

2017

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Julia A. Hudson-Richards

Independent Scholar, juliahudsonrichards@gmail.com

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Recommended Citation

Hudson-Richards, Julia A. (2017) ""Solving the ‘Social Question’: Women Workers and Working-Class Families in Restoration Valencia, 1870-1900.," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 42 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.

<https://doi.org/10.26431/0739-182X.1249>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs/vol42/iss2/4>

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Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank the Fulbright, the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Culture and United States Universities, and Penn State Altoona's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for funding various stages of research for this project.

Solving the ‘Social Question’: Women Workers and Working-Class Families in Restoration Valencia, 1870-1900.

Julia Hudson-Richards

Even in the twenty-first century, the subject of women's role(s) in the workplace garners oftentimes vitriolic debate among economists, feminists, scholars, labor organizers, and politicians. Despite decades of work by women's historians, an idyllic notion of a comfortable middle-class life with a house in the suburbs and a mother at home, fully supported by a gainfully employed husband, remains a powerful image of the past in the face of increasing economic uncertainty. It is still not uncommon for students, or internet-historians, to talk about a time when women “went to work,” implying that there was a time when women had no official economic role in industrial society, and then at some point that role changed. It may have changed when women entered factory work in World War I, or World War II, or this notion could be a reference to an increase in women pursuing careers in the 1960s and the 1970s, a period which coincided with the introduction of the birth control pill. This rather narrow perspective ignores the experiences of the vast majority of working class women and women of color throughout Europe and the United States since at least the earliest stages of industrialization. Working women, of course, have not escaped the notice of historians, and they did not escape the attention of contemporary social reformers, either. In the second half of the nineteenth century, social reformers across Europe and the United States held official conferences at which women's work was an important centerpiece, and passed legislation under the auspices of “protecting” women from the vagaries of modern industrial society. Spanish social reformers, too, were preoccupied with solving the so-called “social question,” and they tended to see the presence of women in the industrial work force as a serious problem in need of official attention. This preoccupation reflected a relatively new perspective on women and work, one that demonstrated the tension between new liberal, free-market ideas that demanded women's and children's participation in the labor market and the bourgeois notions of women, and their legal corollary, children, occupying a separate (private) sphere, and as subordinate groups in need of protection.

Across Europe and the United States, then, laissez-faire economics collided with the bourgeois ideal of separate spheres, gendering debates over the economy and over the role that the state should play in answering the social question. In Spain, the debate played out in a number of socio-economic treatises,

and, especially, the materials published by the *Comisión de Reformas Sociales* (hereafter CRS) in 1891. The end result was the passage of numerous laws that protected women workers and regulated the kinds of jobs they could do. The debates themselves, however, also provide a lens through which to examine the process of embourgeoisement – the emergence of a politically, culturally, and socially powerful middle-class, and their attempts to enforce acceptance of their values by the working classes. The presence of women in the labor market challenged notions of bourgeois womanhood, but also bourgeois masculinity and the morality of bourgeois economic ideologies.

Women's economic involvement of course was not new. Before the emergence of industrial capitalism, though the gendered division of labor was just as present, women's work in the home and family had specific, and important, economic functions. Women commonly worked as domestic servants, and for peasant women industriousness was their most valuable asset on the marriage market. Once married, non-aristocratic women had important economic roles that ensured an individual family's success. If they remained unmarried, women had few financial options, but these options, like spinning, also helped lay the foundations for the earliest stages of industrialization. By the nineteenth century, the economic role of bourgeois women had begun to shift towards consumption rather than production; and while the productive role of working-class women remained extremely important, debates over that role nearly always occurred through the lens of bourgeois family ideologies. The same can be said for early histories of industrialization and its accompanying bourgeois revolution: the focus, through the 1960s, remained on male workers and male contributions to the new, industrial economies of the west.¹

Over the past three decades, historians have worked hard to reinsert the history of women's work, both inside and outside of the home, into the larger story of capitalist industrial transformation prior World War I. Though many histories of working class formation relied on "gender-blind assumptions embedded in traditional sociological and historical scholarship," these historians have found women in the workshops, mills, mines, factories, and fields, and, perhaps more importantly, have taken the study of working class formation out of the factories and into the homes of the workers and the streets of their neighborhoods.² In general, historians have focused on the ways that these issues played out in northern Europe and the United States; less work has been done on

¹ A notable exception to this was Ivy Pinchbeck's groundbreaking *Women Workers in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* (London: George Routledge, 1930).

² Sonya O. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 2–3.

Spain, and even less on regions outside of Barcelona, Madrid, and the Basque country, which had significant industrial importance, but also substantial social unrest. Social conflicts in the region of Valencia, south of Catalunya, rarely appear in examinations of Spain's industrialization or the emergence of the working classes, or the analyses of political movements like liberalism. The region also frequently plays a minor role in overviews of contemporary Spanish historiography. Historians seem to have unquestionably accepted a stereotype of Valencians themselves, who have lived in the "Levante feliz" (happy Levante), members of an "agrarian society [with a] complacent and self-satisfied population;" a region held "prisoner of a lifeless regionalism and of an absent bourgeoisie."³ While local historians of Valencia have worked to provide a more nuanced picture of regional history, much of this new, important work has not been reflected in English-language historiography. In the last third of the nineteenth century, the region, with the city of Valencia at its center, was an important location for Spanish women's work, as well as larger debates over the region's economic identity and the early solutions to Spain's social question.⁴

³ Ismael Saz Campos, "Introduction: Dynamism and Conflict," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 75, no. 1 (1998): 4.

⁴ On working women in Spain, see: Cristina Boderías, ed., *Género y políticas del trabajo en España contemporánea 1836–1936* (Barcelona: Icaria editorial, 2007); Mónica Burguera, "Gendered Scenes in the Countryside: Public Sphere and Peasant Family Resistance in the 19th Century Spanish Town," *Social History* 29, no. 3 (2004): 320–4; Rosa María Capel Martínez, *El trabajo y la educación de la mujer en España (1900–1936)* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, Instituto de la Mujer, 1986); Capel Martínez, "Life and Work in the Tobacco Factories: Female Industrial Workers in the Early Twentieth-Century," in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain*, eds. Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 131–150; Julia Hudson-Richards, "'Women Want to Work': Shifting Ideologies of Women's Work in Franco's Spain, 1939–1962," *Journal of Women's History* 27, no. 2 (2015): 87–109; Heidi Kelly, "Enlacing Women's Stories: Composing Womanhood in a Coastal Galician Village," in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood*, 195–223; Montserrat Miller, *Feeding Barcelona, 1914–1975: Public Market Halls, Social Networks, and Consumer Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015); Mary Nash, *Mujer, familia y trabajo en España, 1875–1936* (Barcelona: Anthropos, Editorial del Hombre, 1983); D.J. O'Connor, "Representations of Women Workers: Tobacco Strikers in the 1890s," in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood*, 151–172; Timothy Rees, "Women on the Land: Household and Work in the Southern Countryside, 1875–1939," in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood*, 173–194. On Valencia, with particular reference to social change or conflict, see Joaquín Azagra, *La desamortización de Godoy en Valencia, 1799–1807* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 1986); Aurora Bosch Sánchez, "Collectivizations: The Spanish Revolution Revisited, 1936–39" *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 14, no. 1 (2001): 4–16; Bosch Sánchez, "The Spanish Republic and the Civil War: Rural Conflict and Collectivization," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 75, no. 1 (1998): 117–32; Alfons Cucó i Giner, "Las agitaciones campesinas de la huerta de Valencia (1878–79): sus orígenes históricos," *Saitabi*, no. 24 (1975): 103–134; Cucó i Giner, "Revueltas campesinas durante la Restauración" in *Siete temas sobre historia del País valenciano: ciclo de conferencias de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 1974), 113–34; Samuel

Europe, Social Class, and the Social Question

For Europeans, the social question or problem – what to do about the rising tide of discontent among workers, how to solve a growing crisis in their standards of living, and how to address their new political affiliations – featured heavily in political and sociological debates, even in areas of limited or slower industrialization. Spain, if mentioned at all in comprehensive studies of European development, frequently appears as a story of failure – the “paradigm of backwardness” still haunts modern Spanish historiography.⁵ A traditional interpretation of European economic development has often followed Marxist theoretical lines: a new working class developed after being slowly divested of the control of the means of production, through integration into factory labor systems dominated by machines. The bourgeoisie, in turn, monopolized the means of production, and emerged as the dominant class in terms of socio-economic influence in new, modernizing, liberal states; over the course of the nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie also then came to have far greater political power. Any nation whose economic trajectory differed from this model was frequently described as backward and underdeveloped, and Spain’s path was rocky in a nineteenth century characterized by conflict, revolution, and numerous *pronunciamientos* – military-led *coups d’état* that launched changes in government administration.⁶

Recently, this traditional narrative of successful industrial development, based on a small period of British industrialization, has come under question. Within Spanish historiography, historians have worked to challenge “the myths that the bourgeois and industrial revolutions had simply not taken place in Spain.”⁷ On a larger scale, scholars have dissected the development of both the middle and working classes, patterns of industrialization and proletarianization, and have found that even in England itself, these processes were, at best, uneven.

Garrido Herrero, *Los trabajadores de las derechas* (Castelló: Diputació de Castelló, 1986); Francesc A. Martínez Gallego, Manuel Chust Calero, and Eugenio Hernández Gascón, *Valencia 1900: movimientos sociales y conflicts políticos durante la guerra de Marruecos, 1906–1914* (Castelló: Universitat Jaume I, 2001); Finally, see also *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 75, no. 5 (1998), special issue on Valencia.

⁵ Mónica Burguera and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, “Backwardness and Its Discontents,” *Social History* 29, no. 3 (2000), 281–83, citing Ismael Saz, “Paradojas de historia, paradojas de la historiografía: Las peripecias del fascismo español,” *Hispania* 61, no. 207 (2001): 143–76.

⁶ The first of these coups came in 1820, against Fernando VII’s attempt to re-establish absolutism, and liberals demanded the he recognize the Constitution of 1812; they proceeded throughout the regency of María Cristina after Fernando’s death in 1833, and the reign of her daughter Isabel II, until her abdication in 1868; the last *pronunciamiento* of the 19th century established the Restoration government in 1874.

⁷ Saz Campos, “Introduction,” 1.

They varied from city to city; machines were integrated sparsely – even in England, manual labor continued to be very important in the decades leading up to the outbreak of World War I. Workshops continued to exist alongside factories; workers migrated not only to urban areas but also to large-scale commercialized estates.⁸ Spanish modernization thus fits onto a continuum of development, rather than outside it, as traditional narratives of European economic growth would indicate.⁹

If the relatively narrow model of economic development was in reality far more complex, then it stands to reason that the concurrent model of socio-political development was equally complex. Reevaluation of economic progress has sparked reevaluation of social trends, as well. Historians like Jesús Cruz have also pointed to the importance of cultural forms like standards of beauty, hygiene, comportment, and above all the consumerism that came to dominate nineteenth century bourgeois culture and continues to be prominent throughout the west.¹⁰ In Spain, the emergence of bourgeois culture occurred despite irregular economic development, and this culture – marked in part by a revolution in manners and comportment and the emergence of associationism – came to play a hegemonic role in Spanish society by the turn of the twentieth century.¹¹ In addition, the emergence of the social question highlights another aspect of the new bourgeois culture: concern for the living, working, and moral conditions of a new, and potentially rebellious, working class.

Shifts in popular discussions of the roles played by poverty and the poor in modern society were very important to the development of the nineteenth century social question. While medieval and early modern conceptions of poverty revolved around ideas of Christian duty, by the Enlightenment, philosophers began seeing poverty as antithetical to a well-ordered, rational state. A poor person, then, was “the total opposite of the useful citizen” who had become the model during the eighteenth century. As such, poverty must be secluded, and the poor must be convinced to conform to new social norms.¹² By the nineteenth century, the emergence of the middle class and its adoption of new ideas of socio-

⁸ A good discussion of this diversity can be found in Geoff Eley’s *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 47–51.

⁹ See in particular David Ringrose, *Spain, Europe and the “Spanish Miracle”: 1700–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Jesús Cruz, *The Rise of Middle-Class Culture in Nineteenth Century Spain* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 4–6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Pedro Carasa, “Welfare Provision in Castile and Madrid,” in *Health Care and Poor Relief in 18th and 19th Century Southern Europe*, eds. Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham, and Bernd Roeck (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 101–3.

economic relationships meant new discourses about poverty. In what amounted to an intermediate phase of the development of the welfare state, observers described poverty as a basic feature of capitalism, believing in “man’s natural inequality, which was essential to allow free movement and competitiveness.” It had to be managed and balanced, but its eradication was not only undesirable, but unrealistic and dangerous.¹³

Of course, those not living in poverty can argue for its “necessity” from a position of tremendous privilege – it is a rather more difficult argument to make when one is actually living in poverty. The challenge that the Spanish middle class faced – indeed, faced by middle-class reformers and observers everywhere – was how to sell a system dependent on inequality to those who would bear the brunt of that inequality. As a group, the poor were far more numerous, and by at least the second half of the nineteenth century, revolutionary ideas had begun to spread, based on philosophies of socio-political and economic systems that rested on (theoretical) absolute equality and a sharing of power and wealth. Even in “backward” Spain, the International was making inroads. For bourgeois thinkers, these new ideas threatened to strip them of cultural, economic, and political power that they had only quite recently won themselves.

Finding answers to the social question was thus part necessity, part responsibility, and part sales pitch. It was necessity because poverty was a real problem that threatened public order and public health. Equally importantly, the middle class enthusiastically embraced its new role as a ruling power, and took on the responsibility of answering the social question as part of this new role. Finally, their sales pitch had to convince the working classes to buy in to a system that, in general, was not going to benefit the vast majority of them, but may hold the possibility of economic prosperity and social mobility for some.

In turning their focus to the working classes, the European bourgeoisie took on the mantle of social leadership, but hegemony involves more than just power, it involves mimicry. The bourgeoisie also attempted, with relative success, to impose their values on the working classes. In bourgeois Europe, social reformers pointed to the family as the preeminent social institution, and the responsibility for performing the duties of respectability fell to the wife, head of the private sphere. Thus, for these same reformers, the path to answering the social question started in working class homes and families, and thus with working class women.

¹³ Ibid., 105.

Working Women in Valencia on the Eve of the Restoration

The Valencian case is significant for a couple of important reasons. While there were a handful of discussions of the social conflicts emerging in the second half of the century, Valencia's intellectual tradition formed the foundation of a larger social reformism, which became known as the "Valencian initiative." This initiative notably informed reformist discourse on a national level, particularly the idea that there could be a middle way between naked individualism and socialist interventionism; that Valencian initiative also formed the foundation of the questions that were addressed by the CRS, and much of the legislation that developed as a result. These questions also clearly preoccupied Valencian observers – the Valencian committee's CRS responses numbered in the hundreds of pages, including reports from town hall-style discussions from most of the province's towns; no other provincial report was this comprehensive.¹⁴

The enthusiasm with which Valencia approached the CRS project in part can be explained by the role played by Eduardo Pérez Pujol, a local attorney and reformer who, by the 1880s, had been working on the social question for more than a decade. His 1872 treatise *La cuestión social en Valencia* was an ancestor of the CRS report, and provides the most relevant discussion of Valencia's working women. After completing his legal education at the University of Salamanca, Pujol had spent much of his professional life in education, influenced heavily by the German education reform movement known as *krausismo*. Named for German philosopher Karl Krause, krausismo gained popularity in the Spanish social and educational reform set because it "melded the concepts of scientific reason, mysticism, positivism, and idealist philosophy into a totalizing theory for political, legal, educational, and economic reform"; it also played a significant role the discussions around the formation of the CRS itself.¹⁵ By the 1860s, Pujol had settled in Valencia as chair of the law school of the University of Valencia, and was an important actor in the Revolutions of 1868-74, a period popularly known as the Revolutionary Sexennio.¹⁶ Increased labor activity and the

¹⁴ The Valencia CRS report, upon the reprint in 1985, was a full 587 pages. While not all provinces answered the questionnaire provided by the CRS, only Madrid turned in such extensive data.

¹⁵ Krausism also heavily influenced the formation of Spain's famous Institute for Free Education. Sandie Holguín, *Creating Spaniards: Culture and National Identity in Modern Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 20. On the role that Krausism played in the formation of the CRS, see María de la Calle, *La Comisión de Reformas Sociales, 1883–1903. Política social y conflicto de intereses en la España de la Restauración* (Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1989), 38.

¹⁶ Sylvia Romeu Alfaro, "Estudio preliminar" in *Eduardo Pérez Pujol: vida y obra* (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 1979), 23–25.

emergence of the International also characterized the era, ultimately leading to an 1871 debate in the Spanish Cortes about the legality of the International and calls to form a national committee to study worker questions. These debates culminated in the passage of the Benot Law of 1873, which restricted children's labor before the age of ten, but the formation of investigative committees would be left for another government. Inspired by these larger issues, Valencia's local *Sociedad Económica de los Amigos del País* established a commission under their recently-formed Social Science section to "study economic estrangement that had emerged between manufacturers and workers."¹⁷ The result was Pujol's *La cuestión social en Valencia*.¹⁸

The study was not uniquely about women's work, but the position of working women played a significant role in his discussions. The catalyst was evidently the spread of a new political movement: the *Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores*, or the (First) International, which had made inroads in Spain by the beginning of the 1870s; in 1871, Valencia played host to one of the AIT's regional meetings. Pujol noted the International's propaganda had been "directed with all intensity at Valencian workers," though he alleged that it had not found tremendous success. That said, by the publication of *La cuestión social*, the AIT had attracted 1600 affiliates in Valencia city alone.¹⁹ Between September 1870 and August 1871, an average of 410 affiliates attended meetings in local Valencian sections of the AIT, and a substantial minority of the some thirty thousand Spanish AIT members by 1873 hailed from the region.²⁰ At the 1871 Valencian congress, leaders of the AIT proposed a reorganization of the International along occupational lines, which would include not only industrial workers, but farmers, service workers, public service workers, and even those who worked in "aseo individual," or hygiene, including domestic servants, barbers, and washerwomen.²¹ In addition to making an attempt to facilitate the formation of class consciousness, the categories included work that was explicitly done by women, or sectors, like domestic service, that women dominated.

¹⁷ de la Calle, *La Comisión de Reformas Sociales*, 33.

¹⁸ Eduardo Pérez Pujol, *La cuestión social en Valencia* (Valencia: Imprenta José Domenech, 1872), 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14, 16.

²⁰ For specific meeting information, see "El Congreso de Barcelona, junio de 1870, y el desenvolvimiento de la Internacional hasta junio (estadísticas), relaciones con el Consejo General (cartas de Francisco Mora y de F. Engels, 1870–71) in Max Nettlau, ed., *Documentos inéditos sobre la Internacional y la Alianza en España* (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Protesta, 1930), 27–28.

²¹ "La conferencia de Valencia (septiembre de 1871); su carta y proposición a la Conferencia de Londres y su organización de la Internacional española," in Nettlau, *Documentos inéditos sobre la Internacional y la Alianza*, 56.

Pujol leaned on gendered imagery to bolster his argument against Spanish (or, more specifically Valencian) acceptance of AIT principles. His critiques certainly resembled many mainstream fears about the International. He argued that the International, with its departure from traditional Spanish values, rendered it unappealing to Spanish workers. The AIT was atheistic, of course, but it also propagated the “negation of the bonds of matrimony, free love for the woman, and the suppression of paternal power.”²² For Pujol, the threat of the International was not the organization’s advocacy for better living conditions, a cause for which he had a certain sympathy, claiming that “the need to improve the condition of the working classes is evident,” and recognizing that it was “the battle of today, the one day strike” that workers hoped would “raise their salary tomorrow” that attracted them to the International in the first place.²³ His argument was thus that workers would be turned off not by the politics of the International, but because of its potential threat to the established gender order, which he unquestionably assumed to be the norm for all Spaniards.

To prevent the revolution, Pujol pointed to several potential solutions: the expansion of education, the creation of joint labor-management commissions (*jurados mixtos*) to encourage cooperation between labor and capital, reforming of the guild system – though maintaining the modern freedom of hiring out one’s own labor – and the expansion of cooperative societies.²⁴ It is important to note that Pujol paid more than cursory attention to the ways in which organizations like cooperatives and worker associations could mean the difference between life and death, though not always approved of by radical political parties – he noted that the only type of worker cooperative the International approved of was one that helped workers band together to be able to purchase basic necessities. But no serious liberal examination of working class life ignored the “morality” of the working class family. His focus on working class women fits into this larger discussion of morality. Women’s historians have interrogated the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres and found it to be a weak model for understanding the realities of women in every class, but the emergence of the ideology itself nonetheless was a driving force behind much of the European

²² Pérez Pujol, *La cuestión social en Valencia*, 10–12.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10–12.

²⁴ In the last decades of the 1800s, the Spanish government passed legislative measures intended to facilitate cooperation among workers and farmers, among other groups. Of these, the *Ley de Policía Rural* of 8 January 1898, which established the *Comunidades de Labradores*, or farmers’ cooperatives, was probably the most significant in Valencia. There were also innumerable Catholic worker organizations, as well as productive and consumer cooperatives. *Jurados mixtos*, in addition, became one of the dominant forms of labor organization, and existed well into the 1930s.

debate on working women.²⁵ Pujol did not go so far as to suggest that women be excluded from the workforce entirely, a nod to free-market policies that allowed women's work, and industrialists who relied on it. But there was a right way and a wrong way to employ women, and for the right way he turned to the example provided by a Don Miguel Nolla, who operated a mosaic tile factory. Nolla's factory was an "establishment...as notable for the extent of its products and for the prestige it enjoys within and outside of Spain, as for the number of workers it sustains."²⁶ Nolla hired only single women, who worked separately from men and left fifteen minutes earlier every day to prevent any fraternization which could have led to impropriety. They earned between one and two pesetas per day, "according to their capacity and aptitude," about one-third of what their male counterparts earned, though Pujol noted that they did the same work and to the same standards as the men.²⁷

Pujol contrasted Nolla's factory with the conditions in the tobacco industry, which for many epitomized women's waged work in nineteenth century Spain. According to *La cuestión social*, in tobacco, children of workers spent their days with grandmothers or older siblings, who brought the younger ones to the factory on mothers' work breaks in order to nurse. He painted a grim picture of a lifeless home, abandoned by the mother, chores unfinished, and children, "while the mother goes to the workshop" who "live among strangers, often in day care," cared for, but not with the affection and love they could only receive from their mothers. They grew up "wandering the streets," and at the age of eight, entered into factory work like their parents to "become an appendix to a machine, without any instruction...heart dry, head empty...soul degraded."²⁸ Pujol notes of a city-established day care, but mentioned neither the establishment's cost, nor who was able to take advantage of it. Another day care had been established by *La Gran Asociación de Beneficencia de Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados*, which cared for toddlers, but Pujol also offered no specifics about this day care, either. The inclusion of the day cares in *La cuestión social* indicates at least a moderate demand for child care in the nineteenth century, catering to a population of working mothers unable to rely exclusively on extended family to care for smaller children, perhaps after having relocated to the city from suburbs or smaller agricultural areas throughout the province.

The "abandonment" of children to day care was not the only threat that

²⁵ Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff, "General Conclusion," in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood*, 399.

²⁶ Pérez Pujol, *La cuestión social en Valencia*, 78–79.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 79, 101.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 94–96.

working women, and working mothers in particular, posed to modern Valencian society. The nuclear family was the root of the new social order, and women's work challenged home life – nineteenth-century bourgeois masculinity demanded that a man be able to provide for his family, and working women challenged the ideal of economic productivity as an exclusively male sphere. Furthermore, working wives and mothers threatened male “sovereignty” in the household. An empty house flew in the face of the bourgeois ideal of the home as sanctuary, and undermined the process of working class *embourgeoisement*. Pujol asserted:

[t]here is nothing as agreeable to the worker as the domain of a roomy house, clean, where light and air enter in waves, and the possession of a little garden or orchard in which the father can rest in the sun in the winter, or the shade in the summer... the habits of domestic sovereignty and the sentiment of property improve the character and elevate the moral dignity of the worker.²⁹

Bourgeois domestic bliss through sovereign property ownership, never mind the unrealistic expectation that working class homes were likely to be roomy, or that a working class family had exclusive access to a small garden. Sublets would become increasingly common during the last third of the century, and even with whole families working, many workers could not afford “sovereign” homes in any of the urban or urbanizing areas across the province.³⁰ Pujol's suggestion that the solution to the social question rested on the adoption of bourgeois property and family relationships, while possibly well-intentioned, at best was completely ignorant of the economic realities of working class families.

Pujol's work is one of the earliest examples of long-winded discussions of the social question, and it laid out solutions that, by the 1880s, laid the theoretical groundwork for the Valencian initiative. Few studies at this stage had to do with women's work directly, but the few treatises available provide clues to the development of the new gender ideology. Manuel Polo y Peyrolón's speech *Apostolado de la mujer en las sociedades modernas* (*Women's Mission in Modern Society*), presented to a local Juventud Católica (Catholic Youth) chapter and published in 1882, for example, charged women with the regeneration of modern men through marriage. Men may “make laws, govern nations, dedicate themselves to industry, to the arts, to the sciences...but the woman makes the

²⁹ Ibid., 106.

³⁰ *Reformas Sociales: Información oral y escrita publicada de 1889 a 1893. Tomo III. Información escrita practicada por la Comisión de Reformas Sociales en la provincia de Valencia, publicada en 1891* (Madrid: Centro de Publicaciones del Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1985), 74. Hereafter *Reformas Sociales: Valencia*.

customs and holds the key to the heart of man.”³¹ The family itself is the “cornerstone” of society and without it, “neither state nor civilization are possible.”³² The epitome of Christian womanhood was a woman in the home who did not devote herself to “the sciences, or letters, or the arts, or culture, or modern progress, but to Jesus Christ,” but of course a woman who could devote herself solely to the home was a luxury in most modern industrial societies.³³ Polo y Peyrolón, like other observers, connected women’s worth with her role in perpetuating religion and in her mission in the home, but in nineteenth century society, economic value was the key to being socially valuable.

Concern for working women also transcended ideological lines, and while Polo y Peyrolón’s work represented a conservative viewpoint, operatives on the left contributed to the debate as well. The same year as the publication of *La cuestión social*, the AIT addressed women’s work at their congress in Zaragoza, arguing that work was women’s unique path to “liberty,” and that to relegate “the woman” to only domestic chores was to condemn her to dependence on “the man.” Women’s work was not the source of “great immoralities” or the “cause of the degradation of the race...the cause of these evils is not the work of women, but the monopoly exercised by the exploitive class.”³⁴ Women had to be allowed to participate in the worker’s movement, because the family relationship that bound her was intimately related to property and social relationships – women and men, through work, experienced the same exploitation.³⁵ Though these types of records are more sparse because of the legal standing of the International after the Restoration, we see similar position was laid out in 1888, in the anarchist magazine *Acracia. Revista Sociológica*. The anonymous series with the polarizing title “*Las mentiras convencionales de nuestra civilización*” (“The conventional lies of our civilization”) presented a complex critique of modern industrial society. In part six, “*La mentira matrimonial*,” or “The marriage lie,” the author proclaimed that marriage, the root of the bourgeois private sphere, was the “greatest of all the lies of society.”³⁶ The dominant socio-economic organization made marriage a form of bondage, with women dependent upon men for survival,

³¹ Ibid., 8.

³² Ibid., 10.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ “Dictamen del II Congreso de la Federación Regional de la I Internacional, Zaragoza, 1872” in Mary Nash, *Mujer, familia y trabajo en España, 1875–1936* (Barcelona: Anthropos, Editorial del Hombre, 1983), 299–300.

³⁵ Ibid., 300–301.

³⁶ “Las mentiras convencionales de nuestra civilización (La mentira matrimonial, VI),” *Acracia. Revista Sociológica* año III, núm. 28, abril de 1888, in Nash, *Mujer, familia y trabajo en España*, 128.

rather than a contract based on choice and love.³⁷ The same year, the platform of the new Socialist party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) asserted that equality between male and female workers rested on establishing equal pay, and a focus on unequal salaries will be echoed in the reports from the CRS. In each case, a call for equal pay was rooted in the perception that women undercut men in the workforce because they would work for less money.

The concerns over working women's roles in modern society had other, European corollaries. Across the industrializing nations of the west in the last half of the 1800s, various nations passed legislation designed to regulate women's and children's work. Discussions about the effects of industrialization began in the British Parliament as early as the 1830s, and a series of laws passed through the 1880s regulated women's work hours, the most important of which were the Factory Acts. These defined women and children as "not free agents" in particular industries. The Factory Act of 1874 specifically targeted women and children in the textile industry, limiting their work hours to "fifty-six and a half hours per week"; debates surrounding the 1874 law focused in particular on working mothers.³⁸ Critics of working mothers pointed to "lazy" fathers who were allowing their wives to sustain them, and it found tremendous support among middle-class women's activists who also blamed men "if women could not do their motherly duties."³⁹ Like in Spain, legislative moves against women's work employed bourgeois notions of separate spheres, and a woman entering the male sphere of paid labor was obviously forced to do so because of the failure of her husband to be manly enough.

Before 1920, protective legislation had been enacted in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the US, Greece, and Australia, which all had varying levels of industrial development.⁴⁰ Spain's debates, and the subsequent protective legislation that resulted, fit well within the larger European discourses on women's work. So, it stood to reason that they would also be invited to an international conference called by Kaiser Wilhelm II, to be held in Berlin in March of 1890. The conference, the first of a series of international "official" conferences, proposed an international ban on women's and children's night work, and passed resolutions that restricted women's work

³⁷ Ibid., 129; 131.

³⁸ Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, 59–61. Rose also notes that this push to reduce women's working hours served as a rallying cry for trade unionists trying to get the state to limit *everyone's* working hours.

³⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁰ Ulla Wikander, Alice-Kessler-Harris, and Jane Lewis, eds., *Protecting Women: Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

hours, and advocated for at least four weeks of maternity leave. Though Spain voted against the ban on night work, by the turn of the century, legislation was in the works that put many of these ideas into place. Though the international conferences were an essential step in the creation of Spain's labor legislation, perhaps the most important piece of the puzzle came from a somewhat obscure state initiative – the Comisión de Reformas Sociales.

The Comisión de Reformas Sociales and Women's Work: A Valencian Case Study

The CRS's formation by Royal Decree in 1883 represented a new phase in Spanish reformism, facilitated by workers' strikes, the formation of the anarchist organization La Mano Negra (Black Hand), and perhaps the natural culmination of a decade of political concern over working conditions and the potential for social instability that could result if workers' issues were not addressed. While the roots of the CRS lay in the Cortes debates of the early 1870s, the political change of the last half of the decade set the legislative stage. In December of 1874, General Martínez Campos revived the tradition of pronunciamiento, and from Valencia declared son of the deposed Queen Isabel II, Alfonso XII, the rightful king. Though the system established under the Bourbon Restoration was far from perfect, through the end of the nineteenth century, it provided enough political stability to allow for steady, if somewhat slow, economic expansion and increased integration into the European and world markets until at least the beginning of World War I. Of course, the Restoration was not an idyllic political or social landscape. Spanish society became increasingly fractured; indeed, investigations into the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 often start early in the Restoration period. The nation once again turned to constitutional monarchy, with the Cortes and king sharing power, but the much-maligned *turno pacífico* system, fully elaborated in the early 1880s, also became a lightning rod for contemporary (and historical) critiques as evidence of political immaturity and a lack of Spanish modernity. Within *turno pacífico*, the liberal and conservative parties alternated control of the government in times of political crisis or deadlock, replacing the more fractious pronunciamiento as a means to political change. It relied on both urban and rural oligarchies (led by *caciques*, or bosses, hence the also popular epithet *caciquismo*) to ensure that the opposition party would be swept to power by popular vote, and tales of dead men voting and disappearing ballots have become the stuff of legend.⁴¹ It is tempting to discuss this period – the 1880s through the turn of the century – with the foreknowledge that the days of *turno pacífico* were numbered, or even that Civil War loomed in the not-too-distant

⁴¹ Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808–1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 366–79.

future. But at the time of the formation of the CRS, some of Spain's most severe challenges that came to dominate both contemporary and historical discussions of the Restoration – the Disaster of 1898 and the loss of empire, increasing political polarization, the emergence of socialism and anarchism as powerful and divisive political forces – remained in the future. In the moment, the government and the ruling classes saw in the relative political stability of the 1880s an opportunity to address the social question.

The Restoration also experienced a general liberalization of politics, quite literally. The Liberal Party, under the leadership of Práxedes Sagasta, established its first ministry in 1881, ushering in “a decade of change.”⁴² With the installation of a real liberal government, however it had been put into place, a renewed commitment to the development of liberal principles and policies, including freedoms of the press and of association (the latter essential to solving the social question), characterized the 1880s; this culminated in with the passage of universal manhood suffrage in 1891.⁴³ Debates over the condition of the working classes also increased in intensity, culminating in Spain's first “interclass” sociological conference, the *Congreso Nacional Sociológico de Valencia*, which foreshadowed much of the early work done by the CRS.

The debates at the Congress generally occurred between two schools of reformist thought that had coalesced during the ten years since the publication of *La cuestión social*: the *intervencionistas* and the *individualistas*. As a group of hard-core free marketers, the individualistas viewed any government intervention as tantamount to socialism, and though Pujol did not address much socialist philosophy in his closing remarks, there were socialists in attendance. As one group of *intervencionistas*, socialists demanded legislation that directly improved working-class lives. However, a more moderate group of *intervencionistas*, rallying around Pujol's ideas, had significant representation at the Congress. These moderates called for the passage of legislation designed to allow the working class to improve their own situation.⁴⁴ These debates had been going on in the press and in Valencia's Ateneo Casino-Obrero since the beginning of the Restoration, but had really picked up steam as the government loosened

⁴² Santiago Castillo Alonso, “El reformismo de la Restauración del Congreso sociológico de Valencia a la Comisión de Reformas Sociales,” *Estudios de historia social*, no. 30 (1984): 21.

⁴³ The Law of Universal Suffrage is somewhat of a misnomer. Like its European counterparts, Spain continued to exclude women from the voting until the late 1920s (when women were permitted to vote in some local elections), and women did not win full suffrage rights until the Constitution of 1931.

⁴⁴ *Congreso Nacional Sociológico convocado por el Ateneo-Casino Obrero. Discurso pronunciado por el Excmo. Sr. D. Eduardo Pérez Pujol* (Valencia: Imprenta de Manuel Alufre, 1883), 3–8.

restrictions on association and the press.⁴⁵

The moderate strain of *intervencionismo* found its national voice in the so-called “Valencian initiative,” initially laid out at the 1883 Congreso. This focused on a package of proposals designed to help workers help themselves, at least in theory. These included the formation of the aforementioned *jurados mixtos*, which were interclass organizations designed to facilitate negotiation between labor and capital, thus rendering the strike superfluous, expansion of education, savings banks for workers, and fixing the credit system. These programs would not infringe too heavily on the freedom of the market, and indeed, this middle road posited that the social problem “did not reside in the socio-economic system” itself, but in the “poor management of governments and in the lack of freedom and of association; acquired vices that could be corrected.”⁴⁶ According to press releases in the Madrid liberal newspaper *El Imparcial*:

The Congress declares that the solution to the social question, with regard to the improvement of the workers, should be founded in the exercise of the right of association, in order to properly develop trust, savings, and mutual benefit institutions, in the interest of the workers, likewise [institutions to promote a] relationship and harmony between labor and capital; and on the other hand, the state should contribute to the solution of the social problem in an exclusive and sufficient way, as regards its tutelary power.⁴⁷

As such, the State’s responsibility was to clear a path for the creation of institutions to solve the social question; it was not to act as savior for the working class.

It is not difficult to argue for the creation of legal pathways to allow workers to organize (along appropriate political lines), or open savings accounts, and still maintain a philosophical adherence to the ideas of free market capitalism. These things would potentially allow workers to participate in that market in more productive ways. Calling for the regulation of women’s work, on the other hand, ventures into a very different territory. In England, as noted above, this was done

⁴⁵ Cruz notes that the original *ateneos* – an adaptation of the Greek word “*atheneum*,” – flourished in mid-century urban Spain, but that by the end of the century, workers had begun to establish *ateneos*, which had a far more obvious political bent, as well as encouraging the intellectual development and sociability for which earlier *ateneos* were known. As such, they were essential spaces for the development of working class politics.

⁴⁶ de la Calle, *La Comisión de Reformas Sociales*, 38.

⁴⁷ “Congreso Sociológico de Valencia,” *El Imparcial* 24 julio 1883; quoted in de la Calle, *La Comisión de Reformas Sociales*, 39.

through a linguistic sleight-of-hand: the law focused on women and children who were “not free agents,” and thus were subject to regulation.⁴⁸ At the Valencian Congress, resolutions leaned on scientific explanations to justify the regulation of women’s work. Of course, the attendees resolved, the Benot Law passed in 1873 outlawed labor for children under the age of ten – legislation that could theoretically help support the Moyano law of 1857, which mandated compulsory education through the age of nine. Both of these laws had only had patchy success. The participants at the Congress decided that while prohibition of children’s labor did not violate the rights or freedoms of either capital or labor, it was “incomplete” in terms of its lack of focus on women’s work. In Valencia, and in Spain in general, women were being asked to do work that they were physically incapable of doing. Pujol cited the contribution of one Sr. Gómez, who had “special competence” in the area of women’s work and health, and argued that “the woman develops fewer caloric units than the man, and because heat is strength, it is well understood that she cannot be employed in the same jobs as the man.”⁴⁹ Everyone, individualistas and intervencionistas alike, thus agreed that if established, the jurados mixtos should have medical experts involved who could determine suitable and unsuitable work for women.⁵⁰

This particular discussion foreshadowed the responses to questions about women’s work in Valencia given to the CRS for the 1891 report. No one seems to have suggested, at least openly, that women should be completely excluded from the workplace. But women’s work needed to be better regulated, and conference attendees also agreed that women should leave work an hour early so as to make certain that they are able to fulfill their “principle mission”: complete their chores at home – in other words, to make sure that they can clock in for what women’s historians have called the “second shift.”⁵¹ Like Pujol in 1872, the Congress attendees reinforced the notion that women’s work in the home was not actual labor, that “chores” were not “work.”

The Valencian Congress was an important step toward the formation of the CRS itself, and though its proposals regarding women’s work were relatively benign, if based on rather questionable science, the inclusion of women’s work in discussions of the solution to the social question are quite telling. As Pujol noted in 1872, the family was the root of the natural social order. Working women potentially disrupted family life, and the working class could only solve its problems from the solid foundation of a stable family. Valencian Congress

⁴⁸ Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, 55.

⁴⁹ *Congreso Nacional Sociológico convocado por el Ateneo-Casino Obrero*, 18–19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

attendees suggested that one way to avoid the disruption of home life was to restrict working hours so housework could be addressed as well, indicating that women's work in the home was not really seen as work, as something that required physical exertion, and could and should be done after a long day at the workshop or factory.

All these examples – Pujol, the Congress, legislation from across Europe and the United States – show the tension between the two fundamental ideas of separate spheres and a free market, and the elaboration of “solutions” to the social question are evidence of the shifts taking place in liberal economics that allowed for the development of the middle way between full *intervencionismo* and *individualismo* that the Valencian initiative represented. Furthermore, protective legislation and the legal definition of women as “dependent” on men, another common tactic, attempted to negotiate the right to a free market in labor, in which employers had the right to hire as many women as they wanted at the wage they chose, and the cherished notion that the right to sell one's labor was exclusively male.

Within six months of the Sociological Congress, the Real Orden of 5 December 1883 created the Comisión de Reformas Sociales with the foremost task of studying “cuestiones obreras.”⁵² The formation of the CRS coincided with Europe's First Great Depression, and in Spain, an outbreak of *phylloxera* combined with decreases in wheat and rice production to cause a genuine agricultural crisis; these developments had the most detrimental effects on *jornaleros* and small property owners, often resulting in job and/or property loss.⁵³ In order to study “el problema social,” the CRS set up local offices in provincial capitals, as well as in cities that had become known for labor conflict. Working- and middle-class representatives made up each committee, which then embarked on researching and answering a series of two hundred and twenty-three questions broken into thirty-two separate groups.

An examination of all of the available CRS reports could potentially provide historians with the most detailed picture of the lives of Spanish workers in the late nineteenth century, despite the fact that not all the provinces dedicated sufficient resources to the completion of the CRS questionnaire. Valencia, with

⁵² “Real Decreto de creación de una Comisión de estudio de cuestiones obreras,” in “Apéndice al Estudio Introductorio,” *Reformas Sociales. Información oral escrita publicada de 1889 a 1893. Tomo I. Información oral practicada por la Comisión de Reformas Sociales en Madrid, publicada en 1889* (Madrid: Centro de publicaciones del Ministerio del Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1985), cxliii–cxli.

⁵³ de la Calle, *La Comisión de Reformas Sociales*, 21–23.

Pujol himself as the Vicepresident of its Executive Committee, produced one of the most comprehensive reports – published in 1891, the 582-page document provides information about a number of important urban areas, as well as some more economically significant Valencian *pueblos*. Pujol's involvement with the committee was essential. He was able to guide the choice of organizations involved in data-collection, choosing those that best exemplified interclass cooperation, leaning on a Valencian “cooperative tradition” that had been flourishing since the middle of the century. His involvement also ensured that the Valencian CRS surpassed “in quality and quantity the rest” of the responding areas.⁵⁴

The organization of the committee itself deserves some attention. Though ostensibly designed to study worker questions, its composition was decidedly bourgeois: of the fifty-two members of the provincial Commission, only ten identified specifically as “workers;” three of those workers were also on the Executive Committee. The majority of the Provincial Commission worked in white collar or academic positions – two attorneys, a doctor, and a number of educators at various levels. Only four members identified as *propietarios*, indicating that they could also be industrialists. This group also included Pujol, who was also a member of the law faculty at the University of Valencia. Though the province had a large agricultural economy, not a single committee member was identified as a rural worker, *campesino*, *jornalero*, or *labrador* – urban questions were clearly privileged over rural, despite recent conflicts in the countryside.⁵⁵ Finally, despite an overwhelming concern with working women, and an active population of women workers, not a single woman was included in the Provincial Commission – these studies were part of the public sphere, and thus perceived of as inherently masculine.⁵⁶

Several question “groups” addressed the reality of women's work in some way, and answers to the questions were presented in the general provincial report; several organizations and towns were able to submit responses to the same questions as well. So in addition to the “official” report, evidence was also

⁵⁴ Ibid., 87. Though the region was comprised of three provinces, Alicante and Castellón de la Plana were responsible for filling out their own reports.

⁵⁵ Burguera, “Gendered Scenes in the Countryside,” 320–41.

⁵⁶ Though scholars have complicated the notion of the strict separation of spheres, particularly with regard to political activism, as Enders and Radcliff have noted, “Spanish women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were in fact largely invisible in the classic public arenas of work and politics.” Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff, “General Introduction” in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood*, 3; Mónica Burguera specifically discusses the public/private divide with respect to the Comisión de Reformas Sociales in “Del hogar a la fábrica: El trabajo de las maquinas en el declive de la selería,” *Asparkia* no. 9 (1998), 141–43.

submitted from the city of Valencia, the towns of Onteniente, Sueca, Alberique, Ayora, Liria, and Chelva, and a host of worker organizations in important industries, in particular silk, which was dominated by women workers.⁵⁷

Question Group XIV directly addressed “Trabajo de las mujeres,” and the language in which women workers were discussed illuminates local attitudes towards women’s work. Women commonly “abandon” the home to work in “factories and workshops.” The report specifically noted the silk industry, which was “completely in the hands of women in factories situated in Valencian suburbs,” resulting in men being “thrown out” of work in the silk industry, who were forced to search for new positions. They ended up “serving as waiters in boarding houses and cafés.”⁵⁸ Instead of praising Miguel Nolla, proprietor of Pujol’s exemplary tile factory, the CRS report noted that he employed 840 women compared with 145 men – evidence that the same thing happening in silk might have been happening in tile making.⁵⁹ The CRS also addressed the “light” agricultural work that women engaged in throughout provincial towns, which included:

[H]arvesting peanuts, cutting grapes, harvesting and wrapping oranges [in tissue paper], harvesting olives, raisins, et cetera, and also arranging oranges and raisin[s] for their exportation, working the same hours as the men and earning half a days’ wage of 0,75 pesetas...⁶⁰

Firstly, by labeling these tasks as “light,” report authors immediately diminished the value of the labor, not to mention its inherent strenuousness, similar to the interpretation of housework already noted in Pujol’s work, as well as in the 1883 Congress resolutions. For example, female orange wrappers, the *empapeladoras*, worked full days on their knees, individually wrapping each orange in tissue paper to prepare for exporting, while harvesters had to carry heavy baskets of fruit in from the plantations [Figures 1 and 2]. Secondly, lest the reader think they were lauding these women workers, they noted that “[t]he consequences of women working outside the home are bad and not favorable to [their] morality as a general rule....”⁶¹

In addition to the tendency to underestimate the physical nature of women’s work, two particular features of the above discussion really stand out.

⁵⁷ Mónica Burguera, “Del hogar a la fábrica,” 139.

⁵⁸ *Reformas Sociales: Valencia*, 111.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

The first is the alleged replacement of male workers by women in both silk and tile manufacturing, and the attendant implication that salary or wage disparities were behind this trend. The second is the morality of women workers. Both of these themes appear in several Groups of questions. The first general discussion appeared in Group VI, “Condición económica de la clase obrera,” one of the report’s most extensive sections.⁶² The report noted that, in general, the daily wage of ordinary workers, or *braceros*, was not enough to cover basic necessities, and that (male) workers earned on average 2,25 pesetas (ptas.) per day; as a result, many families were only able to make ends meet because of the contributions made by working wives.⁶³ Some workers were better off than others, of course – skilled labor, workers in smaller, and thus less expensive cities. Regardless, “*el obrero...fights with the unavailability of work,*” a subtle jibe at places hiring women instead of men because of salary inequality.⁶⁴ It is interesting to note, however, that little is said directly about women’s wages in Group XI’s questions about “Salario.” Rather, this section reinforces the idea that men’s wages are not sufficient to cover basic necessities on average – they place the minimum wage for family subsistence at 3,00 ptas./day, 0,75 pesetas/day more than the average male worker earned; this inability to support a family weighed heavily on the minds of workers.⁶⁵ The report pointed to the usual vices that the bourgeoisie attributed to workers – alcoholism, the lottery – but women workers were not portrayed as the picture of restraint. It was “women who, receiving the wages of their husbands,” which were meant to “sustain the family,” bought lottery tickets waiting “for a change in fortune which never arrives.”⁶⁶

Women’s salaries were addressed separately in Group XIV’s discussion of “Trabajo de las mujeres.” In each example the report provided – textiles, like silk, wool, and cotton, espadrille making, tile making, agriculture – and in every location – Valencia, Liria, Onteniente, Alcira, Ayora, or Gandía – women did the same or comparable work as their male counterparts, and consistently made less money.⁶⁷ The concern for the gendered wage gap was not a forward-thinking nod to gender equality, but a thinly-veiled concern that women were replacing men because they would work for less money, potentially threatening working-class masculinity, as well as family relationships.

Family relationships also fell under the general category of working class

⁶² Ibid., 64–78.

⁶³ Ibid., 65; 69.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 67.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 98.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 111–14.

morality. Question number 97, again in Group XIV's discussion of women's work, inquires about the "Influence of the life of the workshop or the factory on the morality of the single or married woman, and on the way that [she] fulfills her ultimate duty within the family."⁶⁸ The response presented by the committee states emphatically that working life "generally exercises a *fatal influence* to the morality of the married and single woman," especially if women were at any time in contact with men.⁶⁹ In silk, for example, women often "heard in the factories of Valencia men's conversations," while in the factories outside the city, they had to cope with the "demands and clumsy desires of the foremen," implying that they were subjected to unwanted sexual advances from male superiors.⁷⁰ There was also a risk when married women had to work "in contact" with single women, or young women working with adult women. Though this was presented without further explanation, the inference was that their conversations would possibly introduce immoral ideas to young, impressionable girls. But in every case, single women working in factories meant that they did not learn how to do housework, which the report called "oficios domésticos." The use of the term "oficio," or "trade," here is particularly interesting: when done by working women, "tareas domésticas," or household chores, are light enough to be done after a long day at the factory or in the fields. For unmarried young women, housework becomes a "trade," implying that it took a certain amount of skill. Married women, while their wages improved a given family's material life, could not complete their housework, or, more importantly, "complete their maternal duties."⁷¹

Group XIV was not the only space for concerns about working class morality, and the threat to the destruction of the family posed by women who needed to work – and time and again it was stressed that women who worked did so out of absolute necessity. Ironically, Group VIII, entitled "Condición moral de la clase obrera" did not explicitly reference immoral behavior as much as it did educational opportunities and access to art, culture, and literacy. Question number fifty-two specifically addressed the presence of drunkenness, as well as the "national disgrace" of the lottery. The same question evinced concern over "fallen women," though the report noted that there were only "298 registered prostitutes in this city [of Valencia]." Of these, two-thirds hailed from the working classes, while the other third were disgraced domestic workers. Here, the authors proposed a correlation between working class prostitutes and the existence of factories that allowed women and men to work in close proximity to one another—"the habitual and daily contact with [male] workers working in the same

⁶⁸ Ibid., 113.

⁶⁹ Ibid., emphasis added.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

factories,” along with possibly living away from parents, posed a tremendous danger to young, impressionable women.⁷²

This section also presented one of the only mentions of domestic servants throughout the entire document, a glaring oversight, as domestic service was the single biggest employer of women after agriculture. In 1887, some 322,000 women were employed “in service,” and these young women could be either working class or even from middle-class families who had fallen on hard times. The latter would have been ideal for higher levels of service, like governess or tutor, or parlor maid.⁷³ Even women who were not in service likely had been at some point – although families in southern European countries tended to employ fewer servants than their northern European counterparts, historians generally agree that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, “a significant proportion of Europe’s inhabitants were in service at some point in their lives.”⁷⁴ The CRS’s exclusion of domestic service from its inquiries demands a certain amount of hypothesizing. It is possible that, since domestic service generally happened in homes with other families, that bourgeois observers presumed their morality to be “safe,” though as we have seen, one-third of Valencia’s registered prostitutes allegedly hailed from this sector. Observers could have also assumed that these girls and women were gaining valuable training to become young wives and mothers, and thus under the direction of a bourgeois wife were learning a trade (as the language “oficios domésticos” would indicate). In addition, the CRS demonized women’s work as potentially morally and physically dangerous. Since nearly every bourgeois family worth its salt employed domestic servants, to include a discussion of this in a document that also argues against women’s work would have held up a mirror to their own exploitive reliance on female domestic labor to improve their own comforts.

Women’s work played an important discursive role in one more section: Group IX, “Condición de la familia obrera,” or “Condition of the working family.” The Commission noted that the education that working-class children received “in the bosom of the home” could not “be more deficient.”⁷⁵ Because mothers had to work to supplement fathers’ wages, they were unable to “exercise the elevated mission of directing the moral culture of *los pequeñuelos*,” the report intentionally used the diminutive “pequeñuelos,” rather than “niños,” to emphasize the innocence and vulnerability of these children. Neighborhood

⁷² Ibid., 86–7.

⁷³ Adrian Shubert, *A Social History of Modern Spain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 40.

⁷⁴ Isidro Dubert, “Domestic Service and Social Modernization in Urban Galicia, 1752–1920,” *Continuity and Change* 14, no. 2 (1999): 207.

⁷⁵ *Reformas Sociales: Valencia*, 88–89.

streets were scenes of moral depravity, with children bothering passersby or “destroying everything in their reach” with no discipline from either parents or authorities.⁷⁶ For the working classes, “their lack of culture has made them fall easily into idleness and vice, descending a slope that ends in crime, since actually ignorance and poverty are the principle causes of criminality.”⁷⁷

Attitudes about the proper type of family arrangement, reflected in the discussions of women’s work in the CRS report, stemmed directly from urban, bourgeois standards of family relationships and the separation of spheres – the assertion that mothers were the exclusive educators of children was firmly rooted in nineteenth century ideological constructions of womanhood, or as it was known in the U.S., “Republican motherhood.”⁷⁸ Women and children, whether in the street, the factory, or the workshop, were in male space. The time had passed where the home was a center of economic activity, and with this new relegation of spaces in the nineteenth century came expectations that the working classes should attempt to at least mimic bourgeois home and family arrangements, and this mimicry was a crucial part of the emergence of bourgeois cultural hegemony during the Restoration.

The main section of the report essentially summarized all the data collected throughout the province. The provincial commission also decided to publish the most significant reports from the various pueblos, as well as worker associations, that they received. The latter included two important organizations within the silk industry, a painter’s union, and a printer’s union. Of these, the information from within the silk industry provides perhaps the most important insights, due to the significant presence of women within the industry. Appendix Fifty contained the report submitted by the *Unión manufacturera del Arte de la Seda* (Manufacturer’s Silk union), which had engaged in limited strikes against silk factories in recent years. The union agreed that the factory was a dangerous place for women, who had been exposed to “obscene and unseemly conversations,” and of course married women were also unable to fully complete their housework. The union then called on the Commission for Social Reform itself to fulfill a “sacred duty” to “raise the moral standards of the working-class family” and prevent the fall of young women to prostitution – the language in this section is so similar to the main report, it is clear that the Commission’s authors leaned heavily on the Union’s contribution in its discussion of the dangers posed

⁷⁶ Ibid., 89.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 89.

⁷⁸ Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 187–205.

by men and women working together.⁷⁹

The *Sociedad de Socorros del Arte de la Seda*, a silk-based mutual aid society, also submitted detailed answers, but only to the questions involving women's work. They noted that while in the city (Valencia), women in general worked out of necessity, in the suburbs, "where only women work" in silk, the majority do not do so out of necessity, and instead spend their money on "clothes and jewelry, for daily use as well as to prepare a trousseau," echoing the frustration felt across Europe that women working spent their earnings on frivolous things.⁸⁰ The distinction was significant: in Valencia, men still worked in silk, but their wages were inadequate to support a family; the subtle point here, of course, was that women's presence in the industry pulled male wages down. Regardless, in each location, women did the same work as men, and for less money, which further implied that they were doing work that men should be doing.⁸¹ In response to question number ninety-nine, regarding "insalubrious or dangerous" work that women did, the society evinced tremendous concern over women's use of machines, especially machines that they perceived to require tremendous physical force. For example, weaving silk handkerchiefs on a Jacquard machine that had "only one pedal" required "a force of twelve to twenty kilograms," or twenty-six to forty-four pounds of pressure. To operate this machine, the worker had to rest on a "seat that is not very good," and the body's weight was "supported by the left foot."⁸² Similar conditions were to be found in Damask weaving, a complicated pattern woven on a machine with "two pedals" requiring similar force, with one foot in constant movement. Each worker produced between three and five meters of cloth per shift, and in doing so lifted between "300 and 400.000 kilograms" per day.⁸³ Because of this excessive physical exertion, the Society argued that the majority of women in the weaving sector "frequently become ill." To address the problem, they established a commission to study the adverse effects of certain jobs on women workers, made up of local doctors, and they all agreed that "heavy work" done in the factories by women was detrimental to their health. They argued that, as such, women should not be permitted to engage in any labor designated as "heavy," leaving this work to men.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ *Reformas Sociales: Valencia*, 546–47.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 551.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 551–553.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 553.

⁸³ *Ibid.* The final number—between 300 and 400,000 kg./day, is arrived at by multiplying the number of "passes" a machine must make to produce a meter of cloth: roughly 5,000, by the number of meters of cloth produced, three to five meters, by the average force needed to work the machine.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 554.

The society's report focused mainly on the creation of a finished product, ignoring the first part of silk production: the harvesting of the silk from silkworms [Figure 2]. Also a female sector, it involved raising the silkworms, and then separating the silk from the cocoon, which required that women harvesters dunk their hands into near-boiling water, surely also potentially "dangerous" or "insalubrious."⁸⁵ But it was the use of machines, a masculine endeavor, that sparked the society's concern. As Maxine Berg noted, machines were introduced in textiles early in the process of industrialization to make work easier for women and children⁸⁶; however, by the end of the nineteenth century, heavy machinery was being used as a way to restrict certain types of work, indication that the use of machines came to represent masculinity and skill. Women could remain part of the industry, but they should be prohibited from the use of the heaviest, and thus manliest, machinery. This would also have the intended effect of opening those jobs back up to men.

Valencia's CRS contribution provides excellent insight into the culture of work for women, though I have found no evidence to indicate that any women were consulted in the completion of the questionnaire. Valencian working women's experiences were thus filtered through male sources, many of whom were actively seeking to exclude them from the workplace entirely, or at least limit the jobs they could work and the hours during which they could work. Respondents were anxious to emphasize that working women only engaged in paid labor out of absolute necessity, that women worked for less money than men, that their work was not really work, and that the factory and workshop were no place for women, whose delicate sensibilities may be offended, and whose delicate constitutions were obviously endangered.

In the two decades following the initial results of the Commission for Social Reform's reports, a flurry of legislation emanated from the Cortes that succeeded in redefining women's roles in society, including the first law, in 1900, to address women's work specifically.⁸⁷ The Law of 13 March 1900, based on CRS recommendations, included some very forward-thinking regulations: a mandatory six-week maternity leave, with the option of taking medically-

⁸⁵ Debin Ma, "The Modern Silk Road: The Global Raw Silk Market, 1850–1930," *Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 2 (1996), 331. Ma does not refer directly to Valencian silk, but provides an excellent and brief discussion of the phases of silk production.

⁸⁶ Maxine Berg, "What Difference Did Women's Work Make to the Industrial Revolution?" *History Workshop*, no. 3 (1993): 34.

⁸⁷ Adela Núñez Orgaz, "Gestación de la primera Ley de Regulación del trabajo de la mujer (1.883–1.900)," in *El trabajo de las mujeres, siglos XVI–XX: VI Jornadas de Investigación Interdisciplinaria sobre la Mujer*, eds. María Jesús Vara Miranda and Virginia Maquieira d'Angelo (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1996), 231–48.

necessary time off before childbirth beginning in the eighth month of a pregnancy; bosses were also legally prohibited from firing a pregnant worker or a worker on maternity leave, thus putting many of the recommendations presented at the Berlin conference in 1890 into place.⁸⁸ By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Cortes had compiled an extensive list of jobs prohibited for all children and for girls under the age of twenty-one.⁸⁹ Spain, like other western nations, had found a compromise between bourgeois gender ideology and free market policies.



Figure 1: Almacén: Triadores, First decade of the 20th century. Museu de la Taronja, Arxiu Fotogràfic. C-0090.

The conversation around women's work did not stop as a result of the CRS report, and the number of women involved in paid labor steadily increased over the first half of the twentieth century, especially after 1914.⁹⁰ In Valencia, women took on active roles in the production and distribution of citrus fruit, working in both fields and warehouses, giving them not only a connection to the

⁸⁸ "Ley de 13 de marzo de 1900," in Nash, *Mujer, familia y trabajo en España*, 373–75.

⁸⁹ "Decreto de 25 de enero de 1908 clasificando las industrias prohibidas a mujeres y niños," Nash, *Mujer, familia y trabajo en España*, 377–84.

⁹⁰ Nash, "Introduction," in *Mujer, familia y trabajo en España*, 51–53.

larger global economy, but also a work identity – after a substantial crisis in the citrus industry, women began unionizing as working class women in the Sociedad El Despertar Femenino, or “Feminine Awakening.”



Figure 2: Two women gathering oranges, Valencia, late 1800s. Museu de la Taronja, Arxiu Fotogràfic, A-0009.

The development of a burgeoning industrial economy on Spain's east coast has often been overshadowed by its agricultural economy, but the two are intimately related. The major agricultural products – oranges and rice in the irrigated *huerta*, wine and olive oil in the dry *secano* region – required a certain amount of industrial organization, especially in terms of distribution. But their dominance, especially citrus, also belies a very diverse economy experiencing the usual growing pains of industrialization: increased urbanization, debates over working conditions and living conditions, and consternation over the role that women should play in the new economy. This last feature, debates surrounding women's work, are a genuine hallmark of modernization. Valencia was an important location for these debates, and helped set the agenda for the emergence of a true reformism in Spain; similarly, Valencia's working women, though their voices were not allowed to be heard, were lightning rods for discussions about masculinity, about embourgeoisement, about capitalism, and about identity. The solution to the social question rested squarely on their shoulders.



Dones treballant en la cria del cuc de seda. Carcaixent.

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Figure 3: Women caring for silkworms, Carcaixent, late 19th century. Carcaixent: Arxiu Municipal de Carcaixent