

**Psychology of Cognitive Processes**

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**COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST AND NATIONAL IDENTITY OF THE STUDENTS  
YOUTH IN UKRAINE**Ivanova E. F.  
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The goal of this article was to explore collective memory of the Holocaust and its connections with the national identity in the students youth of Ukraine. A theoretical analysis of the concepts of collective memory and national identity and their characteristics was conducted. Writing essays as a methodology of collecting empirical data was provided and sample peculiarities were described. Discourse analysis was chosen as a methodology of empirical data analysis. It was proved that one can make some suggestions about national identity on the basis of collective memory. Civil, ethnic and victimized types of identity which have regional peculiarities were singled out.

Key words: collective memory, national identity, Holocaust, discourse analysis, regional peculiarities.

Метою даної статті було дослідження колективної пам'яті про Голокост і її зв'язок з національною ідентичністю української студентської молоді. Був проведений теоретичний аналіз концепції колективної пам'яті і національної ідентичності і подані їх характеристики. Було обґрунтовано, що як метод збирання емпіричного матеріалу може бути використане написання есе; були подані особливості вибірки. В якості аналізу емпіричних даних був вибраний і описаний дискурс-аналіз. Було доведено, що можна зробити деякі висновки щодо національної ідентичності на базі колективної пам'яті. Були виділені громадянська, етнічна й ідентичність жертви і їх регіональні особливості.

Ключові слова: колективна пам'ять, національна ідентичність, Голокост, дискурс-аналіз, регіональні особливості.

Целью данной статьи было исследование коллективной памяти о Холокосте и ее связи с национальной идентичностью студенческой молодежи Украины. Был проведен теоретический анализ концепций коллективной памяти и национальной идентичности и выделены их характеристики. Было обосновано, что в качестве метода сбора эмпирического материала может быть использовано написание эссе; были описаны особенности выборки. Для анализа эмпирических данных был выбран дискурс-анализ и дано его описание. Было доказано, что можно сделать некоторые выводы относительно национальной идентичности на основе коллективной памяти. Были выделены гражданская, этническая и идентичность жертвы и их региональная специфика.

Ключевые слова: коллективная память, национальная идентичность, Холокост, дискурс-анализ, региональные особенности.

In the turning points of existence and changing orientation toward the future every state faces a task of constructing a new version of the history and people's collective memory, because as G.Orwell noted those who control the past also control the future. This new version is constructed in several directions. Well known events are interpreted in another way and a new narrative about them is created. Events that were less important before are emphasized. And finally, those events which were tabooed before, not kept in the official memory and which the authorities tried to remove from unofficial memory begin to enter official and collective memory. It is typical for post-totalitarian countries first of all. Thus a new grand narrative of a national history is constructed. These "new" events, new interpretations, new narratives create and support national identity since representations of the historical past are very important in this process.

Memory and identity (both individual and collective) interact tightly and constantly influence each other. It should be mentioned that history determines their relations [4, p. 5]. Both memory and national identity are not immutable but they are constantly constructed and reconstructed depending on political and ideological goals, distribution of power, etc. [4].

The goal of this article is to explore collective memory of the Holocaust and its connections with the national identity in the students youth of Ukraine.

It should be solved by the accomplishment of the following tasks:

1. To conduct a theoretical analysis of the concepts of collective memory and national identity and their characteristics;
2. To provide a methodology of collecting empirical data and the sample peculiarities.
3. To discuss the results about collective memory of the Holocaust and its connections with national identity.
4. To analyze regional features of national identity.

Concept of Collective Memory

A concept of collective memory was introduced by M.Halbwachs [5]. In his views collective memory is a socially constructed phenomenon. It is constructed by various social groups and institutions, and there can be as

many versions of the collective memory in the society as many groups it has. Certainly it is separate individuals who remember and recollect but their memory and recollections are determined by a group context and collective memory of a definite group is shared by its members. Thus, different social groups create their different versions of collective memory. But even within the limits of one group collective memory about some event can vary and differ. To analyze this phenomenon it is productive to use the notion of "distributed" collective memory introduced by J. Wertsch [11, p.23-24]. According to him collective memory is not identical, it is distributed between the members of the group. The simplest version of the distributed collective memory is the so called "homogeneous" memory, mainly identical for each member of the group. In fact it can be met rather rarely. Wertsch named the second version of the distributed collective memory as "complementary". In this case different members of the group remember different things and events but these memories are not contradictory, they can supplement each other forming a general picture. The third version is characterized by Wertsch as "contested". In contested memory different members of the group remember different events as in complementary memory but their memories contradict and oppose each other. Many historians and sociologists who write on collective memory and use other terms describe frequently just this "contested" version of collective memory [1], [2], [3], [8], etc.

Collective memory has a number of characteristics: it inclines to create a simple and clear version of an event (P. Novick), it is determined not only by a group that creates and shares it but also by the place and time of its creation (P. Burke), it is able to constant development (P. Nora). The content of memory can be kept and forgotten, unconsciously distorted, being manipulated and appropriated; memories can be latent for a long time and then to "wake up" for life again. Memory is a phenomenon of the present and it is changed being influenced by a current life. It agrees with M. Halbwachs idea that in many respects the past is a changeable social concept adjusted for the needs of the present [5, p.25]. Being emotional, collective memory keeps only those facts that "fit" it. It is subjected to transfer, defense, censorship and projection of all kinds. Being filled with emotions collective memory can be a "burden" of the past. At the same time collective memory develops narratives addressed to contemporaries using for it the language and the system of ideas of the present, not of the past [9, p. 9].

M. Halbwachs considered that supporting a stability and wholeness of the group is a significant characteristic of the collective memory. Developing this thought H. Rousso mentions that both individual and collective memory support identity. He also underlines the fact that individual memory always enters collective bounds of the family, school, working place or country. People do not remember by themselves; they always remember in the context [9, p. 6]. Thus collective memory supports not only local group identity but also ethnic, national or civil and other identities.

National Identity and its Connections with Collective memory.

Many scholars note many difficulties in defining a notion of national identity. It is used in various fields of knowledge and each field puts its own somewhat different content in this notion without giving it accurate definitions at the same time. The most general characteristics of this notion are the following.

National identity is a kind of a more general notion of social or collective identity. When an individual learns essential elements of a group culture in a wide sense including norms, ideas, political views, etc., considers them own, identifies with them, has a feeling of belonging to a definite group or community it is defined as a group or collective identity. As soon as any person belongs to various social groups it is possible to speak about multiple collective identity.

As it was already mentioned identity is not static, it is a historical, constructed and reconstructed phenomenon. Identity (national as well) is developed in a certain historical situation and can be changed in definite circumstances. But forming a new identity is always connected with rewriting history, creating new myths, new heroes, and a new version of the collective memory.

If a person identifies with and feels belonging to a definite nation, state, ethnic group it is defined as national identity. National identity is constructed by a political community which seeks to get a sovereign status or to defend it. National identity development is a process of describing one's own group and differentiation and separation it from "Others". I share a viewpoint that national and ethnic identity are not equal. Members of the same ethnic community may have different national identities: an ethnic Ukrainian with Canadian national identity, for example. Whatever is an understanding of national identity and its content, almost all scholars recognize that national identity is inseparably linked with collective memory; development, support, and transformation of national identity is impossible without collective memory. Therefore national identity cannot exist without support of collective (historical, national) memory.

Basing on the theoretical assumption about tight connections between collective memory and national identity this study is focused on the collective memory of the Holocaust in Ukraine and its connection with national identity.

Methodology of Collecting Empirical Data

A method of collecting empirical data which gave the information to conclude about collective memory was writing essays about the Holocaust. With the help of this method one can obtain data of what respondents know and remember about the Holocaust. Besides, the essays contain a wide range of issues connected with genocide in general, with person's right for life and other moral questions. Gillis notes "what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity" [10, p. 3]. Thus, having analyzed what is remembered by people it is possible to reconstruct their identity. Asking a direct question we can get a socially approved answer. When a person writes about something his views, attitudes, identities, in many cases including national identity become apparent.

### Sample and its Description

The sample was chosen with regard for generational, regional, educational and gender characteristics. Analyzing memory of historical events it should be kept in mind that memory about them will change from one generation to another. Person's memory of the event in which he participated or witnessed differs from his memory of the event about which he learnt from stories, books or other written or oral sources. New generations create their memory of the Holocaust drawing information from different sources and getting as a result a mixture which forms a collective memory of the Holocaust of a definite generation. Therefore it makes a sense to speak about the collective memory of the Holocaust with reference to a definite generation, historical, social, and cultural situation. Continuing J. Young's idea it can be said that not only every country constructs "own" memory of the Holocaust but also every region can have somewhat different memory of it. Thus the sample was compiled from the students from Kharkiv, Poltava and L'viv. The sample of each city, approximately equal, included university students of sciences, social sciences, and humanities (but not historians) of all years. Their age varied from 16 to 23 years, females slightly exceeded males. Altogether 237 essays were analyzed: 89 from Kharkiv, 74 from Poltava, and 74 from L'viv. Empirical data were collected in September – October 2006.

### Methodology of Empirical Data Analysis

Collected essays were like small texts. One of interdisciplinary methods for qualitative text analysis is discourse analysis. It is widely used not only in linguistics but in other humanities – philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. to study different social phenomena such as youth subcultures, sexual harassment, anti-Semitism, attitude to racism, etc. In discourse analysis attention is paid not only to what people say but also to how they say it. Even when we speak "in our own words" these words are not just ours but they are the words of our community. "We speak with the voices of our communities, and to the extent that we have individual voices, we fashion them out of the social voices already available to us, appropriating the words of others to speak of our own" [7, p.24-25]. The way individuals speak is determined by those ways and means that they share with other members of their community. Discourse analysis may be considered as a method for the analysis of these social voices.

Discourse analysis can be applied not only to oral but also to written texts. An approach most frequently used for the analysis of the written texts is called critical discourse analysis [10], [12]. This approach unites analytical means of structural linguistics and the so called critical theory that consider social phenomena to be constructed by various social forces, and not be "essential" and "natural". Thus R. Wodak mentions that every discourse and every text are connected with others and they should be examined in connection with other discourses [12, p. 11]. Discourse is a form of social activity which is defined by values, social norms and social practices. Many conscious and unconscious motives are significant while creating texts, and this leads to the appearance of articulated and hidden meanings, cognitive and emotional aspects of the discourse.

Thus, facing a task to recall and to write about the Holocaust respondents created their text using some discourse which had to be reconstructed. Discourses reconstructed in this study show values and views of respondents which were reflected in their narratives about the Holocaust.

### Characteristics of the Collective Memory about the Holocaust

Respondents actualize facts about the Holocaust, events, considerations putting this content into a wider framework and using one or another discourse. It is anti-racist (or anti-nationalist) discourse, historical discourse, personification and transfer of responsibility discourse, comparative discourse, everyday life discourse, anti-Semitic discourse, stating discourse, neutral discourse, interpretative discourse, emotional discourse, regional discourse, religious and philosophic discourses. These discourses were described in details in my article [6]. In general the content of the collective memory about the Holocaust is rather shallow, not informative, based on the details, stereotypes, and myths of the everyday life and is personally distanced from the respondents.

### Connections of the Collective Memory about the Holocaust and National Identity

Essays written by the students showed not only specific features of their collective memory about the Holocaust but also gave a possibility to make some conclusions and assumptions about their national identity. The first which is striking in most essays is the absence of the localization of the Holocaust in the space. Two thirds of respondents connect the Holocaust with Ukraine in no way; they did not mention any Ukrainian realities. They did not connect the Holocaust either with Ukrainian history or its past. Thus, remembering the Holocaust two thirds of respondents did not display their national identity in any way. So it can be assumed that collective memory of the Holocaust is not connected with their national identity.

At the same time it is possible to say about manifested national identity in a third part of a sample (31%). Let us focus on the analysis of this part. What can be said about their national identity? This group appeared heterogeneous.

The first group, the most numerous, is the group which places the Holocaust in national Ukrainian history, understands it as a fact of our history that took place in Ukraine with people who lived not only beside but together with Ukrainians. National identity in this group is not equal to ethnic, as soon as it includes not only Ukrainians but other people living in Ukraine. So in fact we can speak about civil identity in this case.

The second group is composed of the respondents with strongly marked ethnic identity and a large distance from other people, Jews in particular. Students of this group consider that the Holocaust is an event of Jewish history that it bears no relation to Ukrainians.

The tragic fate of the Jews made some students ponder over it and put other nations, Ukrainians in

particular, in the place of the victims. These students belong to the third group. They have a strong idea about Ukrainians as victims in history. A myth about Ukrainian people as victims and martyrs is a part of their national identity. Students of this group often draw a parallel between Ukrainians and Jews according to the level martyrdom. They are aware that the Ukrainians suffered not less than the Jews and they feel offended in terms of recognition their sufferings. They mark that Golodomor was not less tragic historical event and during World War II Ukrainians suffered innocently not less than Jews. It can be qualified as a manifestation of the inferiority complex, desire to make equal themselves with other victimized people and to become sure that Ukrainian people suffered not less than any other.

It is possible to single out a subgroup here which compares discrimination of the Jews in fascist Germany and in the Soviet Union. Some respondents mention that both Germany and the Soviet Union strove to get rid of the Jews. Other compare Germany's attitude to Jews with Soviet Union's attitude to Ukrainians. But in both cases they express negative attitude to the Soviet Union and denial of Soviet identity.

At the same time whatever versions we are speaking about all they tend to keep positive and not conflicting identity. It can be assumed that this reluctance to shake positive identity, desire to keep it consistent and plain is one of the reasons of the poor collective memory of the Holocaust in the students.

#### Regional Characteristics of Collective Memory and National Identity

In general as it was expected both differences and similarities have been found in the results of respondents from the three regions. In each city everyday life and interpretative versions of collective memory are represented most frequently (Table 1).

Table 1

Regional distribution of the versions of collective memory

Versions of collective memory	Kharkiv	Poltava	L'viv
Interpretative	29,2%	33,8%	20,3%
Anti-racist	18,0%	23,0%	18,9%
Historic-comparative	13,5%	5,4%	16,2%
Everyday life	28,1%	23,0%	33,8%
Anti-Semitic	14,6%	14,9%	5,4%
Regional	1,1%	2,7%	10,8%

Students from these cities have all versions of the collective memory though the frequency of their usage is different. The L'viv sample differs from the samples of Kharkiv and Poltava by rather frequent use of the regional discourse and by remembering more facts and events relating to the Holocaust in Ukraine. Students from Kharkiv and Poltava used anti-Semitic discourse rather often. At the same time almost three times less L'viv students used it.

The expression of the national identity is the following. Most of all students who showed it are from L'viv (37.8%), 24.3% - from Poltava, and 21.3% - from Kharkiv. Comparison of civil, ethnic identity, and identity with Ukrainians as victims showed that in all three groups most students manifested civil identity (Table 2).

Table 2

Regional distribution of the types of identity (%)

Type of identity	Civil	Ethnic	Victimized	Others
City				
Kharkiv	31,6	21,1	-	47,3
Poltava	44,4	22,2	22,2	11,2
L'viv	32,1	25,0	21,4	21,5

Other types of identity were distributed in each city in a different way. In L'viv ethnic identity appeared on the second place, identity with Ukrainians as victims – on the third place. More than other groups L'viv students deny Soviet identity. In Poltava ethnic identity and identity with Ukrainians as victims are presented equally. Somewhat different structure of identity is in Kharkiv sample. Here the second place after civil identity is occupied by the attitude to the Jews as “Others” (26.3%). So they describe themselves not positively but by negating those who are not “We”, thus throwing away a part of history from their collective memory. Fewer students in comparison with the whole sample showed ethnic identity.

#### Conclusion

It should be mentioned first of all that these findings relates to the generation of the youth who were born about thirty years ago. They cannot be distributed at least without special study to other generations whose collective memory of the Holocaust has its own features that are characteristic for their generation. Besides, highly probable that the data which could be obtained in small towns or villages, in the youth without higher education would have been different as far as it is well-known that more educated population is not only

more informed but also more tolerant including inter-ethnic relations.

In general the content of the students' collective memory about the Holocaust is very poor, not much informative and rather strange to them. It is rested on various cultural models and values such as human rights, equality of people of different race and nations, absence of violence, everyday stereotypes and myths. It is not homogeneous but present both complementary and contested versions. Everyday life and interpretative versions of the collective memory are most frequently used. Wide use of the everyday life version agrees with ideas that collective memory tends to simplify events, present them as simple and consistent.

Very few respondents remembered the Holocaust in a regional context (in a narrow and a wide sense, applying to own region or Ukraine as a whole). It evidences about their attitude to the Holocaust as a foreign event, that the Holocaust is not incorporated in Ukrainian history and national memory by these students. A large number of the students expressed their anti-Semitic views and position (mainly in Poltava and Kharkiv). Their views and attitude toward the Jews are rather intolerant and aggressive.

Some specific features have been disclosed in regional peculiarities of collective memory and national identity. Regional memory and national identity is more evidently expressed in the students from L'viv. Students from Poltava in general remind them. Kharkiv students display their ethnic identity in an indirect way, separating themselves from the Jews as "Others".

Thus, students' youth collective memory of the Holocaust acts a minor part in the support of their positive national identity.

Taking into account an idea about inseparable connection of national identity and collective memory it can be assumed that it is possible to make some suggestions about national identity on the basis of collective memory. Several types of national identity have been singled out: ethnic identity, civil identity, identity with Ukrainians as victims and martyrs, denial of Soviet identity. But it was possible to make conclusion about respondents' national identity only regarding about one third of the sample: two third of respondents while remembering about the Holocaust did not display their national identity in any way. It gives a reason to suggest that the memory about the Holocaust is not connected with their national identity and does not support it. At the same time among the respondents who displayed their identity the largest amount revealed civil identity.

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