

**Историческая память:**

**преемственность, традиции, ценности**

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Оригинальная исследовательская статья

**Integrative Aspects of Collective Memory**

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**Abstract**

Ongoing globalization foregrounds the task of finding reliable bases for preservation and development of the socio-cultural identity of peoples and individuals. Among such foundations is collective memory, as experience of the historical past, fixed in individual and social consciousness and determining the main patterns of social dynamics. The long-studies phenomenon of collective memory is the area of interdisciplinary research. The researchers focus on the map of collective memory and its renewal processes, the sources and mechanisms of its formation, the relationship between memory and history, the dialectics of collective and individual memory, the processes of preserving the past and its oblivion. In a risk society, the interest in the study of collective memory takes on a special practical significance. The article is devoted to identifying and describing the integrative potential of collective memory. Achieving this goal presupposes solving interrelated tasks: to reveal the essence of collective memory as the most important phenomenon of social consciousness; to explicate the prerequisites for the formation and identify the factors of development of collective memory in present-day conditions; to analyze the possibilities and features of the integrative potential of collective memory. The work reveals substantial features of the formation and transformation of collective memory. It considers the growing importance of media technologies and mass culture since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The consequence of such changes is growing complication of the structures of collective memory, increase in variability of its national versions. This contributes to disintegration of its holistic picture and to formation of many alternative options. The article substantiates that the integrative potential of collective memory acts as one of the principal foundations of social solidarity.

**Keywords:** historical past, solidarity, generation, congregation, continuity, experience, traditions.

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## **Интегративное измерение коллективной памяти**

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### **Аннотация**

Современные процессы глобализации актуализируют задачу поиска надежных оснований сохранения и развития социокультурной идентичности народов и отдельных личностей. Одним из таких оснований является коллективная память как закрепленный в индивидуальном и общественном сознании опыт исторического прошлого, определяющий основные паттерны социальной динамики. Феномен коллективной памяти имеет длительную историю своего изучения и представляет собой предмет междисциплинарного исследования. Направлениями исследования являются содержание карты коллективной памяти и процессы ее обновления, источники и механизмы ее формирования, взаимоотношения между памятью и историей, диалектика коллективной и индивидуальной памяти, процессов сохранения прошлого и его забвения. Интерес к исследованию коллективной памяти приобретает особый практический характер в обществе риска, что обусловливается многими обстоятельствами, но в первую

очередь – сочетанием социальной востребованности с серьезными интеллектуальными вызовами, на которые должны дать ответ ученые, обращаясь к проблеме репрезентации прошлого. Статья посвящена выявлению и описанию интегративного потенциала коллективной памяти. Достижение поставленной цели предполагает решение ряда взаимосвязанных задач: раскрыть сущность коллективной памяти как важнейшего феномена общественного сознания; эксплицировать предпосылки формирования и выявить детерминанты развития коллективной памяти в условиях современности; проанализировать возможности и особенности интегративного потенциала коллективной памяти. В работе выявлены содержательные особенности формирования и трансформации коллективной памяти. Обращено внимание на рост значения фактора медиатехнологий и массовой культуры со второй половины XX века. Следствием таких перемен становится усложнение структур коллективной памяти, рост вариативности ее национальных версий. Это способствует разрушению ее целостной картины и формированию множества альтернативных вариантов. В статье обосновывается, что интегративный потенциал коллективной памяти выступает в качестве одного из оснований социальной солидарности.

**Ключевые слова:** прошлое, солидарность, поколение, конгрегация, преемственность, опыт, традиции.

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## **Introduction**

The modern world continues to change rapidly: the diversity of the geopolitical landscape is increasing; the factors of instability and uncertainty, climate change and epidemiological diseases are increasing; basic institutions of society, value systems and life-purpose orientations of people are undergoing change. Every year, the time boundaries separating the present from the day of yesterday expand, living witnesses of the past and their children pass away, the era of eyewitnesses of the past century is ending. The idea of a “distant and happy future,” previously surrounded by an aura of unprecedented attraction, still remains little more than a dream. Even the most daring dreamers of the past could not imagine its implementation in life. Also, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century large-scale and significant events: revolutions, world and local wars, natural, and anthropogenic disasters, have turned modern history into tragic experiences of hundreds of millions of people.

In his work *The Past is a Foreign Country*, the British historian David Lowenthal analyzed the role of the past in modern European and U.S. cultures, coming to the following conclusion: “To be is to have been, and to project our messy, malleable past into our unknown future” [Lowenthal 1985, xxv]. Along with the historical science, another form of awareness and preservation of the past is collective memory. In recent years, there has been a significant surge of interest in its study, in the context of the transformation of modern social, political, and cultural practices. Such an interest is evident in various branches of social and humanitarian knowledge: in historians and anthropologists, in philosophy and cultural studies, psychology and social science.

Collective memory is a complex and dynamic social formation with a strong integrative potential. We can consider it not as a means to preserve the past, but above all as a condition for maintaining integrity of groups and communities, as well as an important factor in the formation and preservation of national identity. At the same time, collective memory can also feature as a source of tension in social and political spheres, as it may generate conflictogenic interpretations of the past and cast doubt on individual identity within certain social communities.

The relevance of the present study of formation and functioning of collective memory in modern society is due to a number of considerations. Present-day society actively masters fundamentally new ways of producing and storing information, which results in emergence of colossal data archives. At the same time, society has not yet developed

a clear strategy for memorizing and forgetting things: what seems to be fundamentally important today may lose its relevance in the very near future. And vice versa. Theoretical and practical interest is paid to the study of conflict potentials of collective memory, the relationship between reality and fiction, ideological constructs formed by authorities, mythological ideas and accumulated life experience. Revision of collective memory in modern society and establishment of its new versions occurs through massive collective actions not only of a consolidating, but often of destructive nature. Finally, the problem of studying collective memory directly affects the issue of social cohesion, which marks its special role in the heterogeneous context of modern societies. All of the above aspects require a revision of previously established approaches to assessing past events in the collective memory of different communities, and as a result we come to face a methodological problem, due to our inability to explain the rapidly changing reality based on accepted monistic theories.

### **Collective memory and the theory of solidarity**

According to E. Durkheim, the mechanisms of emergence and renewal of social solidarity are associated with special, out-of-the-ordinary states of collective emotional involvement. Such states arise as a result of involving people in intense interaction, within which individuals will come in touch with jointly perceived ideas and feelings. Then, a person experiences a “special” reality that s/he shares with others. Hence, there is the division of the world into the realms of the sacred and the profane, which is fundamental for many religions. The source of the sacred realm has its source in the highest cohesion of the group, where the individual dissolves in the stream of collective life. In turn, the profane world is associated with everyday struggle of individuals and families for their existence and is characterized by a low degree of moral intensity. The nature of collective life, according to E. Durkheim, is associated with the fact that a person lives alternately in two successive states: religious rituals take him out of the daily course of life on sacred holidays, but after participating in these, he returns to his daily concerns.

The states of collective excitement serve as the source of emergence of sacred symbols that keep the emotional imprint of the group’s intensive life. This determines the ability of symbols to empower assemblies, directing and uniting the actions of their participants. However, such moments of cohesion sacred for the group need to be repeated periodically.

cally. Therefore, the actions and states experienced by the group in the past are reproduced again in the present.

In periods of creative upsurge of a group, the symbolic fabric of culture emerges from collective interpretations of moments of excitement and inspiration. Over time, it becomes more complicated and improved: each new generation makes an intellectual contribution to the formation of a common system of accessible knowledge of the group about itself and about the world around. This is how basic sacred formulas are born, expressing social values and crystallizing them, to unite generations [Durkheim 1995, 430]. *Anomie* arises when values and ideals that are manifested in a specific culture cease to be supported by collective actions and completely lose touch with social life. Having no more resources to maintain, collective representations dissolve in the routine of individual experiences and interpretations. Thereupon, a person is left to himself, losing the opportunity to cooperate and trust others on the basis of shared ideas and values.

The increasing complexity of the division of labor and the differentiation of social life lead to a situation when collective ideas, which in the past had a religious character, are scattered “among other (relatively autonomous) social systems, such as law, ethics, art, etc.” [Batanova 2016, 73]. In such new realities, secular rituals and “civil religion” appear, along with traditional cults. Then, heroes and “fathers of the nation” replace the prophets, and religious symbols are perceived on a par with state ones. The more complex the system of division of labor is, the more autonomous the spheres of social life become, if endowed with a sacred status. Morality is complexly interwoven with local forms of socialization, united around symbolic centers: civil society, religion, democracy, law, family, capitalism, mass culture, etc. Nevertheless, collective representations result from an intellectual synthesis of individuals interacting that arises in moments of creative unity and emotional stress. This accounts for the importance of collective public assemblies for restoring public solidarity. According to E. Durkheim, “moral remaking can be achieved only through meetings, assemblies, and congregations in which the individuals, pressing close to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments” [Durkheim 1995, 429].

Thus, collective memory is a system of collective ideas about the past that arises at moments of high-intensity and emotional interactions of individuals and is supported by complex ritual mechanisms, thanks to which individuals separated by everyday life again begin to

perceive ideas and symbols common to them. The solidarity arising in the course of the ritual reconstruction of a common past is explained by E. Durkheim in a performative mode: it is precisely because people participate in common actions that they begin to feel their belonging to a community. In this way, collective memory, expressed by shared ideas and memorable rituals, becomes the foundation of group identity and serves to awaken and renew a sense of community and unity.

### **The category of collective memory in memory studies and in social studies**

The sociology of collective memory focuses on topics related to commemoration, on relationship between individual memories, shared perceptions of the past, and group identity. The central theoretical resource in the social study of collective memory is Durkheim's research program. M. Halbwachs (a student of E. Durkheim), consolidated the category of collective memory in the social sciences. M. Halbwachs developed the idea that individual memory is strongly associated with the effects of group life (social frameworks of memory) [Halbwachs 1992], and in turn, the group itself shares ideas of the past that are different from history. In his last works, M. Halbwachs has focused on the connections of collective perceptions of the past with social time and space, and he also points to the emotional component of collective memory [Halbwachs 1980]. Within the framework of his theory, it is proposed to distinguish between two dimensions of collective memory, or "two kinds of activities within social thought: on the one hand a memory, that is, a framework made out of notions that serve as landmarks for us and that refer exclusively to the past; on the other hand a rational activity that takes its point of departure in the conditions in which the society at the moment finds itself, in other words, in the present" [Halbwachs 1992, 188].

The thoughts of E. Durkheim and M. Halbwachs about the role of commemoration and collective ideas about the past in the life of a community remain the core of present-day memory studies. However, this does not mean that research of collective memory is limited to the space of those ideas that were proposed by Durkheim's school. Henry L. Roediger and James V. Wertsch define current memory studies not as a distinct line of thought with rigid disciplinary boundaries, but rather as an intersection of intellectual traditions, methodologies, approaches and subject fields: "The multidisciplinary field of memory studies combines intellectual strands from many domains, including (but not



limited to) anthropology, education, literature, history, philosophy, psychology and sociology” [Roediger & Wertsch 2008, 9]. There are also different intradisciplinary interpretations of this research field. In sociology, memory studies have been reinterpreted by the American scholars Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, who suggested using the term “social memory studies.” This direction is associated with the study of “the varieties of forms through which we are shaped by the past, conscious and unconscious, public and private, material and communicative, consensual and challenged” [Olick 1998, 112]. Taking into account the works of J. Olick, we can judge that the focus of sociological research of collective memory is “the social frameworks of individual memory [...] as well as processes of cultural transmission and commemoration that take place in and through collectivities” [Olick 2009, 249].

A similar definition is used in the studies of Barbara Misztal. She identifies four main themes in the sociology of memory: the study of processes and rituals of commemoration, the mutual influence of memory and identity, the relationship between collective memory and trauma, and the relationship between memory and justice [Misztal 2003, 126–154]. Barry Schwartz and Howard Schuman note that collective memory exists on two levels: cultural and individual. At the cultural level, we discuss symbols, narratives and representations of the past. There is a connection between collective memory and history, especially since “commemoration is intellectually compelling when it symbolizes values whose past existence history documents; history is morally and emotionally compelling when it documents events that can be plausibly commemorated” [Schwartz & Schuman 2005, 185].

At the second level, collective images of the past are interiorized, they are becoming part of an individual biography and of personal experience. Thus, in sociology, collective memory is denoted as “social representations concerning the past which each group produces, institutionalizes, guards and transmits through the interaction of its members” [Jedlowski 2001, 33].

Despite the many theoretical approaches to conceptualizing the category of “collective memory,” there is no doubt about the connection between the latter and the mechanisms of group mobilization and solidarization. One way or another, it is Durkheim’s sociological program that brings us closer to understanding how collective memory contributes to integration of individuals into a united moral community.



### Collective memory and the effects of congregation

Collective memory is both a consequence and a condition for maintaining group solidarity. One of the effects of participation in intense emotionally loaded interaction is that special events that break the fabric of everyday life will be imprinted in culture as sacred moments of history, significant for the community. The memory of such events in the form of rituals, symbols and narratives is passed on to future generations so that from time to time the community can gather again without an external stimulus. Thus, the natural effect of collective excitement becomes a constitutive mechanism for maintaining social solidarity. Such states release the creative energy dormant in groups, and this leads to cultural transformations.

When institutionalized, collective interpretations of the past become a structural prerequisite for individual memory, due to which the life of an individual is woven into the historical narrative of the appropriate group. The English historian Patrick H. Hutton defined the essence of collective memory as follows: “Collective memory is an elaborate network of social mores, values, and ideals that marks out the dimensions of our imaginations according to the attitudes of the social groups to which we relate. It is through the interconnection among these shared images that the social frameworks (*cadres sociaux*) of our collective memory are formed, and it is within such settings that individual memories must be situated if they are to survive” [Hutton 1993, 78].

Among the crises that force people to seek refuge in a group, events associated with mass violence occupy a special place. The mobilization of the group in response to a threat of destruction of the social order or as a result of large-scale social and cultural transformations further serves as material for collective memory. The gestures and speeches that people made in the state of collective turmoil form rituals designed to revive this state in the future. Thus, collective memory only indirectly contains information about the past: it bears the imprint not of events, but of actions and sensations that the group experienced at the peak of its solidarity and unity. That is why events perceived as real may never have happened in reality; it is only the sensation of collective involvement that people share. Nevertheless, large-scale transformations that served as a reason for the “synthesis of collective consciousness” are imprinted, directly or indirectly, in the cultural system. Thus, people store mythologized common memories as various symbols that connect the past and the present: works of art, historical artifacts, monuments, etc. As soon as people come together

to re-create their shared past and re-experience their unity, the collective memory manifests itself to the highest degree. Commemoration is always firmly connected with the present. As M. Halbwachs points out, collective memory, in contrast to history, is “a record of resemblances and, naturally, is convinced that the group remains the same because it focuses attention on the group, whereas what has changed are the group’s relations or contacts with other groups. If the group always remains the same, any changes must be imaginary, and the changes that do occur in the group are transformed into similarities. Their function is to develop the several aspects of one single content – that is, the various fundamental characteristics of the group itself” [Halbwachs 1980, 87].

The collective memory of a generation is not only the basis for formation of its national and civic identity. It is designed to ensure preservation and enrichment of the collective experience accumulated by previous generations, to develop its system of values, to act as an essential mechanism self-actualization, to provide effective means of intercultural communication and a powerful integrator in social development. According to the Belarusian sociologist L.G. Titarenko, “the fact that until recently, Belarusians did not have a nation-state did not prevent the people from appreciating and preserving their historical memory, this even stimulated their interest in the past. Belarusians are proud of their national history and are not ashamed of having been part of other states. All people who have lived on this territory are considered equal and are not divided into ‘titular’ and ‘non-titular nations’ [major and minor ethnic groups]” [Titarenko 2018, 40–41].

The content of collective memory lies in interiorized experience of living together with other groups; it reflects typical stories of the behavior and life of its members. “The images of events fixed by the collective memory in the form of various cultures, stereotypes, symbols, and myths are interpretive models that allow an individual and a social group to find their way in the world and in specific situations” [Repina 2003, 10].

Collective memory reflects the distinctive features of the group that form its identity and establish boundaries in relation to others, thereby proving its legitimacy and the right to autonomous existence and independence. As Yael Zerubavel writes, “the power of collective memory does not lie in its accurate, systematic, or sophisticated mapping of the past, but in establishing basic images that articulate and reinforce a particular ideological stance” [Zerubavel 1995, 8].

Thus, the integrative potential of the collective memory of a community is determined primarily by the sum of knowledge and ideas about the past that do not only contribute to its preservation but also allow individuals to experience moral cohesion and unity, discarding individual differences and utilitarian objectives. The processes of collective memory formation and resistance to oblivion of the past differ in their content among representatives of different socio-demographic groups, but they have a common source: joint participation in intense interactions and sharing ideas and sentiments. In modern societies, changes in collective memory are caused by the processes of expansion and fragmentation of social space, pluralization and intensification of social interactions, mediatization of culture, and change of cultural systems. The integrative potential of collective memory also lies in creating opportunities for diverse and intense public interactions through a conscious attitude of each individual to the shared past and present.

### **Attitudes to the past: features of transformation in the modern era**

The past is present among us in two different forms: history and memory. History is an objective scientific reconstruction of the past, which is carried out by professional researchers based on various sources and guided by the desire to establish the historical truth. The German historian Johann Gustav Droysen wrote: “The practical significance of historical studies lies in the fact that they, and they alone, hold up before the State, or people, or army, its own picture. Especially is historical study the basis for political improvement and culture. The statesman is the historian in practice” [Droysen 1897, 56].

Memory is a relatively stable and emotionally colored aggregate of accumulated knowledge about the past and of experience transmitted from generation to generation in various ways. Memory differs from history primarily in its subject matter: it embodies the past that is directly related to the life of a person and a group. This past comes from the stories of relatives and friends, from family letters and greeting cards, from the pages of school textbooks and fiction, from television programs and films, theatrical performances and historical reconstructions, and from individual experience. It is preserved in traditions and texts, in material objects; it is reflected in banknotes and coats of arms, in clothing and hairstyles, in postage stamps, product labels and advertisements. Museum expositions, archival materials and library funds supplement it with new perspectives and interpretations.

The memory of the past is primarily emotionally colored and highly individual personal perception. History, on the other hand, is specialized knowledge about the past, focused on its consistent, accurate and maximally complete reproduction. However, there is no clearly defined “demarcation line” between professional history and memory (collective, social, historical, cultural). They are separated by a shared territory, in which they periodically enter into a complex and ambiguous process of communication, as a result of which there appear various versions of the past.

Objectified materialized memory includes historical buildings, monuments and memorial plaques, places of commemoration and cemeteries, paintings and theatrical performances, music and folk songs, sculpture, historical maps and toponymy. Historical chronicles, family memories and archives, narratives based on religious faith and sermons are all sources of our memory about the past. Modern media and the Internet play a significant role in its preservation, the result of which is accumulation and even active replacement of printed images with virtual images.

Different events of the past influence society in different ways. Those that belong to other peoples and cultures or that are distant in time or space, are usually perceived rather calmly. Those that are directly related to the identity of a given individual or group, to national shrines and values, cause high emotions and become subjects of heated discussions. Events are interpreted not only rationally but also irrationally, which results in a conflict of historical interpretations and “wars of memory.” Such collisions are perceived as a clash of “history” and “memory,” where the former is attributed to an objective view and a balanced assessment, while the latter is distinguished by reductionism and an appeal to “mythical archetypes.”

The current tradition of respectful attitudes to the past and memory of the past is subject to certain changes, which are primarily due to a change in the structure of the society. Until recently, nation-states were the main subjects of geopolitics and the most interested “consumers” of information about the past. In an effort to legitimize their own identity, they “cultivated” appropriate types of memory, which were inspired by national values. The globalization processes that have been actively developing in recent decades and the accompanying crisis of national states have brought about the need to revise previously existing types of memory: the memory of a single world community and the memory of global social institutions (UN, NATO, and others; which assume the

function of representing the world community in certain areas of human activity) are gradually replacing national memory [Anikin 2014].

The social institutions involved in the transmission of collective memory are significantly transformed. The role of alternative mass representations of the past is growing, implemented in social networks, computer games, museums of “living history,” digital archives, media, etc. Such representations do more than merely reflect the various forms of memory that exist in the modern world. From the point of view of professional historians, they often distort the “true” picture of the past, offering the consumer exactly the product that is most in demand in modern society as a whole.

Collective memory is increasingly acting as a source of commercialized images, and the “places of memory,” about which Pierre Nora wrote, attract the appropriate infrastructure, which is designed to generate sales. Thus, it is not the past itself that ensures importance, but the marketing of its sales. Mass production of souvenirs “for memory” has become a highly profitable industry: a sticker on a car containing a well-known slogan or words of gratitude to war veterans, a military service shirt, a water flask or a mug with war symbols, a military cap and many other attributes of the glorious past on the eve of Victory Day become much more expensive and sell more actively than in other times.

Tourists’ visits to historical sights and memorable places are mainly entertainment or shopping events and are often dictated by the need to buy a fashionable souvenir and take another selfie picture, but not by the desire to revive the spirit of history, to immerse themselves in the atmosphere, to feel insignificant in comparison with the monuments of the past. On such trips, tourists do not aim to experience contact with the sacred past, but gather evidence of having being to certain iconic places; and this in no way contributes to their awareness of the past as a value. The past more and more often turns out to be nicely wrapped solely so that it can be “sold” profitably. True, in this form it mostly loses its true meaning, which becomes too difficult for perception. Without re-living the experience, one cannot develop a sense of belonging or solidarity. However, modern mass consciousness no longer requires conscious participation or depth of involvement. It is much more important to entertain the consumer, to offer him the past as a recognizable product and to extract the maximum commercial gain. What is not suitable for internal use or is not beautiful enough for purchasers, is largely forgotten. Claiming to be “working with the

past,” we try to periodically “redraw” it. However, here we run the risk of losing what the classics of memory studies have called the foundation of identity [Golovashina 2018].

The transformation of attitudes toward the past is also expressed in a change in the methods of communication, in the development of global information networks and, as a consequence, in the globalization of the modern world space. Humanity has entered the era of “memory wars”: various agents dominating in the information space seek to rewrite their past from the standpoint of globalism, to embed individual images of the past into the overall picture of the progress of world civilization, and to turn their local history into a global “memory of the world,” using computer technologies and mass media resources.

### **Conclusion**

As we know, the self-awareness of any society begins with the ability to connect its past with the present. At various stages of historical development, tribes, ethnic groups, and nations have striven to preserve the memory of the past: in the form of oral legends and handwritten texts, petroglyphs, and architectural monuments, music and painting, fiction and films, memoirs and scientific works. At the same time, the processes of the formation of collective memory and resistance to oblivion of the past have acquired different content in representatives of different socio-demographic groups.

Collective memory is a relatively stable set of ideas, views, perceptions, feelings, moods, reflecting the perception and assessment of the past in all its diversity, inherent in both society as a whole, and in various social groups and communities, as well as in individuals. Preservation of collective memory has been and remains one of the most important factors in the formation of people’s ethnic and cultural self-identification.

Collective memory ensures transmission of accumulated socio-historical experience and acts as a significant resource for consolidation of individual communities and groups, contributing to the strengthening and updating of their uniqueness. At the same time, it also acts as a powerful means of social differentiation of such groups and communities.

Collective memory is inherently fraught with conflict, and such conflicts can be turned either inside the community whose consolidation it aims to provide, or into the external environment. In the former case, the emerging historical discussions lead to a further stratification

of such communities. In the latter case, such a conflict is manifested in communication with memory of other social groups, when their content contradicts each other.

The study of the features of the formation and evolution of collective memory may facilitate a consensus in relation to a common past between various social subjects, which can ultimately provide a more stable existence of society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The results of a sociological study of collective memory are an essential condition and a necessary prerequisite for the development of normative sociocultural projects designed to optimize the functioning and development of modern society as a whole.

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