THE TOOLKIT OF ORAL HISTORY IN THE FORMATION OF A MASS OF ORAL HISTORY SOURCES FOR THE HOLODOMOR IN UKRAINE IN 1932–1933

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Summary
The aim of the paper is to apply theoretical framework elaborated in oral history for the research of the Holodomor. The first aspect is relation of the collective and the individual. Regarding the Holodomor, one can find absence of pressure of official historical memory over the individual; massive of Holodomor oral history is huge (thousands of units of narrative) that allows to solve the problem of verification and to generalize the experience of the respondents in many parameters. The author also shows how problems of the degree of censoring, reference points and regarding the harmonization of the public and the private can be solves with the oral history of the Holodomor. Specificity of gender's recalling of the past is also proposed. The second component of analyzed framework is correlation between memory and time. The author illustrates that there are no obstacles to non-trusting of the narrative of the Holodomor survivors. Third component of the framework is trauma. Using oral history, the author illustrates how witnesses to the famine express signals of the traumatic event. The article also points at such important aspect of dealing with investigating the trauma, as absence of words to express surviving through the famine. The historical method, analysis and synthesis, and also the comparative-historical method were used.

Keywords: Holodomor, oral history, oral history sources, trauma, memory studies, historical memory, interview.

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1. Introduction

Oral history has led to a number of discussions regarding the tools for working with it for the best interpretation of this type of historical source. Western schools of research have solid achievements that historians have now used for half a century. Ukrainian scholars – above all folklorists, ethnologists, and also historians and sociologists, all whom the modern anthropocentric focus of interests unites – are now actively introducing oral history projects and constantly expanding the sphere of use of this type of historical source.

Such Ukrainian researchers paid attention to the issue of oral history theory: H. Hrinchenko *(Hrinchenko, 2004: 10–32; Hrinchenko, 2008: 59-76)*, O. Kis *(Kis, 7–12; Kis, 2015: 212–220)*, T. Pastushenko *(Pastushenko, 2010: 10–15)*. These three researchers edited a collection of articles on oral history *(Suspil'ni zlamy, 2014)*. T. Pastushenko summoned up evolution of the Ukrainian Assosiation of Oral Hiatory *(Pastushenko, 2007: 230–235)*. O. Kis also analyzed such aspects with the help of oral history, as female experience during the Holodomor *(Kis, 2010: 171–191; Kis, 2013: 42–67)* and in the GULAG *(Kis, 2017)*, polish voices in Lviv

(Kis, 2009: 60–75). Oral history as a source for ostarbaiters was approached by H. Hrinchenko *(Hrinchenko, 2004: 151–170)* and T. Pastushenko *(Pastushenko, 2010: 202–213)*. V. Ohijenko focused on trauma and Holodomor oral history *(Ohijenko, 2018)*.

Scientific novelty. From the end of the 1980s, from the very start of Holodomor studies in Ukraine, oral history became one of the key tools, inasmuch as the official documentation of the totalitarian government, with the goal of hiding the traces of this crime, was empty and superficial. And so the theme of the Great Famine was "stormed" from two sides: from the sides of archival documents and oral history. The author proposes taking a look at the problem areas of an oral history source in general, and oral history sources on the Holodomor in particular.

The relevance of scholarly approaches. Proposals for the analysis of the problem (the relation of the collective and the individual; memory/time; trauma) witness to the "normality" of the oral history of the Holodomor, compared with Western practices of research of the past, above all where traumatic events are involved. The Western experience of developing the theoretical grounds of oral history as a field of historical knowledge, and also as the practical full-fledged use of oral history as a historical source, remains for now extremely in demand.

Research goal: To compare three pairs of factors which influence the formation and interpretation of oral history as a historical source (official history/personal narrative; time/memory; trauma/recollection) and to track their influence on the formation and interpretation of oral history sources about the Holodomor.

Research tasks: To identify the degree of influence of the collective treatment of history on personal experience; to determine how the time which has passed after an event influences the person's ability to recall the event and how the traumatic nature of an event influences the recollection and the reliability of the presentation of the event in an interview or memoir.

Methodology: The historical method, analysis and synthesis, and also the comparative-historical method were used.

The logic of the conception of the researched material. At first we propose looking at how oral history helps provide a forum for people whom, as a rule, official history-writing avoids, and understanding what, in the given context, is the role of the oral history of the Holodomor. Later we propose focusing on how the time which has passed since an event happened influences the narrative of the event. Finally, the last factor which researchers of the Holodomor must take into account is the traumatic nature of the event and how this influences the respondent and the future oral history source.

2. Official history vs. personal narrative

Historians who work with oral history encounter the problem of official and personal memory. How does one find the correct relation between events present on two different levels which often, it seems, not only do not overlap but do not even intersect? A problem like this in the conditions of researching totalitarian regimes (and the Holodomor fits well into such a paradigm) has, essentially, been partially solved, because totalitarian regimes demonstrate the most force in suppressing the publication of recollections which run counter to their ideology and politics and, in general, in suppressing the ability to remember *(Abrams, 2010: 101)*. And so, it is very important to research the totalitarian past especially with the help of oral history.

Regarding the Holodomor, the whole toolkit of the totalitarian regime was used to control memory and plant its own version of history *(Abrams, 2010: 159)*: silence (the ban on introducing any information about the famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine into the public space was

only removed in 1987, more than half a century later); honor (confirmed by the honoring of a pantheon of "heroes," including Chekists and Komsomol members); active silencing (of mentions of the famine and the discovery of related manuscripts or printed materials); and manipulation (this was not a famine but "food-related difficulties" of the period of the first five-year plan.)

The German historian Jan Assmann used the concept "communicative memory," which covers part of collective memory, which is based in communication. Individual memory manifests itself in communication with people who have a common image of the past. Stories of traumas experienced (and not only traumas) are re-told to close people whom the speaker trusts. In this way, an alternative view of history survived, different from the one officially announced *(Kis, 2010: 173–174)*.

The narrative of the Holodomor belongs to such stories, told in whispers. As Oksana Kis sums up: "Thanks to the personal (often private, and not political) character of such stories, they probably have less often been erased from memory, and now they can help reconstruct a fuller and more adequate picture of the experience of the Holodomor." *(Kis, 2010: 174)*.

Ukrainian historian Oleksandra Veselova precisely summed up the problem of the "forced silence" of witnesses of the Holodomor: "…Silent repressions, forcing into the consciousness of the population the Leninist-Stalinist ideology of the 'petty bourgeoisie character and inferiority' of the feeders of the country, the peasantry, lasted half a century, and historians not only could not take up the given theme but, in general, they had no idea of the scale and mechanisms of the tragedy. And the carriers of memory of these terrible events only in secret whispers told their offspring of the frightful evil, with the constant warning/request to keep silent so as not to risk reprisals from the authorities, who were extremely silent about the genocide of the Ukrainian people by famine. However, thousands and thousands of people preserved memories of the horror of extermination of people"*(Veselova, 2009: 7)*.

Among the advantages of oral history sources compared with an "official" source, another is the absence in the latter of information about certain facts, personalities, and relations between persons and institutions. There is an opportunity to interpret personalities and events and to establish relations, personal roles, the development of institutions and the process of the development of policy. Oral history can also help in the analysis of documents: clarification of actual conflicts; the ability to shed light on suppositions, motives, and gaps in the documents *(Seldon, 1983: 36–46)*.

As for the Holodomor, it is possible not only to talk about oral history as filling in the historiography of a certain period but, in general, about the influence of oral history on writing the history of the internal and economic policies of the USSR at that time. This is because the uncritical use of official documentation to research this period leads to conclusions about the relative "normality" of the economic policy with deviations due to weather conditions and economic factors *(Hurjeva, 2010: 5–17)*.

Problems of differences between personal experience and the official narrative, about which theoreticians of oral history write (divergences which arise because of researchers' ignorance about certain aspects; varying understandings of events by a contemporary and retrospective view of inaccuracy in the testimonies, connected with changes in memory over time *(Yow, 2005: 22; Roseman, 2006: 231)*, are, it seems, not so relevant. For the respondents describe famine generally in their own village, more rarely in the city. They tell of their own, personal experience, which intersected with "officials" on the level of the functionaries of the local authorities. Still, certain categories of witnesses (diplomats, engineers, scholars, etc.), could have mentioned famine in the cities in their narratives, memories of highly-placed persons and some facts connected with centers where decisions are made.

The problem of the verification of oral testimonies is a relevant problem. And so British historian Trevor Lummis states that verification can be divided into two zones: the degree to which each individual interview contains reliable information about historical experience and the degree to which this individual experience is typical of its time and place. Also, in his opinion, depending on the number of interviews, one can develop a method of generalization *(Lummis, 2006: 255)*. American historian Valerie Yow adds that, in generalizing, the researcher encounters the problem of the number of testimonies: How many do there need to be so that the generalization is legitimate? Did the respondents truly speak willingly and did they fully respond to the questions? *(Yow, 2005: 18)*.

For research on the Holodomor, a significant amount of testimonies, more than a few thousand examples, allows one to generalize the experience of the respondents in many parameters – searches, survival strategies, and the situation in the village.

The problem of memory is related to the problem of divergences between testimonies and official history. In Trevor Lummis's opinion, it is possible to distinguish three problem aspects connected with memory in oral history: the degree of censoring of recollections/memories; reference points for chronology; and how the public and private spheres are consistent with the individual testimony *(Lummis, 2006: 256)*. Remembering these aspects, the researcher can better decipher layers of recollections.

The first aspect regards the degree of censoring. It is possible to talk of the active silencing of information contained in recollections when it does not coincide with the official narrative. Evidently, here a certain self-restrain, self-censorship is working in relating the experience of surviving the Holodomor – especially if certain phenomena are involved which are condemned by the community (eating corpses or cannibalism, membership in structures of power in the village, thievery for survival, etc.).

The second problem (reference points) surprisingly solved itself. The separation of the Holodomor from a general famine made an impression on researchers. Materials from an oral history collection about the confiscation of food, "1933: And why are you still alive!" *(Boriak, 2016: 110–687)*, demonstrates the awareness of the respondents themselves of the transformation of hunger to a real famine from the end of 1932 to the start of 1933. This happened as a consequence of searches during which not only all grain stocks but ALL FOOD was withdrawn. The respondents themselves indicate time parameters: late autumn, the end of autumn, the end/beginning of the year, Christmas, New Year's, winter, and the spring of 1933.

The third problem, regarding the harmonization of the public and the private, is mainly not relevant for the oral history of the Holodomor because of the above-mentioned ideological factors. It turned out that the public narrative did not intersect with the private. A person before whose eyes parents, children, fellow villagers, and relatives died as a result of searches and the removal of food could not reconcile these deaths with the "legitimate" official thesis about "certain food-related difficulties" in the country. It looks like a witness of the famine who wanted to publicize his experience was waiting for an appropriate opportunity to do this.

The sex of the respondent also explains the differences between official history and personal testimony, because women and men remember differently (also concerning the Holodomor). A woman's memory mainly preserves information about details of personal life, events, names, and faces; in their recollections, as a rule, emotions are present *(Yow, 2005: 50; Abrams, 2010: 91)*. If a man loves to talk about sports, politics, and intellectual matters and has little interest in domestic matters, women express interest in the daily routine *(Yow, 2005: 174)*, because the home is considered "the woman's place" *(Abrams, 2010: 91)*. As a rule, men tell stories with a linear narrative; they try to talk exclusively about outstanding events.

In comparison with women, they were mobile, and so able to talk about the situation outside the village. Women, mainly gravitating toward a conversational style, rather recall ordinary things (family, food) and refer to the accounts of other people. They often build their account not with chronology but tie it together with certain episodes, with repetitions and details *(Abrams, 2010: 119)*. And so women sooner recount personal stories *(Abrams, 2010: 114)*. In particular, the emphasis is on the specific memories of people who talk about events that they witnessed in childhood. Recalling their experience of living through the Holodomor, they focus on food, the deaths of family and neighbors, facts of cannibalism, and the violence of activists against the family *(Mytsyk, 2004: 9–10)*; their recollections are fragmentary.

One of the problems that faces researchers of oral history, in particular in the context of official discourse, is the relation of individual and collective memory. Theories exist that not only prove the influence of collective (social) memory on personal narrative, but acknowledge the uniqueness and reliability of individual memory, and also the conflict between them *(Abrams, 2010: 96)*. Today it is generally acknowledged that collective memory influences personal, and vice versa.

From the point of view of the Italian researcher of oral history Alessandro Portelli, individual memory does not depend on collective, but they co-exist and are closely connected. And so individual memory is often used to weight dominant narratives of collective memory, confirming certain positions: "If all memory were collective, one witness could serve for an entire culture – but we know that this is not so." *(Abrams, 2010: 103)*.

An aspect worth attention – how the media influences collective consciousness – confirms that how people fill out their memories, based on personal experience, in certain frameworks depends on the social context *(Yow, 2005: 55–57)*. For researchers of the famine, the influence of the information field on the lexicon of the narrative is evident. There is a question, in particular, about the change of the term "hunger" in the sense of "famine," which respondents used to the start of the 2000s, to the idea "Holodomor." This clearly happened as a consequence of the passing of the 2006 Law of Ukraine "On the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine". Also, in the accounts of respondents, an unconscious acknowledgment of the famine as "genocide" occurs, though this could be treated as their understanding of the artificial nature of the famine and the government's criminal act. Today researchers of oral history emphasize the possibility that it can help look at relations between the person and society, the past and the present, and personal experience and the generally-accepted assessment *(Abrams, 2010: 81)*. These are particularly relevant for research of the famine.

3. Memory: Ally or enemy of recollection?

The problem of the relation of memory and oral history can be broken into a few components: the types of memory which participate in the process of recording oral history; the influence of aging on memory; and the person's ability to "pull out" events from his or her memory.

Autobiographical memory consists of the acts of someone's life, personally reconstructed in memory (rather than honestly recalled). This reconstruction depends on the development of personality – acts, experience, and certain things that will be recalled and renewed in various ways depending on the stage of someone's life *(Abrams, 2010: 86)*.

They also distinguish episodic memory (memory of events; sometimes they call this autobiographical) and its components – so-called "flash-bulb" or "vivid," when memory recalls

an event with the smallest details, as if it photographed it. This memory is most often connected with very emotional or essentially personal acts *(Abrams, 2010: 83)*.

They describe this "flash-bulb memory" as "exceptionally vivid, exact, concrete, durable at the time of recollection of these conditions which surrounded the person at the moment when he or she witnessed a certain unusual event." *(Kis, 2010: 182)*. It is this kind of memory that characterizes the vast majority of recollections about the Holodomor of witnesses who at the moment of the given traumatic event were children. The fact of the absence of a clear, logical orderly narrative witnesses to the specified type of memory; present instead are certain episodes reflected in detail.

There is a generally-accepted idea that it is not worthwhile to trust the memory of an older person, and more so, to use his or her recollections as a full-fledged source. However, conducted research has refuted this claim: depending on the respondent's psychological health, the functions of his or her memory do not necessarily worsen with age *(Abrams, 2010: 90)*. Recollection depends on individual interests and needs. Older people (in their 70s, 80s, even 90s) are not in the main different from younger people in the vividness of the recollection of details. This is explained by the fact that people preserve memories important for them, for they repeat them over the years, trying to reinforce the meaning of their lives *(Yow, 2005: 38)*. In addition, it is considered that, with age, events of long ago are recalled better than those which happened to the respondent recently *(Abrams, 2010: 90)*.

Yet another caution regarding the "quality" of the memory of older people is a theory about the influence of the irreversible loss of neurons on the worsening of memory. According to the latest research, however, the formation of new neurons ("neurogenesis") happens constantly, and so does the renewal of the processes of recollection *(Yow, 2005: 39)*.

Valerie Yow has observed that, with the passage of time, people become more objective. When a person has something to lose, he or she more carefully controls his or her telling of an event. At the end of life, on the other hand, a need arises to look on things with maximal honesty, to sum up the way traveled. This desire to understand the events of the past competes with the need to present oneself in a good light *(Yow, 2005: 19–20)*. This sometimes causes errors in recollection *(Abrams, 2010: 85)*. The mentioned researcher also expresses the observation that events of childhood, youth, and young adulthood more easily arise from memory than events of the period of middle age *(Yow, 2005: 20)*.

Research conducted by various experts gives grounds for making a generalizing statement: few reasons exist to say that people recall events inaccurately, and intentionally or consciously distort their testimony. Rather, the situation is that the quality, vividness, and depth of individual memory about specific events or one's own experience will depend on the coding that happened at a certain time, and the conditions in which the recollection took place. It seems that people remember what is important to them. Certain details may be dim, but the wide contour of the memory remains all through life *(Abrams, 2010: 86)*. Other similar research allows one to make yet another generalizing conclusion: people of various ages remember what has great meaning for them *(Yow, 2005: 39)*. Any memory is "true" for its bearer. Personal memory is not a direct psychological phenomenon but experience shared with society *(Abrams, 2010: 79)*.

The idea exists that a person better remembers events connected with an experience which is repeated or connected with habits – work, going to school, etc. *(Abrams, 2010: 87)*. If one uses this approach for information from witnesses of the Holodomor, for example, recollections about the daily struggle for food (trying to hide it, find it, prepare it in a way that neighbors would not see), or about the situation seen in the village on the days they went to school, this can fall under the category of daily routine which is remembered better.

4. Oral history and trauma: Specifics and limitations

In the mass of oral history, a separate place is given to testimonies of people about events which can be considered traumatic, which negatively influenced the person, caused a split in life before and after the trauma and affected further life *(Yow, 2005: 45)*.

As for work with events which can be qualified as "trauma," researchers of oral history have to be aware that, regarding experience connected with strong emotions, they can hear about the core of events which interest them, but smaller details are unlikely to be mentioned *(Yow, 2005: 46–47)*. One should keep in mind that the Holodomor belongs to these kinds of traumatic events, because through repressions, starvation, and death, the traditional, established family structure was ruined.

It has been established that traumatic events are more strongly set in memory and are more easily re-created, even with the passage of time *(Abrams, 2010: 86-87)*.

Swedish researchers Sven Åke Christianson and Birgitta Hübinette have established that, with time, highly-emotional events from real life are held well in memory from the point of view of details which are directly associated with the event which rouse the emotions, but less from the point of view of details of accompanying events of the circumstances (in the case of an experiment – date and time) *(Yow, 2005: 44)*. Lynn Abrams also characterizes the ability of memory to re-create a traumatic experience, directly connecting this with the degree of emotionality of the event *(Abrams, 2010: 88)*. However, in the case of recalling a traumatic event, not everything is so unambiguous. Really, the traumatic event can be reported vividly by the respondent and even precisely but, at the same time, he cannot re-create details, consistently relating the events. Here subconscious factors are active. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a complex and lasting emotional reaction to extreme psychological trauma. Some people suppress painful memories. This explains why some cannot recall a traumatic event, while others relate even the smallest details.

Cultural (in the case of the Holodomor, political) pressure can explain silence regarding traumatic memories. Thus, veterans of the Second World War mainly chose the tactic of silence and rarely were diagnosed as suffering from psychological disorders *(Abrams, 2010: 93)*. According to the testimony of historian of oral history and consultant on traumatic events Dori Laub, silence can witness to a collective mass trauma *(Abrams, 2010: 122)*.

Authors of a work on the Armenian genocide Donald and Lorna Miller, collecting and working on a mass of testimonies about the tragedy, asked the question: What is the reason for the vividness of recollections of witnesses of events of more than half a century ago? They came to the conclusion that the impressions of what the witnesses saw as children were so emotionally strong that they could not forget them. The witnesses dream of these horrors and feel a need to talk about them *(Miller, 1993: 28)*. Jewish witnesses of the Holocaust talk about this constantly.

Witnesses of the Holodomor thus describe their pain: "After this, my soul began to turn grey" *(Kovalenko, 1991: 21)*; "All my life I lived with tearful eyes" *(Kovalenko, 1991: 19)*; "I sometimes dream of these horrors and now I cry out during the dream… and for my daughters [two daughters died from starvation – T. B.] still now, in old age, I grieve and curse…" *(Kovalenko, 1991: 98)*; "Now I still tremble when the dreams sometimes come – a cart full of the dead is taken to the cemetery" *(Kovalenko, 1991: 99)*; "All my life I carry this terrible tragedy of 1933, like that nail driven into the heart. Perhaps it will be easier on my heart if I tell the truth about these terrible times." *(Kovalenko, 1991: 128)*.

Lynn Abrams considers that the degree to which trauma can influence memory and the process of recollection can be analyzed by way of looking at two elements: credibility (reliability) and the ability to recall emotions. Doubting a witness's recollections of trauma may look like insensitivity. The events often recalled are from a distant time, and to express them in words is difficult. We have to expect that such testimony will contain some inaccuracies, though this is no reason to doubt its value *(Abrams, 2010: 94)*.

Holocaust researcher Lawrence Langer wrote that memory of the Holocaust never died in people's recollections. Factual errors in the recollections of witnesses happen, but they appear non-essential compared with the information that the respondents provide. This opens new horizons for interpretation by historians *(Roseman, 2006: 231)*.

It is not possible to forget the problem of describing a traumatic event. Researchers indicate the impossibility of witnesses sharing their recollections of the traumatic past, not because they don't remember it, but because there is no structure which could contain and order what was experienced *(Abrams, 2010: 95)*. Not understanding how an ordinary person can describe inhuman tortures can lead to the witness not wanting to begin a conversation at all.

Witnesses of the Holodomor are no exception when some of them refuse to give testimony because memories are difficult *(Bilousova, 2007: 16)*. Thus American bank worker Walter Becherer, who in August 1933 returned from the Ukrainian SSR and at the invitation of the German Evangelical Press Association gave his personal impressions of what he had seen, also mentioned the difficulty of describing the state of starving people: "… it is not possible to exaggerate the description of these horrors which he saw in Ukraine, for no words can represent it. The biggest human fantasy cannot think up a hell like what there is now in Ukraine." *(Svoboda, 1933: 1)*.

Yet another testimony about the lack of words to adequately describe the famine was given by two Czechoslovakian communists who tried "to convey the groans of the terrible life; people have no words to describe it. Groans. The death of millions for a bunch of parasites… This is hell, the house of the insane…" *(Delehan, 2008: 80, 83)*. In a letter, a witness thus ends his description of the reality: "In a word, to describe all that is being done around us is impossible." *(Kliuvak, 2008: 152)*. Another letter states that "we have starvation which we don't have words to describe." *(Kliuvak, 2008: 154)*.

In this context, the mention of people's use of a certain set of words to describe the events of the Holodomor cannot be overlooked. The most vivid examples, the names of "foods" which people were forced to prepare during the famine. Recently, on the basis of testimonies a whole dictionary of terms that indicate "food" was composed *(Riznykiv, 2003: 3–76)*. It's possible to add such verbal formulas that indicate the death of a person like the lexeme "zdykhannya," a word which indicates the death of an animal *(Kovalenko, 1991: 507)*. And such a description of a certain situation with the help of the same choice of words, universal for various regions of what was then the Ukrainian SSR, again testifies in favor of the truthfulness of the core of the testimonies about murder by starvation.

It is also agreed that during an account of a traumatic experience, the speakers use special forms to express their experience, feelings, and emotions. Researcher Gadi BenEzer recognizes 13 most widespread signals of trauma in biographical accounts: continuing silence, an outburst of emotions, stupor, an obsession with the story, immersion in the past, an inability to tell the story, change in voice, body language, et al. *(Kis, 2010: 180)*. Interviewers of witnesses of the Holodomor also sometimes report similar signs (mainly crying, change in voice or stupor).

Accordingly, monitoring these signals allows the expert to be aware of the essence of a traumatic event, even if the respondent does not want to talk about it or refutes its traumatic nature.

Connected with traumatic recollections of violence on the part of the authorities is the factor of time – the time between the moment of the events recalled and the moment of the interview. Researcher Nancy Combs refers to proximity to the time of the genocide as one of the factors which worsens the quality of the testimony. That is, the less time that has passed since the date of the event to the time of recording it, the more chaotic will the account of the witness be, as his family loss will pain him and he'll still be under impressions of terror, murders, and deaths. Through his life, the person will be able to think of the event, build his own chronology of events, his vision of what happened, and determine his place in these circumstances *(Erin, 2011: 302)*. If one speaks of the Holodomor in this context, a minimum of two decades passed from the time of the event to the recording of the first witnesses, and, in Ukraine, more than half a century. So, according to the theory of Nancy Combs, the factor of time should be minimalized in the testimonies of those who lived through the Holodomor. And this, in its turn, should positively influence the quality of testimonies.

Working on the recollections of witnesses of the Holocaust, Mark Roseman turned attention to yet another aspect of memory and the reliability of oral history. Many who gave testimonies at the end of their lives wished to report what they had experienced *(Roseman, 2006: 232)*. It is possible to assume that, in recording, the person tried to recall the events as accurately as possible. Irina Shcherbakova, gathering recordings from people who survived the GULAG, came to a similar conclusion regarding the dependability of the memory of the witnesses of extraordinary events. In her opinion, it is not possible to repress such people's memory, for this would mean for them to forget their own lives *(Sherbakova, 2006: 522)*.

Miron Dolot (Semen Stariv), the author of a book of reminiscences "Execution by Hunger," responded to the question of how, after so many years, it was possible to recall the course of events (he published the reminiscences in 1985, though 24 out of 30 chapters were recorded before 1953): "First of all, one does not forget the trauma and tragedy of one's life, no matter how hard one tries. Secondly, one cannot forget the details of one's struggle to survive… I cannot forget these things." (*Dolot, 1985: XV–XVI*). Another witness of the starvation, Pavlo Makohon (1983), wrote: "I always held in my memory my brothers, sisters, and all those of our villagers who before my eyes died from starvation, who almost naked were tossed into one common hole. Wherever I go, wherever I live, this terrible, tragic memory of the terrible death by starvation will never stop pursuing me." *(Makohon, 1983: 41)*.

Concluding this look at the influence of traumatic events on recollection, we note that the literature lacks an analysis of how feelings of the injustice of the violence inflicted on the person can influence the respondent's desire to fix traumatic events in memory or what other arguments witnesses present in telling their stories of surviving in extraordinary conditions. A knowledge of motivation could help in assessing the testimonies, understanding why the witness brings attention to one or another detail that is recalled.

For example, among motives of witnesses of the Holodomor, one encounters a conscious desire to recount the harm done to the family by the authorities, to convey the truth to contemporaries and future generations: "The soul rejoices that finally the time for truth has come. Justice should be resurrected" *(Kovalenko, 1991: 87)*; "the farmers are waiting; yet in the period of Perestroika, Truth will reign. They are waiting to hear the truth about the tragic year 1933" *(Kovalenko, 1991: 128)*; "All my life, I believed that this time would come, when they would speak out loud about this unbelievable calamity." *(Kovalenko, 1991: 270)*.

5. Conclusions

Without a doubt, the list of factors which influence the oral history of the Holodomor are much more extensive – the organization of interviews and the culture of transcribing the recording and transferring it to the category "historical source" and general approaches in the humanities to oral history. The author analyzed three groups of factors which directly influence the formation of oral history sources on the theme of the Holodomor.

Research of the totalitarian past cannot not include the voices of repressed communities. The witnesses of the crimes were considered enemies of the regime or, as a minimum, unworthy members of society, and so "silenced." Only by enlisting their narratives will the reconstructed past be balanced and reveal new directions for research.

The ban on recalling the famine (in all four forms – silence, honor, active silencing, and manipulation) was, nevertheless, violated by those witnesses who were able to report to the West about their experience already in the 1930s and, particularly, after the end of the Second World War. However, recording interviews, gathering reminiscences, and publicizing them from the middle of the 1940s abroad, and in the 1980s and 1990s in Ukraine, demonstrates that a strong informational field which would be able to cardinally influence the narrative of the respondents was not formed in those years. Terminological innovations (the change from "famine" to "Holodomor" and "genocide") happened in the last decade, though this did not influence the core of the narrative – it remains similar in tens of thousands of sources.

The problem of chronology which researchers in oral history encounter is partially solved for sources about the Holodomor, because respondents with the help of various formulations generally indicate what events were happening from the end of 1932 to the middle of 1933.

The ban on recalling the famine, on the contrary, led to a "preservation" of recollections in the memory of a witness who could not betray deceased relatives and so did not accept the thesis of "food-related difficulties" proposed by the authorities. He lived with the hope of publicizing his tragic experience and dreamed of a worthy honoring of the memory of the deceased.

The theory expounded by Western researchers about differences among narratives of respondents depending on sex found its affirmation also in relation to the oral history of the Holodomor. The experience of reporting on the latter allowed one to speak of the specifics of how children recalled the famine.

In the given context, problems of the reliability of recollections for researchers of the Holodomor are considered from a different perspective, because the center of the accounts were villagers, and also city-dwellers, but of low social status. So their experiences concern aspects that are not likely to concern certain famous figures of this or another period.

Researchers are inclined to state that it is not worth discriminating against reminiscences based on the time elapsed between their recording and the corresponding event in life. Traumatic events even more so fall under the given rule. Particularities of age not only do not have much effect on recollection but, on the contrary, make this process more active. This is explained by the fact that a person who wants to share his or her past with strangers has more life experience and desire to sum up his or her life and a greater vocabulary.

It is worth mentioning that people remember what has extraordinary significance for them. The historian's task is to understand why one event or another, important from his point of view, remain outside the respondent's attention, and to try to "push" the latter to recalling what seems important for the interviewer.

The traumatic character of the event leads to the recollection of details, emotions; on the other hand, the trauma given by the event can be so strong that the respondent cannot talk about it.

The similarity of descriptions of the Holocaust and the Holodomor catches the eye, like the absence of words which can describe that borderline state between life and death which the witnesses have passed through. We must assert the creation of a special language to relatively correctly convey a picture of the events. If the speaker had the courage to publicize his experience, he wanted to recall details and maximally fully present the data, which, to a significant extent, is determined by a feeling of moral obligation before the deceased.

In general, it is possible to assert the adequacy of using the toolkit which is used to analyze oral history as a source for the analysis of the oral history of the Holodomor.

Unfortunately, now, through the passing of the generation of direct witnesses of the tragedy, we must admit the conclusion of work in collecting testimonies from direct witnesses of the Holodomor. But the available toolkit can be used on the already-formed mass of sources on the Holodomor. Suggested approaches can also be used to research another famine, that after the war, 1946-1947.

Other traumatic events, similar to the Holodomor, were the Second World War and the Russian-Ukrainian War, which has gone on in Ukraine since 2014. One difference in the latter theme is the aggressive media space which unquestionably is covering, like an umbrella, the direct participants of the process, and outside viewers, which in fact narrows the space for one to express one's own "I" and one's own lived experience and understanding of it. Future historians will need to use their expertise to separate the level of television and the Internet from the respondent's own narrative. The question is, will it be possible to do this?

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