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Gender barriers of the late 19th – early 20th century and strategies of women's professional self-realization: the case of the Gordeev family

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Abstract.

In the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, Ukrainian society underwent profound modernization changes affecting education, science, medicine, and professional activity in general. However, women's access to education and social engagement remained limited by both formal institutional frameworks and patriarchal stereotypes that defined the traditional role of women as keepers of the domestic hearth. ***The purpose of this article*** *is to analyze the socio-historical context of modernization processes influencing women's opportunities for self-realization and to identify specific strategies of professional and educational advancement through the example of Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Hordieieva (Chyrikova) and her daughter Khrystyna.* ***The research methodology*** *integrates general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, and systematization) with specialized historical approaches, while adhering to the scientific principles of objectivity, systematics, and historicism. Using socio-historical and biographical approaches allowed linking the macro-level social transformations with individual women's life stories.* ***The study's scientific novelty*** *lies in examining how women from the Hordieiev family created alternative paths for self-realization, combining maternal and professional roles. The article reveals the specifics of gender barriers in the 19th and early 20th centuries that restricted women's access to knowledge and public recognition. It demonstrates practical ways to overcome them through private schools, Sunday educational institutions, and participation in cultural and educational initiatives.* ***The findings*** *show that the formation of new models of women's professional identity in the context of modernization occurred through active engagement with academic and professional opportunities, combining traditional roles with new social functions, and building collective and family strategies of self-emancipation. The experience of the Hordieiev family demonstrates that women's strategy for self-realization not only responded to the challenges of the era but also actively transformed societal perceptions of women's roles, contributing to the spread of education and the development of the cultural environment at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries.*

Keywords: *gender, modernization, education, professional activity, self-realization, feminism.*

Гендерні бар'єри кінця XIX – початку XX ст. та стратегії професійної реалізації жінок: на прикладі родини Гордєєвих

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Анотація.

У другій половині XIX – на початку XX ст. українське суспільство переживало глибокі модернізаційні зміни, що торкнулися освіти, науки, медицини та професійної діяльності загалом. Проте доступ жінок до освіти та суспільної активності залишався обмеженим як офіційними інституційними рамками, так і патріархальними стереотипами, що визначали традиційну роль жінки як берегині домашнього вогнища. ***Метою статті*** *є аналіз соціально-історичного контексту модернізаційних процесів, які впливали на можливості жіночої самореалізації, виявлення конкретних стратегій професійного та освітнього утвердження жінок на прикладі Єлизавети Дмитрівни Гордєєвої (Чирикової) та її доньки Христини.* ***Методологія дослідження*** *базується на інтеграції загальнонаукових методів (аналізу, синтезу, порівняння, узагальнення та систематизації) із спеціально-історичними підходами, з дотриманням при цьому наукових принципів об'єктивності, системності та історизму. Використання соціально-історичного та біографічного підходів дозволило поєднати макрорівень соціальних трансформацій із конкретними жіночими долями.* ***Наукова новизна роботи*** *полягає у тому, що на прикладі родини Гордєєвих досліджено, як жінки формували альтернативні шляхи самореалізації, поєднуючи материнські та професійні функції. Розкрито специфіку гендерних бар'єрів XIX – початку XX ст., які обмежували доступ жінок до знань та суспільного визнання, а також продемонстровано практичні способи їх подолання через приватні школи, недільні навчальні заклади, участь у культурно-освітніх ініціативах.* ***Висновки*** *показують, що формування нових моделей жіночої професійної ідентичності в умовах модернізації відбувалося через активне освоєння освітніх і професійних можливостей, поєднання традиційних ролей із новими соціальними функціями, побудову колективних і родинних стратегій самоемансипації. Досвід родини Гордєєвих демонструє, що жіночі стратегії самореалізації не лише відповідали викликам епохи, а й активно трансформували суспільні уявлення про роль жінки, сприяли поширенню освіти та розвитку культурного середовища кінця XIX – початку XX ст.*

Ключові слова: *гендер, модернізація, освіта, професійна діяльність, самореалізація, фемінізм.*

The problem statement. In the second half of the 19th and the early 20th century, Ukrainian society underwent dynamic modernization shifts that affected education, science, medicine, and the professional sphere. However, despite the growing demand for qualified personnel, women's access to education and professional activity remained significantly constrained by entrenched gender stereotypes and institutional barriers. The traditional model of the female role as the "guardian of the domestic hearth" came into conflict with women's increasing aspirations to acquire knowledge and assert themselves in the public sphere. Under these conditions, women faced the challenge of finding alternative paths to professional self-realization: participation in private educational projects, civic initiatives, and employment in fields gradually opening up to women (medicine, pedagogy, enlightenment). This fostered the emergence of new models of female professional identity that combined personal ambitions, societal challenges, and cultural transformations of the era. While the men of the Gordeev family realized themselves in "traditionally acceptable" spheres, the women – Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna and her daughter Khrystyna – became symbols of the new opportunities available to women at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Analyzing women's strategies of self-realization through their example makes it possible to view this issue in a "living dimension": through concrete female biographies, their experience of overcoming gender barriers, and the construction of strategies of professional affirmation. Such an approach makes it possible to link the macro-level of modernization processes with the microhistory of women's destinies, which is especially important for understanding the gender specificity of the modernization era.

Analysis of sources and new research. The issue of gender barriers at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and women's strategies of professional self-realization occupies a prominent place in contemporary studies on the history of education, medicine, social movements, and gender history. A classical work in this field is Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak's monograph Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884–1939 (1988), which outlines the main directions of the women's movement in Ukraine. The author emphasizes that even without identifying as "feminists," women implemented emancipatory practices: they struggled to access education, professional activity, and the right to vote. This study is fundamental for analyzing gender barriers, particularly in education and social activism. In the same context, the collection Women's Studies in Ukraine: Women in History and Today (Smoliar, 1999) is significant. It became the first attempt at systematically presenting women's history in the Ukrainian academic space, summarizing the thematic field of gender studies. A considerable body of historiography is devoted to women's education. The works of O. Anishchenko (2003), M. Voronina (2003), and O. Drach (2008) interpret higher education as a new model of women's social behavior in the era of modernization, emphasizing the

transformation of female identity. Similarly, one should mention K. Kobchenko's monograph (2007) on the Kyiv Higher Women's Courses, which specifies the conditions under which the first systematic women's university experience was formed the research of I. Volkova (2003) focuses on women's participation in the cultural and educational movement of the second half of the 19th century, which makes it possible to trace the interconnection between academic and social initiatives. A separate group consists of works dedicated to the history of medicine and the role of women in this field. Of a generalizing character is Ya. Hanitkevych's book History of Ukrainian Medicine in Dates and Names (2004) provides a factual basis for establishing medical institutions and key figures. It is also valuable for studying women's strategies in medicine. Titovska's work (2014) examines the "nursing movement" development during the First World War, demonstrating how the war opened new professional niches for women.

Of particular interest are studies concerning the history of the Gordeev family – the materials of A. Although journalistic in character, Paramonov (2018), devoted to the Chirikov house in Kharkiv, nonetheless enriches the reconstruction of the local context of this family's life. The article by S. Hlybytska (2017) highlights the activities of Ye. D. Gordeeva (Chirikova) as a teacher and associate of Kh. Alchevska, combining public and private perspectives. However, despite describing Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna's pedagogical activity, the author considers her biography primarily through the prism of motherhood, focusing on her children (mostly sons) who achieved scholarly and cultural recognition. Such an angle inadvertently shifts the mother's image into the background, leaving her as if only a backdrop for the future accomplishments of her children. This reveals the weakness of traditional "women's history," which often reproduces the patriarchal narrative of women's secondary role. In contrast, gender history offers a broader perspective: to view Gordeeva not only as the mother of "successful descendants" but as an independent figure – an educator, cultural activist, and intellectual partner of Alchevska. At the same time, this approach allows us to see the continuity of women's strategies within the family: for her daughter Khrystyna, by continuing her mother's active life stance, she realized herself in the professional and public spheres, which makes the "mother–daughter" duo an essential subject of gender analysis. Based on this, the authors of the article seek to fill the gap of traditional "women's history," demonstrating that members of the Gordeev family – both mother and daughter – were active agents of professional and public activity, and that their life strategies together form a coherent model of women's self-realization in the context of gender barriers at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the socio-historical context of the modernization processes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which shaped the conditions of women's access to education and professional activity, and to identify the strategies of their professional self-realization through the example of the female representatives of the Gordeev family.

The results of the research. The 19th and early 20th centuries marked a period of profound transformation in gender relations within the Russian Empire, most visibly reflected in women's search for opportunities for professional self-realization. The issue of women's emancipation during this era moved far beyond the realm of private conversations and became the subject of active public debate. It resonated in the publications of leading newspapers and journals, in the works of historians, jurists, sociologists, and philosophers, and found expression in Western European and Russian literature circulated in Ukraine. New conceptions of women's societal roles gradually took shape within these public debates. The spread of ideas of equality became a catalyst for processes of self-emancipation: an increasing number of women sought education, professional fulfillment, and participation in civic life. Their guiding values were independence, dedication, and a conscious desire to contribute to social progress. Nevertheless, women's opportunities to realize their intellectual potential in the second half of the 19th century remained severely constrained by imperial policy and the patriarchal system of social norms. The existing legislative restrictions and institutional inequality in education created distinct "boundaries" for women's activity. Equally powerful were cultural stereotypes that confined the female role to the family and domestic sphere. The social changes of the 1860s–1870s opened new opportunities for educated youth, yet women, traditionally excluded from systemic education, experienced their significance most acutely. The desire to learn was closely intertwined with the aspiration to fully prove one's capacity to participate in social life. Education and professional knowledge became for them both a tool of emancipation and a practical necessity, offering not only access to advanced learning but also the possibility of gaining public recognition, transcending the private sphere, and demonstrating that intellectual labor was not an exclusively male privilege (Smoliar, 1999, s. 78). Thus, throughout the 19th century, women gradually fought for their right to education, a process marked by numerous compromises with the state and society. While the earliest educational institutions for girls primarily aimed at preparing "educated wives and mothers," the situation began to change by the second half of the century. The emergence of women's gymnasia and the introduction of the eighth pedagogical class, completion of which granted graduates the right to teach in the first four grades of women's gymnasia and to serve as instructors in elementary

schools, created a new educational space in which women acquired not only cultural but also professional capital.

Women, gradually gaining access to secondary and higher education, became involved in educational circles, charitable and professional organizations, and participated in public initiatives. As a result, their intellectual space gradually expanded from a narrowly private domain to a socially significant one, opening new horizons for professional and cultural self-affirmation. The formally granted right of female graduates to teach in elementary schools represented the first recognition of their social role beyond the family. At the same time, this "legalization" of women's work as teachers did not dismantle the gender hierarchy, as pedagogical activity was still perceived as an extension of maternal functions. Yet it was from this niche that women began to enter broader professional spheres in urban settings, particularly in education and medicine. The experience of the women in the Hordieiev family vividly illustrates this transformation: by taking advantage of the educational opportunities available at the end of the 19th century, they combined traditionally "female" roles with new professional identities.

First of all, in the foregoing context, the figure of Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Hordieieva (Chyrikova) draws particular attention. The formation of her socio-political convictions resulted from the interaction of multiple factors that reflected the complexity of the era. She was influenced by large-scale socio-economic shifts – the abolition of serfdom, the spread of bourgeois-democratic and populist ideas. Equally important were the cultural and intellectual processes: the active development of science, literature, art, and theater, which shaped new spiritual orientations in society. Family environment also played a significant role – traditions, moral values, and the psychological climate of the household. No less influential was the personal dimension: the impact of leading cultural and educational figures, Chyrikova's own temperament, her natural talents, her broad interests, and her aspiration for self-development. Together, all these factors created the unique ground on which her worldview and civic activity matured.

Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna was born on August 22, 1850, into the family of Dmytro Petrovych (1818–1868) and Maria Frantsivna (dates of birth and death unknown) Chyrikov (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 760, p. 1). Dmytro Petrovych's father came from serfs of the village of Staryi Merchyk, Valky County, which belonged to Vice-Governor Hryhorii Romanovych Shydlovskyi, where he worked as an estate manager. 1818 through Shydlovskyi's patronage, Dmytro entered the First Men's Gymnasium and later enrolled in the Faculty of History and Philology at the Imperial Kharkiv University. After graduation, he worked as a Russian language teacher at the First Men's Gymnasium in Kharkiv and gave private lessons. He also taught there from the opening of the Veterinary School in Kharkiv in 1851. Maria Frantsivna Chyrikova (Shperg) served as a class mistress at the Institute of Noble Maidens for some time (Paramonov, 2018). Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Chyrikova received her primary education at the First Kharkiv Gymnasium, where she distinguished herself as a capable and diligent student. Teacher evaluations attest to her diligence and academic success, which Christina Danylivna Alchevska later referenced in her correspondence (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 792, p. 1). Such assessments from her teachers emphasized the thoroughness of the future educator's knowledge and laid the foundation for her subsequent educational and civic activities.

Amid the wave of social uplift in the 1860s, the young and unmarried Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Chyrikova took her first steps in pedagogical activity by joining the effort to develop a women's Sunday school in Kharkiv. It was here that she met Khrystyna Danylivna Alchevska. Their collaboration quickly grew into a true sisterhood and shared educational dedication. They were united by the desire to overcome the stereotypical approach to educating children from low-income families, which was characterized by a clear gender divide. Parents often spent their last resources on sons, who were seen as future providers, while girls attended even free parish schools very rarely. The inspector of the Okhtyrka-Lebedyn district explained the situation as follows: "Such a low percentage of girls depends primarily on the belief that literacy is only necessary for boys, and also on the reluctance of mothers, as girls are the most needed helpers" (DAKhO, fP. 266, op. 1, d. 793, p. 7). The educators' goal was to provide women and girls with opportunities to gain an education, which opened the path to employment in less physically demanding jobs. Consequently, the social composition of the students reflected the poorest segments of the city's population. As a contemporary noted: "This entire mass of students belongs to the poorest population of Kharkiv; they are all townswomen, peasants, soldiers' wives, and by profession – domestic servants, seamstresses, milliners, factory workers, wives and daughters of artisans, etc. – and without the Sunday school, they would have had no opportunity to receive any education at all" (Abramov, 1889, s. 5). Many of these girls could obtain primary education, which opened new life prospects and contributed to an improved social position. Later, mothers who had once studied at this school sought to enroll their daughters at an even younger age, viewing education as an essential investment in the future. In this way, the established gender stratification that traditionally limited girls' access to education was gradually being overcome.

In 1863, when the authorities closed Sunday schools, fearing “subversive” ideas, the young female educators did not stop their work: lessons continued in private homes, in small circles, almost clandestinely. During this period, the circle of Alchevska’s first collaborators was formed, among whom Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Chyrikova stood out prominently. Her role in education development was even highlighted in the historical overview of Kharkiv prepared by D. I. Bahaliy and D. P. Miller (Bahaliy, Miller, 1912, s. 744). Later, in 1870, when Alchevska managed to open her own school, Chyrikova became one of her most devoted assistants, helping to organize the premises, establish the library, and collect books and educational materials. The donations contributed by her and other volunteers (Myropols’kyi, 1892, s. 19) were not merely material resources – they symbolized a shared belief in the importance of education and a collective endeavor capable of transforming the lives of hundreds of girls.

The private women’s Sunday school in Kharkiv, closely associated with the work of Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Hordieieva (Chyrikova), became one of the first experimental platforms for the modernization of public education. Its teachers, together with Khrystyna Alchevska, introduced teaching methods that were ahead of their time. It was here that the “phonics method” of literacy instruction, developed by K. Ushinsky, was systematically applied for the first time, transforming the very approach to learning to read. In addition, the school actively practiced methods of dialogue, explanatory teaching, and extracurricular reading. The library, which Hordieieva herself helped to develop, became a central hub for the intellectual growth of the students, reflecting efforts to expand women’s access to books and knowledge. The curricula designed for both adults and children demonstrated the educators’ intent to create a comprehensive system of education that went far beyond mere “Sunday instruction.” Of particular importance for reconstructing the everyday life of this educational center is Chyrikova’s diary, in which she meticulously recorded the course of lessons, the specifics of the teaching process, and her own reflections during 1873–1874.

Analyzing the records shows that the educational process was built on a combination of traditional and innovative approaches. Even at the initial stages of learning, the teacher employed elements of a playful methodology (exercises with vowels and consonants in which students had to place or remove their hands from the desk; switching roles between student and teacher). In line with Alchevska’s ideas, this was an attempt to make lessons engaging and dynamic, overcoming the monotony of rote memorization. This reflects a search for more visual and interactive forms of working with children (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, pp. 3, 32). The teacher also devoted considerable attention to individual approaches to students. She emphasized that each child has a unique personality, and the teacher’s task is to reveal their abilities (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 10). In cases where a student significantly lagged behind the class, it was recommended to transfer her to a lower grade (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 5). At the same time, Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna constantly analyzed teaching methods. She sought to improve them, particularly by finding ways to support weaker students without harming the progress of stronger ones (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 22). The diary consistently reflects the teacher’s self-reflection: she acknowledged her own mistakes in teaching (sometimes giving unclear explanations or failing to correct errors in students’ notebooks, which led to the memorization of incorrect information) (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, pp. 11, 26), worried about interruptions in lessons due to her own illness (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 15), and doubted her own professionalism (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 23). Notably, in her notes, Yelyzaveta Hordieieva–Chyrikova recorded the difficulties experienced by girls from Ukrainian-speaking backgrounds when learning Russian. In particular, she noted their frequent mistakes in pronouncing the sounds “И” and “Е” (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 27). These observations demonstrate that Russian was not a natural language for the students, but was imposed as a mandatory tool of imperial educational policy, which displaced the native Ukrainian language from the learning environment. The existence of linguistic barriers and the need for artificial adaptation underscores both the multilingual character of the region and the assimilatory pressures typical of Slobozhanshchyna at the end of the 19th century.

An important feature of the school was its close cooperation with parents. Some of them attended lessons and provided feedback and expectations afterward. Chyrikova emphasized that only the combination of school and family education could yield positive results, and that parents should cultivate an internal motivation for learning in their children (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, pp. 4, 17). At the same time, the diary records parental complaints about the school, often based on negative statements made by the children (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 16), illustrating the complexity of pedagogical interaction. She observed that lessons were effective only when children enjoyed learning; her greatest satisfaction came from moments when students did not want holiday breaks and asked to continue the lesson (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 40). Simultaneously, the teacher noted structural problems in the educational environment, such as the negligence of some teachers who were late, missed classes, or were indifferent toward the children (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 63). For Hordieieva, a particularly valuable practice was the mutual observation of lessons

followed by collective discussion of emerging problems and teaching methods (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 762, p. 48).

Her notes reveal not only a desire to improve her teaching methods but also to gain approval from her colleagues, confirming her professional competence in an environment where women had not yet been recognized as equal participants in the educational process. Despite her high self-criticism, contemporaries noted that she had a unique ability to engage children, maintaining their attention throughout the lesson and transforming learning from a formal obligation into a lively and captivating experience. As S. Myropols'kyi recalled, her lessons were distinguished by exceptional skill and elicited genuine interest from the students. A notable example occurred in 1871, after the lesson "Apple Tree," when the senior-class pupils unanimously asked H. Alchevska to convey their gratitude and their persistent request to keep Chyrikova as their permanent mentor (Myropols'kyi, 1892, s. 57). This incident was significant because subject lessons in the school were usually taught in rotation by different teachers. Yet, the students wished to deviate from the established schedule for their favorite instructor. This prompted a discussion within the school about whether all similar lessons should be entrusted to a single specialist. Despite heated debates, most teachers acknowledged the benefit of observing and learning from a colleague with exceptional pedagogical skills. As a result, Chyrikova was entrusted with conducting subject lessons systematically, which she did with great success. At the same time, Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna herself insisted that excessive specialization could narrow teachers' horizons. She emphasized that a true teacher must be well-rounded because knowledge in only one area does not allow fully addressing students' questions. In her view, an instructor who can skillfully talk about the animal world but falters when discussing trees or other natural phenomena cannot be considered adequately prepared (Myropols'kyi, 1892, s. 58–59). Gordieva's pedagogical work combined two complementary qualities: exceptional individual skill and a commitment to fostering the school's teachers' comprehensive development. Her approach reflected not only professional competence but also a progressive vision of the role of women educators in shaping the new educational culture of the late 19th century. Thus, Gordieva's diary not only documents her pedagogical endeavors but also demonstrates how a woman, operating under strict gender constraints, could earn her colleagues' respect, secure her place within the intellectual community, and influence the formation of a new school culture model.

In the 1870s, significant changes occurred in the life of Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna: she married Petro Andriyovych Gordieiev, a student at the Kharkiv Veterinary Institute. The couple lived for some time in Saint Petersburg, where Petro Andriyovych continued his studies at the Imperial Medical-Surgical Academy and quickly established himself in the scientific field: after defending his master's thesis, he was appointed a privat-docent and later a professor. It was there, in 1875, that their first child, Taras, the future renowned biologist, was born. For Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna, life in the capital did not mean retreating into her husband's shadow. On the contrary, combining motherhood with her pedagogical work, she took a teaching position at a women's gymnasium, remaining an active participant in the educational process (Hlybska, 2017, s. 50). When the family returned to Kharkiv in 1879, Petro Andriyovych's career continued to develop rapidly (Rudnyk, 2009, s. 123–125, 213–223, 369), yet Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna did not confine herself solely to the role of "professor's wife." In the following decades, she taught Russian language and literature at the Second Women's Gymnasium, served on its board of trustees, and at the same time remained devoted to the educational work of H. Alchevska's Sunday school (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 765, p. 1). The latter recalled Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna in her memoirs: "Yes! I admire our teachers, I love them… How could one not respect Chyrikova, who devotes her only free day to a noble cause?!" (Alchevska, 1912, s. 40).

Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Gordieieva's involvement in creating the fundamental bibliographic index "What Should the People Read?: A Critical Guide to Books for Popular and Children's Reading" became a striking testament to her intellectual contribution to the cause of public education. It was precisely through her work in selecting and critically analyzing literature that this project gained significant domestic and European recognition (What Should the People Read, 1888). The first volume of the publication received high acclaim at the international exhibition in Paris, where the innovative approach and social value of the work of Kharkiv teachers were emphasized. Gordieva herself was awarded a silver medal, which acknowledged her methodological expertise and her dedication to the cause of enlightenment (Myropols'kyi, 1892, s. 105). This award highlighted Gordieva's role as one of the women laying the foundations of a new school and extracurricular education model, oriented toward the democratization of knowledge and the accessibility of books to broad segments of the population. Participation in this project established her as an active educator whose name stood alongside the most prominent figures of the educational movement in the second half of the 19th century.

The private life of Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna organically intertwined with her public activity: alongside raising her children – Khrystyna, Dmytro, Taras, and Bohdan – she maintained space for her own self-realization, demonstrating that a woman could be not only the guardian of the family but

also an active participant in intellectual and cultural life. This constitutes the gender dimension of Gordieieva's biography: her example challenged traditional notions of women's roles in late 19th-century society, showing the possibility of harmoniously combining family responsibilities with professional and civic engagement. Notably, this life stance of the mother also influenced her daughter Khrystyna, who, continuing the family tradition of service to society, chose the path of active participation in public life, realizing herself in her profession and socially beneficial work: after graduating from the gymnasium in 1899, she engaged in pedagogical activities, working for five years at the same women's Sunday school (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 814, p. 1). It was likely then that she fully realized the need to forge her own path, rather than merely benefiting from the efforts of her predecessors. Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna's letter, in which she wrote: "You are the 'young forces,' our 'salt of the earth,' our 'pride'; you are young Russian women, you will prove your equality in labor, knowledge, and the arts, gather your strength, and carry on your small shoulders a great task" (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 833, p. 4), can be regarded as a symbolic passing of the torch to the next generation.

The generation of Khrystyna Petriivna entered a different context than their mothers. In the second half of the 19th century, another form of professional activity recognized by both the authorities and society for women was obtaining the qualification of "trained midwives." The opening of midwifery schools in provincial towns aimed to replace traditional rural midwives with a new generation of educated medical practitioners. For many women, this was the only chance to earn official qualifications and an independent livelihood. Women with a stronger prior education aspired to more and often viewed midwifery as a stepping stone toward the coveted university medical course, access to which remained nearly closed to women in the Russian Empire. In this context, the trajectory of Khrystyna Petriivna Gordieieva's professional realization was taking shape. Like hundreds of her contemporaries, she sought ways to become a physician. However, the government, despite a severe shortage of medical personnel, stubbornly refused to grant women the right to complete education, even blocking diplomas from European universities. As a result, Khrystyna was forced to follow "detour" routes: taking Professor Lesgaft's courses in Saint Petersburg for "physical education instructors and supervisors," serving as a nurse during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), and working for a year at the Lebedyn Zemstvo Hospital. Only briefly did Kharkiv University open its doors to women, and she seized the opportunity. Still, she was forced to transfer to Moscow to attend the private Higher Women's Medical Courses.

This experience proved a test of her willpower and a reflection of generational struggle. Her mother, Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Gordieieva-Chyrikova, in the 1860s, exerted immense effort to earn the title of "home teacher," thereby asserting a woman's right to participate in educational and cultural life. Half a century later, her daughter Khrystyna fought for a woman's right to become a physician. Here lies the continuity of women's history: each generation claimed its own "territory of freedom," gradually expanding the boundaries of what was permitted. However, the path was complex and fraught with despair. As Khrystyna's friend, V. H. Zaporozhets-Smirnova, wrote, even the strongest-spirited women often felt cornered: "I have no faith in myself; the thought of what I will do next literally torments me – undoubtedly I will take a post as a nurse and for the rest of my days I will simply exist…" (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 833, p. 36). This reflected the condition of an entire generation that aspired to professional careers but had to settle for temporary or secondary roles, which, in reality, were available to virtually all women in the empire without special education (Titovska, 2014, s. 105). The financial aspect was an equally significant factor in women's struggle for professional realization. Education was entirely paid for and, in the first decades, accessible only in Moscow or Saint Petersburg. Unlike her brothers, Khrystyna had to live and feed herself away from home, which became a severe financial burden for the Gordieiev family. The theme of expenses pervades her correspondence with her mother, filled with pain and anxiety: "Today I calculated how much I have cost you all this year and I was simply horrified…" (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 790, p. 15). And all of this was for the hope of gaining the right to become a physician. Drawing on the experience and support of her mother, Khrystyna Gordieieva navigated this challenging path.

Just as Chyrikova's generation had swept away gender stereotypes in education, her daughter's generation created its own wave in response to society's demand for medical care, a context in which the gender of medical personnel was no longer ignored. In September 1907, the medical faculty at the Higher Women's Courses in Kyiv began its work, admitting 295 female students. Over the following five years, similar faculties were opened in Kharkiv and Odesa, resulting in hundreds of new women doctors entering the country every four years (Hanitkevych, 2004, s. 58–61, 63, 65).

The First World War finally changed the game's rules: the state was forced to recognize women doctors on an equal footing with men. For Khrystyna, this was an opportunity to establish herself in her profession fully. She worked as a resident physician in Kharkiv clinics and served on the front. In her autobiography, Khrystyna Petriivna Hordieieva notes: "Since the beginning of the World War, I served a year as a resident physician at the hospital of the Mutual Credit Society attached to

the First Clinic of Kharkiv University, then about a year on Sanitary Train No. 177 of the All-Russian Union of Cities, then in the advanced sanitary detachment named after the Voronezh Zemstvo…" (TsDAMLM, fP. 208, op. 1, d. 814, p. 1). During the Revolution and Civil War, she remained in the medical field, understanding the importance of her work. In the subsequent years of purges and repression under Bolshevik rule in Ukraine, her survival strategy was to occupy lower positions while continuing to work in her profession. This ultimately saved her, as it ensured her evacuation to Georgia on the eve of the occupation.

Conclusions. The study of the biographies of Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna Hordieieva (Chyrikova) and her daughter Khrystyna Petrivna Hordieieva makes it possible to view women's experience of professional self-realization in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries as part of broader social transformations. This period marked the time when the issue of women's emancipation moved beyond private conversations and became the subject of active debates in the press, scholarly works, and civic initiatives. Women's aspirations for education and professional fulfillment gradually eroded entrenched notions of "natural" roles, opening the way to new forms of participation in public life. The example of Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna demonstrates that even within the constraints of rigid imperial educational policies and patriarchal stereotypes, it was possible to secure the right to intellectual labor. Her pedagogical work in the Kharkiv Sunday School, collaboration with Khrystyna Alchevska, and the compilation of bibliographic indexes attest not only to her professionalism but also to her conscious stance as a woman-citizen striving to influence the cultural development of society. Khrystyna Petrivna, in turn, continued this path this time in the medical sphere. Despite the obstacles posed by imperial restrictions on women's education, her persistent efforts to qualify as a physician vividly illustrate the complexity of the "detours" women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries had to take to realize their intellectual potential. Thus, the destinies of mother and daughter reflect the evolution of women's strategies within a single family: from attaining the status of a "home tutor" and fighting for the right to teach in schools to mastering the medical profession and serving during wartime. This highlights the gradual, albeit contradictory, expansion of women's activity from the local pedagogical environment to socially significant spheres such as medicine, science, and culture. The experience of the Hordieievs vividly illustrates the ambivalence of women's position in the 19th and early 20th centuries: the formal recognition of certain professional rights was accompanied by persistent barriers that consumed both time and energy. Yet, their biographies confirm that women's path to professional and civic activity was not merely a matter of individual choice, but part of a broader process of societal modernization. Thanks to women such as Yelyzaveta Dmytrivna and Khrystyna Petrivna, a new cultural and social landscape gradually emerged, and women's presence in education and medicine became a recognized and accepted phenomenon.

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