

Consequences of Holodomor Knowledge in Second Generation Children of Survivors in the Ukrainian Canadian Diaspora Through Oral History Accounts

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ABSTRACT

Interview-based qualitative methodology was used to assess the consequences of knowledge of the 1932-1933 Holodomor genocide on the second generation, the children of survivors, in twenty-one Ukrainian Canadian respondents' families. This is the first oral history study addressing the legacy of the Holodomor on the lives of the second generation of survivors in the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora. Only one sibling was interviewed from each family to reduce cross-influencing. Interviews employed the 'oral history method' of open-ended questions without setting any predetermined hypothesis. Five of the fifty-one questions asked were assessed in a thematic analysis of these semi-structured, in-depth interviews which were recorded between 7 April and 17 December 2015. Eleven of the respondents were chosen because their survivor parent(s) had previously recorded their oral histories in the UCRDC archives; the other ten were chosen using the "snowball method" of selection. The findings show that the Holodomor, a genocide that claimed millions of lives through forced starvation, has left significant effects on the second generation born decades later in a separate country. A key finding which grouped respondents into two main categories was based on their knowledge of the Holodomor, specifically whether the children had been told about the Holodomor while growing up and it was spoken about at home, or whether the children had never been told, it was not spoken about at home growing up, and they found out about it in various ways later in life. However, of the survivors who did not tell their children about their experiences during the Holodomor, the study found that male parents especially did mention events in their lives that resulted from the brutal Soviet state policies of dekulakization and collectivization, and in often graphic ways, without referring to them as Holodomor related.

Key conclusions in the study include that these children inherit a legacy and memories that are not their own but that nonetheless shape their lives and identities. In denying their children knowledge of their Holodomor identities, those children tended to grow up aware of five traits shaping their lives: a strong sense of injustice; a complete loss of family and feelings of fragmentation often accompanied with a permeating sense of sadness; a psychological inner conflict; traits passed down relating to survival and spirituality; and a need for belonging to many organizations in their youth to create a stronger sense of identity. Of the survivor parents who talked about the Holodomor, those children tended to grow up aware of four traits that shaped their identity and life choices. The first was a sense of mission and motivation to be ambassadors of Ukraine and keep its traditions, customs, history, and language alive. The second was resilience, a combination of strength and an observed indomitable spirit. Third was a felt gratitude imbued with learned Canadian values. And fourth, a felt sense of responsibility to vote, the core privilege of living in a democracy. All children of survivors articulated a set of community action issues they felt needed to be discussed to heal collectively and move on. By focusing on their oral microhistories, the study highlights the extent of, and limits upon, the felt human agency of children of survivors.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The *Children of Holodomor Survivors Speak* oral history project is a project of the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), coordinated by Head Archivist Iroida Wynnyckyj. The interviewer and researcher for the project was Sophia Isajiw; the technical consultant/videographer was Andrij Holowaty, and the web page developer was Valeriy Gorchynskyy working closely with Isajiw. Please refer to the web page introduction for further information about the project: ucrdc.org/cohs. The project questionnaire was developed in consultation with input from the advisory sociologist Wsevolod W. Isajiw, and a respected

psychology PhD with a practice. We are grateful to the Temerty Family Foundation for sponsoring the oral history and research projects.

INTRODUCTION

Although there has been much research on the survivors of the 1932-1933 Holodomor, the genocide perpetrated by Stalin's Soviet Regime through policies and acts which claimed millions of lives through systematic forced starvation, there has been very little research on the children of Holodomor survivors. This project intended to begin to assess the consequences of the knowledge of the Holodomor on the second generation – the survivors' children. This is the first oral history study addressing the legacy of the Holodomor on the lives of the second generation of survivors in the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora and it was my hope as researcher that it would spark further research about the Holodomor's second generation.

There were no predetermined hypotheses set for this study but there were a few objectives. One of the main objectives of the project was to assess if the knowledge of the parent(s)' survival of the Holodomor had any physical, emotional, social or spiritual influence on the descendants. The influence could be on the respondent's attitudes toward life, work, or feelings of obligation. Or it could be social, such as what the interviewee's feelings of connection to the Ukrainian community might be. Another objective was to record the respondent's own life story. This included a description of his or her family, schools the respondent attended, work history and the like.

The method used followed the Oral History Method of open-ended questions, which allows for respondents to freely express themselves and draw on memory as needed. Of interest to the study was what would come up naturally as the respondents recalled their knowledge of their parents' behaviours and stories and their own knowledge of the Holodomor and their life journey. All italicized quotations throughout this paper are from their responses during the oral history interviews. Each of these interviews took between two to three-and-a-half hours to record in video format in English. This analysis assesses five of the fifty-one interview questions posed to respondents (full questionnaire attached, see Appendix A).

The five questions assessed in this analysis are:

- When did you first learn about the Holodomor? –What were you told?
- What affect did it have on you and how do you know it affected you?
- How do you think your parent(s) survived?
- Since then, do you feel the Holodomor has affected your life in any way?
- Is there anything you've done with your knowledge of the Holodomor and your family history since that time?

Description of the sample of respondents:

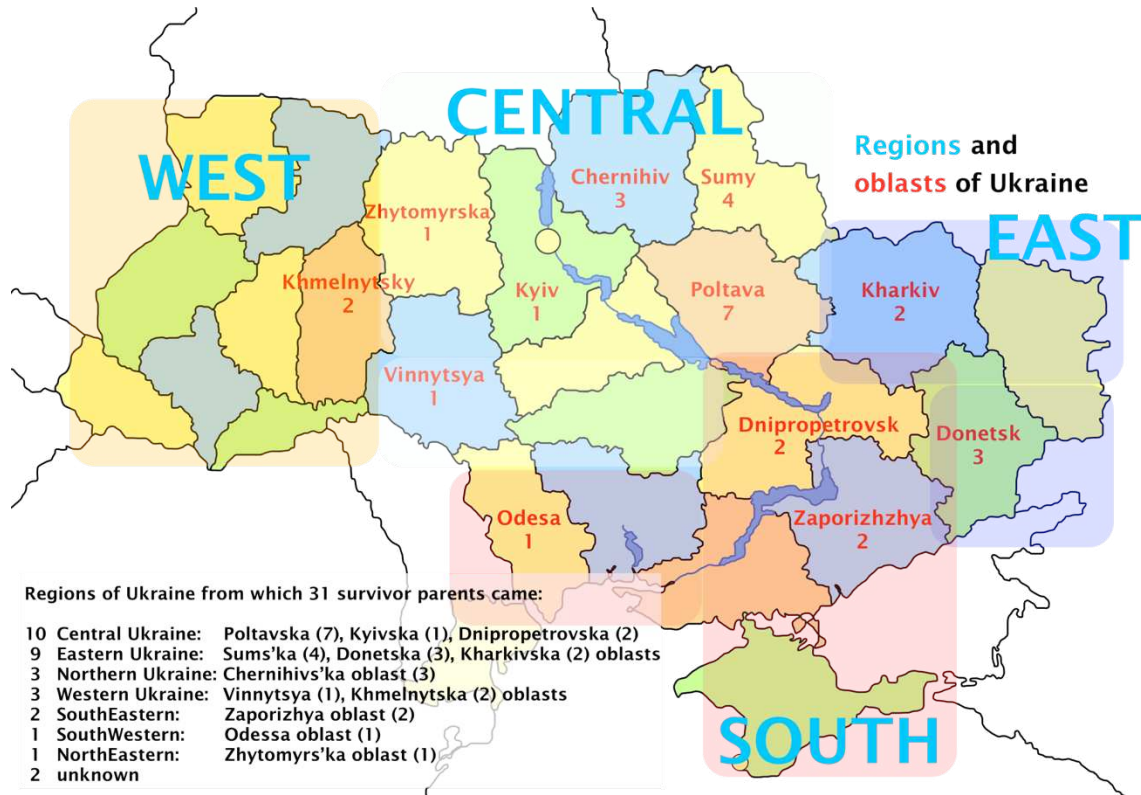
A total of twenty-one respondents were interviewed regarding thirty-one survivor parents (for some respondents both of their parents survived the Holodomor). Eleven of the twenty-one respondents were selected based on the UCRDC having previously conducted archival interviews with their Holodomor survivor parent(s). The remaining ten respondents were the

result of the "snowball method" of selection. Seventeen of the survivor parents described by respondents were their mothers and fourteen were their fathers. The average age of the parents during the Holodomor was eleven. The youngest parent was two at the time of the Holodomor and the oldest parent was thirty-one. The interviewees' average age was sixty-three. The youngest respondent interviewed was forty-six and the oldest was eighty-one in 2015. By religion, fifteen of the respondents and parents identify as Ukrainian Orthodox and six as Ukrainian Greek Orthodox. All respondents had some form of Ukrainian language school growing up: nineteen respondents attended Ukrainian school, two were taught by their parents who taught Ukrainian school classes.

Profession of Respondents

1. Architect
2. History Teacher/History Department Head
3. Chemical and Industrial Engineer
4. Structural Engineers
5. Educator/School Trustee
6. Educator/Education Consultant
7. Librarian/Reference Specialist/Musicologist/Composer
8. Urban Planner
9. Pharmacologist/Mom homeschooling 5 children
10. Teacher
11. Artist / Curator
12. Artist/ Designer
13. Ministry of Health and Long-term Care
14. Engineer/Business Development Manager
15. Ukrainian Catholic Priest
16. Criminal Lawyer
17. Capital Markets Trader
18. Litigation Lawyer
19. Professor of Chemistry
21. Actor / Comedienne

Parental origins in Ukraine of the 31 survivor parents		
10	Central Ukraine:	Poltavska (7), Kyivska (1), Dnipropetrovska (2) oblasts
9	Eastern Ukraine:	Sums'ka (4), Donetska (3), Kharkivska (2) oblasts
3	Northern Ukraine:	Chernihivs'ka oblast (3)
3	Western Ukraine:	Vinnytsia (1), Khmelnytska (2) oblasts
2	Southeastern:	(coastal) Zaporizhia oblast (2)
1	Southwestern:	(coastal) Odessa oblast (1)
1	Northeastern:	Zhytomyrs'ka oblast (1)
2	unknown	(Parents themselves did not know, or child did not know)
31	Total survivor parents	



Map of survivor parent origins in Ukraine: the highest percentage came from Poltava in central Ukraine; the second highest from eastern Ukraine. Note: for 2 respondents their parents' origins were unknown to them.

Two Main Types of Interviewee Respondents:

Overall, the most significant finding of the study was that the respondents grouped by knowledge into two main types: whether they had been told about the Holodomor as children growing up and it was talked about at home, or whether they had never been told, it was not talked about at home, and they found out about it in various ways later.

Of those whose survivor parent *did not talk* about the Holodomor:

For a few, their parent was said to be quite broken from the whole experience (two of the fathers and one of the mothers), but otherwise, the parents are described as very smart and intelligent but taciturn, guarded, almost untrusting, suspicious, timid, of few words (“маломовні”) – this due to wanting to protect their family and it being an undiagnosed trauma that they lived with. In the words of one of the descendants: *“I understood she [his survivor mother] was not like other mums. She was very, as if broken, she needed a lot of healing.”*

The fathers tended to get more angry and irate over Ukraine when issues arose even when it was the mother who was the survivor. For such families with a parent living in fear, having had to lie about where they came from, having falsified documents to get into Canada to avoid being deported to be murdered by Stalin, it *“ate these honest hardworking people up inside”* to lie to their child about these aspects of their history. And when these children learned the truth later, it

caused rebellious behavior in them and feelings that everything the parent had told them were lies.

The children from this group of survivors were brought up more frequently hearing stories of their parents' lives before collectivization, of self-sufficient prosperous lives that were idyllic: with land, livestock, bees, windmills, horses, pigs, fowl, carriages, sable coats, velvet dresses, hired workers, etc. They did so, according to these children, because their parents wanted to instill in them a strong connection to the goodness and happiness of *that earlier Ukraine* that had existed peacefully pre-collectivization, dekulakization, and pre-Holodomor, and not inflict their own internal wounds upon their children or have them suffer what they went through. As one child stated: *"It was almost like they came to a fresh start in Canada, and they didn't want to weigh us down with stories from back there that might have been hard for us to hear."*

Often these children had glimpses onto the Holodomor only when some event in real time dramatically triggered something in the parent who then would admonish them or lecture them about their currently more privileged lives.

Several survivor parents were very careful not to retell much about life in Ukraine because they had been declared dead back home or did not want to endanger relatives left in Ukraine, which was a big fear, or because the children thought they had survivor guilt. More often those who survived and made it out of Ukraine were the only members of the family that had fled or that were left.

Significantly, for those parents who absolutely refused to ever talk about the Holodomor, it was when their third-generation grandchildren started to ask questions or wanted to interview them for their Ukrainian school projects, that they would open up. With their survivor parent(s) already in their eighties, the second-generation children now in their fifties finally learned some details about their parent's experience because their own children (the third-generation grandchildren) became the catalyst for it. This third generation is worthy of study as well. But, according to their children, information had to be pried out of parents who did not want to relive those emotions and memories. In addition, under Soviet occupation one simply didn't talk about these things – because one's neighbors or children could inform on you to the state and you could wind up in a gulag – so, for survival purposes, the parents remained more closed and stayed silent. **Across the board, the children of survivor parents who did not talk about the Holodomor made mention of this guarded behavior becoming a part of their own consciousness while growing up that affected them.**

Very often some of these parents might instead have talked about the separate events leading up to the Holodomor – brutal “розкуркулення” [dispossession or dekulakization] in 1929-31 on family farms with communist commissars taking their possessions away over several trips, then taking the father and the eldest sons, shipping them to Siberia or shooting them, then brutally kicking mothers and children out of their homes, pregnant in the middle of winter, taking away boots and even the husband's sheepskin coat, living through the Terror of the 1930s, and repatriation, and being sent to Siberia, DP (displaced persons) camps. Men would often talk more about these specific events and their effect on various family members and not say a word connecting these to the Holodomor in general (and similarly if they wrote in a diary) partly because this would be evidence against you if you wrote or talked about the Holod. The children

were left to piece these bits of information together later in life themselves. And significantly, when these survivor parents did talk about the Holod, it would be very specific and graphic, apparently much more graphic than what the other group of survivors would talk about.

Of those whose survivor parent *did talk* about the Holodomor:

It is important to note here that no parent called it “the Holodomor,” that term came later, they all called it holod (hunger, famine, or starvation), i.e.: “when holod was in the village.”

It was not the case that all the children who knew about the Holodomor sat and talked to their parents about it openly at first. More often, they listened and heard, they absorbed the information through a full range of visual and verbal cues, through tones and tears, most often at the kitchen table at a celebration with other survivor friends of their parents. People would ask each other around the dinner table ‘where were you in the 1930s’ and then the anecdotal stories of sharing similar experiences would come out (and the children nearby would listen, or even if they got kicked out of the room, would defiantly sneak back under the table, and sit quietly absorbed in listening). These early childhood events left an indelible impression on almost all the children who absorbed information about it in this way. “*So, you listened, you picked things up,*” as one of the children stated. And they would have to put the pieces of the puzzle together themselves, which led directly, by their own accounts, to these children choosing professions such as historians, librarians, and educators. Only a few of the children were sat down by their parents at a certain age and had it explained to them more directly.

Significantly, none of the children ever dared sit the parent down and interrogate them about the Holodomor. Some gently tried but it was so obviously painful for the survivor parent, and it was evident how much they suffered, that as a child none would voluntarily inflict this on them. And on the other hand, several of the children also mentioned that in their youth they just didn’t want to hear it again and again, over, and over, themselves.

For many of these children, what was passed on to them with stories of the Holodomor was a profound sense of sadness and loss. As one child stated: “***I think this profound permeating sense of sadness and loss was passed along.*** *Where my father grew up, there is no place I came from left, the village is gone. People ask, ‘where are your relatives?’ – but I have no relatives, they all died. Mother would on rare occasions get a letter from Ukraine and cry. There was always sadness from anything connected to Ukraine.*”

In some cases, this led to an early adolescent rejection of Ukrainian things – although often in adult life there was a quest for understanding that came usually after the death of one parent, and a reconciliation (in all respondents but one). Or the opposite reaction was to carry on with traditions, language, learning and “take on the mantle” of ensuring a future for an independent Ukraine with greater passion and commitment.

One can begin to see from these responses how certain identities begin to shape themselves in the second generation depending on whether there was knowledge about the Holodomor and it was talked about at home while they were growing up, or not. There were characteristics identified as common by all the children of survivors interviewed, in addition to whether they

knew about it growing up or not, that are evident to them in their adult knowledge and study of the Holodomor. I turn to these now.

HOLODOMOR: IDENTITY DENIED



Mind Map: summarizes some of the key characteristics that were described by second generation descendants of survivors which they felt are part of the legacy of the Holodomor's long denial.

The denial and cover up of the Holodomor for over five decades worldwide, was a rejection of Ukraine's national and ethnic identity, which gave rise to the following challenges for the children and markers of identity for all of the children of survivors interviewed:

1. An overarching awareness of injustice

All children of survivors tend to feel a strong sense of social justice and an understanding of human rights, especially living in Canada. This influenced the careers they chose for themselves as educators, criminal lawyers, and teachers. All the children of survivors in the study who are educators (five of them) teach about the Holodomor and Ukraine in their English classrooms or in Ukrainian language Saturday school. About half of all children of survivors interviewed credit their professions to being children of survivors fighting for injustice. Several worked on the Deschênes Commission on War Criminals (1985); all are activists in one form or another.

As one daughter stated: *“Well, I wonder if I would have chosen criminal law and social justice and have an interest in human rights had my parents not had this experience, had my parents not persevered during this horrible time. So, I think it developed my sense of social justice, my interest in my career and I suppose even the types of friendships that I have chosen, the type of interests I pursue.”*

2. Sense of loss of family

Perhaps the most poignant part in all the interviews was when each second-generation descendant of survivors spoke about what it means to grow up without relatives. They spoke about the **fragmentation** of not knowing one's own roots even one generation back, or who their grandparents were, or where exactly they come from. They spoke of not being able to visit family or a place back in Ukraine because whole villages no longer exist. And they spoke especially about having no photographs of anyone yet knowing theirs had been big families once. And they spoke of the sadness of their survivor parent not having a photo of their younger self or of their parents. They told of being asked about relatives growing up and simply not having any because their parents were orphaned in the Holodomor. In addition, they spoke of not having any family traditions because of having no family. Very often they stated being aware of their parent carrying "survivor guilt" for being the only survivor in the family or the only one who made it to the West.

The subtext of "**survivor guilt**" and **profound loss** meant an unhappy parent would get noticeably sad remembering traditions they lost out on in their youth which resulted in family holidays that were sad and uncomfortable celebrations for the children. This created residual **anger and fear** in the children and **regrets** around not having uncles, aunts, or grandparents to go to when needed for outside counsel or for help coping – the loss of a sense of extended family support.

Another loss was not knowing one's own **genetics** for what might get passed on to a child they may have. As one married adult son without children stated: *"And part of the problem is with my mother's side of the family – I have no idea what my genetics are because she was adopted in the Holodomor. So, I don't know what diseases the maternal grandparents had or what they were susceptible to, so it's impossible for me to be able to give a medical history of my mother's side. I don't know what her parents had, or any of her aunts and uncles or her brothers and sisters. So, if you want to look at what the Holodomor did to us, that's fairly subtle, but it's real."*

Another son talks about the realization that the children have been victimized also, saying: *"Because, if you can't connect to family, that means you're an orphan, right? So, you act like an orphan. You have to basically go back to find those roots. If you can find one or two, you're lucky."*

As one daughter stated: *"The other thing that this Holodomor did indirectly, is the fact that my parents had to emigrate to survive. They had to leave, my mother was taken, and my father fled, and then they chose not to go back to Ukraine under those conditions. We came here like orphans, with nobody. If you didn't have that Ukrainian ghetto, you couldn't have survived. And there's a feeling that maybe that's why we clung to each other. There's always the feeling, my feeling of loss of family. There's a sort of inner rage in me about how dare you have kept us away?"*

3. Awareness of a psychological legacy

Ukrainian Canadians need psychologists in the community particularly to carry out research studies on the legacy of the Holodomor in the diaspora. I will share here one example from the children about one way it affected their struggles with their identity and Canadian friendships

and relations, but other points they defined deal with an acknowledgement by the children of their being victims of parents with [undiagnosed] PTSD, of carrying a sense of inferiority and a mindset of fatalism that makes them extremely risk-averse, and experiencing communication issues, amongst other things.

One son's reflections on how this identity fit growing up:

"I would be waking up and have sleepless nights and struggle with my friends: There would be times of saying what's going on, why is it my job? Why do I have to do this? You know, all my non-Ukrainian friends were going to tennis camps in the summer, they were sailing, they were golfing. And what am I supposed to be doing? I'm going with these scouts, camping? And then while I'm playing cards with these guys, I'm supposed to tell them about the Ukrainian cause and about the Holodomor, and about the evils of Stalin? Why? Why me? This cross is too big to bear. And there are other times when you're saying, 'Why aren't my friends listening to me? Why are they such goofballs? Why don't they believe me?' When you're not wrestling with that, you're wrestling with something else. Again, I've been lucky growing up in the period of Martin Luther King [Jr.] and his legacy was a huge inspiration, and one of the things that he said that I'll never forget is that: "In the end, it's not the words of our enemies that we'll remember, but the silence of our friends."

And this ongoing inner conflict has continued for this child of a survivor to the present day, with Ukraine in the news since Maidan in 2013, and in conversations with some friends he's known for decades.

Other examples related to the Holodomor's psychological legacy on children of survivors in the diaspora, quoting from the children interviewed:

- I think that the people that survived against absolutely every conceivable odd, developed a particular mindset of fatalism and risk-aversion that permeated every part of their lives. And I think that was in turn passed on to us as children of it. Because I think it has affected our community deeply, I think it has created a particular way of acting and I think there's a particular way of thinking and in order to understand us, you have to understand this.*
- My father was a tortured guy. And on top of all of it, all of the people I know—my dad, mom, their friends—would have what we would call PTSD; every last one of them. And nobody recognized it. It was completely undiagnosed, and I think a lot of our community had it ... You know, my father I think treated his PTSD with Manhattans ... I think a lot of that was a coping mechanism for the most abject horrors that these people had been subjected to ... But it was a thing and I think that in some ways it affected our ability to excel and that kept us insular. That kept us within our community – you could spend your entire time dealing only with other Ukrainians. I don't think that helped us in terms of being a success, what we could be in Canada, from the talents that we had. For a variety of reasons, you have a lot of wounded people that dealt with things in a particular way, and you know, as a result we have no entrepreneurs of that generation.*
- Like, your parents are telling you this at the dinner table, which is, you know, it's odd. And you don't really know how to relate that into your daily existence of going to play football in the park*

or riding around the street on your Big Wheel. You know that your parents' experience is different from the experience of your friends, but you can't really talk to them about it either because if you tell people they kinda go: "you're lyin'." Um, it made us different. It made us insular. It made us stay inside our own heads, inside our own community. You couldn't really tell people about it because they wouldn't believe you – no one talked about anything, especially the kids. Because: "you'll say something and we'll all get deported," you know, or "I'll lose my pension."

• *My father couldn't communicate with his mother, my father couldn't communicate directly with his brother, my mother had no one to communicate with, and that's all they had.*

4. Survival and Spirituality as legacy characteristics

In response to the question of how the children thought their parents had survived, the respondents repeatedly cited the following range of innate or other contributing characteristics in their parent(s) that can be grouped together under “survival and spirituality” traits:

• Parent(s)' own innate traits:

- The child viewed their parent to have survived because of their innate tenacity, stubbornness, and characteristic of never feeling sorry for oneself.
- Another stated their young father survived because of his mother's wisdom, her ability to do what was needed and not fall into despair, and to take things one day at a time.
- Others stated their parent survived because people helped each other and didn't listen to the rules, and because they snuck each other food.
- Several stated a grandfather (or uncle or aunt) was an herbalist and therefore knew what to bring back from the woods in terms of non-poisonous grasses, leaves, roots, etc., both as food and as medicine. Or the ingenuity of a grandfather and his skill set which helped them survive.
- Some respondents stated it was through the kindness of Germans and even German officers who helped their parent with medical aid, to hide them, and who gave them information to do the opposite of what they were being told to do and to run into the woods, not show up on the platform because they were all being taken to be killed.
- Respondents stated the foresight of their grandfather or other family member to escape (sometimes from camp, sometimes to avoid deportation), and cited good luck.
- Others that Ukrainians are resourceful, and Ukrainians adapt. Or that their parents had a quiet, low-profile nature, meaning they didn't attract unwanted attention to themselves.
- Some said it was just a will to survive, nothing else can describe it.
- Respondents also cited their mother's quiet yet determined stance in life that you had to do what you had to do in order to survive, or because the parent was tough psychologically: *“I never heard them being depressed, anxious or overly-worried. They had an inner toughness, a centre around which they could build an identity – they had an identity.”*
- An innate or ingrained ability to survive was also cited: *“My mother had her wits about her, she had street smarts, she had a skill set and she was a survivor, it's all she knew how to do, it was ingrained.”*

• Parent(s)' own physical characteristics or circumstances:

Other reasons accounting for a parent's survival, in the thinking of their children, included external circumstances. Survival was possible because the surviving parent lived in the city or

was resourceful (they re-sewed garments to sell; they had more land so therefore more money and so their possessions could last longer; they hid food well all around the farm and didn't play by the rules; or because they were indispensable at fixing things – for example, in the Communist distillery).

Another reason cited was that the parents were students, so they received food rations in the city. Or because they had to move to cities after surviving dekulakization, where they were able to get enough food to get by. Or through relocation to the city (after dekulakization most frequently, or other reasons) the grandfather was able to get a job in the city and feed the whole family.

Other physical circumstances included because the parents lived just outside the village near a creek and had a forest, thus mushrooms became a part of the diet at this time where previously they were not a staple in the Ukrainian diet. Or because their parents had owned a very ornery cow that the Communists couldn't take away, they thus survived on some of its milk.

Also cited was the parent's own physical strength and their ability to hide food (potato peels & grain), or their ability to eat things you normally wouldn't eat (i.e. their constitution could stomach bark and beetles and what little other could be scavenged or made into food).

• **Luck as a major factor**

Both types of children of survivors (those who knew and those who did not know about the Holodomor growing up) additionally emphasized that it was a matter of luck, that a great deal of random luck was involved in the survival of their parent(s), but as one stated: *“luck is what we call what we don't know”* – and then their reasons turned toward spirituality and faith. As one interviewee stated: *“It was an acceptance: we lived through it, we survived. We are thankful we survived, and we are thankful for what we have. Our life is built on this gratitude expressed in getting together with other people in church, concerts, community.”*

• **Spirituality/Faith/Religion were passed on to the children and became a main support for how they also cope in their lives**

Many respondents cited their parent(s)' deep faith and trust in God as what made them able to cope with the situation in a rational logical way, which saved their parent(s) and informed their own spirituality: *“It probably had a hand in the development of my own kind of spirituality. It's hard to put into words, but maybe a carry-over that's both a combo of sadness and optimism because I mean history has repeated itself, but if you're going to find any meaning in life you have to look towards the good and you can't ignore the bad – you have to sort of delve into it and see what you come away with, because you have to know about it and know that we're ALL capable of it.”* They also spoke about “God's will, and good fortune” as being factors of survival. One respondent stated that their parent survived through the charity of an almost complete stranger—a doctor who adopted their parent when they were orphaned because their whole family had died. Another respondent summarized it as a spiritual legacy passed on from their survivor parent:

“It is one thing to give a political answer, it is another to give a psychological answer, it is another matter to give an economic answer, but there's also, and I think a more profound answer, is a spiritual answer, because fundamentally, that is where some of these deep

questions are answered. And so, it's fine to curse, it's fine to blame somebody; it's fine to complain about something. But we can also create; we can also be a transformer, transformer of evil into good. And I think to a large extent, that's what humans do. ... We always have to be vigilant; we always have to work, and I think this is one of the messages that is passed on to us from our parents who survived the Holodomor. Pass the message along. Stay at it. Heal that wound."

5. Organizations

Respondents cited the need for belonging to many organizations, especially in their youth, as an aid to their creating a strong sense of identity for themselves, but with some side effects also:

"Our parents took all the civic stuff extremely seriously and it created a generation of people who wanted to be very Canadian but at the same time, they wanted to be very Ukrainian too, there was that dichotomy. It inculcated a sense of community spirit as well. We've gotta do this, gotta do that. Maybe that's why I'm in a trillion organizations."

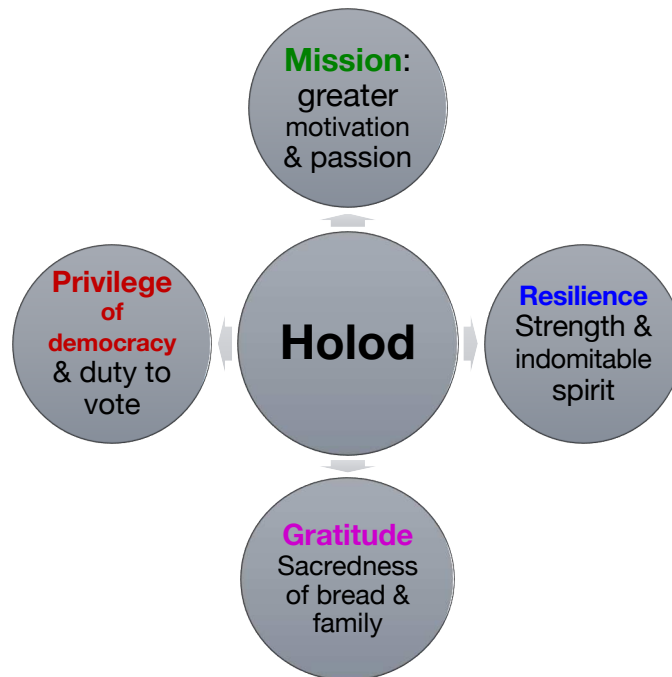
One respondent commented about his common experience of attending PLAST (the Ukrainian Youth Association of Canada) as a youth while growing up:

It was a political community, the PLAST of that era, everything was 'at some point we're all going back so we better learn these skills 'cause we're going to be the new Divizia or UPA or whatever.' And it was a real thing, I remember. Camouflage skills, digging trenches, marching, doing drill. I'm 8 years old and I'm digging slit trenches. It really actually helped in the army, because: "Where the hell did you learn to do THAT?" "Uh, Boy Scouts, Sergeant-Major Macmillan!" "WHAT? What kind of boy scouts were you in?" They didn't get it, you know? Like, we were getting merit badges, but the merit badges were a little different. "Bow and Arrow." Like, when am I going to use a bow in combat?

To summarize, according to the children of Holodomor survivors, the legacy of the *denial of identity* formed a number of discernible markers of identity, as discussed above by the children and summarized in the mind map above. Their parents' survival also created certain *positive markers of identity* in the children as well, as part of the legacy of the Holodomor on the second generation, which I turn to next and which are summarized in the mind map which follows.

[See below].

HOLODOMOR: IDENTITY CREATED



Mind Map: summarizes some of the key characteristics described by second generation descendants of survivors as influencing positive markers of identity in the legacy of the Holodomor.

1. SENSE OF MISSION: Greater Motivation and Passion

In all of the children of Holodomor survivors across the board, coming from their parents, there is a passion for Ukraine that comes from a sense of mission to be Ukraine's ambassadors in the world so as to ensure that Ukraine has friends in the rest of the world that will fight for it so it can rebuild itself ("like Poland did between the wars with the support it had in Paris"). After all, the children reminded in their interviews, their parents didn't upend their lives and leave Ukraine to end up in Canada because they wanted to.

*When I compare my parents to other parents of people of their generation that I knew in the Ukrainian community, they were obviously people who were **more motivated** than others when it came to history and the national cause. ... It's not that my parents were burning nationalists, but they really loved Ukraine, they loved their village, just the beauty and the richness, and that that beauty and richness wasn't allowed to flourish was always a source of pain for them, an injustice, you know?"*

This **sense of a mission** is one that **was passed down** to them from their survivor parents, and, as one interviewee said, "I took my father's words seriously."

This extended into keeping the traditions, customs, history, and language alive:

“We were brought up with a love and a kind of a patriotism, because my mother and father were very much that. My mother, in particular, was quite the patriot. And so, yeah, we were interested in working for the liberation of Ukraine. We were very idealistic at that time. So, yes, we did the Ukrainian school, and Ukrainian dance and whatever else.”

This sense of a mission also motivated the children not only at home in Canada but also in relationship to Ukraine: *“Basically it put me in a position where I said, ok, now you have to do something about it over time and commit to it and spend money and time on it, and that’s basically what I did. I can say I spent more money on the Ukrainian issue than on my personal life in my lifetime. I put 3 million dollars into a joint venture in Kyiv. And more in another joint venture in Lviv.*

2. RESILIENCE: Strength and indomitable spirit

Resilience is a key characteristic of all the survivors of the Holodomor that is named by their children, most especially *“the quiet strength and indomitable spirit of women.”* One of the markers of resilience is a belief in oneself and something larger than oneself, and this is certainly true of the spirituality and faith that supported the survivors, which developed out of the challenge to maintain self-esteem. As one daughter stated: *“That stock of resilience was inbred in us, I think. And also, for future generations.”*

A degree of resilience is indeed genetic; however, psychology experts still argue over how much.

This is interviewee Ludmilla Temertey who is thought to have created the world’s first Holodomor monument in Edmonton, Alberta, as she explains it: *“The reason I wanted to take on this project of the Holodomor Monument, was to honour that indomitable spirit. Because these immigrants who came really with just a suitcase and very little money, in five years they had already built their own home through hard work. And because, here is a woman [her survivor mother] upon whom every tragedy was visited, if you can imagine, starting from the collectivization, being thrown out of your own home with nothing but your shirt on, the Holodomor which was horrific, and then the loss of her first child, the war, the camps in Germany, and so on, and here’s this woman who had experienced just about everything. And she was the most loving, forgiving, joyful, generous person.”*

As one daughter stated: *“And so that was really what they were trying to instill in us, is this hope. “**You** have to help that country,” my mother told my eldest brother on her deathbed. And he set about doing it immediately, and still does.”*

From the perspective of the children of survivors, that which contributed to their parent’s **resilience** was their legacy: honesty, hard work and a devotion to the country they left behind, always with the hope that it would be free. *“My mother the survivor, in her parting words, she says at the end, “what your soul yearns for, grant it. Don’t waste your life. So that’s the kind of spirit, you know?”*

3. GRATITUDE: The Sacredness of Food and Family

During the interview process, the children all expressed carrying a deep gratitude, firstly, that their parent survived, because they otherwise wouldn't be present talking to the interviewer.

I think it has perhaps given me the means to be more grateful for the things that I do have and to realize the transiency of the good things of life. I think that we tend to think in terms of progress, that the world is progressing toward some sort of better state. But I think, looking back on the 20th Century, that's not the case, and I think it perhaps helps me see things in a real way and not to idealize our society but work towards keeping the good things in our society alive and recognizing evil, or things that are flawed in our society today, and to know that very easily things can change, the way they did for my family in the 1930s.

Another daughter of a survivor stated it this way:

What I felt from the very beginning was a deep, deep sense of gratitude, to my mother and father, and that was for their courage; and for having spared us too. I mean when I think, imagine: we'd be there today, you know? It was the courage and resourcefulness – how they survived that exodus – very few people survived that exodus out of Ukraine. And they did. And there were many stories my father told us – he was arrested and interrogated, and all kinds of horrible things happened on the way. So, yeah, there was just this gratitude. I was, eternally, and am, grateful. Not a night goes by without my thanking them.

Many of the respondents also expressed gratitude for the family which it was possible to have in Canada, and for Canada itself as a country, for food and the sacredness of food and of family as a legacy of the Holodomor. As one child of survivors stated:

My mother never allowed us to leave the table with food on our plates. Never. You had to eat everything. See it hearkened back to the days when they had nothing to eat. The other thing is the strong bond to family. Because only family they could trust. So back then, the strength was in keeping touch with the family and being a family, being together. I think that's one of the things that we love about our family. We've got a very good relationship with everyone, with our kids and grandkids and everyone.

FOOD IS SACRED

Common across all the children of Holodomor survivors is that they grew up with it inculcated into them that all food is sacred, it never gets just thrown out, it goes to the birds or some other being, and that most especially bread is sacred. If a piece of bread fell on the floor, or even a crumb, many of them cited that they were taught that you picked it up, crossed yourself, and kissed it. Like a ritual enacted to be forgiven for dropping it. Food was never thrown out, and sometimes it is in these moments around food that the children would hear about the Holodomor from their survivor parents.

In addition, amongst many survivor mothers, even if they were poor or not very well off, the table had to be groaning with food. Why? Because cooking the food, seeing the food, feeding guests with it, this was a great joy, and it made them *feel* rich.

4. VOTING: the great privilege of democracy

The other thing that was instilled by, I think, my parents is the absolute, well, the privilege that we have, to vote; and you know, and the understanding that democracy is a complicated, kind of unhappy construct but I don't think we've come up with anything better. So, I've never missed a vote and never would, to me that's, it's a very important privilege to have and I've tried to instill that in my kids. If they didn't go and vote, other than the times they were off in school or different provinces or whatever, I would be very upset. Yeah, flawed though it may be and complicated, you've got to exercise that.

Informed by knowledge of the Holodomor, while growing up in Canada with Canadian values, brought children of survivors closer to the Ukrainian community, but they also acknowledged that the Ukrainian community is not a homogenous whole. The children feel closer to that wave of immigration that came with their parents, rather than the most recent wave who came for economic reasons. They also felt that a truth and reconciliation process should still be carried out in Ukraine, that “*it's not about a hatred for Russians*” in any way, but that there should be healing and a recognition of diversities. Several also argued that, politically in Canada, there needs to be acknowledgement that “*Ukrainian Canadians have worked their way into government and that there is a legal and government process by which we can get our issues heard and our goals met as a community here, with the government helping us to succeed in our goals and with the current recognition of our community as a political force.*”

Holodomor: Community issues, as raised and defined by the children of survivors

There were 4 major issues that repeatedly surfaced in the interviews when diaspora children of survivors wanted to convey what they thought still needs to be addressed in Ukrainian individual and community life related to the legacy of the Holodomor. These are a recognition and acknowledgement of the PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) that has gone undiagnosed and untreated in their parents' generation. Many respondents were also concerned about ongoing conflicts in contemporary diaspora community organizations and the presence of spies who have historically created conflict or worked against community initiatives, especially as relate to the Holodomor. A third issue needing address in their estimate was the need for a truth and reconciliation process for Ukraine for healing to begin over this major trauma. And finally, numerous respondents believed that inhibitions to risk-taking that developed as a legacy of the Holodomor have bred insularity and held back individual and community growth and higher business or other success.

Recognition of parental PTSD:

Many of the children of survivors interviewed said that recognizing and acknowledging the PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) was important because they realize that their parents never had any treatment or support for it. PTSD affects everyone in the family, thus further research needs to be done into the full effects of the parents' trauma on the second generation of survivors.

Divisive agent element within community organizations:

The children were referring to the KGB, and others who infiltrated diaspora organizations about whom they heard frequently growing up, and partly about divisions of focus on

issues within the community itself. There was residual concern about the KGB and Soviet agents, spies who came over with the Eastern Ukrainians especially, at the time of their parents' immigration, who worked within certain community organizations against certain initiatives, including free speech on the Holodomor. This bears further research, which it has not received in a formal or scholarly way yet, although people have always talked about it informally amongst themselves, especially within the Toronto community. There are numerous instances of this, and sometimes names, given during the interviews by those children willing to be more vocal about it.

Need for a truth and reconciliation process in Ukraine:

Coming to an understanding of this trauma and reconciling it in our minds is very important in the development of contemporary knowledge about Ukrainian history. As one respondent put it:

There's a problem that Ukrainians and Russians have, in respect to the Holodomor. The problem eventually will have to be resolved. It's a problem that is raised by Yale theologian, Miroslav Volf. He talks about reconciliation. And he makes an interesting statement, he says: 'In order to finally deal with evil you have to name it.' The people who carried out that Holodomor, they have to be named, because once you name the perpetrator, it's not for vengeance. It enables reconciliation to occur, and eventually these people can live normal lives. And that enables it to happen.

Another respondent spoke more specifically about local Ukrainians who were also involved carrying out soviet policies and orders:

My cousin in Ukraine, she says, our family and extensions of these families, extensions of those families who were actually involved in some of those deeds, we have names of these people. Up till '39 it was other people who were coming in and doing these nasty deeds who were from somewhere else, they were strangers. But in '39, a lot of the local polls showed up and all of their names are listed that they were actually going into the xymip ["khutir," small village] and forcing people to either take your house apart and move it to the village and join the collective or tear the roof off and that's the end of it. And those were local people. What happened to them? When the war broke out, a lot of them scattered, went into the army, took off. Because I asked my mom when she ended up in the kolhosp [collective farm] in '39, you had to work with these people. You knew who they are, you knew what they did. She says, what am I going to do?

But I think a lot of Ukrainians still have a lot of this buried, there's still a long way to go. We need some more of those truth and reconciliation kinds of, I think those are mind jarring because they force people to uncover uncomfortable truths about themselves that allow them to move on, and I don't think Ukraine is anywhere near any of that. It's not necessarily to lay blame on anyone, because that's still part of the problem.

The issue of collusion was stated often in the interviews with the following kinds of typical responses:

• *If the guy in charge of the village who allowed this to happen, colluded in the famine, ok'd all the orders, who was often a Communist Party member, was Ukrainian, then it makes Ukrainians and the Holodomor as banal and evil as all these other banally evil people in similar horrific tragedies all over the world. The enemy isn't necessarily 'over there' or 'other' – it could be us. Why did he do it mom? "Because he wanted to take care of his family." Put in a circumstance, anybody could do horrific, horrific things. That's not to absolve Stalin and the Bolsheviks as being the main motivators. But, without that guy in that village, who's trying to protect his family, at the cost of my mother's family, it wouldn't have happened, it would have been a very different story.*

• *In Ukraine there were no onlookers, everybody was part of it. They were either the ones being tortured, or they were those few inflicting the tortures, but there were no onlookers...everybody suffered the same fate. Everybody had to fend for themselves, at every minute, every second they had to fight for their life.*

• *The Holodomor was a war of extermination against us, which could have united us into thinking about us as a nationality to unite around. It was done in terms of "kulaky/kulaks" being "class enemies" against the regular proletariat. But the "kulaky" were all ethnically Ukrainian and we were ethnically cleansed from certain areas and people were brought in to replace us – which in some ways explains the Donbas to us today. ... **But this was done to us, and only us, it was a war on us as a culture, to beat the nationalism out of us, to beat the culture out of us, to turn us into the new Soviet Man in an unadulterated socialist baloney of 'you-can't-really-tell-who-you-are-you're-the-new-socialist-man,' so that we had no national consciousness. What it should do, and if it's taught more, it could still do, because the Fourth Wave [of immigration] were never taught any of this at school and have no knowledge of this, is it should spark a nationalist consciousness in ourselves because there's no systematic way of remembering it to us. I think we have to recognize that this has to be our rallying cry because Donetsk and Donbas are entirely and completely connected through time from 1932-33 to Maidan in 2013-14.***

Risk-taking inhibitions in individual and organizational life were identified by some diaspora children of survivors, to breed insularity in the individual and in the community. As one respondent put it: *"I think the only way you're going to move forward in society is to then come to terms with it and let it go. It's your past history, and then you can develop as a nation, and be healthy; because this constant feeling that nobody understands is what holds us back."*

Conclusion:

The finding that there is a significant difference between the two major types of second-generation children of survivors in terms of how the parents handled conveying knowledge of the Holodomor should be further investigated for all the issues raised by the second-generation survivors in their interviews, and many others.

Furthermore, the children of survivors themselves indicated areas that they felt desperately required further study or action including the recognition of PTSD, a discussion of the presence

of divisive elements in the form of agents within earlier community organizations, a stated need for a truth and reconciliation process that would also include the recognition of collusion amongst Ukrainians in this tragedy.

Finally, it is clear from the interviews that it would be highly valuable to look at the legacy of this history from a purely psychological aspect through standard tests in a psychology study of its effects on the second generation.

Children of Holodomor survivors inherit a horrific, unknown, and unknowable past that their parents were basically not meant to survive. For too long, Holodomor survivors could not tell their stories—not in public and not officially. As researchers and scholars, we are indebted to the courage of those who were able to speak out about their experiences of the Holodomor. And especially, speaking in the language of the family, the language of bodies where the past often breaks through and influences the present in the form of sighs and stillness, tears and illness, or even in the sound of nightmares or loud drinking, there are many verbal and nonverbal acts of transfer that occur within family spaces. These create a subjective, psychological dimension that can influence a second generation deeply, whether they are told about it, or it is kept secret. Many of the children of survivors in talking about the Holodomor themselves for this oral history project, expressed during the interview process how cathartic it was for them to be a voice for their survivor parent(s). Oral history projects are where groups can speak for themselves, and voices without power gain audience. Oral histories and microhistories are a place where we can come to understand something more about ourselves and our past and to figure out what kind of a future we want to work toward. Knowledge of our histories shapes our identities, as individuals, as a community, and our national identity. It was and continues to be a privilege to have interviewed these descendants of Holodomor survivors and been a witness to their embodied knowledge and understand the ways in which this has fueled their own sense of agency in the world. It is my sincere hope that others will study these issues further in the window of time that there is to do so.

APPENDIX A
Interview Questions used for the
Children of Holodomor Survivors Speak oral history project

Questions:

1. What is your full name? First name, surname, (maiden name).
2. What is your date of birth?
3. What is your place of birth?
4. Tell us something about yourself.
5. How many brothers/sisters do you have? What are their ages, or years of birth?
6. Tell us something about each one of your siblings.
7. Where did you attend elementary school, high school, and college?
8. If you attended college or university, what subject did you major in?
9. Tell us a bit about your job history.
10. What was the first job you had, and what is the job you are working at now?
11. Did you have difficulty finding your present job?
12. Who or what was most helpful in your job search?
13. Did you attend Ukrainian School? Saturday school?
14. What language(s) did you grow up with? (First language, others)
15. Did you or do you belong to any Ukrainian organizations?
16. To any Canadian organizations? (a hospital, theatre, reading group, church, work-related, sports)
17. Do you consider yourself religious/spiritual? Do you belong to a particular religion? Which?
18. What is your mother's full name? First name, surname, maiden name.
19. Tell us about your mother, when and where she was born, what she does, her hobbies, interests, etc.?
20. What is your father's full name? First name, surname.
21. Tell us something more about your father, when and where he was born, what he does, his hobbies, interests, etc.?

22. What do you know about your grandparents – paternal and maternal? Where were they born?
23. Do you have relatives in Ukraine, and do you maintain contact with them?
24. Do you know of any family traditions, jokes, stories, etc.?
25. Which of your parents is a Holodomor survivor?
26. How old was the survivor at the time of the Holodomor?
27. How often did you talk with your parent about their experiences in Ukraine?
28. Do you remember when and how you first learned of the Holodomor? What was the situation, how old were you, how did that happen?
29. If someone told you about it what made him or her tell you at that time?
30. What did your parent tell you about the Holodomor? Give details.
31. How did you feel?
32. How and why do you think your parents survived?
33. What effect did this information have on you? And how do you know that it affected you?
34. Did you talk about it with anyone (friend family priest)
35. Since then, do you feel that the Holodomor has affected your life in any way?
36. Describe in what ways in particular it has affected or continues to affect your life? (Nightmares? Sadness? Silence? Make you stronger? Write a book? Make art about?)
37. Is there anything in particular that you've done with your knowledge of the Holodomor and your family history?
38. Do you have any affinity toward Ukraine as your place of origin?
39. As you have been raising or raised your children, Do you maintain Ukrainian national traditions in your family? Do you encourage your children to learn Ukrainian? Do you speak Ukrainian at home? Do your children study the history of Ukraine, or have you studied it together? Family trips to Ukraine?
40. Do you consider yourself to be Ukrainian? Ukrainian Canadian? Canadian Ukrainian? or Canadian?
41. What do you think the Ukrainian community should do about the Holodomor now? (Or the larger Canadian community depending on how they define themselves).
42. How close do you feel to the Ukrainian Canadian community?
43. What do you like and find helpful about the Ukrainian Canadian community?

44. What would you like to see different about the Ukrainian Canadian community?
45. Do you feel that your knowledge about Holodomor brings you closer to the Ukrainian community?
46. And how do you feel about Canadian authorities and the government?
47. Do you trust them?
48. Would you say that you are passionate or dispassionate about politics and social movements?
49. Do you believe that the collective, or community can change social or political realities?
50. Is there anything else we haven't mentioned that you feel is important to touch on or talk about?
51. We asked everyone to bring in something that connects them to their early knowledge and awareness of the Holodomor, something that when you look at it, or hear it, or smell it or whatever strongly reminds you of the Holodomor. Can you tell us what you brought?