

Krzysztof Czykier

- University of Białystok
- e-mail: k.czykier@uwb.edu.pl
- ORCID: 0000-0002-9310-6415

GRANDPARENTS AS SIGNIFICANT PERSONS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF ACADEMIC YOUTH (POLISH-BULGARIAN PILOT STUDY)

| Abstract

- *Goal* – The main objective of the study was to diagnose the perception of grandparents as significant persons in the lives of academic youth. An attempt was also made to determine what environmental factors influenced the declarations of the surveyed students.
- *Research methodology* – The study included 219 students from Poland and Bulgaria. A diagnostic survey method was used, employing a questionnaire technique. The research tool was an online Google survey questionnaire (prepared in Polish and Bulgarian, respectively). The basic statistics were calculated using the χ^2 test. The statistical assumptions were verified at a significance level of $p = 0.05$. The correlation coefficient C_{kor} was also taken into account.
- *Score/results* – 1. The results of the research among the Polish group of students illustrate the phenomenon of socialisation shift and prefigurateness. 2. The relations with grandparents on both the mother's and paternal sides are definitely positive, although the frequency of such declarations was higher among the Bulgarian students. 3. None of the analysed environmental factors significantly differentiate the perception of grandparents as significant persons in both studied groups. There are certain tendencies that assume a weak relationship between individual variables. Given that the study was a pilot study, the results should not be considered definitive. They should be perceived as certain signals, tendencies that require empirical development and are a contribution to further scientific exploration in terms of intercultural differences in the perception of grandparents as significant persons, how the role of grandparents differs in different countries or social environments.
- *Originality/value* – It can be expected that the presented results will fill a research gap in the field of the significance of mutual relations between adult grandchildren and

grandparents and will contribute to the revitalisation and strengthening of preventive measures that pose challenges for the social policy and education in the area of strengthening intra-family and intergenerational relations.

| **Keywords:** grandparents, significant others, intergenerational relations, academic youth

1. Introduction

Despite the social, economic, and cultural changes that are transforming the family and its environment, it is difficult to identify a moment in a person's life when, for whatever reason (external or resulting from individual development), they would be isolated from their family environment. The family is the main space for human life and functioning, starting from childhood, through youth and maturity, to the period of involution and old age. "From birth to death, the individual is influenced by what their parents and other family members think, what they value, what they strive for, what they believe in, what they consider most important, what principles they follow" [Kawula, Brągiel, Janke, 2007: 14]. Despite the difficulties currently being experienced, the family remains a lasting community, irreplaceable in meeting the needs of its members. It can be stated that the family has always been and still remains a special place of communion between emotionally closest people. The essence of these relationships is the intergenerational nature of the family bond, which boils down to the mutual satisfaction of psychological and social needs, a sense of recognition, trust, security and love [Małecka, 1997; Napora, 2016].

2. Socialisation shift. Prefigurativeness. Intergenerational distance

The volatility of the modern world is reflected in the structure of the family and in the functioning of its individual members (including generations). A characteristic feature of the family in the postmodern perspective is the explosion of individualism among its members in various areas of their lives. It is natural for both parents and children to negotiate or renegotiate family roles, and in a multi-generational family, this also applies to the grandparents' generation. The mechanism of **socialisation shift** towards non-family institutions, peer group, media and multimedia is significant. The dominant type of culture is the **prefigurative**

type. There is a loss of authority, uniqueness, irreplaceability of the experiences of the older generation, the canon of values, norms, and social rules that have been in force for generations in the family. Alternative forms of marriage and family are emerging. There is a reduction (narrowing) of many functions of the family in favour of non-family institutions, peer group, media and multimedia. The activity of family members in non-family relationships and social arrangements is increased [Iashkova, 2002; Czykier, 2013a; Ferenz, 2015; Pachkova, 2018].

In modern societies, the prestige of the elderly is much lower compared to their situation in traditional societies, in which the generation of grandparents enjoyed social and cultural authority as an active source of knowledge and collective experience. According to M.W. Smereczyńska, “in many of today’s societies, where the cult of productivity reigns supreme, there is a risk of considering the older people as useless or even a burden on others; (...) meanwhile, the age-old truth that older people bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge is fading into oblivion” [Smereczyńska, 2000: 84]. It is a fact that with age there is a weakening of vital forces, a biological regression characterised by contexts of degradation. These are natural phenomena that are a consequence of biological programming. However, contemporary changes mean that older people also face many non-biological problems – social, economic, technological, and others. Currently, we can see a disruption of the hierarchy in which socialisation and upbringing in the family took place until recently: grandparents (parents) – parents (children) – children (grandchildren). Referring to the phenomenon of “socialisation shift” [Kwieciński, 1998], it should be noted that it is not the older generations that are today’s determinants of norms, rules, and values that are universally accepted and considered appropriate for young people. The sources of the “socialisation shift” mechanism should be sought in macro-causes operating in the world space, i.e. globalisation, an integral part of which is the enormous increase in the importance of electronic media in popular culture, and in micro-causes, among which excessive paternalism of adults, i.e. their attitude of superiority over the younger generation, is often pointed out. The socialisation (and inculturation) shift manifests itself in the loss of educational influence by the family, school, and Church in favour of electronic media and peer groups.

Considering the transformations associated with the development of computers, the Internet, mobile technologies, intelligent GPT chats, and artificial intelligence (AI), it can be said that we are currently on the threshold of another civilisational change. In the context of the digitalisation of the world and the images through which it is represented, the parcellation noticed already in the 1970s and

defined by M. Mead [2000] as the intergenerational distance, is gaining dangerous dynamics. According to M. Mead, changes in prefigurative cultures occur so rapidly that the attributes of the older generation – experience, knowledge, wisdom – formerly testifying to their superiority and value, lose their significance because knowledge is devalued very quickly. It can therefore be said that there has been a reversal of the traditional rules of upbringing and socialisation: it is young people who teach adults, for example, instrumental skills and how to use electronic media. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in the necessary conditions of social isolation, we all completed a crash course in media education, including family education. We learned from one another how to use multimedia, discovered the previously unused possibilities of the Internet and our equipment. We have learned to work on-line, study, participate in scientific conferences, take exams, “meet” on the occasion of holidays and family celebrations. Our parents or grandparents asked us when we would be online to connect with us via a multimedia communicator.

3. Significant persons in early adulthood. The novitiate phase

In the development of every human being, regardless of their stage of development, other people and interactions with others play an important role. Due to the presence of other people and relationships with them, we are equipped with a sense of security, autonomy, freedom in action, control over the situation, awareness of closeness, belonging to someone, readiness to act independently [Brzezińska, 2013: 34]. A person whose opinion and views are particularly important in the development of self-knowledge and personality formation is a significant person. This is an important person owing to the frequency and significance of their interactions, someone with whom a person shares a unique emotional bond, built on closeness, mutual trust, and understanding. This person is also a source of identification in terms of values, views, and perspectives on the surrounding reality. He is an authority figure, a role model, a moral compass [Brzezińska, 2013: 35–36]. A significant person is fundamental for the psychosocial development, both in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood [Bakiera, Harwas-Napierała, 2016]. Depending on the stage of development, the significant person and the repertoire of functions, they perform change. The period of intensive, independent search for an important and significant person is the phase of early adulthood. In his concept explaining the developmental patterns of human beings, Daniel Levinson [1978] distinguished four stages: childhood and adolescence, early adulthood, middle age

and late adulthood (old age). Early adulthood (the second stage; between 17–22 and 40–45 years of age) is a period of full physical strength and intellectual fitness, a period of life independence and creative expansion leading to self-fulfilment in professional work, marriage, and raising children. During this period, young adults make the most important decisions and establish their place in society. He/She is starting his/her professional career, often reaching its peak. Opportunities for development are mainly related to physical maturation, play, and upbringing (in earlier stages), but also to practical life activities, such as taking up and performing professional work, starting a family, raising children, and participating in social life. According to Levinson, this is the period of greatest vitality, but also the greatest accumulation of many tasks, responsibilities, and ambitions that are difficult to reconcile (e.g., the dilemma of career versus family life). It is a very dynamic and dramatic era, in which successes as well as failures are present. This is because in all roles, the individual appears as a novice. For this reason, Levinson specified the phase of the novitiate (17–28 years of age) in early adulthood.

The main task here is for the individual to form a suitable life structure for themselves, capable of functioning in a given environment. The means to this end include such steps as learning about the adult world, identifying with adults, developing interests, assimilating the value system of adults, and making important decisions about work, marriage, and family. This requires a lot of action and trials. This is a very difficult stage, which is why Levinson attaches great importance to young people finding a mentor, who is a very important figure in their development during this period. He (or she) is a kind of “master”, an object of identification, a person whom the mentee believes in, befriends, admires, and imitates [Hlebovy, Gitimu Waithaka, Gitimu, 2016]. For the development of an adult person, it is important to specify the superior goal he wants to achieve – the “*dream of life*”, without which life may turn out to be not only less fruitful, but also more burdensome in its monotony. In this context, the main role of the mentor is to provide moral and material assistance in the realisation of the “dream of a lifetime”, as well as to inspire the ambitious dreams of the young adult. The main developmental task of this period is to establish contact with a mentor.

4. Research methodology

The main objective of the study was to diagnose the perception of grandparents as significant persons in the lives of academic youth. An attempt was also made

to determine which environmental factors influence the declarations of the surveyed students. The research was a pilot study serving as a reconnaissance and basis for the preparation of international research on universal design, including the social inclusion of older people as a disadvantaged group. The advantage of pilot studies is that they serve as a starting point for more detailed research. They provide preliminary data that can help in the better understanding of the studied issues and of the formulated hypotheses. They help to assess whether the selected variables are appropriate and whether they provide valuable data for statistical analysis. They help identify trends and hypotheses that can later be verified in more representative studies. They also allow you to test whether the research tool works correctly and is understandable to the respondents.

As part of bilateral cooperation, students from the Faculty of Education at the University of Białystok (Poland) and students from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University “Prof. Hab., PhD. Asen Zlatarov” in Burgas (Bulgaria) participated in the research.

In demographic terms, the societies of Poland and Bulgaria (like many others) are ageing societies [Eurostat, 2020; 2022; 2025]. In 2024, the proportion of people 65+ in the total population exceeded 20.0 percent in both countries (Poland 20.5 percent; Bulgaria 23.8 percent; EU 21.6 percent). The mechanism of the so-called double ageing of societies is noticeable, i.e. the appearance of an increasing number of the oldest among the old. The percentage of people aged 80+ was 4.4 percent in Poland and 5.2 percent in Bulgaria (6.1 percent in the EU). Between 2014 and 2024 increase in the share of the population aged 65 years or over in Poland 5.6 p.p. (percentage points), in Bulgaria 3.9 p.p. (in EU 2.9 p.p.). In 2024, the share of people aged 15–24 in the total population in Poland was 9.8 percent, in Bulgaria 9.2 percent (in the EU 10.7 percent). In both countries, the percentage of older people living alone is high: in Poland 28.2 percent, in Bulgaria 33.8 percent (in the EU 32.1 percent). Compared to the EU as a whole, the percentages of older people who travel (Poland 38.0 percent, Bulgaria 11.0 percent, EU 48.4 percent) or use the Internet at least once a week (Poland 23.0 percent, Bulgaria 12.0 percent, EU 45.0 percent) are low.

A diagnostic survey method was used to collect data, employing a questionnaire technique. The research tool was an online Google survey questionnaire (prepared in Polish and Bulgarian, respectively). The students were given access to the form using the submitted web address. It was sent to students by employees of the relevant dean’s offices. One entry from a given record was possible. The students were informed about the purpose of the study and were equipped with

instructions on how to complete the tool. The data was analysed using Microsoft Office Excel. The basic statistics were calculated using the χ^2 test. The verification of statistical assumptions was carried out at the significance level of $p = 0.05$. The correlation coefficient C_{kor} was also taken into account.

5. Research results

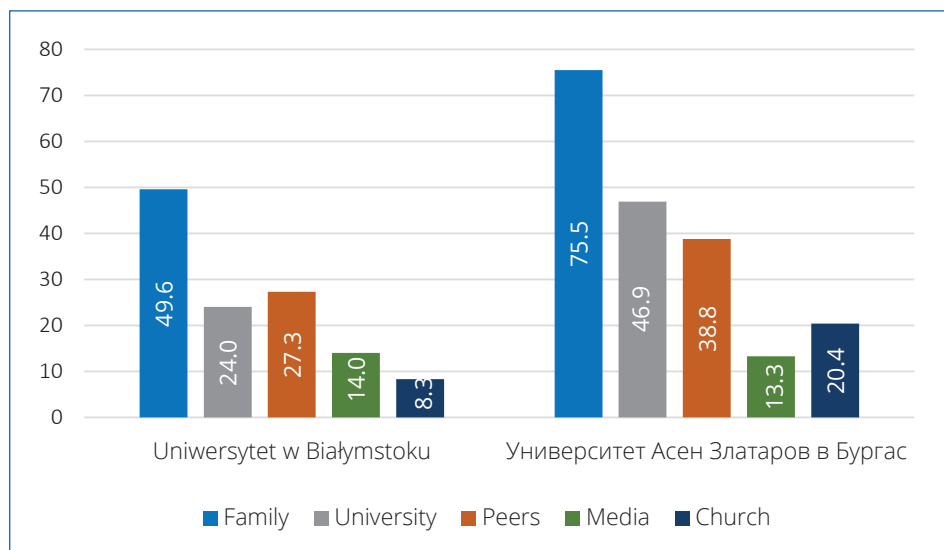
A purposive-random selection of the study group was used. The study included 219 full-time students (PL 55.3%; $n = 121$; BG 44.7%; $n = 98$)¹, who had a grandmother and/or grandfather. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. 180 women (82.2%) and 39 men (17.8%)² from all years of study took part in the surveys: 1st year 19.6%, 2nd year 22.4%, 2nd year 24.7%, 4th year 18.7%, 5th year 14.6%. The largest group of students were those aged 21–23 (49.3%). Every third respondent was 24 years old and older (38.8%). The smallest group were the youngest students aged 18–20 (11.9%). Most of the surveyed students come from urban areas (78.5%), most often from two-parent families (76.3%). Every fifth respondent (20.1%) comes from a single-parent family as a result of divorce or death of one of the parents. During their studies, most students lived in the city (89.5%), in a single-generation family (61.2%) or alone (24.2%). Every seventh respondent (14.6%) indicated that their family with whom they live is a multigenerational family. Most respondents declared their mothers' level of education as secondary (45.2%) or higher (33.8%). In the case of fathers, secondary education (44.7%) and vocational education (27.4%) were indicated. Most of the surveyed students have siblings (78.1%). Among the surveyed students, 65.3% were religious.

In both groups of surveyed students, family was the most frequently indicated among the most important factors shaping their attitudes (Figure 1). High indications are visible among students from Bulgaria (75.5%). Half of the respondents from Poland (49.6%) think similarly.

¹ In the results section, I use the following abbreviations: University in Białystok – PL; University “Prof. Hab. PhD. Asen Zlatarov” in Burgas – BG.

² The gender proportion resulted from the specificity of pedagogical studies.

Figure 1. Factors shaping attitudes in the opinion of the surveyed students (in %)

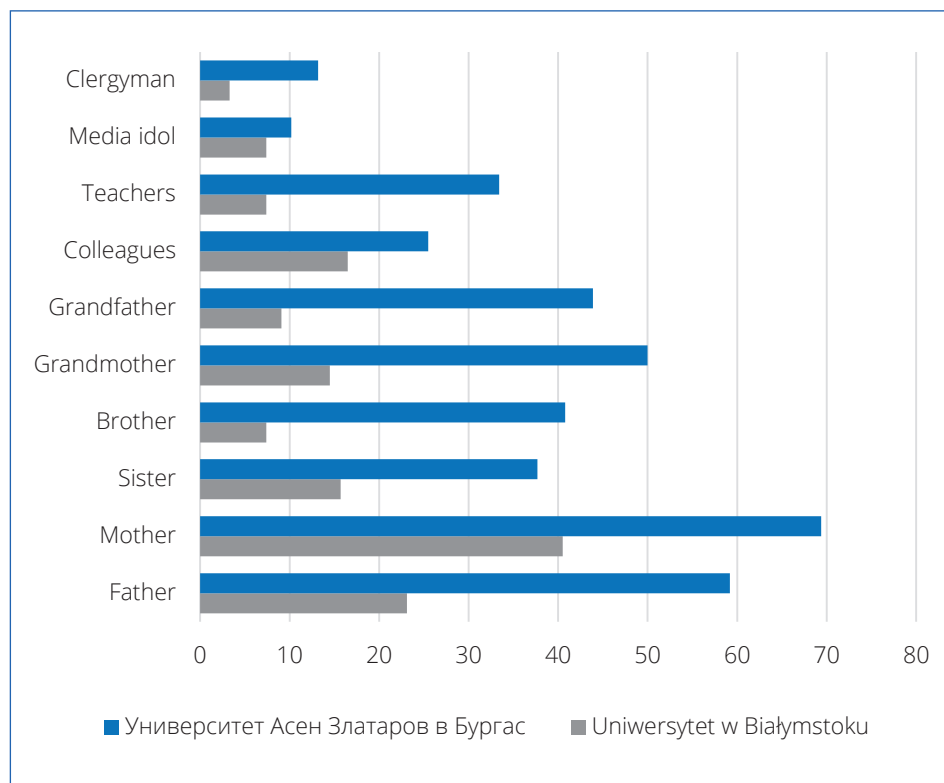


Source: the author's own research.

The high rank of the university's indications is interesting – among students from Burgas, it regards almost half of the respondents (46.9%). The data show that among the Polish students, the university was indicated by every fourth student surveyed (24.0%), lower than the peer group (27.3%). It is also worth noting the high importance of the Church in the group of students from Bulgaria. Every fifth respondent (20.4%) declared so.

Among the significant people in the lives of the respondents (Figure 2), parents were the most frequently indicated. It is interesting, however, that in the group of students from Bulgaria, they achieved much higher indications compared to students from Poland, respectively: BG mother (69.4%) and father (59.2%); PL mother (40.5%) and father (23.1%).

A similar situation also applies to the perception of grandparents as significant people in the lives of the respondents. For students from Bulgaria, the indications are much higher. Grandma was appreciated by 50.0% of the respondents, and grandfather by almost half (43.9%). Among the Polish students, one in seven indicated a grandmother (14.5%) and one in ten grandfathers (9.1%) as significant persons (higher indications were achieved by peers – 16.5%). Every third surveyed student from Burgas indicated a teacher (33.4%).

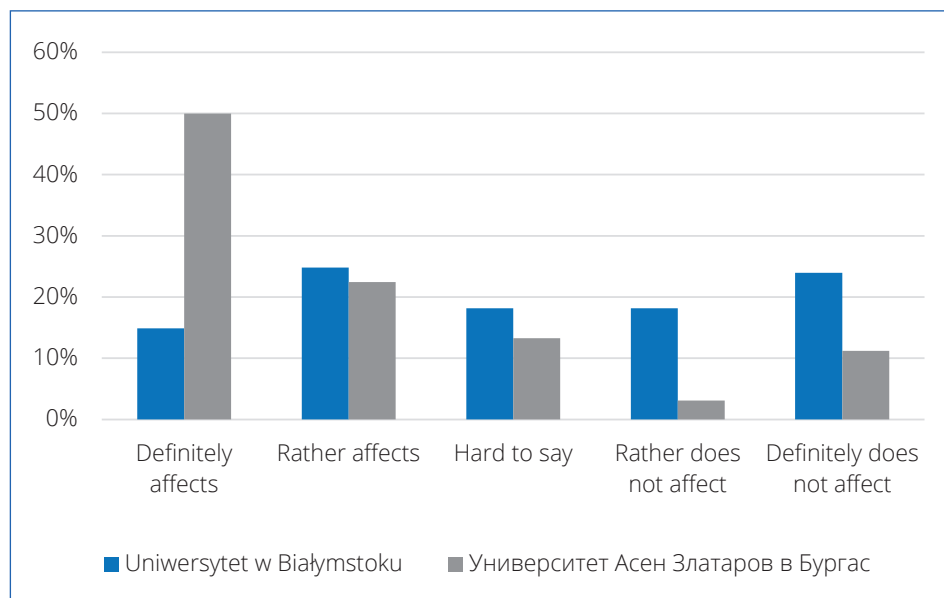
Figure 2. Significant persons in the lives of the respondents (in%)

Source: the author's own research.

It should be emphasised here that for both groups of the surveyed students, the relationships with grandparents are a valued asset. The relations with grandparents on the mother's side are definitely positive (BG 67.3%; PL 38.0%) or rather positive (BG 16.3%; PL 28.9%). Similarly, the relations with paternal grandparents are also decidedly positive (BG 52.0%; PL 27.3%) or rather positive (BG 18.4%; PL 32.2%).

Every second student from Bulgaria (50.0%) believes that grandmother definitely influences the shaping of his attitudes (Figure 3). In the group of the Polish students, almost every seventh respondent (14.9%) thought so. In this group of respondents, the highest percentage of indications concerns the category "rather affects". Every fifth respondent (24.8%) thought so.

Figure 3. Grandma as a significant person in the experience of academic youth

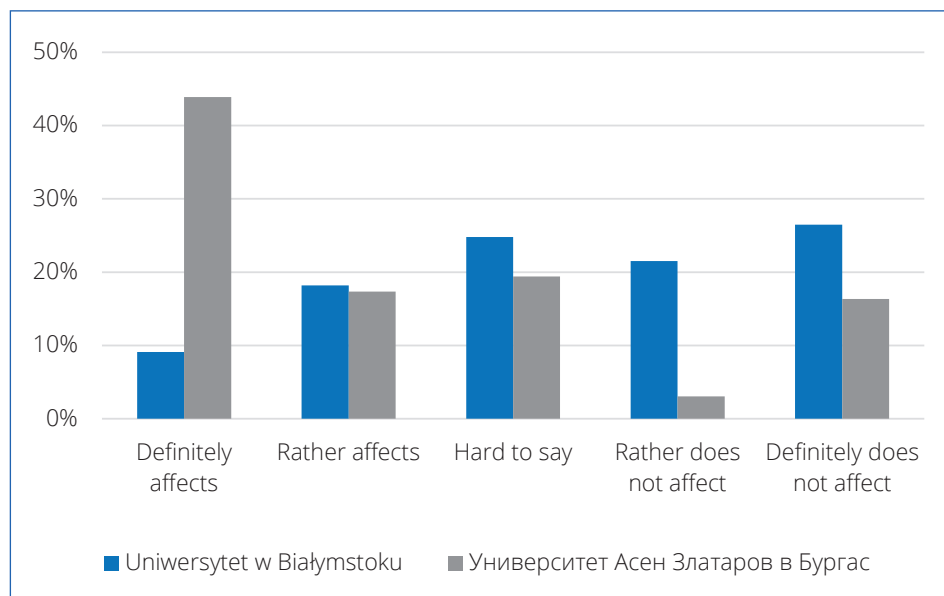


Source: the author's own research.

In the group of the Polish students, compared to the Bulgarian students, much higher indications were given to the categories “hard to say” (18.2%), “rather does not affects” (18.2%) and “definitely does not affects”, which was indicated by every fifth student (24.0%). Among the Bulgarian students, one in nine respondents (11.2%) stated categorically that the person of a grandmother definitely does not influence their attitudes.

According to every second respondent (43.9%) from the group of the Bulgarian students, the grandfather is an important person influencing his or her attitudes to life (Figure 4). Among the Polish students, every eleventh respondent (9.1%) thought so. Twice as many respondents believed that it “rather affects” (18.2%). The category “definitely does not affect” received the most indications (26.4%). Among students from Bulgaria, 16.3% thought so.

It is worth noting that every fourth Polish student (26.4%) and every fifth Bulgarian student (19.4%) did not give a clear answer, ticking the category “difficult to say”.

Figure 4. Grandfather as a significant person in the experience of academic youth

Source: the author's own research.

5.1. Selected environmental conditions and the perception of grandma and grandpa as significant persons

Individual independent variables were subjected to the basic statistical verification based on the χ^2 test with a variable concerning the declaration of grandparents as significant persons in the experience of academic youth. The analysis covered selected environmental factors, i.e., the gender of the respondents, their age, year of study, origin (urban, rural), family structure (complete, incomplete, reconstructed, informal relationship between parents), family type (single-generation, multi-generation), and religiosity. Statistical inference was used to establish relationships and correlations (or lack thereof) between the mentioned variables and the statements made by the surveyed students.

The gender of the respondents does not significantly differentiate the perception of grandmothers and grandfathers as significant persons. There is also no correlation between the variables. In the group of the Polish students, both women and men attributed little importance to their grandmothers and grandfathers. Students from Bulgaria (both women and men) attributed great importance to their grandmothers and grandfathers.

Similarly, the age of the respondents does not significantly differentiate the perception of grandmothers and grandfathers as significant persons. In the group of the Polish students, there is also no relationship between variables. Among the Bulgarian students, however, the value of the C_{kor} coefficient (grandmother $C_{kor} = 0.28$; grandfather $C_{kor} = 0.28$) indicates a weak relationship between the variables. In all age groups, grandmothers and grandfathers were most often considered to be very important, but the youngest students (aged 18–20) gave them the highest ratings (grandmother 87.5%; grandfather 75.0%).

The year of study also does not significantly differentiate between the perception of grandmothers and grandfathers as significant persons. In both groups, there is a weak correlation between the variables. Among the Polish students, older students were more likely to attribute little importance to their grandparents (4th year: grandmother 54.2%, grandfather 62.5%; 5th year: grandmother 52.6%, grandfather 63.2%). Among the Bulgarian students, the second-year students most often attributed great importance to their grandmothers (90.9%, $C_{kor} = 0.28$) and grandfathers (77.3%, $C_{kor} = 0.25$).

No statistically significant differences were found, with a weak correlation observed for the variable of origin. In the group of the Polish students, the respondents living in the city more often attributed little importance to their grandmothers (47.4%, $C_{kor} = 0.26$) and grandfathers (55.1%, $C_{kor} = 0.25$). In the group of the Bulgarian students, the respondents living in the city more often attributed great importance to their grandparents (61.7%, $C_{kor} = 0.22$).

Similarly, in the case of family structure, no statistically significant differences were found, with a weak correlation between the variables. In the case of the students from Poland, the low importance of grandmothers and grandfathers was most often declared by both students from two-parent and single-parent families. In the group of respondents from Bulgaria, grandmothers and grandfathers were most often considered important by the respondents from two-parent families (grandmother 73.1%, $C_{kor} = 0.21$; grandfather 61.5%, $C_{kor} = 0.29$). A weak relationship between variables without statistically significant differences was found in the case of the family structure variable in the group of students from Bulgaria. The respondents from multigenerational families most often attributed great importance to both their grandmothers (86.7%, $C_{kor} = 0.23$) and grandfathers (80.0%, $C_{kor} = 0.23$).

A weak relationship between the variables (without the presence of statistically significant differences) was found in the case of the variable religiosity. Among the Polish students, the most common responses concerned the low importance

of grandmothers (58.8%, $C_{kor} = 0.31$) and grandfathers (64.7%, $C_{kor} = 0.30$) among the respondents who declared themselves to be non-believers. The picture is different among the Bulgarian students. In this case, the most common indications concerned the great importance of the grandmother (70.7%, $C_{kor} = 0.21$) and grandfather (60.0%, $C_{kor} = 0.23$) among the respondents who declared themselves to be believers.

Due to the fact that the research was of a pilot nature, the obtained results should not be treated as definitive. They should be seen as certain signals, trends requiring empirical development and contributing to further scientific exploration of intercultural differences in the perception of grandparents as significant persons, how the role of grandparents differs in different countries or social environments [cf. Gardiner, 2020].

6. Conclusions

1. The results of the research among the Polish group of students illustrate the phenomenon of socialisation shift and prefigurateness.
2. The relations with grandparents on both the mother's and father's sides are definitely positive, although in the group of the Bulgarian students the frequency of such declarations was higher [cf. CBOS, 2012].
3. None of the analysed environmental factors (i.e., gender, age, year of study, origin, family structure, family type, and religiosity) significantly differentiate the perception of grandparents as significant persons in both groups studied. There are certain trends indicating a weak relationship between individual variables.
4. The multigenerational nature of the family of origin among the Bulgarian students clearly determines the more frequent perception of grandmothers and grandfathers as significant persons.
5. The recognised ways of perceiving grandma and grandpa and their importance in the lives of academic youth, the nature of the obtained declarations are a kind of opportunity to build proper intergenerational relations, symbiotic functioning in a common, dynamically changing reality through educational and educational interactions.

7. Discussion

Postmodern processes have led to the disappearance and breakdown of kinship relations and the independence of the nuclear family from the extended family. The multigenerational family has been replaced by the small family [cf. CBOS, 2019]. Traditional multigenerational families, in which three (or more) generations lived together under the leadership of a patriarchal father, are becoming increasingly rare. As the nuclear family became more independent, emotional ties intensified, manifesting themselves in the maintenance of extensive personal relationships between generations. Therefore, the modern multigenerational family should be interpreted as a modified extended family (large, also known as a family circle), which is a union of nuclear families that are partially dependent on each other. Their members exchange services with each other, while maintaining their economic independence. Sometimes they are spatially dispersed, while maintaining an intense family bond. There is also no hierarchical structure of authority in them [cf. Czykier, 2013a]. The social, economic and cultural transformations of the modern world are clearly visible in the transformations of the external and internal structure of the family and the functions it performs. The roles of its individual members are also being redefined and reinterpreted.

The available research results indicate that grandparents are important to their grandchildren (regardless of their age) primarily because of the unique bond that develops between them. The intergenerational nature of the bond places young people in the past of the family and allows them to shape their individual identity [Wawrzyniak, 2011]. Grandparents are an important link in the intergenerational transmission of culture within the family [Dyczewski, 2003; Czykier, 2013b; Stepaluk, 2014]. The frequency of contact and their life experience make them authority figures and role models for their grandchildren [Pieńkos, 2015].

The relationship with grandparents is a protective factor for grandchildren experiencing a reversal of family roles, as it compensates for deficits in the family system [Kozerska, Miszczak, Napora, 2015; Napora, 2016]. People who experienced parentification in childhood perceive their grandparents as significant figures [Chojnacka, 2023]. Grandparents are perceived by young people as individuals who influence their choices regarding values and life goals [Franks i in., 1993].

Grandparents are significant people in the lives of their grandchildren because they are reference points, a kind of “anchors” who care about family relationships, unite the family, are the source of life wisdom, meaning of life and values. Grandparents are also guardians (“protectors”) who support parents (their

children) in raising and caring for their children (grandchildren) [Przygoda, 2015]. Grandparents are also a source of economic support [Botcheva, Feldman, 2004]. They are a source of closeness and unconditional acceptance for grandchildren. Grandparents often become negotiators (mediators) between parents and children in conflict situations, helping them to understand each other. Grandparents are also “historians”, a source of generational continuity, a guarantee of the durability of family history [Pikuła, 2010], cherish tradition and family values [Appelt, 2007: 89].

It is also important that for grandparents, contact with their grandchildren gives them a sense of fulfilment, being loved, belonging. It also contributes to harmony in their mental health [Napora, Jakowska-Suwalska, 2020; Jahangir, Patil, Gangopadhyay, Vogt, 2025]. The cultural heritage of the family and the local community, developed by older generations, is also significant here. Customs, family traditions, behaviours, and symbols are the determinants without which a family would be nothing more than a group of people sharing a common space, running a common household, and exchanging services, mainly focused on satisfying basic needs [Czykier, 2013b].

8. Summary

Despite the appeal of today’s digital world and the devaluation of the position and value of the older generation, this generation remains a valuable source of knowledge and an important element in the socialisation and upbringing of young people.

Therefore, there are challenges for social policy and education in the field of strengthening intra-family and intergenerational relations. In the academic sphere, efforts should be made to obtain transdisciplinary diagnoses and practical implementations. Attention should be paid to the mechanism of ageing societies. Many countries are grappling with a growing elderly population, which brings with it the need to create support programs and to promote intergenerational integration. Migration and mobility are an important issue. Increased migration can lead to family separation, making it difficult to maintain strong family ties. Family models are changing. Modern families take various forms (single-parent families, patchwork families), which requires the adaptation of social policies to the different needs of its members. In the area of intercultural education, it is necessary to introduce educational programs that promote family values and

communication skills, taking into account cultural diversity. Programs focused on relationships also seem to be important. Education often overlooks the importance of life and interpersonal skills, which are crucial for building relationships within the family and between generations. Integration programs are also important, as is the creation of programs that engage different generations in community activities, supporting the building of stronger relationships. A prerequisite is to understand the needs of different groups. Social policies should be developed in cooperation with NGOs, schools and local communities to better respond to the needs of families. Counteracting stereotypes should be an essential activity. It is important that education policy does not support stereotypes about roles in families and intergenerational interactions. In the course of her research, Z. Szarota [2004] proved that the inclusion of gerontological content in the curriculum of students increases the level of attitudes approving old age and has a positive impact on breaking the negative stereotypes shaping the attitude of ageism. In this spirit, education should be pursued into old age, beginning from the earliest years [Zawada, 2009].

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