5-14-2021

«Cuida tu alma y tu cuerpo por Dios y la Falange»: Women’s Education and la Sección Femenina in Franco’s Spain

Madeleine Fontenay

Follow this and additional works at: https://crossworks.holycross.edu/honors

Part of the European History Commons, Gender Equity in Education Commons, Intellectual History Commons, Women's History Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons
"Cuida tu alma y tu cuerpo por Dios y la Falange":

Women’s Education and

la Sección Femenina in Franco’s Spain

Madeleine Fontenay

Professor Theresa McBride, Advisor
Professor Ke Ren, Advisor
Professor Estrella Cibreiro, Reader

College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, MA
May 2021

This thesis is submitted for the College Honors Program and History Departmental Honors.

1 Laura Wagner Tinoco. “La Sección Femenina de Falange española.” La Universidad de Málaga (2018), 2. Translation, from José Antonio’s 1935 guide for women of the Fascist group, the Falange: “Take care of your soul and body for God and the Falange”
Acknowledgments

I am fortunate to have so many people to acknowledge and appreciate during this rather turbulent year, and first and foremost are my parents. My late father nurtured my love of all things historical and my mother supported my dreams to write and do research; both of them provided me with the best education they could find and I’m eternally grateful. I also want to thank my incredible advisors, for they guided me through all the highs and lows of this worthwhile journey. To Professor Theresa McBride, thank you for answering my many questions and for asking me questions in turn. You helped me find my space in the historiography and pushed me forward both as a learner and as a historian. To Professor Ke Ren, I’m so grateful for all your help in the very beginning of my research and for all the meetings and thoughtful comments since then. From my first year at Holy Cross to my last, you helped shape the type of historian I strive to be. To Professor Estrella Cibreiro, thank you for the enlightening and thought-provoking discussions, through which you significantly improved my knowledge of Spanish history and culture. I appreciate your help with my work on la Sección Femenina and for furthering my admiration of the Spanish language. I also certainly need to thank both Professor Ellen Perry of the College Honors Program and Professor Gwenn Miller of the History Honors Program for their guidance and making their task more organized and doable. Lastly, I must thank all my friends and family members who checked in on me and asked about this project and how I was doing. With all of your help, I can be proud of the paper I wrote and I thank you.
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Historiography .................................4

Chapter 2: Women’s Public Roles .............................................31

Chapter 3: Women’s Education....................................................41

Chapter 4: The Catholic Church and Morality ..............................56

Chapter 5: Conclusion .................................................................73

Bibliography ...........................................................................77
Abstract

My thesis exploration is on La Sección Femenina and its diffusion of female cultural guides and shaping of female education in the early francoist period, from 1939 to 1959. The Sección Femenina and its field offices published work in many facets of women's lives to influence and reeducate women or their values and place. The contrast of rhetoric and reality gives insight into the values and upbringings of generations of Spaniards. By setting the female figure as the foundation of their francoist society, the Sección Femenina held immense cultural power. I am approaching the topic from an educational perspective, focusing my research on publications meant for girls and their mothers. Historians have studied this time period from a religious or gendered perspective, but I want to add to the educational facet. I have concluded that the Sección Femenina did find a space to exert agency and create opportunities for positive change under Franco’s dictatorship, but primarily for elite women. However, in the process of establishing their power, the organization instilled more traditional, distinctly anti-feminist values and gender roles via their media and educational publications for the public. The paradoxes and complexities within the Sección Femenina make it worth further and deeper study, and I hope to contribute to the rich historiography.
Introduction and Historiography

Introduction

Women’s rights and roles in Spanish society drastically changed after the Civil War, as Franco and his government pushed back against the Second Republic and refocused the priorities of the nation on traditional values, including putting the majority of women back into the domestic sphere and leaving them very little room outside the home. One consequence of Spain’s neutrality in the second world war was how the economy wasn’t filled and bolstered by women wartime workers, and women did not have the opportunity to fill these economic or cultural spaces. With the incoming wave of traditionalist rhetoric, how is it possible that an entirely female run organization became one of the most influential branches of the government? La Sección Femenina and their diffusion of values and cultural guides shaped female education, and I focus on the window of 1939-1959 to analyze directly after Franco's rise to power and the transition in values and rhetoric as the generations in power change and push beyond the memory of the Second Republic and the Civil War.

The Sección Femenina proceeded, after the Civil War, with the intent to organize, educate, and facilitate the new image of the exemplary Spanish woman. This resurgence of conservative ideology reconnected with ideology from the 19th century in Spanish history, and one of the Sección Femenina’s main goals was to create an ideal femininity above reproach, attempting to find the balance between having educational opportunities for women and not challenging the patriarchy and male authority. The main mission of

---


3 Richmond, 10.
the Sección Femenina, officially, was to carve out a space for women in Franco’s Spain that fit with his broader image, and their recorded loyalty to Franco’s vision of Spain meant the organization had more leeway in representing and influencing women. This tension between the duty to the women of Spain or the enforced duty to Franco’s ideals lasted for decades, yet the leaders of the Sección Femenina successfully balanced on the line and their branch continued to amass power to push propaganda and reeducate the public.

By setting the female figure as the foundation of their francoist society, the Sección Femenina held immense cultural power and educated women of all ages and social levels, from grandmothers to young daughters, elite to impoverished. I approached the topic from an educational perspective, focusing my research on written works and visual reports meant for students and their mothers published by the Sección Femenina. Historians have studied this time period from a more religious or gendered perspective, but I added to the body of knowledge via the educational angle. The roles of women and the importance of educational reform are prominent topics in the Spanish historiography of Franco’s Spain, but there is a vacuum regarding female education and motherhood in which I hope to contribute. Beyond the topic of motherhood, I also see an opportunity to explore the records by connecting beliefs in the published material in the cities, like major magazines or newspapers, with the domestic teachings in homes and less formalized works.

This 1939 magazine cover for Revista para la mujer, one of the major magazine publications distributed by the Sección Femenina, illustrates the priorities and projected

---

4 Richmond, 11.
setting for the lives of the Spanish people, and more specifically the Spanish women and mothers. The less vibrant coloring and focus on blond, material women framed the educational materials and advice columns within the pages of the magazine. The central figure is a kneeling woman wearing an apron and being nurturing towards the little girl. The room is filled with books and the house is evidently well kept; however, the background is what provides a great source for analysis. The other, similarly dressed woman is guiding a group of children back down a path towards a village, with a church being the most prominent structure. The scene is rural, peaceful, and the new Spain that the Sección Femenina wanted to construct out of the ashes of the Second Republic. Franco’s rising ideology advanced more conservative feminine values through the “preservation of the domestic arts, and maintaining a happy home were all central parts of the doctrine that framed a Spanish woman’s ultimate destiny: that of motherhood.” Since the Women’s Section viewed women as the “de facto” educators for their children, the SF did encourage girls to enter secondary and higher education, urging them to by making it socially accepted and offering financial aid.

---


when necessary. The role of mother became so vital to women’s identities that it justified many other social and economic pursuits.

The Nationalist men of the *pueblos* considered the social position and duties of the mother in the village communities as the central pillar folding everyone together and the foundation of their value system. How does the permeation of the Sección Femenina’s message differ between rural villages and metropolitan areas? The change over time is a significant point of study as well, since by 1959 the publications and power of the SF are diminished compared to its start in the early 1940s. How much of this decline was due to Franco’s softening rhetoric, and how much was due to the organization or execution of their policies?

Further study on this specific historical niche holds the possibility of revealing how female identity and cultural understanding unfurled in the beginning of a unique nationalistic regime. In other notable cases, like Italy and Germany, Fascism was discredited after the explosive second World War, but Franco persisted with his government mostly intact and his values justified. Franco’s era lasted twice that amount of time, with lingering influences for years beyond; this phenomena means that the education and belief system established in the beginning of the 1940s by the Sección Femenina unified and instilled beliefs for several generations of women. I looked at the

---

7 Richmond, 10.
Translation: *pueblos* directly translates to “village,” but culturally it means more than just the type of settlement. Each family has a pueblo they identify as their home and community, and usually the same family and trace their ancestry back generations in the same pueblos, a close knit and small community with a strong sense of shared culture and family.

immediate impacts as well as the long-term consequences of the educational decrees and cultural manipulation of femininity. In addition, the concept of motherhood and maternal duties was transformed by the SF and the Falange, and the practice of mother’s significantly contributing to the education of young children, male and female, is worth further study. The overall study can be organized into the influence the SF had on mothers (including those educated during the Republic), the influence mothers had on their children’s education, the influence and enforced ideals of the SF on girls’ schools, and I am hoping to find more about the schools and teaching from the children’s perspective.

Historians debate whether the Sección Femenina was more beneficial or detrimental to women as a whole and how much the experience of the SF and its promotion of literary and educational progress advanced women’s roles in the slowly moderating economy of Spain. How did the Sección Femenina's self-portrayal align with the consequences of their policies? The current early francoist historiography includes two major conversations; one is on women’s rights, treatment, and societal expectations. Key sources in this discourse are studies conducted by gender studies historians in the late 1990s and early 2000s, focusing intently on the shift in rights and regulations on female behavior and expectations of motherhood. Many historians then compare this model with other nationalistic experiments on the continent. In Spain, several pivotal articles published in the later 2010s elucidate more on the intersection of female treatment and francoist education, but their intended audience probably was university-centric, given their vocabulary and smaller, erudite audience. This trend in the

10 Richmond, 10
historiography leads to the second central conversation: the educational shifts and structure within the given time frame. The primary sources are predominately pieces published by the Sección Femenina, mostly magazine articles with some speeches and other published materials like textbooks. So far in my research, the majority of the documents focus on the situation for women, using education as an example or facet of their argument, so by joining both conversations I hope to add to the historiography in a meaningful way and bring a different perspective to a source pool filled mostly with politically-focused or survey Spanish works.

I pursued three principal topics: first, a study of women’s leadership and roles in the public and in the higher ranks of the Sección Femenina, then how the women were assigned primarily domestic roles and how the Catholic church gave a basis for individual and social morality. However, the Women’s Section and their core mission did not completely align with the Catholic Church, and their points of dispute, such as physical education and international travel, reveal part of the SF’s central mission. The third focus is an exploration of women’s education in all its facets, formal and media-centric alike. The traditional element, shown via references to the “Golden Age of Spain” and the glory in the traditions of the different regions, is found to contrast some of the more modernized elements of the Women’s Section’s rhetoric in published magazines and the mass movement prompted by the mass media. The concept of unity is weaponized by Franco in accordance with his authoritarian ways, but it also eases the modernization and mass consumption of media, a media the SF utilized to its fullest extent.

11 Richmond, 53.
Historical Context: The Second Republic and the Civil War (1931-1939)

Starting to emerge in 1929 and fully coming into power in 1931, the Second Republic of Spain was considered the Silver Age of Spain and in the short time frame the culture, economy, and politics of the nation progressed by leaps and bounds. Also known colloquially as “la niña bonita” (the pretty girl) due to the bloodless nature of the transition of power, the relatively short but monumental Second Republic set the stage for a new era without ever fully opening its curtains, and Franco dedicated his dictatorship to erasing each progressive achievement. It was a time of domestic improvement, though relatively brief in its existence, and women’s rights regarding property, divorce, and higher education soared. Introduced in 1931, “an ambitious educational reform project … combined principles of Spanish liberalism, pedagogical theories of the Free Teaching Institution, and the program of public instruction promoted by the socialist party.” The entire education system was redone with a more secular focus and even opportunities for bilingual schools in regions with strong ties to non-Castilian languages, like Cataluña. An educational decree in 1931 mandated that teachers be educated at the college level in special classes, with each class having “40 students per class: 20 men and 20 women.” This surge in equal opportunities did not extend to all facets of life. The exit of both the dictator General Miguel Primo de Rivera and King Alfonso XIII ushered in the second

---

12 Graham, 31; Richmond, 34.
13 Graham, 31.
15 Flecha García, 23.
period of republican government for Spain and a time of diverse factions, powerplays, and experimentation with political ideas and clashing ideologies.

Furthermore, many historians state that the Second Republic faced difficulties starting from the beginning, with nationalism “on the rise” across Europe and war brewing on the horizon, dooming the Republic before it truly had a chance to grow. The General Primo de Rivera held dissimilar priorities to that of the republican government, to the former dictator, “the Fatherland, Church and King” were paramount. Tensions between royalists, nationalists, communists, and anarchists grew even as new art styles and innovations appeared. Certain regions, like Cataluña and Las Asturias, had riots that ended in casualties and General Francisco Franco was sent to deal with some of them. His name grew in power and renown, and soon he rallied under the banner of tradition and promised to bring back the full presence of the Catholic Church. The stage was set for a bloody Civil War that would span nearly three years and cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

The Civil War started on July 17, 1936 due to a military coup. How did this military coup devolve into an incredibly bloody Civil War, and eventually a Fascist dictatorship? According to historian Helen Graham, the coup galvanized a “a series of culture wars: urban culture and cosmopolitan lifestyles versus rural tradition; secular against religious; authoritarianism against liberal political cultures; centre versus

---

16 Flecha García, 23.
17 Flecha García, 23.
Original: “a Patria”
18 Flecha García, 23.
19 Richmond, 52.
21 Graham, 1.
periphery; traditional gender roles versus the ‘new woman’; even youth against age.”

These tensions raised during the initial conflict reverberated into Franco’s dictatorship and are an interesting point of study. The two main forces pushing against the Republic were the elites and the devoutly Catholic rural communities; while they were on near opposite ends of the economic spectrum, their political and religious goals aligned. The Civil War lasted until 1939, with the two main factions being, at first known as the “republicans and the rebels,” and then later called the Republicans and the Nationalists.

The Nationalists eventually had support from Hitler’s Nazi Germany and Mussolini’s Italian resources. In 1939, after Franco’s victory over the Republicans, there was a period when the government encouraged neighbors to turn on neighbors to root out any discontent citizens or enemy soldiers, thus making “millions of ‘ordinary Spaniards complicit in the repression.” The transition from war to Franco’s Spain gave a branch of the government called La Sección Femenina time to gather their bearings and prepare to produce literature, media, and other sources of reeducation for all the women of Spain.

With Franco and his Decree of Unification, the Sección Femenina of the Falange joined the authoritarian dictatorship in his mission and transition from a wartime aid organization composed mostly of nurses to a well-oiled, national-reaching anti-feminist and traditionalist branch of the formal government. For the Sección Femenina, its original goal during the war was to “participate in propaganda and fund-raising, engage in welfare visits to imprisoned party members and act as auxiliaries in street-fighting

---

22 Graham, 2.
23 Graham, 10.
24 Graham, 22.
25 Graham, 85.
operations helping their male comrades to hide their weapons.”

The day to day running of the organization was to support and aid, and excellent internal organization and famously connected leaders made the Sección Femenina eventually draw positive attention from Franco; once he was in power, the organization transitioned to provide “services in schools and hospitals. Its centers also offered women sporting facilities, music, theater and first aid classes.”

The contradiction of pushing stifling gender roles onto the women of Spain while also exercising avenues of agency is ongoing, but pushing further into the sources helps find the lines between the inconsistent strategies. The manner in which these women earned and secured their power contributes to the materials they published, and there was a certain element of conformity in their public images that records of their private positions of influence did not suggest. Further in my analysis of the primary sources, the many ways the Sección Femenina presented traditional roles as ideal, almost glamorous, in crafting their sense of duty and domesticality will showcase the rhetorical return to tradition and emphasis of Spanish folk culture.

**Women’s Public Roles**

There was historical alternation between conservative and liberal ideals of women in Spanish history, starting with the idealization of Queen Isabella in the 15th century. Kathleen Richmond wrote her work *Women and Spanish Fascism: The women’s section of the Falange 1934-1959* with the primary figure of Primo de Rivera, José Antonio’s

---


28 Salvado, 304.
sister, as the focal point. Richmond’s overarching assertion is that the SF held a significant and nuanced role in Spanish society and governance, and her work is meant to add depth to the historical portraits of the elite women involved with the SF as well as break the organization into more understandable facets of study. This source is driven by the key political figures at the top, and by exploring their decisions as leaders of the Sección Femenina, the broad range of influence is revealed. The work is excellent at introducing the many facets of the Women’s Section, from physical education to relations with the Catholic Church, but each component is not a deep analysis like other sources in the relevant historiography. My specific project is building from the foundation Richmond created with her monograph, extrapolating off her section on education and augmenting my work with more specific sources. Richmond relied primarily on a series of 45 interviews with women from the “body of the Sección Femenina’s former members,” and four of the women Richmond selected were for their proximity to power: they were “former national heads” of third of the SF’s specialized branches. This is a different approach to the topic compared to sources like Martínez, who used primary sources documents from courts of law and the government.

The monograph successfully intertwines public perception and self-image regarding both the SF and its leader, Pilar Primo de Rivera. The control Pilar exerts over the SF is emphasized by Richmond, and she notes that Pilar was key in “develop[ing] an identity for [the SF] which led to public perceptions of the organization as...the ‘ideological reserve’ of the Falange.” The confusion surrounding the Sección Femenina’s true

intentions starts and centers around the figure of Pilar Primo de Rivera. From the public’s perspective, she was a wise and maternal figure in their so-called “Crusade against the Second Republic,” titled to reflect the resurgence of ideals from the medieval crusades and Spanish unity against all others. The government, and more specifically the SF, achieved the dispersion of their message via a “blending [of] political articles with a mix of recipes, suggestions for interior design and photographs of ideal home,” which is not outright stating their position but pushing it with more benign material.

Extending from the political and social spheres into the religious facet of Spanish life, the Catholic faith was one of the foremost aspects of Spanish identity at the time. Due to this reality, “the successful outcome of the [Sección Femenina] program would be the Old Testament vision of the perfect home” according to Richmond and her interpretation of SF ideals. Pilar’s role as a female leader and her incorporation of Biblical vocabulary presented the SF as a strongly Catholic organization focused on the Virgin Mary and St. Theresa. José Antonio, a central figure and eventual martyr of the Falange cause, was increasingly compared to Jesus as the Falange and the SF rose in power; however, Pilar did not approve of the almost fanatic worship her brother garnered for himself after death and thought it harmed their cause, though that didn’t stop her from editing all of his works and making them required readings throughout the country in all of their courses. The Church and education also intersected, and this blending and relationship in Spanish society is a major theme in many of the works focusing on Franco’s Spain.

---

31 Richmond, 14.
32 Richmond, 16.
33 Richmond, 53.
34 Richmond, 13, 36, 41.
Women’s Education

In her book *Palabra de mujer: Hacia la reivindicación y contextualización del discurso femeninista español*, Estrella Cibreiro touches on the importance of the literary images and women’s own writing, professing how the writing of women reveal the energy and emotion inherent in Spanish feminist movement. Her work contributes to the study of how women wrote about themselves during the time period, and how these writings reflect the “retorno a una política de género que infantilizaba a la mujer;” how the conceptualization of women became infantile or asexual, with either “virginity or motherhood” being their primary purpose.\(^\text{35}\) Closely related, Carmen Martín Gaite and her work *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*. This particular work gives terrific insight into the politics behind advertisement word choice and is a notable edition that aids my analysis of primary sources. The concept and expression of femininity in a society that both praises and punishes beauty is an interesting quandary, one which Gaite debates and establishes the historical precedent that caused the conflict in the first place.\(^\text{36}\) Who can a woman be if she is only defined by her family? How can a mother’s education exert control over that definition?

These questions can be asked in circumstances outside of Spain and looking at the concept from a different perspective sheds more light. David L. Hoffmann’s research on a comparable situation in Stalin’s Soviet Union in the article, “Mothers in the Motherland:


Stalinist Pronatalism in Its Pan-European Context,” provides some context and vocabulary on how powerful figures glorify motherhood for the benefit of their ideology.\textsuperscript{37} He explains how a new rise in the manipulation of birth rates came when the Soviet government encouraged earlier motherhood; Hoffman remarks that the situation in the Soviet Union is most comparable to Catholic countries in Western Europe because both regions encourage motherhood in all classes and economic levels, not particularly favoring any one class over the other.\textsuperscript{38} After World War I, the link between “population size and military power” became apparent to Europe and integrated into political plans.\textsuperscript{39} This source delves into how the question and definition of motherhood did not only occur in Spain but it was an international phenomena.

Desiré Rodriguéz Martínez wrote the article “La Sección Femenina de Falange como guía adoctrinadora de la mujer durante el Franquismo,” and it focuses on the situation for women overall in Spain and the how la Sección Femenina influenced female identity. This article is representative of a space in Spanish historiography focused on the adult women under Franco and the transition from Republic ideology to Nationalism. It does not, however, touch heavily upon education beyond its societal implications, which is why my research on the intersection of female identity and secondary education is a beneficial contribution. The main focus of Martínez’s documentation shows the shift from the self-sacrificing woman to a growing sense of freedom as time passes under la Sección Femenina. Martínez's article is published in an annual women's studies journal from La Rioja, and it is written for a Spanish academic audience. She writes that the

\textsuperscript{38} Hoffmann, 35.
\textsuperscript{39} Hoffmann, 36.
Franco dictatorship completely overruled all hope for social acceptance of this new
gender reality that appeared with the republican cultural renaissance.\textsuperscript{40} Franco wanted to
stress how he completely annulled the cultural and political beliefs of the Second
Republic. The reactionary nature of the movement against the republic meant that many
practices and expectations were actively reversed, including women’s rights and
education.

The contrast and influence of other Fascist regimes, like Mussolini in Italy and
Hitler in Germany, are included in the beginning of the article in a more general sense.
She focused on a new ideological concept “inspired by national Catholicism and the Nazi
ideology – Kinder (children), Küche (home), Kirche (church).”\textsuperscript{41} The three main elements
of children, home, and church were a new ideological conception of society that extended
to all facets of francoist life, but in Spain in particular the influence of the Church on
education cannot be understated. When it came to women’s cultural and academic
education, the SF intended to spread their heavily Catholic influenced ideology as far and
as deep as they could through public rallies, women's magazines and of course their
Home Schools, Traveling Chairs, and Social Service. The historiography of the era
usually focuses on the major cities, where such media and rallies could take place, but
this article helpfully shines light on other regions and groups within society. The Sección
Femenina wanted to influence not only urban women, but also those who live in the
villages, and so they created in the summer of 1937 the Brotherhood of the Woman of the

\textsuperscript{40} Desire Rodríguez Martínez. “La Sección Femenina de Falange como guía adoctrinadora de la
mujer durante el Franquismo.” Investigació Feminista, 2017, 135.
\textsuperscript{41} Martínez, 135.
Original: “inspirada en el nacional-catolicismo y en el ideario nazi – Kinder (niños), Küche
(hogar), Kirche (Iglesia)”
City and the Countryside.\textsuperscript{42} The main argument of Martínez’s article is, “in all these activities of the SF, there was a clear interest in propaganda and control over a population away from urban centers, Spanish society had to be homogenized, and the vehicle to be used had to be education.”\textsuperscript{43} This emphasis on unity and control are central tenets of the Falange and define the society, which includes what was taught in schools and through the main forms of media and the dispersion of ideas. Many historians use the term “backwards” when describing the period of Franco’s dictatorship in Spain because of this focus on rural areas and older traditions, due to the rest of Europe pushing ahead technologically. However, the Sección Femenina pushed Spain forward in subtle ways, leading by example in their leadership.

Martínez touches on the origin of the SF during the Civil War, and this section of the article has strong parallels to Richmond’s work in \textit{Women and Spain Fascism}. The strong conservative rhetoric and rebellious beginning of the government branch influenced its methods in information circulation. The main magazines (and primary sources) were “\textit{Consigna, Y, Medina y Teresa}.”\textsuperscript{44} The include guides of behavior in public, fashion, and literary reviews focusing on certain themes that align with the Falange’s policies. The “values of the Spanish Falange and the Catholic Church” are the main topics in women’s education as well as formal children’s education, and it was the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{42} Martínez, 137.
\textsuperscript{43} Martínez, 138.
Original: “En todas estas actividades de la Sección Femenina, había un interés claro de propaganda y control sobre una población apartada de los centros urbanos, había que homogeneizar a la sociedad española, y el vehículo a utilizar debía ser la educación”
\textsuperscript{44} Martínez, 138.
\end{flushright}
duty of the teacher to instill these values in all her students, all the future women of Spain.\textsuperscript{45}

In a broader sense of the society, the woman was the nucleus of both the family unit and the national identity, and the “traditional role of woman-wife-mother” permeated every aspect of society in the 1940s and 1950s.\textsuperscript{46} The “woman-wife-mothers” of Spain had high expectations set on them by the government, but the article makes the point that there was a dramatic change over time. In 1957 there was a shift were the Catholic Church started to lose influence Martínez continues her study and article into the 1970s and waning falangist themes in society, and she concludes by firmly stating that the SF may have evolved with time and become more liberating, but at its core it never wanted the true economic, social, or political equality and freedom for women. She adds that despite having such a wide influence, the teachings of the SF did not reach everyone in Spain.\textsuperscript{47} Many of her sources are from the archives of the University of Zaragoza.

Sharing a similar space in the Spanish historiography, Soraya Gahete Muñoz's academic article “La Sección Femenina de Falange. Discursos y prácticas en Madrid” centers on the contradictions between the public speeches of the SF and the reality of their national practices. In comparison to the Martínez article, there is less contextual analysis and overview; instead, Muñoz narrowed the focus to rhetorical analysis and personal files archived in Madrid. In her introduction she makes a point of stating, “the Sección Femenina has received significant historiographic attention, although there are

\textsuperscript{45} Martínez, 139. 
Original: “valores de Falange Española y de la Iglesia Católica”

\textsuperscript{46} Martínez, 140. 
Original: “tradicional rol de mujer-esposa-madre”

\textsuperscript{47} Martínez, 143.
many avenues to be studied... the contradictions between the female model that SF
women represented, and the instilled female model for the rest of the Spanish women and
girls are noted.” Like Richmond, she emphasizes the discrepancy between what the
Female said and what they did. This concept is a recurring theme in the Spanish sources
and articles, and in my own work it raises the question of who the SF was accountable to
and did the public notice these discrepancies as well? Muñoz contributes new insight into
the field with her look at the female model changing over time and how information was
distributed and received.

Muñoz addresses how historians wanted to reconstruct highlighting the contrasts
within the available materials. Considering that “a few social practices are clear
indicators of a feminine model different from the one that they were promulgating,”
historians can try to reconstruct the difference between the speeches and their actions, but
without the witnesses themselves and limited documentation it is a work in progress. The
hierarchy within the female population is a new point Muñoz offers, and she argues
that SF influence created the tiers, with government workers in the SF being close to the
top while women with menial work jobs outside the home are closest to the bottom. The
roles of men and women were not “too different but male ones are clearly superior to
female ones.” Muñoz stressed the point of perceived superiority multiple times in her

48 Soraya Gahete Muñoz. "La Sección Femenina de Falange. Discursos y prácticas en Madrid.”
Arenal: Revista de historia de mujeres, 2015, 390.
Original: “La SF ha recibido una importante atención historiográfica aunque quedan muchas
parcelas por estudiar...las contradicciones existentes entre el modelo femenino que las mujeres de
SF representaban, y el modelo femenino que inculcaron al resto de mujeres y niñas españolas”
49 Muñoz, 391.
Original: “unas prácticas sociales que sean un indicador claro de un modelo femenino distinto al
que promulgaban”
50 Muñoz, 396-397.
work, and how pervasive the social hierarchy was in identity and daily life. Regarding daily life, the magazines published by the SF were “good vehicles for analyzing the speeches transmitted by this organization, although there are quite a few contradictions.”

The body of primary sources in the form of magazines show a varied view of the SF’s message, but even within their own publications there are contradictions and differing viewpoints. In the interest of these differences, her work asked “Who were these women who served in the Women’s Section? Why did they do it? What were the main functions? How did they see themselves within this [political] party?” She saw a vacuum in the Spanish historiography where no one had yet answered why women were joining the Sección Femenina and how they functioned under the organization’s high expectations. She aimed to find answers to the question of how men were represented and how that contrasted with women, and how the SF shaped and influenced the new reality of female identity in Madrid.

In the existing body of francoist work, the article “Little Intellectuals. Girls’ Academic Secondary Education under Francoism” by Antonio Canales gives specific insight into the details of schooling and educational expectations set for young girls and is one of the cornerstones in the existing historiography on the specific subject of Spanish female education in the 1940s. He argues that there was a “paradox posed...that, despite official statements against academic education for women, the number of girls in

Original: “no sólo son distintas sino que las masculinas son claramente superiores a las femeninas”

51 Muñoz, 398.
Original: “buenos vehículos para analizar los discursos transmitidos por esta organización aunque existen bastantes contradicciones”

52 Muñoz, 408.
Original: “¿Quiénes eran estas mujeres que militaron en FE? ¿Por qué lo hicieron? ¿Cuáles eran sus funciones? o ¿cómo se veían a ellas mismas dentro de este partido [político]?”
academic secondary education was greater for the post-civil war period than the preceding one” and education persists in spite of the social pressure against it.\textsuperscript{53} According to Canales, the study of female education is “virtually unknown,” especially during the first Francoist period from 1936-1959.\textsuperscript{54} To set the historical scene, it’s essential to note that “co-education was made one of the cardinal principles of the new education policy of the Second Republic proclaimed in 1931” and this educational overhaul transformed the schooling system from segregated to mixed education in the core subjects.\textsuperscript{55} Once the nationalists had military control over an area, starting as early as 1936, the schools were immediately segregated based on sex, extending all the way to the faculty and staff, where “except in the case of religion, [staff was expected to] be entirely female.”\textsuperscript{56} However, Canales points out that in reality the majority of Republican-era teachers were male, so all female teachers were sent to the girls’ schools and even then, in the beginning, male teachers still had to fill in the gaps. In the written educational laws passed, the “principles of the new secondary education (religious, patriotic and intellectual education) completely ignored girls” but the “Escuelas Hogar de la Sección Femenina (Home Schools of the Women’s Section)” focused on domestic education for girls starting in 1940.\textsuperscript{57} Furthermore, women were pushed out of prestigious teaching positions in major cities in favor of men, and instead they were repositioned in more rural areas for secondary education. Canales focuses more on male government officials and religious authorities and their influence than on the Sección Femenina.

\textsuperscript{54} Canales, 376. 
\textsuperscript{55} Canales, 377. 
\textsuperscript{56} Canales, 377. 
\textsuperscript{57} Canales, 378.
Many high ranking male officials were of the mind that “women students [posed] a challenge for the National-Catholicism that underpinned the regime” and female education should be even more limited, especially after elementary school. Canales contributes to the debate about how much influence women truly had in the Sección Femenina at the time, and he argues in favor of the masculine authorities. The SF and male leadership had differing ideas on where female education should be emphasized, with men taking an Italian influenced approach and focusing on university while the SF pushed for more secondary education. The national push towards motherhood and domesticity for girls is apparent when high-ranking men and Jesuit authorities stated that “women had no need for typing, office work practice or anything similar resembling vocational education.” Practical skills for the workforce were limited in favor of sewing or home economic training. Canales asserts, with statistical evidence, that “Francoist authorities considered at least three models for female secondary education. All failed, and ... are virtually unknown to education historians.” These educational setbacks were due to the fact that enrolling one’s daughters in secondary education was considered a social downgrade and hurt community standing, but even more so, the influential Catholic Church frowned upon extensive female education.

Contrary to expectations, female participation in universities actually rose in the 1940s, causing a paradox not discussed in the female education historical conversation. Canales concludes by arguing that this period of Spanish female education was not a complete step backwards, as it would appear on the surface, but instead a significant shift

---

58 Canales, 380.
59 Canales, 381.
60 Canales, 381.
61 Canales, 382.
towards emphasizing motherhood and the domestic sphere. Social class played a role in female education under Franco, and lower class girls benefited from social education expectations, though this was an “undesired” byproduct for the Falange.\textsuperscript{62} The upper classes had tailored religious educations that fit the new social expectations while lower class girls did have unexpected access to segregated state schooling filled with teachers trained during the Second Republic. However, Canales finishes with the question of how outside influences like economy and military politics influence educational mandates and shape how families foster education. There was a marked discrepancy between the falangist ideology and educational realities in the 1940s, and this article galvanizes the debate and starts the discussion on which factors contributed the most. My research will further add to this line of questioning with an additional influence on La Sección Femenina’s role within the masculine Falange.

Consuela Flecha García contributes to the discussion on Spanish education in her article, “Education in Spain: Close-up of Its History in the 20th Century.” This source covers a broad swath of Spanish educational history, but her main points concerning the timeframe of the 1940s and 50s are that educational progress plummeted directly after the Civil War, as did female participation, but as the decades passed the educational laws started to shift towards the standard set by the rest of Europe. She focuses on legal sources and education decrees as historical milestones and stepping stones in her narrative.\textsuperscript{63} A dramatic shift away from the Silver Age of the Second Republic, under Franco coeducation was “suppressed” as immoral and teachers’ colleges were highly

\textsuperscript{62} Canales, 383.
\textsuperscript{63} Flecha García, 17-42.
monitored due to the level of influence teachers had on growing students. As the hold Franco had on Spain increased in strength, female education rates for college fell as women were barraged religiously, socially, and legally.

Catholicism and Morality

Jessamy Harvey asks questions about the education system in “Domestic Queens and Warrior Wives: Imperial Role-Models for Spanish Schoolgirls during the Early Francoist Regime (1940s-50s),” but elaborates on the feminization process and literacy. She generalizes the existing historiography on the topic of female education as having the SF and lack of education as “clipping the wings of many Spanish girls and women.”

Her main focus was on children, propaganda, and the analysis of the so-called truths dictated in children’s school textbooks, arguing that many of the textbooks portrayed women as paradoxically heroic and servile in an effort to instill their specific moral values in the younger generation. After the Civil War, the Women’s Section and Fascist powers had to completely “redesign primary education,” and this meant rewriting and redistributing all of the textbooks and material used in formal schooling. For the re-segregated girls schools, the “curriculum which, formed by the forced marriage of the [Women’s Section and the Catholic Church], engaged with the concept of Spanish femininity in slightly different ways.” Harvey informs that “it is hard to gauge what schoolgirls actually made of these heroines and how, if at all, they were affected by their

---

64 Flecha García, 27.
65 Flecha García, 28.
67 Harvey, 281.
Many of the girls’ textbooks are filled with heroic tales from the female perspective, but she simultaneously notes that many of these legendary women inhabit or yearn for traditional, domestic roles. A girl may be heroic in defense of her country or family, but ultimately the narrative drives her back to her sewing and she goes to it willingly.

On the topic of Catholicism and female identity, Aurora G. Morcillo’s True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco's Spain, is the authoritative text on the subject. The source’s main focus is how the Catholic Church’s version of female identity centered on reproduction and motherhood, but the 1950s came with a new wave of consumerism despite the rural focus of the economy. Despite the institutional pushback, women still studied at university and followed their faith. The Women’s Section emphasized focusing on authenticity regarding faith, and not performative faith to just follow expectations. Representatives of the Church “demonized women with intellectual aspirations,” according to Kathleen Richmond’s archival research, and this attitude caused tensions between Pilar Primo de Rivera and the Church. This perspective on the interactions between Church and state regarding female education is valuable in my own research, since oftentimes the relations between the Church and other facets of fascism are prioritized in the source base. In addition, the most salient contribution of Richmond’s individual work to the larger historical exchange is her point about how there was the “contradictory self-image of [SF’s] mandos [elite members] as both accepting of a deeply patriarchal system while themselves exercising a degree of

---

68 Harvey, 284.
70 Richmond, 56.
authority.”\textsuperscript{71} Since the SF took responsibility for the social, political, and domestic education of every woman, they heavily influenced “what kind of society was appropriate and desirable” to the public. This paradox combined with their incredibly large sphere of influence leads to questions about gendered power dynamics and how much these elite women believed in the message they spread.

The economic realities of Spain under Franco’s reign is another point of investigation and thought. How did the ideology of women staying within the home collide with the reality that many women had to work to support their families? Julia Hudson-Richards’ “‘Women Want to Work’: Shifting Ideologies of Women’s Work in Franco’s Spain, 1939-1962” focuses on the economic realities for women in differing social classes and Hudson-Richards asserts that the “new ideology did not reflect the reality of many working class Spanish women who found themselves working outside the home.”\textsuperscript{72} The familial financial demand for women to work along with the push for consumerism in the mid to late 1950s meant women were being pulled in different directions. They needed to simultaneously stay within the home and dedicate themselves to their families, they needed to buy certain products to be a good wife and mother, but they also often needed to work to support their husbands if they weren’t the wealthy elite.

Mary Nash’s \textit{Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War} continues to ask the question: in what ways did womanhood change after the Civil War and how much agency did women have in the process? Nash’s monograph brings new evidence about female minorities like prostitutes and anarchists, while many of the other

\textsuperscript{71} Richmond, 123.
works focus on the socially accepted women as the model to study. One vital group to look at is the “Mujeres Libres” (Free Women) group and the anarchist strategies to free women employed within the period. The rhetoric during the civil war and how not all mothers were docile but instead “combative mothers” is another point Nash brings to the existing source base. This source is noteworthy for both its breadth in study, but also because Nash asks and begins to answer the question of who purposefully didn’t follow the Sección Femenina and their standards? Who were the resisters and how did they live in and navigate a society they couldn’t accept? Nash argues that the loss of the Civil War for republicans are demoralizing and many acquiesced to the changing times, but select groups didn’t and their stories are needed to construct a more comprehensive picture. She further reveals how the dissenting group either resisted policies passively or, like with some elite members of the Free Women, left the country as political refugees and headed to France or further into Europe, taking their ideas with them.

**Conclusion**

In spite of the historical research hurdles COVID-19 presented, the research on this subject revealed a fascinating and significant facet of Franco’s Spain to be further studied and the lessons gleaned from the Sección Femenina can help inform discussion to this day. The Sección Femeina carved out a space for agency and women’s leadership within a Fascist, Nationalist government assured of their militaristic superiority and masculine culture. The feat of establishing and keeping power in such a structure is

---

74 Nash, 49.
consequential, but not universal. The published materials and occasional concessions to the Church meant that while the upper echelon of the Sección Femenina had more influence than expected, the average woman in Spain in the period 1939 to 1959 did not have the same access or education. The young girls of Spain learned primarily through the teachings of the Women’s Section, and so understanding this educational tension and complexities of the situation gives insight on generations of Spanish women.

Kathleen Richmond is one of the few historians who writes about the Sección Femenina with a perspective that allows for their own self-perception to be articulated, and her work is one of the cornerstone sources for this work. This approach is underused and so her research is valuable for its perspective. This thesis study has a place in the larger history of social change and cultural shifts in the post Civil-War period, and it contributes to historical groups beyond the admittedly understudied women’s history. Some preliminary studies of the connections to changing patterns of work and female role models in school books and literature point to a modernizing view of women in society. The progression during this twenty year period, as well as the context on both sides of the dictatorship, was not linear and the general goals within the Sección Femenina were not always precisely aligned. Harvey’s work on literary and legendary role models placed in textbooks for younger girls and how these examples of femininity and womanhood influence these girl’s perceptions of themselves and the Sección Femenina. Hudson-Richards is also an example of this preliminary work, arguing that women were pulled in two directions when they were expected to stay at home to be respectable, but economic pressures necessitated more women in the workforce.
Women’s Public Roles

Introduction

Even after Franco annexed the Sección Femenina, Pilar persisted in seeing her organization as a revolutionary one, “capable of transforming society through the efforts of its elite members.” Many of the elite members of the Sección Femenina held one trait in common; they could connect their names to well known figures from he Nationalist party during the Civil War. Many men of the Falange and Nationalist parties perished during and directly after the Spanish Civil War, leaving their female family members behind with similar missions and beliefs to shape Spanish society and culture. Having a recognizable tether to fallen comrades aided these women in accumulating political sway and power, but the ways the women exerted this power was firmly for their own convictions and goals.

The women within the Sección Femenina were as varied as the men on a battlefield, but their causes were not as unified as the nationalistic rhetoric might suggest. Within the SF these differences of opinion in how to properly affect change can be epitomized by the rivalry between Pilar Primo de Rivera and Mercedes Sanz Bachiller as women leaders within the SF. Organized in 1934, the Sección Femenina gave women a unique space to exercise agency and influence the lives of women throughout their country in an otherwise inhospitable political and cultural atmosphere. The Sección Femenina and the leadership opportunities it presented showcase how the elite women

75 Richmond, 4.
utilized their roles as traditional sisters, mothers, and widows of Falangist famous figures to find footholds in the power competition under Franco. How did women find ways to exert agency within the Sección Femenina? How did socioeconomic status affect leadership opportunities? Did women have leadership opportunities outside the Sección Femenina? Did the Sección Femenina make those opportunities available?

The elite of the Women’s Section are depicted sharing ideas and solidifying programs for the nation, surrounded by photographs and the crucifix. The people represented in the photo include Pilar, “Rosario Velasco, head of the department of Art and Decoration of the Central Service of Culture and Clara Stauffer, central assistant of Press and Propaganda.” The ratio of three women to one man is an unprecedented proportion of women making consequential decisions in a high-ranking government office, and the blend of militant and feminine dress is shown in the women’s clothing choices and hairstyles. Franco’s ideal Spain held the image of the perfect mother and dutiful woman as its central tenant, giving said women a certain kind of social power.

---

and influence as moral authorities.\textsuperscript{79} The historian Inbal Ofer, an Israeli historian argues that the “personal experiences of the SF members at the heart of Spain’s political power became a model for an array of policies and reforms that greatly improved the lives of Francoist women.”\textsuperscript{80} The elite women, known as \textit{jefes} or \textit{mandos} were heavily connected to the “formulation and implementation of national policies.”\textsuperscript{81} Due to this close connection between the personal lives of the leading women and the broader policies, a closer look at the lives and parallels between Pilar Primo de Rivera and Mercedes Sanz Bachiller gives a more complete picture and insight into the working realities for women. Additionally, the Sección Femenina and Franco’s core policies did not align completely, and according to social scientist Juan Linz this conflicting relationship was indicative of a typical authoritarian regime; the binding agent, in this case Catholicism, unites groups that otherwise would not coexist in harmony and the “regime” still needs constant negotiations between its “different sectors.”\textsuperscript{82} The balance was constantly in jeopardy and the \textit{mandos} of the Women’s Section needed to navigate these political waters for years; as their mission shifted away from the fading memory of the Civil War, so did their leadership style. These factors all influence how female leadership was perceived, how it functioned in reality, and the long-lasting consequences of these leaders within the nationalist regime and strongly Catholic culture.

The upper echelon of the Sección Femenina consisted of several subgroups, each with their own mission and directives. Pilar Primo de Rivera led the highest group of 150

\textsuperscript{79} Richmond, 33.
\textsuperscript{81} Ofer, 5,
Original with translation: “\textit{jefes}, bosses” or “\textit{mandos}, commanders”
\textsuperscript{82} Ofer, 5-6.
women, who “headed the organization’s political and administrative hierarchy at the
national level.” Then there were 120 provincial representatives, and each provincial
capital had their own professional services run by about 600 women in total. Lastly, there
were twenty women “who headed the Sección Femenina’s national schools...where
national leaders themselves, teachers, nurses and youth instructors were trained.”
Within the leadership of the SF, there were two “distinct generations...las fundadoras
[and las] Hermanas Pequeñas.” The older generations (the Founders) consisted of the
women who joined the SF before the year 1940, and they usually had either a close
relation to “leading Falangists” or they were professional nurses who practiced and joined
during the Civil War. In contrast, the second generation (the Young Sisters) joined after
the 1950s and came into contact with the SF through education (their universities) rather
than the turbulent Civil War. The distinctions between the generations, as determined by
later historians, does reveal the change over time and the fading influence of the Civil
War on vernacular and power plays. The Sección Femenina and its members at all levels
prided themselves on their formal teachings and published textbooks, but “the teachings
arguably had less impact in the long term than the role models of the teachers” By
analysing the lives of two prominent and respected women within the first twenty years
of Franco’s dictatorship and charting the change over time, there can be a deeper
understanding of who exactly ran the Sección Femenina and what kinds of opportunities
they tried to provide for themselves and for the general public.

---

83 Ofer, 6.
84 Ofer, 7.
85 Ofer, 8.
86 Ofer, 8.
87 Richmond, 12.
Pilar Primo de Rivera

To begin the analysis, the face of the Sección Femenina and an exemplary model of how women employed their status as relations to Falangist fallen figures, Pilar Primo de Rivera could be considered political royalty with how many significant connections she has to powerful men in the government. As mentioned, Pilar was the daughter of the former Spanish dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera and sister of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Falange. Unlike the majority of the other prominent women leaders at the time, Pilar was not a politically-significant widow or wife, but instead her connections centered around family. She “rejected marriage and motherhood” in her personal life, though these beliefs did not stop her from upholding traditional values and roles for the general public. In 1934, before the death of her brother in 1936, Pilar “applied her brother’s vision of a ‘Falange Revolution’ to her developing organization.”

The SF focused their wartime efforts on providing aid and supplies to men as well as focusing on the nurses, with the mission of mobilizing women for the Falangist cause. When the Civil War ended and the shift from battles to bureaucracy started, the SF’s mission changed accordingly and began to demobilize the women in the country and push them back into their homes and traditional roles in strict opposition to the norms of the Second Republic.

89 Salvado, 267.
90 Richmond, 0.
91 Ofer, Señoritas in Blue, 12.
In this period of transition, Pilar “reluctantly… accepted the political unification enforced by General Francisco Franco in April 1937 [and] gradually transferred her selfless devotion from José Antonio to the dictator,” finding and defending her space in the new hierarchy and even joining the party’s national council as well.\textsuperscript{92} Pilar endorsed the message of the Catholic Church and the traditional role of women as they define it, but she held personal reservations of how far the Catholic Church pushed into her affairs, in the face of her Catholic education growing up.\textsuperscript{93} In April 1960, “Franco rewarded her services with the title of Countess Castillo de la Mota,” but sixteen years later the SF dissolved and Pilar’s power diminished, though she did keep honorary leadership roles until 1991, the year of her death.\textsuperscript{94} It would be nigh impossible to study the Sección Femenian without learning about Pilar, but her views were not the only ones contributing to the Women’s Section and their mission. In fact, it is erroneous to say all the mandos were in complete agreement, and the rivalry between Pilar Primo de Rivera and Mercedes Sanz Bachiller is a noteworthy case.

\textbf{Mercedes Sanz Bachiller}

Mercedes Sanz Bachiller was not in direct opposition to Pilar, but their views and plans contrasted just enough that their rivalry grew infamous and their setbacks became the other’s victory. While Pilar rose in power via familial connections by blood, Sanz Bachiller instead had connections via marriage and through her relatability as a grieving widow and mother in the aftermath of the Civil War. In 1931, she married one of the

\begin{flushright}
\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{92} Salvado, 267. \\
\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{93} Richmond, 57. \\
\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{94} Salvado, 267-268.
\end{flushright}
leaders of the Spanish Falange, Onésimo Redondo. She constructed her political identity by emphasizing her motherhood, since she raised three children and the story of how “she had a miscarriage when she was informed of her husband’s death during the first week of the Civil War” endeared her to the Spanish public and made her story a rallying point for women who went through similar tragedies. In her grief and devastation, Sanz Bachiller devoted herself to social programs and through her familial connections to Redondo (via his brother Andrés), she became provincial chief of the Sección Femenina at Valladolid. She focused on providing clothes and food to soldiers on the front, and her heart wrenching personal story in tandem with her patriotic good deeds helped her become the “inspiring force behind the establishment of the main institution of welfare under General Francisco Franco: Auxilio Social (Social Aid).”

Social aid and services were potentially the “most wide-reaching” instance of the SF’s influence into women’s lives. This social aid branch utilized the rhetoric and expectations surrounding women at the time to be mothers and expanded it to include all of Spain’s children.

For example, the photograph above demonstrates visually how women of the Sección

---

96 Salvado, 303.
97 Salvado, 303.
98 Richmond, 17.
Femenina and the Auxilio Social provided warm food and health supplies to families in need. The mother accepting the food is accompanied by her child, showcases the Social Aid’s intended audience and the motivation for these community-based activities. Furthermore, Sanz Bachiller established the “Auxilio de Invierno,” heavily drawing inspiration from “Nazi Germany’s Winterhilfe.” Her efforts to create and oversee philanthropic endeavors of such magnitude earned her public recognition and a position of leadership in the public’s eyes.

The combination of Sanz Bachiller’s rapid success and her decision to capitalize on Franco’s “mistrust of the fascist party’s old guard” generated a tension and eventual rivalry between Sanz Bachiller and Pilar Primo de Rivera. Pilar’s authority would eventually triumph against Sanz Bachiller, but not before the leader of the Auxilio Social earned significant achievements and made a lasting mark on the memory of the Spanish people. In May 1937, the “Auxilio Social...was recognized as an independent service from the SF” and about five months later Franco allowed for an extension of her organization in the form of the “Servicio Social de la Mujer, a sort of female military service.” However, Pilar was not her only opponent in the political ring and the Catholic Church firmly frowned upon her actions and organization. When she remarried in 1939 “she lost her status as [the] widow of one of the heroes of the crusade” and her reputation could be attacked far more viciously and directly than before. The protection

---

102 Salvado, 303.
103 Salvado, 267.
104 Salvado, 303. Original: Woman’s Social Service.
of her hero husband’s name, which helped galvanize her political successes, disappeared
and her political opponents did not hesitate to move against her. Similar to the American
treatment of Jackie Kennedy when she remarried and earned her nickname of “Jackie-O,”
the Spanish people felt betrayed that Sanz Bachiller was not an eternally grieving widow.
In the eyes of the public, she was no longer the grieving and devout widow to a war hero,
but a woman who not only remarried but moved on from her Holy Mother public image.

The couple’s rivals accused the newlyweds of embezzlement and by May 1940,
Sanz Bachiller lost her leadership post at Auxilio Social and had reduced leadership
opportunities for the years to come.105 The life and lessons within Sanz Bachiller’s
biographical information illuminate how similar circumstances can shape a female
leader's life differently, since Pilar and Sanz Bachiller approached their roles as
exemplary women and leaders in the community from differing perspectives. While Pilar
pushed towards women being educated—but in specific, traditional fields—Sanz
Bachiller wanted to consolidate power for women and create more sub-organizations and
spades for women to hold power and exert influence on the masses.

**Connections and Conclusions**

The lives of Pilar and Sanz Bachiller give a glimpse into the overarching lives of
the leaders within the Sección Femenina, and how they utilized their connections to
capitalize on the opportunity to create their own space in Franco’s government. They
made use of their “[positions] as the fiancés, widows or sisters of powerful politicians in
order to obtain a foothold at the top of the public pyramid.”106 It was not only the early

---

105 Salvado, 303.
106 Ofer, 11.
years, since “in 1970, an International Women’s Congress was organized in Madrid, chaired by Carmen Polo and Princess Sofía, whose conclusions would be published by the magazine *Consigna*. Women in royalty or married to dictators, their leadership showed the public that women could embody traditional values and still find power and positions with which to shape change, even if that change is a return to older ideals.

\[\text{107 Martinez, 144.}
\]

Original: “En 1970 se organizó en Madrid un Congreso Internacional de la Mujer, presidido por Carmen Polo de Franco y la princesa Sofía, cuyas conclusiones serán publicadas por la revista *Consigna.*”
Women’s Education

Introduction

The education implemented by the Sección Femenina needed to walk a fine line, since the organization firmly disapproved of the intellectualism of the Second Republic, but they simultaneously wanted to encourage the reading and understanding of their publications. One way the Women’s Section balanced was when, in 1945, the Sección Femenina took over the “implementation of the Servicio Social de la Mujer (Woman’s Social Service).” Women went for about six months, and to graduate form the Servicio Social de la Mujer one needed to complete a series of courses in religion, child care and family values. It was obligatory for any “unmarried woman, between the ages of 17 and 35, who aspired to a job in the civil service, a professional qualification or even to obtain a passport or driving license.” This type of education aligned with the values and structure the Sección Femenina wanted to create in Spain, and by having a training period of six months, the women could complete the whole program quickly and not neglect their duties back home. This contrasted with the average university education, which consisted of three years of schooling, and thus removed women from the domestic sphere for a more significant amount of time.

In instances when formal education was not a viable option, for either the student or the teacher, the Sección Femenina “promoted female education and culture in the belief that women were de facto educators of their children.” This meant that many mothers didn’t relieve education beyond what they needed to teach small children, but

---

108 Richmond, 18.
110 Richmond, 10.
more significantly this meant mothers became the conduit of moral value between any materials the mothers read to the malleable minds of their children. However, the reality that not all women would marry or be indefinitely supported by their family meant that some women needed to be prepared to support themselves, and the Sección Femenina helped devise training for such a reality.\textsuperscript{111} While the leadership levels of the Women’s Section held well-educated, high achieving women of status, the general public of Spain had access to different information with differing aims. While the situation was not zero sum in nature, there was more Fascist and Nationalist rhetoric and traditional assumptions in play within the Sección Femenina’s multitude of published materials.

**Education Historical Context**

The Spanish power base, starting with the royal family, has been intertwined with the Catholic Church dating back to the Roman Empire, and the religious institution only gained prestige and influence during the long struggle for reconquest between 711 and 1492, when the Catholic Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand (Los Reyes Católicos) finally defeated the caliphate and reclaimed the Iberian peninsula permanently. Since that religious and political victory, the impact of the Church on Spanish society, culture, and politics cannot be understated and the religious morals can be found steadily influencing Spanish politics for centuries. In the first twenty years or so of Franco’s dictatorship, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Sección Femenina started as close partners, but shifted over time as the SF needed their rhetoric less to maintain their power and reputation. Historical figures such as Queen Isabella, St. Teresa, and the Virgin Mary

\textsuperscript{111} Richmond, 10.
became monumental role models and the Church integrated their life stories and moral lessons into standard education throughout the country.\textsuperscript{112} The ideal for womanhood returned to the Catholic mold more and more once Franco reestablished it as the norm, ending about a decade when that model and values were diminished during the Second Republic. How the women of Spain interacted with the Church and how the Sección Femenina’s relationship with the Church affected their policies is a key factor in understanding the realities for women in the 1940s and 50s and how they shaped their self-identity due to outside forces.

The Catholic Church was significantly involved in education historically, but especially younger education, starting with Sunday School during church hours. Since teaching principles and virtues from a Catholic perspective was the common practice of the time, most areas of education relied on Catholic methods in their education process. The Sunday School teachings of saint lives helped confer moral judgements and life lessons while the structure prepared small children for formal schooling. Catholic Church had a near monopoly on younger education for a long time, as well as Jesuit schools that taught the elite classes. According to Consuelo García and her work on the University of Sevilla, most “Catholic teacher colleges reinforced women’s roles as wives and mothers… [and] by law, women were never of age.”\textsuperscript{113} The enforcement of social expectations happened in these types of universities and colleges, and so the expectations aligned with reality and passed from teacher or mentor to student or child from generation to generation during Franco’s dictatorship Several key Catholic tenets were

\textsuperscript{112} Richmond, 13.
repealed throughout school curriculum, one of which being the “sacred duty … to be a mother,”\textsuperscript{114} which was heavily in line with the dominant Catholic precedent. Similarly, divorce was morally and legally inadmissible due to the conservative politics and strict religious teachers and societal leaning.\textsuperscript{115} Lastly, the topic of obedience and subservience resurges in both the educational rhetoric used in books, but also the publications in major cities, One such point is how a woman must “obey, and by your example teach others to obey”\textsuperscript{116} from the “18-point creed.”\textsuperscript{117} One memorable line includes the advice to “try always to be the wheel of the cart and let the one guiding it be in control,” highlighting how the document urged women to relinquish their agency and control to the male figures in their lives.\textsuperscript{118}

The education of young girls extended far beyond the schoolyard, and many mothers and caretakers completed a large portion of the children’s education from within the sphere of the home. Even though women still accessed higher education in Spanish universities, the upbringing and education of younger girls and teenagers moved away from organized schooling in public school to more specialized, domestic work. The topics covered by the umbrella term “education” ranged from manners, guidelines for behavior in public, and traditional schooling in needlework and home economics. In concert with the embedded image of the Catholic Madonna figure, the loss of certain legal and economic rights for women under the SF pushed mothers to teach from within the home and prepare their daughters for a drastically different future than offered during

\textsuperscript{114} Enders, Victoria Lorée; Radcliff, Pamela Beth. Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain. SUNY Press, 1999, 376.
\textsuperscript{116} Morcillo, 25.
\textsuperscript{117} Mahaney, 13.
\textsuperscript{118} Mahaney, 13.
the Second Republic. During the first period of Franco and the SF’s time in power, the
government could be intrusive in its decrees and many officials had a “critical opinion of
women’s ability to cope as mothers without the intervention of medical experts.”

Pseudo-science and a resurgence and emphasis on traditional female roles in past
centuries solidified the fates of many women, starting with a reversal of Republican
norms and surge of traditional ideals, exemplified in an earlier behavior guide for women
that the Sección Femenina drew upon as source material for their own publications.

Worn where many hands rubbed away the cover’s fabric and with pages yellowed
by time, the original manual consists of eight chapters covering how to properly hold a
conversation through the order in which to clean the house. The title of the manual, “La
Joven Bien Educada: Lecciones de Urbanidad para Niñas y Adultas” translates to “The
Well-Educated Young Woman: Lessons on Courtesy for Girls and Adults.”

The age range implied by using the words for both “girl” and “adult woman” implies a breadth to
the teachings found within, advertising them as simultaneously foundational for the youth
but also necessary for adult women to implement into their daily lives. The manual
begins in earnest with a self-proclaimed “warning” and concise outline of their message,
focusing on the religious and moral rules that dictate how a well-educated girl behaves in
Spanish society.

In their own words, the ideal young woman possesses “a plain and
simple style” to compliment her quiet work and place in the home.

While the SF did

519 Richmond, 23.
520 María Orberá. La Joven Bien Educada: Lecciones de Urbanidad para Niñas y Adultas.
Villalba, 1891, 2.
521 Orberá, 2.
Original: “las reglas, que basadas en la religión y en la moral”
522 Orberá, 3.
Original: “Adoptado un estilo llano y sencillo”
not pen these words, since the guide was published in 1891, the procedures and methods for organizing the information acts as a guide not only to the intended readers but also to the women of the SF decades later.

The board that published the behavioral guide needed to justify their claims and so decided to state their peer-editing process. Before “giving birth” to this work, they presented it to others of a similar and qualified mind, and their only intent in distributing the work was to help the education of young girls.\textsuperscript{123} The particular phrase “dar [la] luz” translates literally to “to give a light,” but the common use of it is closer to the English phrase “to give birth,” adding an interesting connotation to the passage explaining the creation of the manual.

The Franco dictatorship wanted to stress how it completely annulled the cultural and political beliefs of the Second Republic. The reactionary nature of the movement against the republic meant that many practices and expectations were actively reversed, including women's rights.\textsuperscript{124} The Second Republic, also known as the Silver Age in Spanish history, was cut short by the infamous Civil War from 1936-1939, which was when Franco rose to power with the intent of eradicating the progress made during the Republic and redirecting Spain and its people towards an idealistic version of the Golden Age of the Spanish Empire, or the reign of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.\textsuperscript{125} Franco and the Sección Femenina did not see this balanant erasure as negative or reversing progress, but as realigning with the values that made Spain incredibly successful in the

\textsuperscript{123} Orberá, 3. 
Original: “réstanos advertir, que antes decidirnos á dar á luz este humilde trabajo, lo hemos presentado un examen de personas ilustradas…”

\textsuperscript{124} Martínez, 12.

\textsuperscript{125} Richmond, 1.
past. They hoped for a more unified, triumphant future. The absolute power of the
monarchies was an inspiration for both Franco and Pilar, with their role models being
Ferdinand and Isabella respectively. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in Spanish are
called *Los Reyes Cátolicos*, the Catholics Rulers, and their legacy of reconquering Spain
in the name of the Catholic church from the longstanding Muslim occupation shaped
Spanish culture and society for centuries. However, a long lasting approval and close
political relationship with the Catholic church was not Isabella’s only legacy. Her
reputation for being powerful and pious, monstrous against Muslims and Jews yet
maternal in her household set the standard for the ideal, conservative Spanish woman and
the Sección Femenina undoubtedly adopted that image as their own in magazines and
fashion statements.¹²⁶ The Women’s Section examined the past, especially prominent
female figures in their recent history, and used these women’s renown as well as their
political power to reshape the proposed, ideal society.

Since the Women’s Section took responsibility for the social, political, and
domestic education of every woman, they heavily influenced “what kind of society was
appropriate and desirable” to the public.¹²⁷ This paradox combined with their incredibly
large sphere of influence leads to questions about gendered power dynamics and how
much these socially elite women believed in the message they spread. One way this was
most clearly shown was how the Sección Femenina pushed the education of children onto
the mothers as their responsibility, yet these same mothers received limited education in
any official capacity and certainly very few received a teaching degree. The Women’s
Section did not “go out of its way to create new schools because it insisted that it was

¹²⁶ Richmond, 38.
¹²⁷ Morcillo, 4.
first the responsibility of individuals and families” to provide basic education to young children, especially younger girls.\textsuperscript{128} The topics of education could range from mathematics to needlework, depending on the education and skill level of the mother and the time she had to spend with the children. Access to education became delineated by socioeconomic class, and the average day differed greatly between a mandos and one member of her target audience.

This photograph depicts Francisco Franco inaugurating the Women's Section Instructor School in 1951.\textsuperscript{129} The main focus of the shot is the rows of girls participating in physical education, which was a significant facet of the Sección Femenina’s mission for establishing their working definition of womanhood. While “distancing itself from any charge of feminism,” the Women’s Section wanted to pursue innovation in the field of sports and physical education for women.\textsuperscript{130} Innovative is exactly how Pilar wanted to be seen, since she claimed all physical education and female sports were considered improper before her rise to her position as leader of the Women’s Section. She rebranded physical education and sports to focus almost entirely on women’s health,
stating that having sports in a more controlled environment than for leisure or pleasure meant that physical education was more effective in helping foster discipline and improve eugenics for Spanish women new to the sports. Social control became an additional aim for the physical education program form the State’s perspective, but the Women’s Section persisted in using it as an opportunity for international travel and to widen their acceptable spaces in society. Eventually, with time the sports of the state became spectator events as well, but still in the capacity to highlight Franco’s nation and its ideals of tradition, unity, and discipline. The ideals of discipline weren’t always well received by the public, and the SF had more success linking good health and easier childbirth to physical education than creating a stronger sense of Spanish pride, but the realities of the sports program supported women in travel and in an economic sense. In the process of translating their ideals into reality, the tensions between their words and actions became more apparent. The ambiguities within the content of the Sección Femenina’s educational programs expanded beyond the sport’s field and into the traditional sphere with sewing.

In the specific, but exemplary, case of formal education in girls schools, the friction between their prominent physical education initiative and the push for a stronger home economics program is accentuated in the comparison of two photos. The young girls shown sewing in this image below are a visual representation of the home economic curriculum and emphasis placed on home-making skills. The close proximity and grouping of the girls reveals the community aspect of sewing and how these skills with

needlework and in the kitchen could help girls socially as well as in their personal lives as sisters and future wives. As Muñoz argues in her article “La Sección Femenina de Falange. Discursos y prácticas en Madrid,” the speeches of key members of the Sección Femenina didn’t align with the documented activities and major educational programs, even to the rural or provincial level.\textsuperscript{135} The “contradictions between the speeches of Sección Femenina of Falange and their practices” exhibited the complexity to their educational plans and how they balanced their larger, Nationalistic mission with their personal freedoms and the programs that lay cool to their hearts.\textsuperscript{136} Significantly, not every woman willingly joined the SF or their ability to juggle differing views within the organization.

Starting in the tumultuous Civil War, a group of women gathered under the banner of personal freedom and rights for all women; they fought an uphill battle against Franco and the Sección Femenina’s proffered standards. The most famous of these women was Dolores Ibárruri, or more commonly known as La Pasionaria.\textsuperscript{137} Her life and legacy gives


\textsuperscript{136} Soraya Gahele Muñoz, 389. Original: “las contradicciones existentes entre los discursos de la Sección Femenina de Falange y sus propias prácticas”

\textsuperscript{137} Dolores Ibárruri. “Farewell Address.” Barcelona, Spain, November 1, 1938.
a stellar example of how many of these women identified as they fought the system. They wanted to have more rights, see their version of Spain in the light once more, all while still conforming to several key social expectations, particularly concerning motherhood and their role as teachers and nurturers. Additionally, the term “feminist” held different connotations than it does today, and the diaspora of the left women after the Civil War meant many had to flee Spain and brought their ideas, morals, and strength to neighboring countries to help with other, similar movements.

The major issue this group of women faced was the fact that they could not make and maintain a unified group. Smaller pockets of free women groups existed and protested vehemently across Spain, but a lack of coherent communication and aligning goals kept them from working together, to the detriment of their cause and to the good fortune of Franco. Activists working against the conservative concept of feminism did so under many different banners and never united as a uniform, opposing group. Nash, in her work *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War*, reveals how the dissenting group either resisted policies passively or, like with some elite members of the Free Women, left the country as political refugees and headed to France or further into Europe. This dispersion meant that many of the bright minds of Spain survived to spread their ideals elsewhere, but unfortunately it simultaneously means Spain did not benefit from their minds, lives, or messages.

The definition and study of feminism has dramatically shifted over time, so to use that word in regards to the Sección Femenina would go against their own perception of themselves and place their nuanced goals into a rigid box. According to historian Karen

---

138 Flecha García, 22.
139 Nash, 7.
Offen, the traditional and dictionary definition of feminins is “a theory and/or movement concerned with advancing the position of women through such means as achievementment of political, legal, or economic rights equal to those granted men ([her] emphasis).”140 The Sección Femenina, as the paper will discuss later, was not concerned so much with the advancement of women as it was a return to traditional womanhood and embracing being a daughter, wife, and mother. That said, the historian argues further in the article how her working definition of feminism “seeks to destroy masculinist hierarchy but not sexual dualism. Feminism is necessarily pro-woman… it does not follow that it must be anti-man.”141 This duality does work better with the Sección Femenina, but doesn’t erase the fact that the SF took pride in being a far cry from femininst and firmly endorsing and supporting the patriarchy in the authoritarian regime. In Spanish and dating to the post-WWII vocabulary, “feminist’ amounted to little more than an ill-defined slur used to discredit women deemed troublesome by Francoist society.”142 Even today the word still shows some negative connotations, but to understand the public disapproval and disdain the free women faced, there is a vitriol in the connotations.

In this 1958 collection of rules, called “Good Wife’s Guide,” the expectations for good wives were condensed into succinct single sentences with an accompanying bright illustration.143 One of the first squares advises women to “have a delicious meal ready for

---

141 Offen, 151.
when your husband gets back from work. Especially his favorite dish. Offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, relaxed, pleasant tone.”

Starting with the first direct command, the expectation of having a hot meal ready whenever the husband arrives home is not too surprising considering how the 1950s were for many nations, but the list gradually escalated to making the food his favorite, taking off his shoes in a servient manner, and even regulating the volume and tone of the their voice at home once the man of the house is within its walls. While cumbersome and degrading, these rules and

---

expectations are not outlandish considering the time period and traditional push. The Sección Femenina reinforced these expectations and domestic requirements with propaganda-like images like this one.

On the subject of noise, women’s voices, and being able to speak within the household, another several prominent squares on the panel warns women, upon the arrival of their husband, to “minimize any noise. At the time of arrival, eliminate the humming of the washing machine or vacuum cleaner. Say hello to him with a warm smile and show him your desire to please him. Listen to him, let him talk first. Remember that his talking points are more important than yours.”

The obligation for a “warm” smile and forced happiness and gratitude depicts a cold household, and there is an element of performance on the wives’ part in pleasing their husband and acting appropriately excited for their return home. The need for quiet that men demanded intensified to the point where the Sección Femenina reminded their female readers that “his talking points [were] more important than [theirs].” Women were to listen and avoid speaking, and when they were permitted to speak they were supposed to talk in a warm, submissive tone. This striking example illuminates the extent the Sección Femenina disseminated material about traditional domestic roles for women.

The education of women ranged from their table manners to their personal conduct within the home and on the streets, and the way the Sección Femenina disseminated these messages and morals gives a great insight on the way the organization

---

Original: “Minimiza cualquier ruido. En el momento de su llegada, elimina zumbidos de lavadora o aspirador. Salúdale con una cálida sonrisa y demuéstrale tu deseo de complacerle. Escúchale, déjale hablar primero. Recuerda que sus temas de conversación son más importantes que los tuyos.”
functioned and its priorities. Its messages reached urban and rural communities alike, working to influence beyond social class and geographic region.
The Catholic Church and Morality

The Sección Femenina and the Church

The Sección Femenina survived the Civil War, but both this group and the Spanish people in general were tired of war, change, and an unknown future. General Franco recognized he needed a strong ally in establishing his expectations and vision for Spain, yet feared unknown powers and so turned to the tried and true institution within Spain. One year after the founding of the far-right fascist Falange in 1933, Pilar organized six other young women into the Sección Femenina “at the behest of her brother.”146 Even before he fully established his dictatorship, Franco and his regime insisted on calling the period of turmoil and transition a “Crusade.”147 The far-right Nationalists framed the Civil War as a righteous crusade against the principles and values of the Second Republic and its loyalists. The specific use of the word “la cruzada” carried religious connotations of investment and victorious conquest associated with the term “crusade,” and it put the men and women fighting for the Second Republic firmly in a group considered “other” and thus the enemy and unpatriotic. The Women’s Section filled with more mothers, wives, and sisters who wanted to lead by example, and this swell of involvement revealed how the public image as “do-gooders and avenging angels” bolstered the Sección Femenina and their recruitment base throughout Spain, from the northern mountains to the southern beaches.148 Pushing back against the Second Republic and its ideals and its more secular focus, a prevalent Catholic argument asserted

148 Richmond, 15.
that feminism was wholly “unnatural, and a woman [who veered] from her predetermined role [as a mother and domestic woman] was condemning herself to life as a sinner.” 149

The Sección Femenina included such declarations in their recruitment propaganda and enticed many of the more devout Catholics to their organizations due to the combined prioritization of charitable deeds and more traditional roles.

As more women understood the message and motives of the SF, do help the Falange and embrace their traditional female roles in an effort to support their side of the war, the more vital the branch became and Franco ended up giving full authority to Pilar to oversee the women of Spain. Franco invested Pilar with significant authority to develop educational programs and media directed to the women of Spain. While the Sección Femenina utilized religious language and many of their goals aligned with the Catholic Church, on the topic of female education the ties became murkier. Since the Sección Femenina actively support paid female employment, even encouraging it so long as it is fully within the perceived duty as a mother or conscious member of the community, the more traditional Catholic members stated that women should not leave the circle of the home for any reason.150 This ambiguity in the relationship between the SF and the Church is the focus of this chapter, and it will delve deeper into how the Women’s Section used some of the long-standing Catholic traditions to support their cause and how their differences occasionally caused ideological clashes.

Unlike other European examples of Fascism that did not survive the Second World War, notably Italy and Germany, the Sección Femenina remarkably “maintained its

150 Richmond, 21.
original structure, ideology and program” with only slight changes for the entirety of Franco’s time in power. This consistency aided in cementing his new expectations for generations of women growing up both in urban and rural environments, making it so his changes appeared more like a return to better times than an additional upheaval of Spanish identity. According to Kathleen Richmond, “the SF took responsibility for the social, political and domestic education of all women and girls,” where they reorganized education and utilized existing public education systems Pilar focused on the aspect of education in all facets of life, but especially home crafts and behavior expectations outside of the house. In agreement with Richmond, Victoria Enders contributes to the historiography by stating how “in its official capacity as the sole state organization for women charged with the formation of Spanish womanhood, the Sección Femenina purveyed an amalgam of traditional Catholic and Falangist values to several decades of Spanish females.” The early years of the Women’s Section, from its conception in the 1930s to the beginning of World War II, are the focal point of this chapter, which pays special attention due to online, digitized resources from the years 1939-1941 in magazines and other publications.

In the eyes of the public, Pilar and her elite mandos placed themselves within the structure of their organization as highly visible members of the community. They portrayed themselves as virtuous leaders, yet relatable enough that their example felt within reach of the Spanish women; furthermore, the Sección Femenina urged the women to reach for this ideal in their daily lives as much as they could. Additionally, the

---

151 Richmond, 4.
152 Richmond, i.
153 Enders, 376.
Women’s Section and Pilar strove in general towards the “the creation of an ideal femininity that would place women above criticism,” giving women educational and some professional opportunities without challenging the established male authority.\textsuperscript{154} The “SF propaganda continually stressed the humanitarian nature of its work” and Pilar blended her own personal history with her brother, the idealistic founder of the Falange, with the general expectations and experiences of women throughout the nation.\textsuperscript{155} With the political and economic climate filled with uncertainty after the Civil War, the possible stability offered enticed many to accept these views. Moreover, the religious rhetoric and invoking of Biblical passages contributed to the comprehensive and swift acceptance of the organization, including its focus on self-regulation and helping others. The emphasis and revitalization of folk-tales and traditionally rural celebrations in education also fostered a deeper sense of identity with Spanish roots.

Yet most importantly of all, “underpinning [the SF’s] programs was the philosophy that women needed to take responsibility for their own development.”\textsuperscript{156} While on the surface the Sección Femenina can be viewed as entirely regressive or oppressive, the female governance and authority in their sector helped long-lasting, positive impacts on female education and participation in religious affairs. The Women's Section, changing as leaderships positions were filled by younger women and the memory of the War faded, lasted the full span of Franco’s dictatorship, yet by “1981 the new State had completely dismantled the extensive women's organization that had permeated the educational, social, and cultural fabric of Spanish society.”\textsuperscript{157} The focus on

\textsuperscript{154} Richmond, 10.  
\textsuperscript{155} Richmond, 11.  
\textsuperscript{156} Richmond, 13.  
\textsuperscript{157} Enders, 377.
religion changed over time, but in the beginning of the Sección Femenina and the Fascist dictatorship, the organizations utilized and promoted religious figures and terminology in order to support their more secular ideas and causes. Institutionalized religion and the longstanding culture of Catholicism influenced the Women’s Section and their mission and their literary models, but in turn the SF used the entrenched Catholic norms to support and legitimize their newer organization. They reinforced the religious language and modeling of exemplary women to create unity and a sense of shared experience for their people.

Rhetoric and Informal Learning

The childhood of a young girl in Granada was told in one article of the 12th publication of “Y” from the early years of Franco’s and the SF’s time in power, in 1939. One of the introductory paragraphs about the protagonist describes how “after the name of "Dad" she learned those of Jesus and Mary.” The priorities in language education and familial structure are telling in this one line. The exact verb for “to learn” is used, so there is the inference of purposeful teaching in the translation and the informal use of “papá” instead of “padre” shows how this education happens at an incredibly young age. Most importantly, though, is that the first name taught is Dad, followed by the prominent religious figures Jesus and Mary, and then presumably “Mom” is taught, placing fourth in the ideal naming hierarchy. The mother was probably the one teaching these names and concepts to her child, but the social and religious pressure pushed mothers to prioritize the men in the family and the religious figures before themselves.

The care and education of infants and young children was of great interest to the Sección Femenina, and they also published childcare manuals throughout the 1940s, insisting that Spanish women should not employ foreign nannies, for the risk they posed in the upbringing of true Spanish children.\textsuperscript{159} This expectation of education meant that women could not remain completely passive in the home; instead, they needed to actively influence and educate their children so they follow the correct path. The magazines were a creative way to transmit the missions of the Women’s Section to many mothers and “blend” political articles with more domestic concerns like recipes, interior design, or home decor.\textsuperscript{160} The Catholic faith and lessons became a regular feature in these publications from the central command of the Sección Femenina and permeated the household all the way to the youngest children.

The intertwining of faith and the Sección Femenia was apparent in the magazine \textit{Medina} when the series of chants and prayers were published in the first section of the booklet. Looking at this example of a cover, the focus on young girls and instilling useful household skills, like using a sewing machine, are apparent.\textsuperscript{161} The well-dressed, curious girls are looking at the miniature sewing machine happily and broadcasting their interest in the subject. This type of propaganda imagery connects well with the

\textsuperscript{159} Richmond, 18.  
\textsuperscript{160} Richmond, 16.  
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Medina}. 1945, cover page.
religious tones of the articles as the Sección Femenina incorporates tradition expectations and religious rhetoric. The opening line “the Sección Femenina will do the spiritual exercises or, failing that, the Lenten conferences” opens the door to all the different ways the Sección Femenina can dictate the wording for prayers or redirect the attention of practitioners towards their own goals. These repeated lessons and dialogues demonstrate how the SF utilizes the solid foundation of Catholicism to help support their burgeoning branch of Franco’s government. Richmond explains that “religion was acknowledged as an ingredient of Spanish nationhood” but that “the Church” also held the power to harm the regime. The difference between religious beliefs and the institution of the Church, with a capital “C”, exhibits the threat an organized, influential group had on the burgeoning Falange, yet the strength the regime found in faith made the possible compromise with the Church worthwhile.

The Sección Femenina published monthly magazines titled “Y” and “Medina” consistently during their time in power, and these widespread publications were one of the main vehicles for the Women’s Section’s message to women and how they reached such a broad audience. The title for “Y” simply means “And,” for the magazine extrapolated on common trends or touched on global happenings as they pertain to the average Spanish woman. The iconography of the Y is also known as Isabella’s “Y,” a religious and feminine symbol that readers at the time would be well acquainted with and associate with their faith. The revista (magazine/journal) titled “Medina” was in truth

---

162 Medina. December 10, 1941, 2. Original: La Sección Femenina hará los Ejercicios Espirituales o, su defecto, las conferencias cuaresmales.
163 Richmond, 2-3.
164 Laura Wagner Tinoco. “La Sección Femenina de Falange española.” La Universidad de Málaga, 4.
titled with a more common female name for the time period, one with Arabic origins and literally translating to “City of the Prophet,” referring to the city of Medina most closely tied to Islam. These two publications ran for over twenty years each, and they include articles directly related to the aims of the SF, peripherally related by commenting on neighboring Fascist regimes like in Italy or telling anecdotes filled with moral lessons to be learned. The audience of these magazines were literate, mostly urban women that probably had at least comfortable wealth; many of the magazines begin with fashion or etiquette advice for the average Spanish housewife. These magazines did not only introduce fashion standards to the public but also educational ideas and the religious influence on the regime.

One of the reasons Y was such a powerful source was because it directly reveals the motives and agenda of the SF as they themselves presented it to the female, literate audience. An instance of this politically-minded speech occurs when Pilar wrote in the 1939 article concerning the recent election. She penned, “it was the Falange that was firm on the front line for their service and sacrifice. They had received command orders to help anyone who thought they were less evil, not better, there was nothing good. There was nothing but people who were tired and worn out.” The Civil War had just concluded and the Spanish people were exhausted, politically and physically. José Antonio created his facet of the Falange during wartime when tensions were spiralling higher and higher and the fighting felt endless. The Sección Femenina that Pilar inherited

165 “Revista Para la Mujer” Y. June, 1940.
166 Pilar Primo de Rivera. “Historia de la Sección Femenina.” Sumario. Enero, 1939, 12. Original: “Y llegaron las elecciones. La Falange firme en la primera línea, para el Servicio y el Sacrificio fue quien las preparó. Habían recibido órdenes del mando de ayudar a quien se creyera menos malo, no mejores, no había nada bueno. No había nada más que gente funesta y gastada.”
dealt with a different audience, the lines defining the target audience as anyone “less evil” meant the Women’s Section wanted to absorb and convert as many women to their cause as possible, even if they were not explicitly on Franco’s side since the onset of the war. The understanding that the people “were tied and worn” made the SF’s job of gathering them under a banner and leading them with strong rhetoric and guidelines easier; however, this attitude extended to the members of the SF as well. The SF purposefully decided to create additional annual celebrations to bolster spirits and tie the creation of happiness to the involvement of the SF. About five years after the war ended, one such celebration was the feast of the Virgin of Pilar.

Similar to how Franco’s face became the face of the Spanish people, Pilar’s poise and presence became the epitome of Spanish womanhood and the people celebrated her in the streets and within their homes. In the early 1940s, the magazine Medina put the message, “on the 12th, the feast of the Virgin of Pilar, our National Delegate celebrates her name day. For this reason, the SF reiterates to Comrade Pilar Primo de Rivera its heartfelt devotion and its faith in achieving the high ideals that the Falange has placed in its hands” front and center on the third page of the edition. Culturally, there are many religious celebrations for saints or folktales throughout the calendar year, but the elevation of this position signifies the depth of her power and her presence in the minds of the Spanish people. The framing of the message, presented as the Women’s Section paying tribute and “heartfelt devotion” to their leader, was a way to inspire by example,

---

Original: “El día 12, festividad de la Virgen del Pilar, celebra su fiesta onomástica nuestra Delegada Nacional. Con este motivo, la Sección Femenina reitera a la camarada Pilar Primo de Rivera su entrañable devoción y su fé en el logro de los altos ideales que la Falange ha depositado en sus manos.”
hinting to the audience that they too should give their faith and praise to the female leader. However, the SF’s social deeds and “actively promoting paid female employment” contradicted “many Catholic circles” that wanted women in the home one-hundred percent of the time.168

On the topic of important revivals of folk traditions, the dances and clothes also returned to older customs. The photograph of a community folk dancing in 1959 reveals the many aspects of folk traditions that the Sección Femenina affected and influenced as they restored many older ceremonies and practices.169 The older dresses led to more women sewing in traditional manners and finding new cloth patterns advertised in magazines, while the Sección Femenina began to collect rural songs and dance choreographies to preserve these regional traditions and central the many different ways to celebrate Spanish culture.

The equilibrium between her image as a “comrade” and as an authority figure before the masses shifted as the times changed and Pilar’s audience expanded. The

---

168 Richmond, 21.
emphasis on “high ideals” and her responsibility and success with these expectations created the image of a benevolent, yet productive, leader and teacher for the women of Spain to follow. She leads the mandos (elites) of the Sección Femenina by example, and the authors of the SF’s magazines convey these lessons, ranging from aspects as lofty as spirituality and as essential and ordinary as life skills and manners for daily meals. The specifics of silverware and place settings were dedicated to the avid readers of Y in 1939. The “brief doctrinal of the silverware and napkin” reveals how even the smallest details were planned out in the publications. Housekeeping and place setting were considered well within the purview of women, because “women’s work generally did not compete with that of men but served to bolster the family.” The ideal of all women being well trained in etiquette spread and the order and taste of proper table settings was a facet of this homemaking education.

The fable-like short stories, another vital facet of public education of women via magazines and print publications, conveyed clear, explicit messages about family and faith. In another edition of Y, a short story called “A Flower of Granada” focuses on a young girl’s struggles within her family, the beatification process that caused her martyrdom at 21 years old, and the role of her mother as Conchita became a culturally consequential figure. Known as the Flower of Alhambra, Conchita started out as a normal girl until she started to feel extreme spiritual and physical pain, according to the SF. The story portrays the young girl Conchita as someone who “not only knew the bitter pains of a disease, but also those of the spirit. Filial love was her characteristic virtue. Her

---

170 Richmond, 21.
172 Richmond, 9.
sufferings worried her parents so acutely that they produced mental disorders in her mother.”

The morals of these lines showcase the expectations for both young women and the older generation of mothers in Spain. The daughter, Conchita, is constantly filled with filial love despite all the pain she is enduring, and yet this same pain is causing her mother such turmoil out of her material love. It is a circle with no clear winner, but the primary characteristic of devotion is emphasized in both women’s plotlines. The story continues to reveal how the mother had “to confine herself, by medical prescription, and then be taken to a health care home,” so intense was her distress. This hospitalization is not framed as a complete failure on the mother’s part, but a consequence of her overwhelming concern and devotion to her daughter. To the female readers, this example of motherhood is being portrayed as the true Spanish ideal. Love is marketed to be towards the family and it is acceptable for it to cause pain or suffering, a common occurrence in the war-torn, recovering nation.

The Sección Femenina published a multitude of stories based on local folk tales or rural figures, but there was also a heavy emphasis on international image in the later segments of both magazines. In the notice and photographs section of 1939 copy of Y, which also included a wedding photograph and parade of “young Italian women,” the Women’s Section publication team wrote how,

The American writer Jane Anderson, who after leaving the Red’s captivity in Madrid, [was] carrying out valuable and enthusiastic propaganda of the truth of the nation of Spain. The illustrious

---

Original: “Conchita no sólo conoció los acerbos dolores de la enfermedad, sino también los del espíritu. El amor filial era virtud característica suya. Precisamente sus padecimientos preocuparon de tal manera a sus padres, que llegaron a producir en su madre trastornos mentales. Hubo primero que recluírse, por prescripción médica y llevarla después a una casa de salud.”

writer [had] given hundreds of lectures on our Movement and [had] recently been received by the Generalissimo. In recognition of her fervor for our cause, Cardinal Goma [had] addressed an affectionate letter to her.¹⁷⁵

This framing of international relations places the SF and the Falange in a very flattering light, and it is the only perspective shown in the entire publication. However, the use of the term “propaganda” is intriguing. When so much of the magazine is propaganda itself, the use of the word in relation to the American writer might be meant to accentuate the magazines’ perceived ethos and cast doubt on outside information, especially from such a democratic country like the United States. Contextually, the Republican side competed for positive portrayals by the United States and other international journalists and writers. The efforts of the Progressive presidents meant the U.S. did have an international reputation of being highly democratic. The positive interactions with several layers of society was an additional comfort to the Spanish readers since the breath of lecture audience members to Generalissimo was impressive and added credibility to the piece. The purposeful use of “nuestra” reveals the inclusionary “we” in a feminine conjugation, further unfolding what kind of citizens the audience probably contained. The international attention and documentation did not only come from

¹⁷⁵ “Fotografías y noticias.” Y. Enero, 1939, 31. Original: “La escritora norteamericana Jane Anderson, que después de haber salido del cautiverio a que la tuvieron sometida los rojos en Madrid, está realizando una valiosa y entusiasta propaganda de la verdad de la España Nacional. La ilustre escritora ha pronunciado centenares de conferencias sobre nuestro Movimiento y recientemente ha sido recibida por el Generalísimo. En reconocimiento a su fervor por nuestra Causa, el cardenal Goma le ha dirigido una cariñosas carta.”
America but the close ties to the Italian model, particularly when it came to education standards, was highlighted.

Pilar in her role as the Women’s Section leader and with Franco’s express permission, visited Italy to look at their educational model, always keeping Spain in mind and its specific circumstances. She personally included the foreword to an article written by a Spanish teacher in the 12th edition of *Y*, stating that “as a dissemination of the excellences of Fascist Italy, we publish the interesting article by Clementina de Adveran, a Spanish teacher who, from the Traditionalist Communion, is today a member of the Advisory Board to that of the Female Section of F. E. T, And J. O. N. S.”176 The Italian influence is mentioned throughout the article, starting here in the foreword so there was no mystery surrounding where many of these guidelines originated from; furthermore, the emphasis on the words “we publish” and a “Spanish teacher” set up the article as a Spanish look at Spanish teaching, with a filter of the Italian influence and model. The focus was still undoubtedly Spain and setting up the future of educational practices for generations. The article proceeds to outline the similarities and differences between Italian and Spanish public education of children from the perspective of the government but purposefully released for the public’s purview. The teacher highlighted was also a member of the board, the body of women making official decisions.

Señora de Adveran illuminated the tie between formal schooling and home life was illuminated, and the key elements of the home are also fostered in public education,

176 “La Escuela Facista.” *Y*. Enero, 1939, 33. Original: “Y como divulgación de las excelencias de la Italia fascista que van conociendo y estudiando nuestras cámaras, publicamos el interesante artículo de Clementina de Adveran, maestra española que, procedente de la Comunión Tradicionalista, es hoy miembro de la Junta Consultiva X acción al de la Sección Femenina de F.E.T., y de las J. O. N. S.”
at least on the page. According to Adveran, “the Fascist School, [is] full of spirit and brimming with the warmth of the home hearth...and this educational miracle is achieved without destroying the personal initiative of the ‘Teachers.’”\footnote{“La Escuela Facista,” 33. Original: “la Escuela Fascista, llena de espíritu y rebosante de calor de hogar… y este milagro educativo se logra sin destruir la iniciativa personal de los «Enseñantes».”} The balance she is referring to is that of the teacher’s authority and the more comforting atmosphere of the home. The “Fascist School” model was a pushback against the idea of a cold, calculating school system, and the author and the SF use words referencing homes, warmth, and safety in an effort to revolutionize the connotations of school and connect the education happening outside and inside the home. This emphasis on the home and its properties also links to the expectations dispersed by the articles aimed at mothers, like those on proper manners and other home educational skills. The school model mentioned in this article does not refer to the all-girls schools focused on sewing and home economic skills, but the general public school that boys could attend. These schools are still closely connected to religion, even after the remodeling in 1939.

The prioritization of Spanish nationalism and a central national identity constituted the backbone of textbooks and the core of educational philosophy during Franco’s time in power. He pressed that Spanish identity revolve around the traditional aspects of Spanish culture, such as religion festivals and church, as well as creating a nation full of dedicated, helpful neighbors. Franco’s example of the ideal identity highlighted the dictator’s desire to embrace the glory of the Spanish Golden Age of the late 1400s. Catholicism, as the government portrays it, was another facet of being Spanish and was integrated seamlessly into formal education. The definitions of what
makes a “Fascist School” and “Christian School” and how they blend was outlined for the audience,

The Fascist School has given rise to the Christian School, the eminently educational School, the School that does not disintegrate, but combines, that does not equalize but harmonizes, that does not work in series, but awakens and directs the individualities with their typical variations, but in such a way that each and every one of the learners is convinced, caressed and proud of being integral parts of the whole FATHERLAND, and that they enjoy their triumphs, and feel their sorrows, and live with your ideals. The Fascist School by prioritizing the values of the human being has restored to its true position the will and the internal world of the Child of today, promise for tomorrow.\(^{178}\)

The lines alluding to the shift towards unity and homogeneity frame the change as overwhelmingly positive, citing that the new schooling “does not disintegrate, but [combine], that does not equalize but [harmonize]” and the shift in the education model aligns with Women’s Section ideals of a single, cohesive national identity starting with lower education. However, the author does not outright state the philosophy, but heavily alludes to it with the words, the new schooling “directs the individualities… in such a way that each and every one of the learners is convinced, caressed and proud of being integral parts of the whole Fatherland.” The outline here is that the new method guides each student, intrinsically unique by virtue of being human, towards a strong pride in

---

\(^{178}\) “La Escuela Facista,” 33. Original: “la Escuela Fascista ha hecho surgir la Escuela Cristiana, la Escuela eminentemente educativa, la Escuela que no disgrega, sino aun a, que no iguala sino armoniza, que no labora en serie, sino despierta y dirige las individualidades con sus típicas variantes, pero de manera que todos y cada uno de los educandos se convenzan, acaricien y enorgullecen de ser partes integrantes del todo PATRIA, y que gocen con sus triunfos, y se duelan de sus penas, y vibren con sus ideales. La Escuela Fascista al jerarquizar los valores del ser humano ha restituido a su verdadero puesto la voluntad y el mundo interno del Niño de hoy, promesa para el mañana.”
Spanish identity and the comfort and cohesiveness that the community provides. Finally, the lines concerning the children of today and tomorrow connect firmly with Franco’s rhetoric. For example, the SF’s idea of proper schooling is “prioritizing the values of the human being, [restoring] to its true position the will and the internal world of the Child of today.”\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{179} Richmond, 52.
Conclusion

The educational, social, and political realities for women transitioned with the new chapter in women’s history in Spain. This exploration revealed how the women within the Sección Femenina manipulated cultural expectations and religious rhetoric to maintain power in a predominantly patriarchal society, while simultaneously writing and editing their publications for the hundreds of thousands of unnamed women reading the SF’s magazines or attending their workshops and courses. The Sección Femenina focused on the ideal of being a daughter, then a wife, and then a mother. The study of the Sección Femenina created many connections between the historiography of education and historical study of 20th century feminism in Franco’s dictatorship, and the argument concerning the paradoxes and tensions within the organization will contribute in connecting these two larger fields of study. It shows how educational policy and implementation can shape the rights and legacies of women for decades.

The Sección Femenina, once allowed power and the ability to exert it, with a degree of independence, shaped gender legislation, literature, fashion, and many facets of life of women.\textsuperscript{180} Starting with their role models, the Sección Femenina offered the idealized Catholic Queen Isabel and Teresa of Ávila as models for Spanish women to try to emulate as best they could in their daily lives and personal priorities.\textsuperscript{181} During the Civil War, the Sección Femenina served as propagandists for the Falangist regime and reinforced the idea to women that motherhood was vital and should be their focus for their faith and piety.\textsuperscript{182} Another specific way in which the Sección Femenina shaped

\textsuperscript{180} Ofer, 78.
\textsuperscript{181} Richmond, 11.
\textsuperscript{182} Salvado, 304.
female identity is through their use of historical and religious role models, like the successful Queen Isabella and the noble St. Teresa of Avila. Their leadership in the view of the public, striving to be living role models, illuminates how the women tried to live their message and use their influence to the highest extent possible. Beyond the individual lives and stories, the collective organization and the dynamics within the Sección Femenina communicated how an organization run by women for other women could work in a Nationalistic regime.

Furthermore, the Sección Femenina utilized their magazines such as *Y* and *Medina* to spread their messages on female behavior ranging from dramatic tales of love to thow to place the proper table setting. The tensions between empowerment and supporting patriarchal ideals are established in this early time period, with the women of Spain adjusting to their new lives after the scarring Civil War and resettling as mothers, educators, and avid readers. Consistently leading by example, Pilar and her elite echelon of women were constantly seen in the public and they were the backbone of the Sección Femenina. This enduring leadership in the public’s eye marks the organization as distinct from other European examples in the same temporal window. The complicated relationship between religion and the Church highlights how the organization of the Falange benefits from religion but occasionally chafes at the threat the Church posed to their ideals and missions.

The group photo included below, “A group of women who took part in the homage to Franco, more than 10,000 arrived from all over Spain,” showcases the unity and uniformity the Sección Femenina promoted and formed for Spanish women from all
regions. The aprons and headscarves carried the symbol of the Sección Femenina, the quiver of arrows, and the photo shows the group of women in a more informal, content setting than other examples shown prior.

After looking at their publications as well as the language they utilized, it is clever that the women in the Sección Femenina expanded the perimeters and perception of their “home” to encompass more than just the house they lived in. The reality was that many women had to work to survive, and the Sección Femenina did acknowledge that with their training and efforts to find “suitable” work for these women. The “reconquest of the home” was a central tenet to the Sección Femenina’s initial mission after the war, and the simultaneous patriotic and traditional tones to the rallying cry worked well for the mandos and other elite officers. The Falange, and consequently the Sección Femenina, saw the Catholic Church as a possible obstacle in their social reform movements.

184 Richmond, 21.
185 Richmond, 22.
186 Richmond, 15.
187 Richmond, 52.
reconquest did not initially reach to include the Church, but the possibility lingered in the minds of higher officials and this distrust and distance marked a change from simply imitating the past glories of Spain and conforming to the status quo.

On April 7th, 1977 the Sección Femenina officially disbanded as a new form of government gripped Spain, but Pilar persisted and created a new organization by the name of the ANA in 1987. While it did not embody the same ideals nor reach the same amount of influence, there were enough women involved to continue the legacy of the Sección Femenina and transition into a more philanthropic organization once more. The group that began as nurses and aid works ended with a similar cause. The mission and motives of the Sección Femenina were replaced by a set of morals and role models more aligned with the rest of Europe and the world as globalization rose. The supposedly golden standard set by Queen Isabella became outdated once more.

The historical lessons from this twenty year period from 1939-1959 truly illuminate how history is not black and white, and the group of women within the Sección Femenina were incredibly human. It can be labelled selfish, the way they kept their power and influence while willingly dispersing published materials stressing the importance of women staying within their homes, but for dozens of women the Sección Femenina served as a space for agency, relative freedom, and opportunities in the government. The push for progress, in this case as it is in many, was not linear.

---

188 Ofer, 133.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

Newspaper and Magazine Articles


“Breve doctrinal del cubierto y la servilleta.” Y. Enero, 1939


“Fotografías y noticias.” Y. Enero, 1939.


“Un Matrimonio con 16 Hijos.” Y. October 1, 1941.

Medina. December 10, 1941.


“Revista Para la Mujer” Y. June, 1940.

“Texto íntegro del ‘Fuero del Trabajo’ (Del «Boletín Oficial» de la provincia de Barcelona.” La Vanguardia Española. 10 de marzo de 1939.

Pamphlets


Speeches

Ibárruri, Dolores. “Farewell Address.” Barcelona, Spain, November 1, 1938.

Textbooks


Secondary Sources

Articles


Koonz, Claudia. “The ‘Woman Question’ in Authoritarian Regimes.” in Becoming


“Un/Contested Identities: Motherhood, Sex Reform and the Modernization of Gender


Books


Nash, Mary. *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War.* Arden Press,
1995.


**Secondary Sources (Spanish)**

**Articles**


Carbayo-Abengózar, Mercedes. "Shaping Women: National Identity Through the Use of


Books


Images


*Medina*. 1945, cover page.


Pugh, Lara. “La Sección Femenina: Women’s Role in Francoist Spain.” *Women and
Charity in Spain, 1786-1945, (University of Mary Washington, December 2012), pp. 1-5.


Theses


Dunai, Suzanne. “Cooking for the Patria: The Seccion Femenina and the Politics of Food and Women during the Franco Years.” University of New Mexico, History ETDs, (2012).