

DOI: doi.org/10.21272/shaj.2020.i35.p.54

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HISTORICAL HEROES OF MODERN UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

Abstract. *Ukrainian youth from the beginning of the country's independence was a catalyst for democratic changes. From the Revolution on Granite, through the Sumy's Revolution on Grass (Kamionka, 2019) and Orange Revolution to the Revolution of Dignity and the war in the East, undeniably it was the youth who fought for the future of Ukraine. While appreciating the contribution of young people to the contemporary history of Ukraine, it is essential to ask which national heroes and what historical events are important to the young generation. Thanks to the research conducted in 2017-2018 on a representative group of Ukrainian youth (1043 respondents), the author can answer that question. The results show that there are no surprises; the research confirms the all-Ukrainian results and shares knowledge on this subject. However, it is worth emphasizing some surprises, as well as the frequent selection of the answer "neutral attitude" to historical events, which may indicate the lack of historical knowledge among the surveyed youth.*

Keywords: *Historical policy, Youth attitude to history, Youth, National identity, Ukraine, Students.*

Citation. Kamionka M. Historical Heroes of modern Ukrainian Students. *Sumskyi istoryko-arkhivnyy zhurnal* [Sumy historical and archival journal]. №XXXV. 2020. Pp.54-59. DOI: doi.org/10.21272/shaj.2020.i35.p.54

МАТЕУШКАМІОНКА

Доктор філософії з політології та публічного адміністрування, Інститут політичних і адміністративних наук Краківського педагогічного університету (Польща)

ІСТОРИЧНІ ГЕРОЇ СУЧАСНИХ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ СТУДЕНТІВ

Анотація. *Українська молодь від початку незалежності країни була каталізатором демократичних змін. Від так званих Революції на граніті, Сумської Революції на Траві (Каміонка, 2019) та Помаранчевої революції до Революції Гідності та війни на Сході саме молодь боролася за майбутнє України. Оцінюючи внесок молоді у сучасну історію України, важливо з'ясувати, які національні герої та які історичні події є найбільш важливими для молодого покоління. Завдяки дослідженню, що було проведене в 2017-2018 роках на репрезентативній групі української молоді (1043 респонденти), автор має змогу відповісти на це питання. Результати дослідження досить передбачувані та підтверджують загальноукраїнські тенденції загальновідомі уявлення з цього питання. Проте автор робить важливий висновок: доволі популярний вибір молоді – "нейтральне ставлення" до історичних подій, – є однозначним свідченням низького рівня історичних знань серед молоді.*

Ключові слова: *історична політика, ставлення молоді до історії, молодь, національна ідентичність, Україна, студенти.*

Цитування. Каміонка М. Історичні герої сучасних українських студентів // Сумський історико-архівний журнал. № XXXV. 2020. С.54-59. DOI: doi.org/10.21272/shaj.2020.i35.p.54

Introduction After disintegration and collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation went through the bifurcation stages in 1990-1991 and 2004-2005. They are now going through them once again, starting in the fall of 2013. Each time, the Ukrainian people chose one of two possibilities. On the one hand, it was a renunciation of national-state values and national-civic ambitions, on the other – a consolidation for the sake of defending the national-state sovereignty of the country and civic dignity (Jędraszczyk, 2016: 58). The existence of the mechanism described in this way proves that the democratic framework is not fully recognized as binding by both: members of the political elite and voters. In the start of an independent country, had made a founding myth (perhaps without being aware of it) on students and youth. While, for example, in Poland, the transformation was based on the Solidarity movement (Solidarność), which included mostly workers and the opposition elite, in Polish east neighbour this role was played by young people. In the case of Ukraine, understanding students' motivations to act and the patterns they follow is more important than it might seem (Kamionka, 2020). Ukrainian specialist in modern history Oleksander Boyko rightly emphasizes that “the opposition was saved from a real political knockout at the end of 1990 by student youth, which a day later began their “revolution” (the day before, on October 1, 1990, the opposition announced that 25 million workers in Ukraine would go on strike, but indeed went only 10,000) (Boyko, 2003: 85). A similar situation could be observed in The Revolution of Dignity, which was initiated by all-Ukrainian opposition to Berkut's beating of protesting students on the Kyiv Maidan of Independence (2013, November 29-30). Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians of all ages gathered in the capital and other cities around the country, outraged by the fact that “the regime is beating their children” (...), it was a starting point to began the Revolution of Dignity. Myroslav Marynovych, Vice-Rector of the Catholic University in Lviv, described the participants of the student protests in 2013 as follows: “The young generation is most important to me. It is unique in its non-Sovietism. This is the first generation of non-homo sovieticus” (Mezhva, 2014). The choice of this social category of students when describing contemporary Ukraine is not accidental, as researcher Tom Junes wrote, “(...) it is undeniable that students played an important role in these events. As in previous revolutions in 1990 and 2004, students de facto were the catalysts of a wide political upheaval” (Junes, 2016: 30).

Literature Review. Professor of George Mason University Karina Korestelina in her article “Mapping national identity narratives in Ukraine” suggests five scopes of the national identity of Ukraine. She claims that because of the constant feeling of dependency, Ukraine has formatted transitional stages of its national identity. The five concepts generally explain the current national awareness of the Ukrainian citizen based on their political and social views toward the modern Ukrainian nation. Korestelina defines a dual identity of the Ukrainian people (could be triple identity even), which outlined as being pro-soviet rather than post-soviet versus pro-nationalistic. Ukrainian researcher shapes the fight or the struggle for Ukrainian identity and the recognition of Ukrainian identity as a rebirth stage. She gives a broad explanation of Ukrainian cultural and political lifestyle and addresses the topic of heroism as a manifestation of national values (Korestelina, 2013). It could be seen in the student demonstrations in 1991, were the first manifestation of this anti-soviet and pro-nationalist (pro-independence) uprising took place. The “Granit Revolution” was the first such large event aimed at showing anti-Soviet moods by young people. It was a decisive event between the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union, and it led directly to the independence of Ukraine (Wilson, 2000: 171). Dr Nadia Diuk confirms this thesis, writing about the events during the student protests at Granit and the Orange Revolution: “political events in Ukraine in the last two decades have oscillated between conformist views and revolutionary protests. They created two of the most popular youth-led protests that were unique in the region (Diuk, 2012: 64). The Polish sociologist Krystyna Szafraniec rightly notices about youth that “the generation to whom self-indulgence and political fullness over the last decades have been attributed, and denied the potential of rebelliousness, grows into the most indignant in the 21st century. Not

because it was preparing itself for such a role or because it was politically manipulated, but because it is young people who are most struck by the contradictions and dysfunctions of the chosen political and economic doctrines and directions of development” (Szafraniec, 2012: 101). It is vital to research topic of youth historical idols, as Ukrainian historian Alexander Gritsenko in his work: “Heroes and celebrities in Ukrainian culture” writes, “a hero is a primarily-known figure. It is someone, who at least once, did something remarkable and vital to the society; thus, he or she became famous in the cohort of his/her contemporaries and subsequent generations as well”. However, the concept of heroic deeds varies considerably in different cultures and at different times. It also can be developed differently; in other words, there are different kinds of fame. Therefore, it is justified to present in the article the results of empirical research conducted among 1043 students from 14 Ukrainian universities and to show their attitude to the most critical events in the history of Ukraine and national heroes.

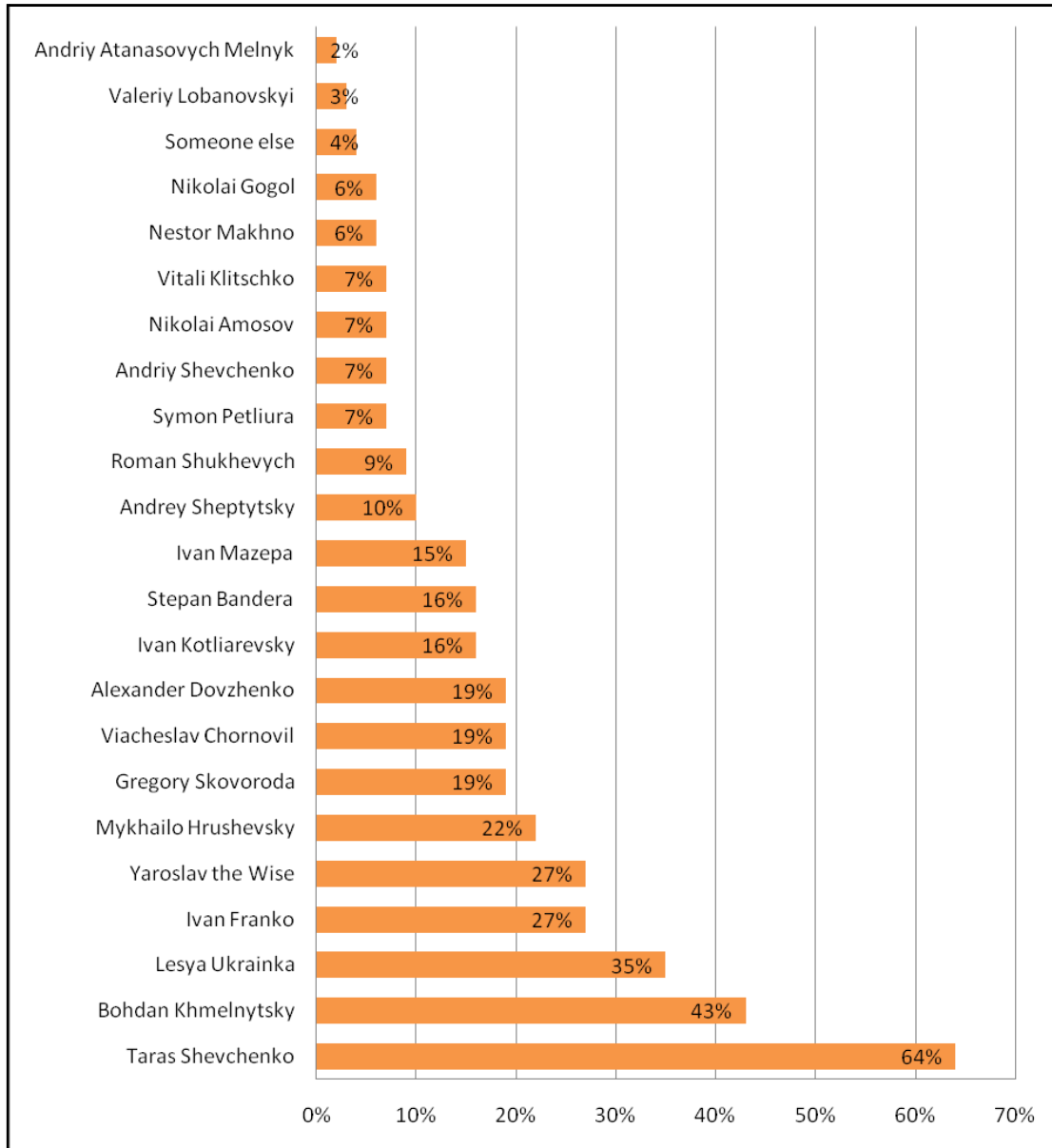
Research methodology. The method of quantitative research – classroom survey among students (full-time) at selected universities in Ukraine was used. In the case of the questionnaire survey, the research sample consisted of 1043 respondents from Ukraine. Purposeful random sampling was applied. In the random phase, it was multi-stage sampling. For this purpose, previously defined sets were used. Fourteen universities were selected purposefully to ensure a relatively high level of territorial differentiation of the sample. At the same time, in the random phase, the first-degree sampling units were faculties, the second – institutes, the third – fields of study, and the fourth – grades of students. The qualitative research questionnaire consisted of 86 questions and a metrics, and the research was conducted from the second half of 2017 to the end of 2018 in Kharkiv, Nizhyn, Kherson, Chernivtsi, Kyiv, Dnipro, Hlukhiv, Poltava, Sumy, Lviv, Odesa, Pereyaslav, Uzhgorod and Vinnytsia. It is worth noting that the research was not carried out in the territory of Crimea and eastern Ukraine which are not under the control of central authorities. The article aimed at describing students’ views on heroes and the most critical events in the history of Ukraine.

Results. The first question for students was to choose three characters who, according to them, are examples of patriotism and as well hero for Ukrainians. The author of the study copied most of the answers options from the famous TV show broadcast in 2008 “Great Ukrainians” (U proekti, 2008). Most of the respondents from the students’ survey chose Taras Shevchenko, which has 64% of the votes. The second most popular figure among Ukrainian youth is the leader of the 17th-century uprising against Crown, Bohdan Khmelnytsky with 43% of support. It is worth noting, however, that this figure is not as evident as a leader like in the Soviet times. One of the examples is renaming of the city Pereyaslav where the famous agreement between Khmelnytsky and Russian Tsar was signed (Shumilin, 2019).

Nevertheless, he is still a prevalent figure among young people in Ukraine. The only woman in the ranking was next, which, unfortunately, does not reflect positively the gender balance and the role of women in the history of Ukraine which is undervalued (e.g. Grand Duchess of Kyiv Olga, Lina Kostenko, Solomiya Krushelnytska, Kateryna Bilokur). Lesya Ukrainka symbol of women’s emancipation in Ukraine has 35% of the votes. Ivan Franko, the next writer on the list, was placed together with the ruler from the Kyivan Rus period – Yaroslav the Wise (Who won TV program Great Ukrainians in 2008 with 40%. What is quite a big shock when we compare this result with this student research made after ten years). The next two heroes of Ukraine are Mykhailo Hrushevsky with 22% and Gregory Skovoroda with 19%. This seven idols ended the list of the so-called money heroes because they are portrayed on the coins and banknotes of Ukraine. The famous politician Viacheslav Chornovil, who died in a mysterious car accident, took the next place with a score of 19%. The same result was obtained by Alexander Dovzhenko, a Soviet cinematographer and director born in Ukraine. Ivan Kotlyarevsky, the pioneer of modern Ukrainian literature, have the same score – 16%, as Stepan Bandera, the ideologist of Ukrainian nationalism. What is quite interesting the ten hryvnias Hetman Ivan Mazepa get only 15%, which is a deficient number for a hero that is shown on Ukrainian money. It may be related to the curse imposed on the hetman by the Orthodox

Church (Osoka, 2019). The rest of the idols did not receive more than 10%; the full list can be found in Table 1. What is worth emphasizing, “other characters” that was not on the list, would be chosen by only 4% of voters, which proves a perfect selection of answers for the survey.

Table 1. The question results: “Who of the following people is an example of a Ukrainian patriot and an example to follow? Please indicate a maximum of 3 persons”



The author also asked students about the attitude of young people to the most important historical events of the last 400 years in Ukraine. The Khmelnytsky revolution is supported by over 56% of students, while over 28% of the respondents have neutral relations, while 3% believe that it was a wrong step. This result shows that the uprisings of national liberation over the centuries still have significant support among Ukrainian youth. 12% were students who said they had no opinion on this subject. In the entire study, it will be a group of young people who or in a more significant (20%) or lesser (5.4%) number probably do not know given historical event or do not understand it. We can compare to “Unions” first with Russia second with Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as

we see more positive are students to Hadziacz Union than to Pereyaslav 16,7% vs 9,6%, as well there are about twice more students that have a negative attitude to Pereyaslavs Union (18,7% to 38,4%). The result of the Battle of Kruty is astonishing. One of the most famous uprisings of patriotic youth during the struggle for independence in 1918 received only 27.6% of students positively. Negatively, almost 20% of young people, and neutral – 38.4%. This result, of course, provokes reflection, but it is clear that even though this event was popularized (e.g. a film based on these events – “Kruty 1918” by Aleksey Shaparev), still students know only little about it. Like the character of Ataman Petliura who is completely underappreciated as a hero of the struggle for independence. Almost 50% of young people have a neutral approach to Petliura’s alliances with Poles. It is worth mentioning here that only 7% of respondents consider him a hero of Ukraine. An impressive result is also presented by the opinion of young people about the UPA. The idea behind the fight for independence is decisive. Thus almost 39% of young people support the UPA’s activities in the 1940s and 1950s. Almost 36% have a neutral opinion, and only 11.5% negatively. Uniquely positive, as many as 60% of students recognize the collapse of the USSR. It is the best result of the student “support” for the historic event. 21.9% are neutral about this fact, while only 9.8% are negative.

Table 2. How do you rate those critical events in the history of Ukraine?

Revolution / Uprising of Khmelnytsky (1648-1657)	Positive	56.3%
	Neutral	28,5%
	Negative	3,2%
	No opinion	12%
Union of Hadziacz (1658)	Positive	16,7%
	Neutral	46,8%
	Negative	18,7%
	No opinion	16,7%
Pereyaslav Council (1654)	Positive	9,6%
	Neutral	36,6%
	Negative	38,4%
	No opinion	15,4%
Battle of Kruty (1918)	Positive	27,6%
	Neutral	35,8%
	Negative	19,7%
	No opinion	16,9%
Petliura-Piłsudski Alliance (1920)	Positive	18%
	Neutral	47,8%
	Negative	14,2%
	No opinion	20%
UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) activities 40's/50's	Positive	38,9%
	Neutral	35,8%
	Negative	11,5%
	No opinion	13,7%
Dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991)	Positive	60%
	Neutral	21,9%
	Negative	9,8%
	No opinion	8,4%

Discussion and summary. Students undeniably have a significant influence on the social situation in Ukraine. Therefore, it is vital to get to know the historical idols of the young generation. Not surprisingly, of course, the first place was taken by figures who were also valued by previous “soviet” generations: Shevchenko, Khmelnytsky, Lesya Ukrainka and Ivan Franko. They are figures that were identified with the peasant (rural), revolutionary or socialist movement by the communists (and wasn’t ban). Besides, what is worth emphasizing are also the idols on the most popular banknotes/coins in joint circulation. It can also prove their popularity when you “watch” them several times a day. The results also show that the political leader of the 90s Chornovil is still alive, interestingly, in the memory of the younger generation. Unfortunately, it was a mysterious accident that thwarted the creation of a great Ukrainian politician. When it comes to historical events, it is clear that the young Ukrainian generation appreciates the fight for freedom (just like today). They approach military and political alliances with reserve. Events aimed at independence, or the collapse of the empires of which Ukraine was a part, enjoy the most incredible support. It is still difficult to clearly define views on the history of young Ukrainian generation. On the one hand, they are big supporters of independents and history, but on another, it is worth noting, however, that young people also often replied that they had no opinion on a given topic, which proves that there is a severe lack of historical knowledge.

Acknowledgments. In this article, the author, used data obtained as part of a research project financed by the Polish National Science Center (grant number: 2016/23/D/HS5/00902). The author was the main contractor for the grant.

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