emigration experience (34%). Among those with network emigration

experience, this topic is less frequently discussed (28%). Discussions on bad relationships among family or kin members with mothers are even less frequent (22%). Poor relationships among family or kin members are most actively discussed among the father and his children with family emigration experience. The representatives of the network with emigration experience discuss these issues with their siblings more frequently. Grandmothers are more likely to talk to their grandchildren who have no emigration experience.

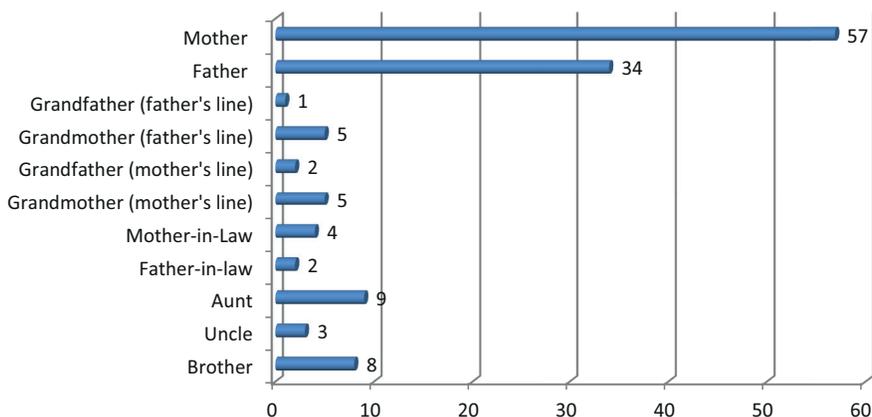
It has been noted that the conversations in the familial channel between the mother and the daughter as well as among the mother and the children within the age cohort of 30–50 years take place frequently. Town residents emphasize this topic. 41% of respondents do not participate in such ‘conversations at the table’. Such behavior is typical of men under 30 years old living in the city or the country.

‘Conversations at the table’ happen more often among those who have family or network emigration experience than among those without such experience. It is not usual to speak about painful relationships among family or kin members. Every second individual (49%) without emigration experience does not participate in ‘conversations at the table’ on this topic, while there are even fewer individuals with family or network emigration experience declaring that (41% in each group). ‘Conversations at the table’ with a sibling happen more often among the individuals with emigration experience. The role of other family or network representatives in the construction of family memory on this topic is less significant.

The construction of family memory also happens due to the provision of ‘common’ information about the experiences of family or kin members. Such ‘conversations at the table’ demonstrate the need for communication by sharing experience and practices. Daily communication also shows the intensity of relationships with the participants of different channels and who the tellers or listeners of ‘common’ information are. Communication on routine issues demonstrates the closeness among family or kin members and their need for communication. ‘Common’ information also contributes to the (re)construction of family memory.

The most important role in daily communication is played by the mother as a participant of the familial channel. Every second respondent communicates with his/ her mother on daily events and practices. City residents stand out to some extent in the area of daily communication between the mother and the child.

Communication with the father is twice as rare. Fathers tend to communicate more with their sons and children under 30 years old. Such



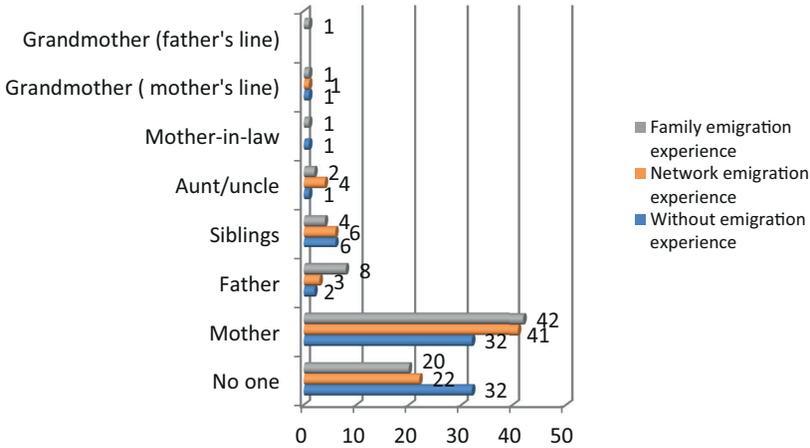
**Figure 13.** The role of family members in 'common' communication about family and kin (in percentages)

*Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).*

communication is more applicable to the children living in towns. Sisters who are 50 years old or above communicate more intensively. The role of the aunt as the network channel in daily communication is more significant than that of grandparents. The aunt tends to discuss these issues with a female relative. Such a tradition of daily communication is typical of town residents. 23% of respondents do not have the experience of daily communication. Men under 30 years old usually do not participate in daily communication (see Figure 13).

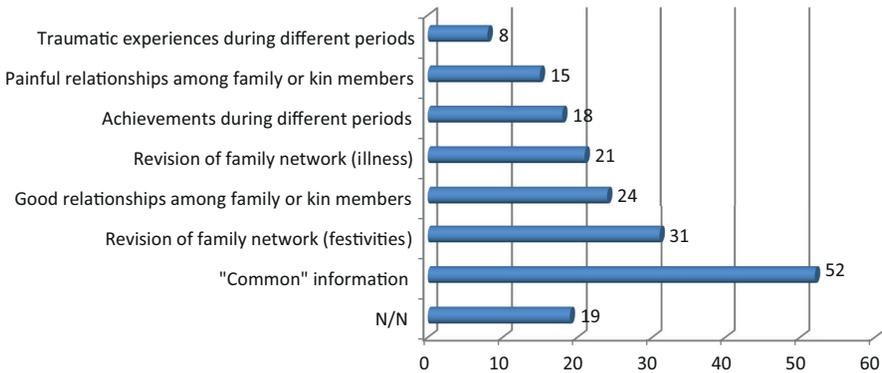
According to the research data (see Figure 14) there are differences between emigration experience and communication about 'common' practices of family or kin members. Such 'conversations at the table' with the mother take place more often among the individuals with family or network emigration experience. Although the role of the father is significantly smaller than that of the mother, the father is nevertheless a more frequent participant of 'conversations at the table' in the context of family emigration experience.

One third of individuals without emigration experience do not participate in the communication on 'common' practices. This is supported by every fifth individual with family or network emigration experience.



**Figure 14.** Emigration experience and the role of family members in 'common' communication about family and kin (in percentages)

Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).



**Figure 15.** The topics communicated via the initiative channel (in percentages)

Source: Representative survey data (N = 1005 respondents).

The initiative channel – the person who tells stories to others on his/her own initiative – concentrates most on the communication of 'common' information, on family revision about good events and on good relationships among family and kin members (see Figure 15).

Every second member of the initiative channel (52%) is interested in the continuity of family memory. They allocate their attention to the communication with others on 'today's' events and experiences of family or kin members. Such conversational narratives are typical of city residents. One third (31%) of respondents concentrate on such topics of family revision as weddings, baptisms or other festivities (see Figure 15). These conversational topics are widespread among town and rural residents above 30 years old. The third topic of 'conversations at the table' in terms of frequency is good relationships among family and kin members. This information is more often communicated by town residents above 30 years old. The topics related to painful experiences of family or kin members occupy the fourth place. Town and rural residents above 30 years old show more initiative when communicating on this topic. Town residents between 30 and 50 years old tend to initiate the discussions on painful relationships among family or kin members. Family or kin achievements or traumas during various historical periods are the least discussed topics. Individuals over 30 years old are more interested in the 'conversations at the table' on the achievements during different periods. Town residents over 50 years old tend to speak about traumatizing experiences during various historical periods more often.

## **Conclusion**

The data of the research show that family memory construction is a constant process during which family memory construction and (re) construction happens through the initiative of the participants of family or network channels and due to the variety of conversational topics. Family memory is constantly supplemented with 'common' information on the experiences of family or kin members. In family memory construction, such topics as 'common' information on life experiences of family and kin members, family network revision (on the festivities, weddings, etc. of family and kin members) and good relationships in the family or among kin members attract most attention.

Research data show that emigration do not impede the family memory formation processes. On the contrary, the individuals with emigration experience participate in family memory construction more actively. Emigration in Lithuania is determined by economic reasons. Most migrants belong to the type of labor migration. However, the type of chain migration is expanding as well; it refers to the individuals emigrating for the purposes

of family reunification or in order to build a family abroad. Currently, emigration is not an obstacle to the construction of family memory.

Such social demographic characteristics as gender, age and the place of residence are important in the construction of family memory. Women, individuals over 30 years old and town residents are more active in the construction of family memory. Based on empirical data, the following groups of the participants in conversations can be distinguished: the mother talks with the daughter more often, and respectively the father talks with the son; sisters communicate more often with sisters, and brothers respectively with brothers. In respect of the place of residence, town residents are more active in the construction of family memory.

The mother is the main initiator of the construction of family memory. The father plays a more passive role in memory construction; however, he is more active than grandparents as the participants of the familial channel. This shows that the construction of family memory mostly happens through the communication of two generations – the parents and children.

One third of Lithuanian residents do not participate in the construction of family memory. This group is dominated by males and individuals under 30 years old.

## References

- Assmann, J. (2008). Communicative and Cultural Memory. In: Erll, A. and A. Nuning (Eds.). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin, New York: 109–118.
- Assmann, J. (1992). *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München: Beck.
- Assmann, A. (2006). Memory, Individual and Collective. In: Goodin, R. E. and C. (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*. Oxford University Press, 210–24.
- Assmann, A. (2008). Transformation between History and Memory. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 75, 49–72.
- Attias-Donfut, C. and F. C. Wolff (2003). Generational Memory and Family Relations. In: Johnson, M. L. (Ed.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing*, Cambridge University Press, 443–454.
- Bengtson, V. L. and K. D. Black (1973). Intergenerational Relations and Continuities in Socialization. In: Baltes, P. and K. W. Schaie (Eds.). *Life Span Developmental Psychology: Personality and Socialization*. New York, Academic Press, 208–234.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). The Social Frameworks of Memory. In: Lewis, A. C. (Ed). *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Hagestad, G. O. (1986). Dimension of Time and the Family. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 29, 679–694.
- Jennissen, R. P. W. (2004). *Macro-economic determinants of international migration in Europe*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers.
- Keppeler, A. (1994). *Tischgespräche: über Formen kommunikativer Vergemeinschaftung am Beispiel der Konversation in Familien*. Frankfurt. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, S. 10f, 206–208.
- Middleton, D. and D. Edwards (1991). *Collective Remembering*. London.
- Morgan, D. H. J. (2013). *Rethinking Family Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ricketson, P. (2001). *Political Myth: The Political Uses of History, Traditions and Memory*. Doctor of Philosophy thesis, Department of History and Politics, University of Wollongong: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/1438>.
- Rosenthal, G. (2016). The Social Construction of Individual and Collective Memory. In: Sebald, G. and J. Wagle (Eds.). *Theorizing Social Memories: Concepts and Contexts*. Rutledge: London and New York, 32–55.
- Welzer, H. (2001). Das gemeinsame Verfertigen von Vergangenheit im Gespräch. In: Welzer, H. (Ed.). *Das soziale Gedächtnis: Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 160–78.