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„Biohistoriographical” Dissertations in Ukraine since Independence. A Quantitative Approach

„Biohistoriograficzne” prace naukowe na Ukrainie od czasów odzyskania niepodległości. Ujęcie ilościowe

ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is discovering how the new demands for modernization of the biographical discourse after biographical turn are met and realized in the current Ukrainian biographical research. The author will approach this through looking at avtoreferats (abstracts) of dissertations on biographical topics that have been defended in Ukraine in the past thirty years. The present work is based on quantitative methods. It draws on the analysis of a relational database of historiographical dissertations defended over the period from 1991 to 2020, built in Microsoft Access. Analysis of the database provides an opportunity to answer a number of new research questions: about the dynamics of biographical dissertation writing and defense over time, circle of humanities scholars whose

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life and activities have been the subject of dissertation-level historiographical studies in recent decades, methodological foundations of biographical studies (special methodological concepts and tools) on the basis of classification of dissertations in biographical studies, finally, the database also allows us to analyze the authors of biographical dissertations as a group and detect the existence of research communities (academic schools) in the field of biographical studies.

Key words: Ukrainian historiography, avtoreferats, historiographical dissertations, biographical studies, quantitative method

STRESZCZENIE

Celem poniższego artykułu jest przedstawienie w jaki sposób potrzeba aktualizacji dyskursu biografistycznego jest realizowana w obecnym ukraińskim nurcie badawczym. Autorka podejmuje się analizy abstraktów naukowych rozpraw poruszających tematy biografii, które obroniono na przestrzeni ostatnich trzydziestu lat. Artykuł wykorzystuje metody ilościowe, czerpiąc z analizy relacyjnej bazy danych prac historiograficznych bronionych w latach 1991–2020, która stworzona została w programie Microsoft Access. Umożliwia to zrozumienie wielu problemów badawczych m.in. dynamiki pisania oraz publikowania rozpraw w ostatnim trzydziestoleciu. Nakreśla ona także krąg badawczy, którego aktywność była przedmiotem badań na poziomie rozpraw z dziedziny biografistyki, ale i definiuje podstawy metodologiczne studiów biografistycznych (pojęcia i narzędzia z zakresu metodologii) w oparciu o klasyfikację prac badawczych w studiach biografistycznych. W swoim artykule autorka kreśli także grupowy portret autorów tych prac, poświadczając egzystencji środowisk naukowych (szkół badawczych) w dziedzinie nauk biografistycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: historiografia ukraińska, abstrakty, autoreferaty, rozprawy historiograficzne, biografistyka, metody ilościowe

As part of the anthropological turn, since the second half of the twentieth century biographical studies have experienced a revival, enriched by new research perspectives, methods, and objectives. For one thing, biographers have moved from the study of mostly prominent personalities towards exploring the life paths of „ordinary” people. For historiographical studies, this means shifting the focus towards historians of the „second” and „third” tier. Secondly, nowadays, authors pay more attention not just to the public, professional activities of the scholars of humanities, and their role in historical events, but also to their personal, emotional, and spiritual lives. This reorientation has spurred the development of a whole number of new types of biographical analysis, such as psychobiography, existential biography, and pathobiography. Many such studies strive towards the ambitious goal of illuminating the connection between ideas and life, between „how we think and how we live”¹. Thirdly, the most important factor that

¹ Т.Н. Попова, *Жизнеописание ученого-историка на перекрестке историографических традиций. Теория. Методология. Практика*, Одесса 2017, s. 19–20.

has restored the credibility of biographical studies was biographers' efforts, through the study of an individual life path, to show „big history” with its specific historical circumstances, challenges, and opportunities, which, on the one hand, directed human behavior and, on the other, transformed under the influence of human will and individuals' actions². This became possible as biographers turned to the contexts of their subjects' lives, to those social and cultural situations through which the biography of an individual acquires meaning and significance³. The requirements of contextual research stimulate attention to social and intellectual aspects and prompt authors to clarify the role of the milieu in the work of both individual scholars and academic communities. Researchers endeavor to study in-depth the factors that influenced the formation of professional norms and values and the realization of the expert function in academic work⁴.

New research priorities have produced the need to modernize the biographical discourse, update the methodological toolbox, and expand the range of personalities that serve as research subjects. Today, one would be hard pressed to find an article in theory of biography published in Ukraine that does not put forward new requirements and specific proposals to improve the quality of biographical studies⁵.

However, the extent to which such requirements are met and realized in actual biographical research remains an open question. We will approach it by looking at *avtoreferats* (hereafter referred to as authors' abstracts, or abstracts) of dissertations, both Candidate and doctoral, on biographical topics that have been defended in Ukraine in the past thirty years. We have chosen to focus on authors' abstracts because our objective is to analyze the subject matter, and theoretical and methodological components of biographical studies, which are usually quite clearly spelled out in these texts. We believe that dissertation-level research is more sensitive to changing requirements regarding up-to-date research tools than the so-called „socially oriented” historical biographies. In this paper, we will limit ourselves to dissertations defended in the field of „Historiography, Source Studies, and Special Historical Disciplines”⁶ given that the nature of historiographical studies pushes the authors of

² Л.П. Регина, *Историческая наука на рубеже XX–XXI вв.: социальные теории и историографическая практика*, Москва 2011, s. 290.

³ Т. Н. Попова, *op. cit.*, s. 301.

⁴ В. Оноприенко, *Апории биографического письма и научная биография*, „Ейдос: альманах теорії та історії історичної науки” 2014–2015, 8, s. 55–66.

⁵ Л.І. Буряк, *Українська біографіка «плинних часів»*, „Українська біографістика” 2020, 19, s. 33–52.

⁶ Before 1999, the specialization was known as „Historiography, Source Studies, and Methods of Historical Research”.

such dissertations to the forefront of the process of the methodological overhaul of academic scholarship in Ukraine.

To date, there are a number of studies whose authors attempt to summarize the results of biographical research over the past decades⁷. The current practices in the sphere of writing and defending dissertations in history have also been characterized in general terms⁸. However, there has been no detailed study of authors' abstracts of biographical dissertations. This is also important in view of the opinion held by some researchers that the requirements within certain disciplinary fields constrain the development of truly interdisciplinary, more methodologically interesting angles of biographical research⁹.

The present work is based on quantitative methods. It draws on the analysis of a relational database of historiographical dissertations defended over the period from 1991 to 2021, built in Microsoft Access. In total, the database contains information on 453 authors' abstracts of historiographical works¹⁰, presented in 5 tables: 1) ID (name and gender of the author, academic degree, year of defense); 2) dissertation details (topic, supervisor and their academic position, institutional affiliation of the author and supervisor, place of defense); 3) information about the opponents; 4) basic characteristics of the work (chronological scope, methodology, keywords, etc.); and 5) type of dissertation (problem-oriented, theoretical, etc.).

Out of the 453 abstracts, 94 dissertations deal with biographical subjects¹¹. At first glance, this number seems small, but it should be borne in

⁷ В.В. Бездрабко, *Сучасний стан і перспективи розвитку вітчизняної біографістики*, „Українська біографістика” 2016, 14, s. 29–49; *Історична біографіка в Україні: проблеми, завдання і перспективи розвитку досліджень, видавничої та інформаційної роботи: колективна монографія*, red. В.І. Попик et al., Київ 2019, passim.

⁸ С.И. Посохов, *Диссертация = бюрократическая наука? (или заметки по поводу «вечных проблем»)*, w: *Мир историка: историографический сборник*, t. 6, red. В.П. Корзун, А.В. Якуба, Омск 2010, s. 220–231.

⁹ В.І. Попик, *Біографіка як феномен науки і культури*, „Українська біографістика” 2020, 19, s. 25, <https://doi.org/10.15407/ub.19.015>, http://ub.nbuv.gov.ua/cgi-bin/ubi/jrn.exe?I21DBN=LINK&P21DBN=UBI&Z21ID=&S21REF=10&S21CNR=20&S21STN=1&S21FMT=A SP_meta&C21COM=S&2_S21P03=FILA=&2_S21STR=ubi_2020_19_4 [dostęp: 30 IX 2022].

¹⁰ The data were collected from the following sources: the publication *Chronicle of Dissertation Autoreferats*, electronic catalogue of the V.N. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, and „Notices Concerning the Defense of Doctoral and Candidate Dissertations”, found on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine.

¹¹ We have assigned six works dedicated to the study of personal archival collections and their informative value to the subtype of „historiographical source studies” and will leave them outside the scope of this paper. See for instance: See: О.Т. Гончар, *Проблеми історії та культури України в епістолярній спадщині М.І. Костомарова*, Київ 2008, автореферат дисертації.

mind that the total number of historiographical works includes studies in both problem-oriented and reflexive historiography (181 and 272 entries, respectively). Biographical studies actually represent the largest subtype of works in reflexive historiography, far ahead of those devoted to the study of academic infrastructure (43), disciplinary history (32), scholarly issues (8), and others.

Analysis of the database provides an opportunity to answer a number of new research questions, especially those regarding the dynamics of biographical dissertation writing and defense over time. The peak of defenses falls on the period from 2007 to 2009. However, it should be noted that this is due to the general increase in the number of defenses of historiographical dissertations during this period. That is why, in order to determine the level of academic interest in biographical topics, we need to take into account the ratio of biographical works to the total number of dissertations defended in particular years. For example, in 2007 this ratio was 4 (7 biographical out of the total of 28 historiographical works). In the period from 1999 to 2009, the ratio averages around 4, and in the period from 2010 to 2020 – 7 (for example, 2018 gives us 2 biographical dissertations out of 13 total). Thus, the recent years have witnessed a noticeable decrease in the popularity of biographical studies among degree seekers, at least in the field of historiography.

To understand the state of development of biohistoriographical studies, it is important to consider the circle of humanities scholars whose life and activities have been the subject of dissertation-level historiographical studies in recent decades. First of all, it should be noted that the 94 biographical dissertations in our database cover a total of 76 historical actors (historians, writers, journalists, and others). Thus, some figures have several dissertations written about them. The undisputed leader is M.S. Hrushevsky (8 studies). The other two of the top three are M.P. Drachomanov (4 studies) and N.D. Polonska-Vasylenko (3 studies). Two dissertations each explore the life and work of V.B. Antonovych, D.I. Bahaliy, O.S. Hrushevsky, V.S. Ikonnykov, O.P. Ohloblin, and D.I. Yavornytsky.

This list testifies to the drive to focus on persons whose activities were neglected in older historiography. In most cases, the relevance of the study is justified by the importance of bringing the names of these figures „back from oblivion”. This is also evidenced by the large number of dissertation-level works on scholars who worked abroad. This category includes 17 scholars of the first and second waves of emigration (11 and 6, respectively) and 2 representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora.

The imperial period of Ukrainian academic scholarship is represented by biographies of 24 figures. To these can be added 25 biographical works dedicated to 14 scholars whose work began during the imperial era, but

continued after the establishment of the Soviet regime. Their biographies offer a picture of the so-called „golden age” of the institutional development of Ukrainian academic scholarship (1920s). The Soviet period is represented by biographies of 16 scholars. The early modern period of Ukrainian history finds reflection in the biography of only one historical figure. Agreeing with the view that the development of historical knowledge is largely mediated by personalities of historians and their professional activities, we must recognize that these numbers indicate certain peculiarities in the process of reviving the creative legacy of humanities scholars.

Close attention to certain historical periods has also determined the gender breakdown of dissertation subjects. Thus, among the 76 protagonists of biographical studies, only four are women (historians N.D. Polonska-Vasylenko and N.V. Pihulevska and writers D.K. Humenna and Lesya Ukrainka).

Another distinct feature of the research interests of authors of biographical dissertations in recent years has been their focus on the life and work of mostly Ukrainian humanities figures. Of the total number of dissertations, only four are devoted to foreign scholars (Bulgarian historian V. Zlatarsky and Polish historians L. Vasilevsky, L. Kubala, and A. Jabłonowski). The interest in Polish scholars reflects the dominance of Polish themes in dissertation-level research on foreign historiography.

The fact that in some cases multiple dissertations are devoted to one historical figure reflects the existence of biographical studies of different types. As we consider the methodological foundations of modern biographical studies, it is important to keep in mind the classification of studies based on their research objectives, which require the use of appropriate methodological tools. Several such classifications have been proposed in historiographical literature. Thus, I.I. Kolesnyk distinguished the following types of biographical studies exploring lives of scholars: 1) from the point of view of socio-cultural life (cultural, social, economic, political); 2) through the history of institutions, academic establishments, or a particular field of knowledge (local studies, archival studies, etc.); 3) from the point of view of research schools and traditions; 4) from the perspective of specific ideologies, socio-political stances; 5) focusing on various aspects of a scholar’s activities (as a teacher, academic organizer, archaeographer, journalist, public figure, historian-writer); 6) in the context of the study of particular problems (military history, history of the Revolution, regional issues); and 7) studies following the two-tier model of a historian’s biography („life path” and „scholarly work”)¹².

¹² I. Колесник, *Передмова. «Нова біографічна історія» як метод, «Ейдос: альманах теорії та історії історичної науки» 2014–2015, 8, с. 8.*

Based on this scheme and drawing on the analysis of available empirical data, we can offer the following classification of dissertations in biographical studies. The most numerous type (41 dissertations) is represented by *comprehensive studies of life paths and academic biographies of humanities scholars*. The main goals of such dissertations are: to build a periodization of the life and work of a scholar; to reconstruct his worldview and socio-political views, defining the principal factors that influenced them; to compile and analyze the bibliography of the scholar's oeuvre; and, finally, to determine the place of the subject in the scholarship of his era and his influence on successors. It should be noted that all such dissertations were submitted for the Candidate's degree.

The next most popular type (17 dissertations, including two doctoral) consists of studies that are *devoted to various aspects of a scholar's work*. In the vast majority of cases, if the protagonist is a historian, the study focuses on his work in the field of special historical disciplines: historiography, source studies, archaeology, archaeography, or methodology¹³. As a rule, such dissertations are different from the previous type in their efforts to examine a scholar's work „in the context of the internal regularities of development” of particular branches of historical scholarship.

A significant proportion of the total (13 Candidates' dissertations) consists of biographical studies focusing on *specific issues and problems as represented in the oeuvre of a humanities figure*. Dissertations of this type are characterized by a deeper analysis of the scholarly legacy of their subjects. They pay much attention to the subjects' theoretical and methodological preferences and the evolution of their scholarly views and conceptions in the context of specific historiographical situations. At the same time, most authors of dissertations of this type refuse to reconstruct complete biographies of their protagonists; at best, they limit themselves to exploring the formation of the subject's scholarly outlook. Further, they often analyze their subjects' contribution to the study of individual problems of history without trying to understand the historiographical traditions that underpin such study (even though it might be worth „sacrificing” the former for the sake of the latter)¹⁴.

The next type (7 dissertations, including one doctoral) includes works devoted to *the study of socio-political stances of humanities scholars*

¹³ Exception: Н.А. Шелудякова, М. Грушевський – колекціонер у контексті наукового та мистецького життя України кінця ХІХ – початку ХХ ст., Київ 2016, автореферат дисертації.

¹⁴ Exceptions: Н.І. Швайба, Н.Д. Полонська-Василенко – дослідник історії Південної України, Київ 2008, автореферат дисертації; Н.В. Весельська, Українознавчі дослідження Александра Яблоновського (1829–1913), Переяслав 2020, автореферат дисертації.

and historical views of writers, journalists, and public figures. These works are distinguished by their authors' efforts not only to study the formation and evolution of the views of their protagonists, but also to highlight the impact of the latter's beliefs on the historical thought and actual social practice of their day.

Another distinct type is represented by the so-called *personological studies* (6 dissertations, including 2 doctoral). Such works analyze the development of scholarly knowledge about the life and professional activities of intellectuals, which allows us, through the prism of historiographical images, to develop an understanding of the problems of reconstructing a comprehensive picture of the biography of a scholar. In addition, most such works deal not only with particular historiographical traditions, but also with the formation of individual academic subdisciplines (such as Drahomanov studies or Hrushevsky studies). Outlining further prospects for the latter's development is one of the tasks of dissertations of this type.

We may also single out the type of *intellectual biography* (8 entries, including one doctoral dissertation). Some researchers tend to distinguish between biohistoriographical works and studies in intellectual biography¹⁵. However, for the purposes of our paper, we have grouped these works into one category. Distinctive features of dissertations in intellectual biography are their special attention to particular methodological tools and the objectivity of reconstructing the biography of a historical actor in its socio-cultural context and specific intellectual milieu.

Only one doctoral dissertation in our database aims to study *the biography of a historian in close connection with the research school* established by him. The work examines not only the efforts of the „mentor“ to develop a school, but also the ways in which the „students“ transformed its theoretical program¹⁶. Another doctoral dissertation sets out to reconstruct the life of a scholar in the context of a specific historiographical situation¹⁷.

This catalog of types of biographical dissertations reflects the present state of the academic tradition. At the same time, it points to new trends in the development of biographical studies, including those concerning theoretical and methodological issues, which directly depend on epistemological approaches and understanding of the research subject.

¹⁵ І. Колесник, *op. cit.*; О.В. Ясь, *Рецензія на кн.: Т. Попова, Жизнеописание учёного-историка на перекрестке историографических традиций: Теория. Методология. Практика, Одесса 2017, 456 с., „Український історичний журнал“ 2018, 4, s. 220–225.*

¹⁶ О.І. Кіян, *Володимир Антонович як історик й основоположник Київської історичної школи в українській історіографії другої половини XIX – поч. XX ст., Київ 2008, автореферат дисертації.*

¹⁷ І.Б. Верба, *Олександр Оглоблин та його внесок в українську історіографію 1920–1940, Київ 2000, автореферат дисертації.*

However, in order to determine the degree to which the research toolbox of today’s biographical dissertations has been modernized, we need to take a closer look at the methodological sections of authors’ abstracts.

It should be noted that for the purposes of this study the question of research methodology boils down to the question of how this methodology is represented in authors’ abstracts. We are aware that conclusions regarding the methodology used in a dissertation can be drawn only on the basis of the latter’s full text. However, we believe that analysis of methodological claims made in dissertation abstracts is important for estimating their authors’ degree of awareness of the importance of methodology in general and their ability to clearly outline its specifics in each particular case. These qualities are showcased in authors’ abstracts – the genre of academic writing called upon to convince the expert community of the degree seeker’s „seriousness of intentions” and her ability to fulfill research objectives by, among other things, clearly describing the methods, resources, and tools employed in her work.

Analysis of authors’ abstracts shows that attention to methodological themes has been growing over the past thirty years. While abstracts of dissertations defended in the early 1990s may skip over the theoretical and methodological aspects of the work entirely, over time statements of methodology become mandatory for the introductory sections of abstracts, and their length increases from one or two sentences to several paragraphs. Eventually, a special section devoted to methodology appears as part of the first (theoretical) chapter of a dissertation. We first find it in biographical dissertations in 1998, and it has been mandatory since 2013. 39 dissertations include a section on methodology in their first chapter. In addition, recently, when justifying the relevance of their research topic, authors have been increasingly citing the need to „modernize the methodological apparatus”.

Questions of methodology cannot, of course, be reduced to the length of statements on this subject; the contents of such statements are important. Analyzing dissertation abstracts, we made note of the presence in the sections on methodology of references to the use of the common methods of historical inquiry (chronological, retrospective, typological, comparative, etc.)¹⁸, as well as „special” methods of biographical research.

Among such „special” methods, 34 abstracts feature the „biographical”, „biohistoriographical”, or „historical-biographical” ones. However, classifying these methods as „special” in biographical studies is problematic. According to theorists of biography, the biographical method in

¹⁸ Sometimes to these are added methods from the field of source studies (heuristics of source analysis, source criticism, and the interpretive method).

biographical studies is the same as their subject matter¹⁹. Asserting the use of this method in each particular work requires justification and explanation, because a method is defined by a special approach to biographical material, determined by a specific methodology. In some ways, the use of the „biographical method“ is justified in historical and historiographical studies, one of the tasks of which on the way to achieving their main goal may be to uncover certain aspects of the life of a person or group of people. However, within the framework of biography and biohistoriography we can only speak of various biographical methods/approaches based on different, „often contradictory theoretical and methodological assumptions“²⁰. Further, explanations that sometimes accompany references to this method (for instance, „the biographical method, as used in synthetic studies“²¹) do little to clarify the authors' intentions.

16 abstracts speak of the use of „historiographical methods“, meaning methods of historiographical analysis and synthesis („concrete historiographical analysis and synthesis“). It should be noted that these are the most popular „special“ methods in the entire body of historiographical dissertations; claims of their use are second in number only to those regarding the common methods of historical inquiry. However, analysis and synthesis are basic scientific research procedures, and the expression „historiographical analysis and synthesis“ indicates that these procedures are used in a historiographical work and applied to historiographical material. Thus, such claims also say little about the specifics of the researcher's approach to reconstructing the life and work of her subject.

„Special“ biographical methods cited in dissertation abstracts can be grouped as follows: 1) methods that help establish the source base of the study and are related to the research procedure; 2) methods used to analyze the oeuvre of the biography's „main character“; 3) methodological tools the use of which is determined by the characteristics of the research subject, and 4) methods relating to special approaches and research models, especially „intellectual biography“.

The first group includes the method of interview, which was used in five studies to reconstruct the biographies of scholars who were active in the twentieth century. One study calls this method sociological, while the other researchers classify it under the heading of „oral history“. A number

¹⁹ И.Л. Беленький, *Биография и биографистика в отечественной культурно-исторической традиции*, в: *История через личность: историческая биография сегодня*, ред. Л.П. Репина, Москва 2005, с. 47; Т.Н. Попова, *op. cit.*, с. 120.

²⁰ И.В. Годубович, *Биография: силуэт на фоне Humanities: методология анализа в социогуманитарном знании*, Одесса 2008, с. 17.

²¹ See: І.І. Долінська, *Н.Д. Полонська-Василенко як дослідник історії Росії*, Київ 2011, автореферат дисертації.

of studies rely on the algorithm of the creation of a „scientific” biography proposed by V.S. Chyshko, who distinguishes three procedural phases of biographical research: empirical, which is based on methods of source criticism; reconstruction of the life, work, and psychological makeup of an individual, based on methods of historical and psychological reconstruction; and representation of the person set within the context of the entirety of her internal and external connections.

One method of analyzing a scholarly oeuvre is bibliometric analysis, using which researchers can trace the dynamics of past intellectuals’ publication activities. This method is featured in 7 dissertation abstracts. However, the task of compiling a bibliography and carrying out a „problem/subject analysis of the scholarly legacy” of their protagonists was postulated by many more dissertation authors. Given this, the use of bibliometric analysis probably involves the study of a wider range of criteria of publication activity, but no abstract specifies these criteria. In analyzing scholarly legacy, four authors used content analysis. However, their abstracts do not explain the specific content analysis procedures they employed, without which the objectives and results of using the method are not quite clear. The authors of works devoted to the study of historical views of fiction writers use the methods of literary criticism.

Special methodological concepts reflecting the peculiarities of certain research subject’s figure, first and foremost, in works on „personology” and are related to the idea of the „historiographical image”²². It is the norm for such studies to not only make a mention of this idea, but also set out the authors’ understanding of it and elaborate on the specific techniques of its use in the context of historiographical inquiry²³.

Specific methodological tools are also needed in studies that aim to explore intellectuals’ non-traditional areas of activity, such as collecting. To grasp the importance of these kinds of activities, it is necessary to understand the motives behind it and its psychological foundations, based on theories about the role of the material world in the self-awareness and self-presentation of intellectuals²⁴.

²² Sometimes, however, this idea is cited without any explanation of its methodological significance for the author’s approach. See for instance: В.В. Тельвак, *Рецепція творчої спадщини Михайла Грушевського в історичній думці кінця XIX – 30-х років XX століття*, Київ 2009, автореферат дисертації.

²³ О.І. Вовк, *В.Н. Каразін (1773–1842) в історико-біографічних нарративах*, Дніпропетровськ 2015, автореферат дисертації; Ю.Ю. Куценко, *Історіографічні образи М. Драгоманова в українській історичній науці (1860-ті–2011 рр.)*, Черкаси 2013, автореферат дисертації.

²⁴ Н.А. Шелудякова, *op. cit.*

The use of special research optics is also evident in dissertations that use the concept of the „second-tier historian”. This concept presupposes defining the context of a historian’s activities (academic, socio-political, socio-cultural, communicative) as a kind of „system of coordinates”. Overall, the concept of „second-tier historian” is featured in five studies. However, only two of them aim to analyze the cognitive value of the concept²⁵ and propose criteria for classifying their protagonists as „second-tier historians”²⁶ which, in turn, is reflected in the hypotheses and principal conclusions proposed by the authors. In the remaining abstracts, the concept is mentioned only in passing, usually when explaining the relevance of the study. The methodological sections of these abstracts omit it altogether. In these cases, the concept’s function is to evoke a „fashionable” methodology, justifying the need for a biographical study. It does not appear to require specific methodological tools and does not set additional tasks other than the study of the lives of scholars who would be difficult to call „prominent”.

Other methodological concepts pertaining to historiographical research may also be featured in abstracts, such as „style of thinking”, „research school”, „disciplinary matrix”²⁷, „style of historical writing”²⁸, „academic families”²⁹, „historiographical process”, and „historiographical situations”³⁰.

In recent decades, authors of biographical studies have increasingly been trying to demonstrate that their research is interdisciplinary and based on up-to-date methodological approaches (this is asserted by the authors of 23 dissertations). Most often authors claim to draw on perspectives borrowed from intellectual history, new biographical history, intellectual biography, history of science, narrative psychology and psychology of science, literary theory, and microhistory. However, such declarations do not affect the range of stated research objectives and conclusions. The reverse is observed in studies belonging to the type of intellectual biography. The authors of these studies often make a point of

²⁵ С.О. Чухлій, *Історик Михайло Васильович Клочков (1877–1952): життєвий шлях та творча спадщина*, Дніпропетровськ 2014, автореферат дисертації.

²⁶ В.М. Андреев, *Віктор Петров: інтелектуальна біографія*, Київ 2013, автореферат дисертації.

²⁷ О.І. Кіян, *op. cit.*

²⁸ See for instance: О.В. Пестрикова, *Польський історик Людвік Кубаля та його внесок у дослідження проблем історії України*, Дніпро 2019, автореферат дисертації.

²⁹ В.М. Саенко, *Олексій Тереножкін як дослідник давньої історії України*, Дрогобич 2019, автореферат дисертації.

³⁰ See for instance: М.І. Маркевич, *Дмитро Багалій – дослідник української історіографії*, Черкаси, 2014, автореферат дисертації.

stressing the difference between the methodological approach from the vantage point of „intellectual biography” and that of „traditional biography”. They focus on the shaping of the personalities and activities of their protagonists in ever-changing socio-cultural and intellectual contexts (including through the use of the „network model”) and strive to examine links between different types of scholars’ creative and practical activity³¹. As a result, intellectual biography becomes „not an ordinary recreation of the successive stages of a person’s life path, but the quintessence of living activity of an individual in all its manifestations”³². Interestingly, even the definition of the subject and purpose of a dissertation study in intellectual biography includes components of the model of intellectual biography (private, spiritual, situational, etc.) and brings up the contexts of the main character’s life and work to be explored³³. Thus, new approaches and methodological tools provide an opportunity to begin realizing a fundamentally new type of biographical studies, in which the main character’s story is used to reach a deeper understanding of the social context. Conversely, intellectual biography also allows the modern researcher to construct the environment and milieu in which a past historian lived and worked. We can consider the socio-cultural preconditions and moral and psychological atmosphere of research work, which directly affected the dynamics of the „inner” intellectual development of the historical actor³⁴.

Of course, the problem of contexts of intellectuals’ life and work concerns today not only authors of studies belonging to the type of intellectual biography. Attention to contexts is becoming a ubiquitous research requirement and distinguishes the new biographical approaches from traditional ones³⁵. Therefore, it is only natural that a number of authors who do not classify their studies as intellectual biography nevertheless see the task of exploring contexts as central to the reconstruction of the life and work of their characters. In these studies, the life and activities

³¹ Д.В. Сачко, *Докія Гуменна: інтелектуальна біографія*, Дрогобич, 2018, автореферат дисертації; Ю.В. Капарулін, О.О. Рябінін-Склярєвський (1878–1942 рр.): *інтелектуальна біографія історика*, Київ 2012, автореферат дисертації; В.М. Андреев, *op. cit.*; В.М. Саєнко, *op. cit.*

³² Г.М. Михайленко, *Олександр Лотоцький (1870–1939 рр.): інтелектуальна біографія історика*, Київ 2009, автореферат дисертації.

³³ В.М. Андреев, *op. cit.*; М.М. Суздаль, *Микола Цертелєв: дослід інтелектуальної біографії*, Київ 2015, автореферат дисертації.

³⁴ See: В. Ващенко, *Концепт «інтелектуальна біографія» та конструювання «наукових біографій» в українській історіографії*, „Ейдос. Альманах теорії та історії історичної науки” 2009, 4, s. 475–486.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, s. 478–479.

of intellectuals may be considered through the prism of family lifestyle influences and professional and social connections³⁶, against the backdrop of the evolution of socio-political thought³⁷, in the context of certain historiographical situations³⁸ and of the functioning of particular research schools³⁹, and taking into account the ways in which the fruits of academic labor found reflection in actual social practice, which allows us to see how socio-cultural conditions shape ideas, and how ideas undermine or challenge the world in which they emerge⁴⁰. This trend has produced a lot of interesting research, including one in which the development of the author's own methodological approach became the objective of the study and the basis for formulating a hypothesis⁴¹.

However, there are still many so-called „scientific biographies“ that tend towards glorifying their subject while refusing to consider his relations with colleagues and those aspects of his social ties that threaten to tarnish his „shining image“. As a result, the individual under study is perceived as the only player in the field of history, which in turn does not allow us to fully understand the motives of his life choices in key situations of professional and personal life⁴².

In another trend, a fair number of authors of biographical studies rather skimp on methodology. 41 abstracts do not mention any methodological tools other than research principles (historicism, scientism, objectivity, systemic approach, etc.) and common methods of historical inquiry, which are simply listed without specifying what was accomplished by using them. Sometimes authors invoke the latest approaches and certain methodological concepts outside the methodological sections of their studies (as discussed above). On the other hand, there are cases where authors advertise the use of such concepts in the methodology section, but do not seem to follow through on their claims in the body of the

³⁶ See for instance: О.В. Глушан, *Наукова, педагогічна та громадська діяльність С.В. Бородаєвського (1870–1942)*, Київ 2012, автореферат дисертації.

³⁷ See for instance: С.Д. Гелей, *Василь Кучабський: від національної ідеї до державності (українська консервативна політична думка першої половини ХХ ст та її вклад в історичну науку)*, Київ 1999, автореферат дисертації.

³⁸ See for instance: І.В. Верб, *op. cit.*

³⁹ See for instance: Н.В. Весельська, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Д.С. Вирський, *Ст. Оріховський-Роксолан як історик та політичний мислитель*, Дніпропетровськ 2000, автореферат дисертації.

⁴¹ В.В. Ващенко, *Стратегії конструювання М. Грушевським українських метанаративів: методи та їх функції*, Дніпропетровськ 2009, автореферат дисертації.

⁴² Ю.А. Кісельова, *Рец. на кн.: Пирогова-Таран Л.В., Логунова Н.А. Іван Васильович Лучицький: історик і час. – Ніжин: НДУ імені М. Гоголя, 2015. – 210 с., „Харківський історикографічний збірник“ 2017, 15, с. 315–318.*

work. Thus, methodological themes acquire a „ritual” significance. This is also evidenced by the scarcity of citations of theoretical and methodological works in discussions of methodology (only 23 studies have such citations). These data indicate a lack of awareness of the importance of methodology as a condition of research work. However, refusing to think about methodological issues often leads to methodological eclecticism or unconscious use of outdated methodology (usually nineteenth-century positivist principles).

Thus, we must admit that the expectations and requirements regarding the overhaul of the theoretical and methodological foundations of biographical discourse, put forward in theoretical and critical work, are still widely ignored by the authors of biographical studies (at least as far as their abstracts demonstrate). A wide variety of interesting methodological proposals remain unrealized in actual biographical research. These include, for example, the use of such concepts as „historian’s big text”⁴³ or „biographical world”⁴⁴, or the study of biography in terms of self-presentation and self-formation⁴⁵.

The database also allows us to analyze the authors of biographical dissertations as a group and possibly detect the existence of research communities in the field of biographical studies. First, let us turn to the gender breakdown of the authors of biographical studies. 59 of them are women and 33 are men (two men wrote two biographical dissertations each, candidate and doctoral). For the entire body of recent historiographical dissertations, the figures are 237 women to 216 men. Thus, it is obvious that dissertation-level biographical studies in Ukraine have a more „womanly” face. Interestingly, dissertations in biography are usually defended for the Candidate’s degree. Doctoral dissertations number only 9 out of the total of 94 works.

Another interesting issue is the authors’ academic affiliation. The list of institutions leading in the number of biographical dissertations defended is as follows: T.H. Shevchenko Kyiv National University (21), O. Honchar Dnipro National University (13), M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (7), Institute of the History of Ukraine at the NASU (6), V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (6), Kherson State University (6), and the National University „Ostroh Academy” (5).

⁴³ С.И. Посохов, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ І.І. Колесник, *Біографічний світ Тараса Шевченка*, „Український історичний журнал” 2014, 3, s. 78–99.

⁴⁵ П. Берк, *Что такое культуральная история?*, tłum. И. Полонской, Москва 2015, s. 141.

At the same time, if we run a breakdown of the entire dissertation corpus by the academic affiliation of the supervisors, the figures will „gravitate” towards the „center”: T.H. Shevchenko Kyiv National University (23), O. Honchar Dnipro National University (11), M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies at the NASU (8), Institute of the History of Ukraine at the NASU (9), V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (6), Kherson State University (5), and the National University „Ostroh Academy” (5). Interestingly, some renowned research centers with a rich history, such as I. Franko Lviv National University and I.I. Mechnykov Odesa National University, are not on the list, although we should note that we counted only biohistoriographical dissertations. Thus, these calculations can help identify research schools in biographical studies specifically among historiographers.

For this purpose, we first need to identify the circle of „repeat offenders” among the academic supervisors of biographical dissertations. Based on the number of dissertations defended, the following list emerged: V.M. Andreyev (7), I.I. Kolesnyk (7), H.D. Kazmyrchuk (5), M.P. Kovalsky (5), I.B. Matiash (4), I.B. Verba (4), Ya.S. Kalakura (4), V.F. Kolesnyk (3), S.M. Kudelko (3), and P.S. Sokhan (3).

However, the overall figures alone cannot demonstrate a purposeful intention to offer specifically biographical topics. A large number of dissertations defended under a scholar’s supervision may be due, for instance, to her age or to how often she takes on the role of a dissertation supervisor in general. That is why we calculated the ratio of biographical dissertations to the total number of works defended under the supervision of a particular scholar. The averaged coefficients thus obtained are as follows: V.M. Andreyev – 1 (7 biographical dissertations out of 8 historiographical), M.P. Kovalsky – 1 (5 out of 6), I.B. Verba – 2 (4 out of 7), I.I. Kolesnyk – 2 (7 out of 14), I.B. Matiash – 2 (4 out of 6), V.F. Kolesnyk – 3 (3 out of 9), P.S. Sokhan – 3 (3 out of 8), H.D. Kazmyrchuk – 3 (5 out of 14), Ya.S. Kalakura – 4 (4 out of 15), and S.M. Kudelko – 5 (3 out of 15).

To detect the existence of a school, it is important to take into account the range of dissertation supervisors’ research interests. Thus, V.M. Andreyev and I.B. Verba each wrote both of their dissertations in the genre of biography. I.I. Kolesnyk and I.B. Matiash have authored biographical monographs and theoretical works in biographical studies. In addition, I.I. Kolesnyk served as the supervisor of V.M. Andreyev’s doctoral dissertation, while she herself had been a student of V.I. Shevtsov, who, according to Kolesnyk, inaugurated the practice of the historiographical

study of historians' intellectual biography at Dnipropetrovsk University⁴⁶ [11, p. 386]. In turn, P.S. Sokhan supervised the doctoral dissertation of I.B. Verba. Thus, we can speak of the formation of research schools of the genetic type.

Taking into account the specialization of supervisors allows us to identify several more scholars who defended their own dissertations on biographical topics and later supervised the preparation of two biographical dissertations each, and whose ratio of biographical to other dissertations reaches between 1 and 2: A.Ye. Atamanenko, I.N. Voytsekhivska, and O.A. Udod.

It appears that all of the above-mentioned scholars have been „promoting” biographical themes in the field of historiographical studies in recent decades. However, and crucially, a research school is defined not only by a succession of students and a shared research subject, but also by the passing down of a specific research methodology and a certain attitude towards the subject. In this regard, it is important to postulate the existence today of a distinct school of intellectual biography under the leadership of I.I. Kolesnyk and V.M. Andreyev.

Talking about academic communities, it is also interesting to look at the group of scholars who most often act as opponents for dissertations in the biographical genre, thus performing the expert function. Based solely on the number of dissertations, we get the following list: O.V. Yas (9), Yu.A. Pinchuk (8), I.B. Verba (7), I.N. Voytsekhivska (6), H.D. Kazmyrchuk (6), V.V. Masnenko (6), H.K. Shvydko (6), L.O. Zashkilniak (5), O.O. Tarasenko (5), A.P. Kotsur (5), Ya.S. Kalakura (4), I.M. Maha (4), V.P. Pedych (4), and V.V. Telvak (4). All these opponents are well-known scholars who have a solid track record in the field of biographical studies.

However, the absence of many of the names mentioned earlier is also notable. Thus, V.M. Andreyev has served as an opponent for one, and I.B. Matiash – two biographical dissertations, while I.I. Kolesnyk has never done so at all. At the same time, these scholars have repeatedly acted in this role for historiographical dissertations of other types. Of course, this can be explained by subjective reasons. On the other hand, it may be due to the high standards and requirements for biographical dissertations on the part of representatives of certain schools. It is not for nothing that I.I. Kolesnyk tends to distinguish works in intellectual biography from biohistoriographical studies.

Summing up, we must acknowledge that in the last three decades biographical studies have been the most popular genre of dissertations

⁴⁶ I.I. Колесник, *Дніпропетровська історіографічна школа: спроба саморефлексії*, „Ейдос: альманах теорії та історії історичної науки” 2014/2015, 2, 1, s. 386.

in reflexive historiography. This has been due primarily to the need to study the lives and legacy of scholars neglected during the Soviet era. It is this factor that determines the relevance and scholarly novelty of the vast majority of works we have considered in this paper. At the same time, authors of biographical works have recently been growing more aware of the importance of using new methodological tools to tackle the ambitious tasks of reconstructing the life and work of intellectuals in various micro- and macro-contexts. There is a burgeoning understanding that, depending on the tools chosen, the researcher will be able to fashion fundamentally different biographies. Our data convincingly testify to the purposeful efforts to introduce the standards of „new biographical history” in biographical dissertations and even to the development of a school of intellectual biography on this basis. However, these positive shifts coexist with traditional approaches, which are characterized by the lack of clear methodological guideposts. In the latter case, the quality of a biographical study hinges entirely on the skill and integrity of the author.

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NOTA O AUTORZE

Yulia Kiselyova – kandydat nauk historycznych (odpowiednik tytułu doktora nauk humanistycznych w zakresie historii). Adiunkt Wydziału Historiografii, Nauk Źródłoznawczych i Archeologii Uniwersytetu Państwowego im. V.N. Karazina. Historyk specjalizujący się w historiografii ukraińskiej, autorka pracy *Formowanie się i rozwój historiografii na Uniwersytecie Cesańskim w Charkowie* (Charków 2014, wydana w j. ukraińskim). Autorka ponad pięćdziesięciu prac, w tym pięciu monografii zbiorowych. Członkini Towarzystwa Historiograficznego. Uczestniczka projektu badawczego „Practices of the Self-Representation of Multinational Cities in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Era” (2018–2021), przy wsparciu Kanadyjskiego Instytutu Ukrainistyki na Uniwersytecie Alberta. Współautorka projektu badawczego w zakresie historii mówionej „Moving West”: Ukrainian Academics in Conditions of Forced Migration” pod patronatem Instytutu Historii Nauki im. Macha-Plancka (2022).

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