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Views of European University Professors on the Subject of Women's Higher Education: An Analysis of Women's Journals from the Polish Kingdom in the Second Half of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Centuries

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to present the views of employees of European and Polish universities (Krakow and Lviv) on the issue of educating women at the tertiary level. The source material, taken from four women's journals—*Bluszcz*, *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści*, *Świt*, and *Dobra Gospodyni*—and *Kronika Rodzinna*, a journal addressed to families, was subjected to qualitative analysis.

It was found that in the second half of the 19th century, journals often published articles containing hints and warnings addressed to young Polish women who intended to study at universities abroad. Universities in Switzerland and France admitted their first female students as early as the 1860s, while universities in Krakow and Lviv only did so 30 years later. Editors and journalists informed their readers about the conditions of studying, the requirements for students, and the difficulties they might encounter. Professors' opinions about women's ability to undertake higher education were also cited. Initially,

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these opinions varied quite a lot, but the observation of the growing number of girls taking up studies and their diligence and commitment to the work meant that a significant proportion of scholars thought that girls could study for the benefit of themselves and society.

Introduction

An important issue raised in women's magazines in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries was the admission of women to university studies. In the United States of America, the first woman to receive a doctorate in medicine, the Englishwoman Elizabeth Blackwell, did so as early as 1849. She had to overcome numerous obstacles in her struggle to complete her education. She was rejected from all universities that she applied to, and the authorities of Geneva Medical College in New York made their decision dependent on the vote of the male students. The students thought the vote was part of a hoax and supported her application as a prank. During her studies, Blackwell often faced intolerance and discrimination, but she defended her doctorate in medicine "at the top of her class" (Bąkowska, 1900, pp. 161–162). In Paris, female students began attending lectures as guest auditors in 1858, and 10 years later, they gained full rights as students.¹ In Russia, a few girls entered the medical faculty in 1861, but the tsarist government soon withdrew their permission. In Zurich, the first female students were admitted in 1864; in Geneva and Bern it was in 1872; and in Neuchatel in 1878 (Wawrzykowska-Wierciochowa, 1963, pp. 219–222). Polish universities in Krakow and Lviv did not admit their first female students until the mid-1890s, but Polish women had shown an interest in going to universities abroad much earlier.

The issue of women's enrollment at European universities has received prominence in many studies. For example, Jan Hulewicz (1936, 1939) published his research on this topic in the interwar period. In recent years, the following authors have written about this subject: Urszula Perkowska (1994), Mariola Kondracka (2000), Jadwiga Suchmiel (2004), Katarzyna Sikora (2007), Barbara Kalinowska-Witek (2011), Halina Wątróbska and Alicja Czyszczak (2015), and

¹ Guest auditors were able to attend lectures, but could not take exams; only regular students enjoyed full rights.

Jolanta Kolbuszewska (2017). Several collective studies have also been published, such as the book edited by Barbara Jedynak (1990) and works by Anna Żarnowska and Andrzej Szwarc (1992, 1996, 2000) and Krzysztof Jakubiak and Adam Winiarz (2000), devoted to the education of women (also at the tertiary level) and their functioning in social life. These publications and others only mention the views of university professors on the issue of educating women at the university level. This article attempts to fill this gap. I have analyzed the source material from four women's magazines—*Bluszcz* [Ivy], *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści* [Fashions and Novels Weekly],² *Świt* [Dawn], and *Dobra Gospodyni* [Good Housewife]—as well as *Kronika Rodzinna* [Family Chronicle], a magazine addressed to families. Three of them appeared in print as early as in the 1860s and were issued until the outbreak of World War I; *Świt* was published between 1884 and 1887, while *Dobra Gospodyni* ran from 1901 to 1915 (Zaleska, 1938; Franke, 1999).

These journals featured articles about the everyday life of women, and the topic of girls' education played an important role. Although both *Bluszcz* and *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści* were quite conservative, and cast women mainly in the roles of wives, mothers, and housewives, they could not ignore the issues that were of interest to an increasing number of their readers. That is why the weekly magazines published information on women's studies at foreign universities. They wrote about the requirements for candidates, the conditions at universities, the obstacles which stood in the way of learning, and the difficulties of taking up work in their chosen field (Augusta, 1886, p. 213; Gruszecki, 1890, p. 321; Górski, 1904, p. 481). They also presented profiles of women who graduated and started working for their own benefit and for society. The first articles devoted to these issues appeared in *Bluszcz* in the mid-1860s. They took a positive view towards the attitudes of Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, who did not lose their female characteristics while earning degrees ("Lady Blackwell", 1865, p. 152; Leja, 1869, p. 379; Fritsche,

² In the period 1862–1871, the magazine was titled *Tygodnik Mód i Nowości* [Weekly Fashions and Novelties], and in 1913 the title was changed to *Nasz Dom* [Our House]. For the sake of simplicity, in the article I use the name under which the journal was published for the longest time, i.e., *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści*.

1877a, pp. 49–50). It was a different story when it came to Maria Walker, who—according to the editor of *Bluszcz*—made a fool of herself by swapping women’s dresses for more masculine outfits. Maria Ilnicka emphasized that even the most educated doctor should not lose her womanly instinct or female sense of modesty (Ilnicka, 1867, p. 107). In the following years, readers were reminded of outstanding doctors (including Teresa Ciszkiwiczowa, Anna Tomaszewicz, and Zofia Sadowska), who were set as an example of how to use one’s abilities and obtain a higher education for one’s own benefit and for that of other people (“Kronika działalności kobiecej”, 1880, p. 199; Bąkowska, 1900, p. 161; Prażmowska, 1908, p. 490; “Dr Med. Zofia Sadowska”, 1914, p. 283).

Views of University Professors from the End of the 19th Century on the Ability of Women to Obtain a Higher Education

In the 1870s, the first articles in *Bluszcz* and *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści* presented the opinions of university professors and representatives of university authorities about the need and possibility of educating women at universities. *Kronika Rodzinna* published such opinions for the first time almost 30 years later, when the editors of the magazine decided that girls who did not start their own families needed to study in order to ensure their material independence (“Silva rerum”, 1896a, pp. 222–223, 1896b, pp. 606–607). The lecturers of various universities were divided on the topic of the intellectual abilities of women. Positive opinions were primarily expressed by professors who had already had experience working with female students. It was they who emphasized that the vast majority of the students behaved impeccably, studied with enthusiasm, and performed their duties diligently, although there were also exceptions: sometimes the young women who went to university, for various reasons, could not or did not want to meet the expectations of the academic community (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872a, p. 129).

Although the writers of *Bluszcz*, *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści*, and *Kronika Rodzinna* have repeatedly emphasized that women play a special role primarily in the family, they also recognized that they should be appropriately educated. Those women who have sufficient

capabilities “will reach for higher knowledge ... so that, having enriched themselves with the light of this knowledge, they can return to their life tasks and fulfill them later in accordance with their destiny,” claimed an article in *Bluszcz* (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872a, p. 129). The magazines reassured readers that we need not fear that a female student would lose her femininity or that her family would suffer harm, because “formal education will never do so much damage to the family, it will never take so many mothers away from their children, it will not make so many homes lonely, as this primitive low spirit which, flowing from the lack of intellectual uplift, so often makes a woman a light and vain being” (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872a, p. 129). The magazines usually published favorable opinions of women from professors, simultaneously reminding the readers that only girls who were properly prepared, had sufficient financial resources, and who knew the language of instruction very well should go to study abroad (Gruszecki, 1890, p. 321).

In 1872, *Bluszcz* presented the views of professors from the University of Zurich. In 1871, 17 women studied at the university there, while in the following year there were already 31 (including 3 Polish women): most of the students attended classes at the medical faculty (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872b, p. 137). In October 1871, a young American woman from Boston received her doctorate in medicine and surgery there. Professor Eduard Meyer, who attended the graduation ceremony, said, “You have shown by your example that women are capable of devoting themselves to the calling of a doctor, without putting a stain on the female character” (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872a, p. 130).

Wiktor Böhmert, another professor from Zurich—although he was not opposed to admitting women to the university—drew attention to the poor preparation of foreign women to study at the university level. Candidates from Switzerland were required to have a lower secondary school certificate, while foreigners did not have to meet this condition. This also applied to women (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872b, p. 137). Böhmert believed that

medical studies require, because of anatomical exercises, and contact with disease and suffering, such strength of character, such moral perseverance and physical strength that only people with a true calling can

endure to the end. For this reason, you can never be afraid of too many women who commit themselves to the medical profession (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872a, p. 129)

because those students who enter the university without proper preparation or passion quickly give up. He claimed that

knowledge cannot and should not be a privilege—a man’s privilege. ... the genuine diligence and sincere desire to learn in more and more women studying in Zurich suggest that the percentage of such persons who can turn science to good advantage not will be smaller for women than for men. (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872b, p. 137)

In Edinburgh, in the early 1870s, students demanded that women be expelled from college. The university authorities, just like in London, fulfilled the students’ demands, although the professors saw no obstacles to the women’s further education. Professor of Medicine Handyside³ claimed

As for me, I had never had such diligent and successful students, and if my colleagues and the college of surgeons had not refused permission, I would be happy to still have them around ... [because] it is beyond doubt that women are remarkably talented and can achieve excellence in anatomy, surgery, and pharmacy and in every department of their vocation. ... Their example arouses respect in the male youth, and made them more diligent, more serious, more scrupulous and regular in their duties. (“Studia kobiet na uniwersytetach europejskich”, 1872b, p. 138)

We can also infer from the opinions published in *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści* that especially gifted girls should have the right to study at the university. At the end of the 1870s, the magazine published an article which acquainted the readers with a lecture given by Dr. Karol Bennie from Berlin. In the speech, entitled *A Female Physician*, the doctor advocated granting girls the right to study, arguing that women had the prerequisite abilities and perseverance to study medicine and then work in the profession, so women should not be barred from any university departments because, especially

³ This publication is based on the analysis of material contained in magazines from the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. Unfortunately, sometimes the journalists only mentioned the last names of the professors. I did not always manage to find additional information about these people, so the first names of the lecturers or information about their area of expertise or workplace are sometimes missing.

in the medical profession, women can render great service to humanity, especially if they limit themselves to women's and children's diseases. And they should be groomed through proper upbringing from childhood to realize that the science of medicine requires too much sacrifice on their part, for it forces them to necessarily renounce *femininity*, their greatest charm, and to live an independent life. ("Odczyty publiczne", 1877, p. 115)

According to Bennie,

A woman has both the ability and perseverance necessary for both practicing medicine and learning the theory of it, and her activity in this field is essential for the good of all women, because it will protect the health of many of them and improve their material existence, and open a completely new branch of women's labor. (Izabella, 1877, p. 218)

He believed that female doctors should deal especially with midwifery and childhood diseases, because these specializations require special patience, which men often lack.

Świt, one of the more progressive women's magazines, informed readers of the attitude of French professors towards female students. The professors at the Sorbonne in Paris were initially ill-disposed towards the female students, especially after a Russian woman committed suicide during her exams. However, thanks to the positive attitude of former Dean Henri Milne-Edwards and the energy, aptitude, and hard work of the girls studying there, the Sorbonne did not close its doors to women. As early as the 1880s, most of the lecturers treated the presence of women in lectures as completely natural. Only one of the professors loudly expressed his disapproval of female students. For the journalist, the reason for his attitude towards female students was obvious:

To the old man, whose heart was apparently very sensitive to the female charms, women learning among the youth seem like an electrical force that attracts young lecturers. ... Unable to increase the distance between them, because sometimes their desks are adjacent to each other, he takes on the role of electric ether and constantly accompanies his dear students. This is the source of the perplexity that led him to once let out a sigh from his heart, "Oh! these girls! ... I hope that they finally pass their exams and go home to darn their stockings!" Still, he helps "these girls" with a truly paternal kindness. ([m ... a], 1885, p. 181)

Views of scientists on the education of women at the university were also published in *Kronika Rodzinna*. The cited opinions were

moderately favorable towards women undertaking a university education. According to Otto Pfeleiderer, professor at the Protestant theological faculty, “some women are gifted for academic studies. They cannot be denied the right to attend a university, on the condition that they meet the conditions required by law, just like every other student” (“Silva rerum”, 1896b, p. 606). However, the scholar proposed to open a small provincial university for female students. Professor August von Esmarck from the medical faculty stated, “Some women may be fit for studying internal medicine and gynecology, but surgery should be left to men only” (“Silva rerum”, 1896b, p. 607). On the other hand, Professor Vincenz Czerny from Heidelberg believed that women should be admitted to all departments at the university, i.e., those of medicine, philosophy, law, and theology (“Silva rerum”, 1896b, p. 607).

Most professors from European universities saw no obstacles to allowing men and women to study together in mixed classes. They argued that the women can meet the obligations of academic courses. However, there were some exceptions. Dr. Gustaw Fritsche was one, claiming that “only in exceptional cases do women embody the qualities indispensable for the successful study of medicine ..., so they should not be encouraged to choose a path in which they will almost always encounter bitter disappointment” (Fritsche, 1877b, p. 80). He would emphasize that in medicine, women cannot demonstrate such achievements as men. Although he appreciated the work of Blackwell and Garrett Anderson, who had obtained their doctoral degrees and successfully started medical practices, he said that they were exceptions. He believed that there was no need to “create laws” allowing women unrestricted access to universities. He reasoned that

if a woman can fundamentally change and [she] acquires these qualities through natural improvement ..., then we should consider whether the benefits resulting from them are so grand and commendable that she should be distracted from the noble vocation to which God destined her: the initial education of children and the inculcation of the first principles of morality in the future citizens of the country. (Fritsche, 1877b, p. 80)

Professor Theodor von Bischoff, a physiologist and anatomist at the University of Munich, was a staunch opponent of women studying at universities. In a thesis entitled *Medical Practice and Medical Studies for Women*, he argued that

a woman is incapable of higher education, that it would cause confusion in nature, in the kitchen, and in the family, that there are activities proper to each gender, and that women cannot fill the role that men fill, or men fill the roles women fill. (“Literatura zagraniczna”, 1884, p. 153)

One of the arguments that he used was the differences in the size of organs in men and women. He claimed that

the weight of the female brain alone evidences weaker mental strength, as the size and development of muscles testifies to weaker physical strength, so such a difference in body and spirit proves that the fair sex is definitely incapable of scientific work, especially of medicine . . . , because women have shorter legs, vocal organs, and larynxes, even smaller, more delicate and thinner skin; furthermore, their stomachs are even smaller, so all this reduces their mental abilities. (“Literatura zagraniczna”, 1884, p. 153)

The opponents of women’s studies also included a fairly large group of professors of the philosophy department at the University of Berlin, such as Max Weber, Eduard Sachau, and Heymann Steinthal. Steinthal argued as follows:

Suppose that from now on we have twice as many scholars, artists, and writers as we had before in each generation, due to the contribution of the female gender, and that there were Leibnits, Raphaels, and Mozarts of the fair sex among them: we would not benefit as much from this as mankind would lose: namely the female half. (“Silva rerum”, 1896b, p. 607)

Many men, like some older women, feared that graduating from college would deprive a girl of her femininity and make it difficult for her to start a family.

Views Presented in Magazines in the Early Years of the 20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century, when many women were attending and successfully graduating from university, and academics had already had extensive experience working with female students, one of the most widely read French journals—the biweekly *Revue*—asked professors and rectors of various European universities about their opinions on the joint participation of women and men in academic classes and the results achieved by female students in exams and later in their professional careers.

All those interviewed were in favor of allowing women to study at university along with men. Edward Meyer, professor of ancient history at the University of Berlin, pointed out that “the women who attended my lectures showed not only enthusiasm, but also great intelligence In relationships with their colleagues, they behaved tactfully, flawlessly” (Świdarska, 1904, p. 13). According to Wilhelm Lexis, a professor at the University of Göttingen, the women at German universities were more serious and hardworking than the men. August Harcourt, a professor of chemistry at Oxford, drew similar conclusions, claiming that while working together with students in laboratory classes, women behaved properly, and their presence “tamed the noisy and uncouth behavior of the male youth” (Świdarska, 1904, p. 13). Barrett Wendell, professor of English language and literature at the Sorbonne, also pointed out the benefits of the coeducation of women and men at university. He emphasized that “while attending the courses, [women] evoked a noble emulation and developed a certain subtlety of notions and scientific judgments among themselves” (Świdarska, 1904, p. 13). As there were voices in the press claiming that the female students were overburdened with academic work, Gabriel Séailles—a professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne—pointed out that women work in factories and workshops 12–15 hours a day and no one talks about them being swamped with work. Luigi Credaro—a professor at the University of Rome—also admitted that the students are conscientious and unremitting, and that in later life they show a much greater talent for teaching in elementary and secondary schools than men. Likewise, Swiss professors, who had the longest experience working with female students, had esteem for them (Świdarska, 1904, pp. 13–14).

Maria Świdarska, when summarizing the information she had collected, stressed that

all professors unanimously grant women diligence, perseverance, high ambition, enthusiasm, and erudition, along with delicacy and tact in dealing with colleagues It is the opposite with the critical sense, creativity, and spirit of initiative—this is what women, even scholars and otherwise gifted, usually lack ..., in general, a learned woman is not a genius, but rather a gifted, brave, persistent, and sometimes dedicated worker in the field of knowledge and its application in practical life. (Świdarska, 1904, pp. 13–14)

She also reassured the readers—especially mothers of girls who attended universities—that studies “do not take away their feminine charm or virtuous predisposition to family life, which they enter as loving wives and caring mothers” (Świdorska, 1904, p. 14).

Dobra Gospodyni appeared on the market in 1901, when Polish women were already able to study full-time at Galician universities. Thus, although the editorial office and journalists did not encourage girls to begin a tertiary education, but instead to pursue vocational qualifications (e.g., in farm schools), issues related to women’s admission to universities were sometimes discussed in the pages of this journal. In 1910, readers were introduced to the beliefs of the American professor John Wheeler, a researcher of American colleges. He argued that studying at university had done no harm to the woman, and that the fears connected with coeducation classes were unjustified. He wrote that

as for university learning, women, if not equally diligent, study much more diligently, because they are not distracted by sports and other recreation activities like men are. As for research in the scientific field, women are less active, on the other hand, and limit their pursuit of knowledge to concrete rather than abstract things. (“Z życia kobiet”, 1910, p. 194)

Wheeler observed that while working together with female students, the general moral condition of the students improved:

The male students try to keep themselves clean and behave decently in the company of women. The sex drives are not only not aroused, but on the contrary, they are suppressed by common science and nature inquiries. Romanticism pales in comparison to scientific formulas and mathematical numbers. (“Z życia kobiet”, 1910, p. 194)

In 1914, *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści* presented the results of a survey conducted among scientists from the universities in Krakow and Lviv on women’s university studies. The questionnaire asked whether “the female intellect brings any new separate elements to scientific research,” whether, after the admission of female students, “the standards of university lectures did not have to be lowered,” or whether, during exams, female students “exhibit[ed] more or less independence than men do,” whether they participated in seminars and submitted their assignments, whether they were persistent in their efforts to learn, and “what can be forecast for science and what for

practical life from women's study and work" ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914a, p. 1). The readers were able to learn about the responses to the questionnaires in subsequent issues of the magazine.

Most of the professors did not notice any differences in intellectual development between men and women. However, if there were any, then—according to Odo Bujwid, professor of hygiene at the Jagiellonian University—they resulted from the differences in the upbringing of girls and boys, while "impractical school education is reflected in all the tasks done by girls and boys equally" ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914f, p. 1). Emil Godlewski, professor of biology and embryology at the Jagiellonian University, drew attention to the insufficient level of preparation of girls in secondary schools. He wrote that "I frequently had ... the impression that many students, not only extraordinary, but also ordinary ones, cannot manage to understand a lecture" ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914a, p. 1). On the other hand, Edward Porębowicz, professor of Romance studies at the University of Lviv, said "the female intellect ... is not cut out to bring new elements into the spiritual life. As it is by its very nature receptive, passive, it could perform the function of a development factor if women were to agree to such a secondary role" ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914e, p. 2).

All of the professors emphasized that they did not see the need to lower the standards of their lectures because female students attended them. Michał Siedlecki, professor of zoology at the Jagiellonian University, wrote that the level of the lectures did not deteriorate because during the lectures "all the weight of unprepared students is lifted and the atmosphere clears up" ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914b, p. 2). Józef Nusbaum-Hilarowicz, professor of biology at the University of Lviv, expressed the conviction that "probably no university professor will ever in any way adapt his lectures to his audience" ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914c, p. 2). Ludwik Finkel, a professor of history at the University of Lviv, asserted that "the entrance of female students to the lecture halls and academic laboratory classes did not bring any harm to university science. The standards of the lectures did not decrease, nor did the seminars suffer any detriment on account of the participation of women" ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914d, p. 1). As Porębowicz wrote, "basically nothing compels a university professor, unlike a lower school teacher, to tune

his lectures to the level of the proportional average represented by a mixed audience. ... Besides, the female students sometimes understand faster than the boys, and during practical exercises they sometimes give more accurate answers (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914e, p. 2). Similarly, Bujwid noted that “as far as the level of the lectures is concerned, the students of both sexes are equally prepared, and it is not necessary to adjust the lectures to suit the students’ pace” (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914e, p. 1).

The professors favorably evaluated the diligence and hard work of women, at the same time highlighting the fact that they are less independent in carrying out their tasks and more easily give up in difficult situations. Adam Wrzosek, professor at the medical faculty of the Jagiellonian University, remarked that female students “are generally more laborious than male students and attend classes and lectures more regularly than men, but only those courses that end in an exam” (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914a, p. 2). In Godlewski’s opinion,

women study conscientiously, carefully, and with greater diligence than men, but generally they show less initiative. ... The value of women’s academic efforts is no less than that of men. However, the fact that the vast majority of female students get married either during their studies or immediately after graduation means that we cannot quite count on long-term scientific work by women. Accordingly, in many cases, the effort put into preparing women for independent scientific research does not pay off as much as in the case of men. (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914a, p. 1)

Bujwid noted that “it cannot be said, for example, that there is less independence in women’s work. If she honestly applies herself, she will create the same reserve of independence that we observe in boys” (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914e, p. 1). On the other hand, Professor Porębowicz shared the following remark: “The ability to master a subject using one’s memory within the limits of a given schema and persistent conscientiousness—these are the defining features of women who study, in my observations” (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914e, p. 2). Józef Kallenbach, professor of Polish literature at the University of Lviv, noticed that the girls were

more dependent on lecture scripts than the male students. The diligence and accuracy in learning the scripts is sometimes amazing. As for participating in seminar classes, I have noticed that women have more difficulty grasping the methods of scientific work, and a greater need for

continuous methodological guidance. (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914c, p. 1)

Nusbaum-Hilarowicz also pointed out that in laboratory classes, female students often required more supervision, while men showed greater independence and looked for more original solutions (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914c, p. 2).

None of the professors surveyed denied the need for women to obtain education: the respondents emphasized the value of scientific development for family life, sometimes professional work, and to a much lesser extent for the advancement of science. According to Wrzosek,

there are many advantages to women from medical studies Among my former friends, I know a few who successfully practice as specialists in various fields of medicine. Even women who study medicine with no intention of practicing in the future, as well as those who, after getting married, give up the intention to start a career in medicine, can honestly benefit from medical studies. Thanks to these studies, they acquire a solid foundation for the skillful physical education of their children. (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914a, p. 2)

Professor Kallenbach said that

even if the scores of women successfully graduating from university were not to find paying jobs and were forced—as it has often happened so far—to marry most of the time, the matter is by no means a lost cause: yes, the more educated the mothers of future Polish generations will be, the greater the resilient strength of Polish society, the higher the general level of education. (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914c, p. 1)

Nusbaum-Hilarowicz added that

women who are academically educated and accustomed to rigorous and serious thinking will certainly be more intelligent mothers, better educators of children, and most importantly, more appropriate and more respected life companions for intelligent men than women without higher education. (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914c, p. 2)

In Finkel’s view, although

the opening of university doors for women has not so far fully lived up to the hopes put in it in some circles, it has multiplied the forces working in the scientific field, which should always be considered beneficial, and has contributed and will ultimately contribute to the improvement of the standard of family and social life. (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914d, pp. 1–2)

Bujwid reasoned that

a female doctor can accomplish a lot Especially in the countryside, medical practice presents itself to women as a vast fallow field ..., becoming closer to people's needs, removing many evils, combating many superstitions, saving a lot of health and life, which are more and more often endangered under the influence of increasingly complicated working conditions. ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914e, pp. 1–2)

Kazimierz Żorawski, a professor of mathematics at the Jagielloonian University, was the most skeptical of women's higher education. He believed that a woman had the most important task to fulfill in the family:

A mother, as the educator of her children, must have a very important influence on the shaping of their characters from the cradle, and this is where her main moral task lies. In order to properly fulfill this task, one needs a thorough education and manners, but an education that should be different from the education of a man, who has to learn to perform his professional work. ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914b, p. 2)

Many professors believed that women who did not intend to use the knowledge gained at the university in their professional careers, but only for their own development and better fulfillment of family and social responsibilities, should not attend university. Professor Siedlecki argued that

for many of the women who seek education at the university, it would be better if they tried to acquire completely general principles of knowledge, but put together as a whole, the university offers education which is too specialized for them and pushes them towards specialization. As the majority of women do not complete their studies—or, even after graduating from them, do not fully use them—it would be better if they sought mental development in such institutions that provide a certain amount of knowledge (e.g., the Baraniecki Courses), rather than in universities. This highest institution should be attended by those individuals whose lives cannot be severed from their scientific work; maybe then there would be less disappointment and discouragement. ("Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet", 1914b, p. 2)

Finkel advocated the creation of separate universities for women, which would be

quite similarly equipped and endowed, with the same tasks and academic requirements; universities in which, alongside associate professors, there would be female associate professors. Nobody will deny that there

are some intellectual differences, however greatly overestimated, which should be taken into account even in the academic treatment of science. (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914d, p. 1)

Godlewski also highly esteemed the value of higher education for women, who will educate future generations and work for the benefit of the country. However, he argued that separate women’s colleges should be established, ones more adapted to the life and duties of a woman (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914a, pp. 1–2). Porębowicz summed up his statement with the following words: “Universities ... are schools of specialized knowledge that require a commitment for one’s whole future. It would be cruel to demand a similar abnegation from a young girl; only desperate women recognize science as the only goal of life” (“*Studia uniwersyteckie kobiet*”, 1914e, p. 1).

Conclusion

The statements from professors about the educational opportunities of women were mostly favorable towards female students. This was undoubtedly due to the great diligence and hard work of the first girls to be educated at universities. They realized that they had to work much more than their male colleagues and maintain a good reputation. Almost all of the magazines included here presented statements of outstanding representatives of science who spoke highly of the educational efforts of female students and appreciated the social value of women’s education at universities. Only *Kronika Rodzinna* published more moderate, cautious views. Sometimes in women’s magazines there were statements that were less favorable to female students, or even those which denied women the possibility of getting a college education due to their intellectual potential being significantly less than that of men. However, such views were presented only as a curiosity or a springboard for discussion of the possibilities and needs of women’s education.

In articles published at the beginning of the 20th century, professors of medicine, the natural sciences, mathematics, history, and literature were asked about their opinions on “those skills which a woman was admitted to study at our universities; to express their judgment about the conditions, properties, and results of women’s academic learning,

based on many years of experience” (“Co powiedzieli w streszczeniu wybitni przedstawiciele wiedzy o studiach uniwersyteckich kobiet”, 1914, p. 1). Their statements clearly indicated that women can take up higher education on an equal footing with men. “She studies diligently, passes exams, writes her dissertations, and achieves the highest degrees. And as a qualified force, she can work both in medicine and in higher education, on an equal footing with a man” (“Co powiedzieli w streszczeniu wybitni przedstawiciele wiedzy o studiach uniwersyteckich kobiet”, 1914, p. 1). Although women were perceived as somewhat less independent than men, and as showing less initiative, it was also noticed that they were described as more diligent, thorough, and conscientious. It was alleged that men were too easily discouraged and had too disparate and changeable interests. Moreover, women’s studies are hindered or interrupted by marriage and motherhood (“Co powiedzieli w streszczeniu wybitni przedstawiciele wiedzy o studiach uniwersyteckich kobiet”, 1914, p. 1).

Of course, not all female students achieved their intended goal: sometimes they could not finish their studies because of their health, which deteriorated because of financial difficulties and excessive work, sometimes because of insufficient material resources or an overestimation of their own abilities. In the beginning of the 20th century, despite the increasing number of girls entering university, still only a fraction of them received degrees and took up work for the benefit of themselves and others (Trąmpczyński, 1909, pp. 177–178).

The substantial competition of men also stood in the way of them pursuing a career. Hence, female doctors mostly took jobs in the countryside and treated mainly women and children, while men took on better-paid jobs. A similar situation occurred in other professions where women gradually acquired an education equivalent to that of men.

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