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Conflict over Women's Working Times on the Eve of Industrialisation: Spanish Social Reformers' Surveys at the End of the Nineteenth Century

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CONFLICT OVER WOMEN'S WORKING TIMES ON THE EVE OF
INDUSTRIALISATION: SPANISH SOCIAL REFORMERS' SURVEYS AT
THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Cristina Borderías

ABSTRACT: During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Spain experienced growing social instability. The worsening working conditions stimulated social conflict and the rise of the labour movement. In this context, the first voices in favour of state intervention in conflicts between capital and labour arose among the reformist intellectual elite. One of the first social policy measures undertaken by the state was the creation, in 1883, of the *Comisión de Reformas Sociales* (Commission for Social Reforms, CRS) as a consultative and advisory institution of the government on social issues. Under the influence of positivist methods of empirical sociology, the commission's first initiative was to conduct a survey with the objective of undertaking a detailed diagnosis of the living conditions of the working population. Changing gender relations in the family and labour market, especially the conflicts over the use of women's time, was one of the central questions in this survey. Thus, its results allow us to analyse both the discourses – by social reformers and other social groups – and the social practices of women at work in different sectors and in different parts of Spain.

In the light of new sources and new methods of analysis, European historiography has recently given fresh importance to research on working times, highlighting the need to revise some classical hypotheses on the impact of industrialisation – from Marx to Thompson. The opening up of a longer-term perspective, driven by studies on the uses of time in the medieval and modern eras, are making it possible to properly appreciate the continuities and changes induced by industrialisation as regards the duration and structuring of the working day, the intensification

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of work and the relations between wage forms and the management of working times. A marginal issue in mainstream studies on living standards, working time has received more attention from social history and historical sociology, although the analysis of labour rules, regulations and agreements has predominated over the analysis of social practices.¹ Moreover, following the concept of work that became consolidated both in liberal theory and in socialist theories, with rare exceptions, the study of working time has been confined to factory work. Domestic service, as well as paid and unpaid domestic work – particularly opaque to the eyes of the historian – implies very different temporalities, which, in most countries, remain to be explored.² Yet, studies on factory working times have dealt with gender differences only in a subsidiary manner.

In Spain, there are hardly any studies on the evolution of working times, beyond knowledge of the legal rules, or collective agreements between workers and employers, which were theoretical rather than real.³ We are more aware of

¹ See a recent state of the art in Corine Maitte and Didier Terrier, “Réinvestir l’histoire du temps de travail”, in *Les temps du travail: Normes, pratiques, évolutions (XIV–XIX siècle)*, ed. Corine Maitte and Didier Terrier, Rennes: Press Universitaires de Rennes, 2014, pp. 9–31.

² Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts’ Advice to Women*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1978; Joan Vanek, “Time Spent in Housework”, *Scientific American* 231/5 (1974), pp. 116–120; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, “The ‘Industrial Revolution’ in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the 20th Century”, *Technology and Culture* 17/3 (1976), pp. 1–23; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, New York: Basic Books, 1983; Caroline Davidson, *A Woman’s Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650–1950*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1982; Amanda Vickery, “His and Hers: Gender, Consumption and Household Accounting in Eighteenth-Century England”, *Past and Present* 1, suppl. 1 (2006), pp. 12–38; Raffaella Sarti, “Historians, Social Scientists, Servants, and Domestic Workers: Fifty Years of Research on Domestic and Care Work”, *International Review of Social History* 59/2 (2014), pp. 279–314. Rachel Rich, “‘Life will pass quickly for me’: Women, Clocks and Timekeeping in Nineteenth-century France”, *Gender and History* 31/1 (2018). For Spain, see Richard Wall, “La contribución de las mujeres casadas a la economía familiar bajo distintos sistemas familiares: Algunos ejemplos de mediados del siglo XIX a partir del trabajo de Frederik Le Play”, *Revista de Demografía Histórica* 12/2–3 (1994), pp. 183–197; Cristina Borderías, “Suponiendo ese trabajo lo hace la mujer: organización y valoración de los tiempos de trabajo en la Barcelona de mediados del siglo XIX”, in *Tiempos, trabajos y género*, ed. Cristina Carrasco, Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2002, pp. 103–128.

³ Maria Jesús Espuny Tomas, “La Jornada laboral: perspectiva histórica y valoración jurídica”, *Revista andaluza de relaciones laborales* 13 (2004), pp. 115–144; Gloria Nielfa Cristobal, “Trabajo, legislación y género en la España contemporánea: los orígenes de la legislación laboral”, in *¿Privilegios o eficiencia?: Mujeres y hombres en los mercados de trabajo*,

the resistance of male workers to the presence of women in certain sectors and their complaints about its effects on the worsening of male working conditions, in terms of wages, but also on increasing working hours and intensifying the pace of work, although none of these issues have been subject to specific analyses. In rural environments, for example, where men combined agricultural with industrial work, as in the textile regions of Catalonia, only by resorting to female work could employers have the guarantee of regular and longer working hours. We also have some evidence confirming that the working hours were longer in feminised sectors,⁴ but more systematic research needs to be done in this regard.

The control over working time and the struggle to shorten the long factory hours were among the principal factors of social conflict throughout the nineteenth century in Spain.⁵ As the annual number of working days continued to be very irregular – determined in the countryside by seasonality, poor weather and bad harvests; and in the industrial nuclei (with low competitiveness) by the frequent crises – the working day was progressively extended, this being one of the key elements of social conflict since the mid-nineteenth century. Among the demands of the first great general strike in Barcelona (1855) was the limitation of the working day. This strike led to the first urban quantitative survey on working conditions and living standards of the working class carried out in Spain, by the architect and engineer Ildefons Cerdà (1856). At the request and with the participation of the workers' associations, as Cerdà explained in the prologue, the *Monografía de la clase obrera de Barcelona in 1856* (Monograph on the Barcelona working class in 1856)⁶ intended to respond to “the compelling need of the workers to demonstrate with irrefutable data the difficulties that they experienced

ed. Lina Gálvez and Carmen Sarasúa, Alicante: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante, 2003, pp. 39–56; Mario García Zúñiga, “Fêtes chômées et temps de travail en Espagne (1250–1900)”, in Terrier and Maitte, *Les temps de travail*, pp. 63–80.

⁴ Carles Enrech, *Indústria i ofici: conflicte social i jerarquies obreres en la Catalunya tèxtil (1881–1923)*, Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma, 2003; Carles Enrech, “Género y sindicalismo en la industria textil (1836–1923)”, in *Género y políticas del trabajo en la España contemporánea*, ed. Cristina Borderías, Barcelona: Icaria, 2007, pp. 127–162.

⁵ During the second half of the nineteenth century, the most frequent cause of strikes was the limitation of the working day; from 1905 to 1933 strikes for wage rises were, however, more numerous. Álvaro Soto Carmona, *El trabajo industrial en la España contemporánea (1874–1936)*, Barcelona: Anthropos, 1989, pp. 448–484. Spain was the first country to adopt the eight-hour working day, on 3 April 1919, but it took a long time for it to be implemented.

⁶ Ildefonso Cerdà, “La urbanización como un hecho concreto: La estadística urbana de Barcelona”, *Teoría general de la Urbanización*, vol. 2, Barcelona, 1867. As an appendix, it included the “Monografía Estadística de la Clase obrera de Barcelona en 1856: Espécimen de una estadística funcional de la vida urbana con aplicación concreta a dicha clase”, pp. 553–700.

with the wages established in Barcelona” in order to support their demands to the Spanish Parliament. The data on annual working days and working hours in the 171 trades of the city showed that in female trades the working hours were longer. Labour movement arguments presented women’s work as a cause of the deterioration of male working conditions by increasing working times and lowering wages. Numerous other strikes and conflicts occurred in various parts of Spain between 1855 and 1884, most of them demanding a reduction in working hours and a rise in male wages to the level of a “family wage”.⁷

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Spain witnessed growing social instability. The repercussions of the global crisis caused unemployment, hunger and emigration. The worsening of working conditions (marked by increasing work hours, unhealthy workplaces, increases in accidents and work-related illnesses, low wages, infant mortality) stimulated conflict and the rise of the labour movement. In this context, the first voices in favour of a mediating intervention by the state in the conflicts between capital and labour could be heard among the reformist intellectual elites, although the first legislative interventions in labour relations were not enacted until the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸

In 1883, the growing concern about the “social question”, as well as the fear of revolutionary movements, led the government to create the Commission for the Study of the Questions aimed at Improving the Welfare of the Working Classes, both Agricultural and Industrial, and which Affect the Relations between Capital and Labour.⁹ Its final composition did not comply with the supposed criteria of “impartiality and sufficiency” intended by the government, and did not bring together representatives of all social classes, since its 14 members did

⁷ Some strikes related to the length of the working day in the second half of the nineteenth century: General strike in Barcelona (1855), Barcelona cotton workers (1873), textile workers in Sabadell (1883), typographers in Madrid, carpenters and brickmakers in Barcelona (1882), miners in Langreo (1879), Mieres (1883), Riotinto (1888), Vizcaya (1890 and 1892), bakers in Vizcaya (1884), shipyards (Nervión, 1892).

⁸ The only legislative initiative which prospered in the mid-century decades was the Bênot Law (1873) on the protection of child labour, although it was not applied until the twentieth century. See José María Borrás Llop, *El trabajo infantil en España*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2014.

⁹ The Comisión para el estudio de las cuestiones que interesan a la mejora o bienestar de las clases obreras, tanto agrícolas como industriales y que afectan a las relaciones entre el capital y el trabajo was established by royal decree on 5 December 1883. The creation of the CRS was led by members of the Liberal and Republican parties, although its central commission included all ideological strands, even some very conservative ones but that had shown interest in the “social problem”. For a history of this institution, see Maria Dolores de la Calle Velasco, *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.

not include a single representative of the workers' associations. The different ideological currents on the social issue were not represented either; the majority of its members were opposed or at least openly hostile to state intervention.¹⁰

Some historians have stressed that the workers' movement itself denounced the survey proposed by the government as no more than a mechanism to delay state intervention in the regulation of labour relations, which the workers' movement had been demanding for some time.¹¹

Although the National Statistics Commission and Geographic and Statistical Institute were established in 1856 and 1873, respectively, the state had paid little or no attention to the effects of economic and political liberalisation and of industrialisation on the working classes, as the decree creating the commission made clear.¹² The quantitative and qualitative progress in the collection of information on living conditions of the working classes by the state in various countries had not reached Spain.¹³ There were no statistics on labour, housing, poverty and education, and no measures had been taken to access public opinion as in other countries. Individual initiatives and those of philanthropic, statistical or workers' associations, which had arisen in Europe and the US, had not significantly developed either.¹⁴ Only in the health field had medical associations developed extensive local reports.¹⁵

The leading influence of positivist and Krausist trends in the creation of the commission contributed by introducing the procedures of empirical sociology as a prior step of state intervention and social policy. The so-called "scientific

¹⁰ Santiago Castillo, "Estudio introductorio" to his facsimile edition of *Información oral y escrita*, originally published from 1889–1893, Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1985, vol. 1, p. lxxiv.

¹¹ M. del Carmen Iglesias y Antonio Elorza, *Burgueses y proletarios: Clase obrera y reforma social en la Restauración*, Barcelona: Laia, 1973.

¹² Preamble of the royal decree of 1883 that created the CRS, in *Información oral y escrita*, p. 11.

¹³ Pierre Karila-Cohen, "État et enquête au XIXe siècle: d'une autorité à l'autre", *Romantisme* 149 (2010), pp. 25–37.

¹⁴ Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales and Kathryn Kish Sklar, *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880–1940*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Christian Topalov, *Histoires d'enquêtes*, Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015.

¹⁵ In the nineteenth century, the Royal Academies of Medicine in different cities announced prizes for the best medical topography, publishing the winning entry each year. The medical topographies were initially systematic studies of the physical environment of a locality as a conditioning factor of the diseases suffered in them. In a second phase, they included a description of the social aspects, considering that they also had an influence on public health. See Llorenç Prats, *La Catalunya rànica: Les condicions de vida materials de les*

intervention of the state” in the resolution of the “social question”, in the positivist currents – sociological and judicial – of the era, was based on a “positive understanding of social needs and an analysis of the causes that engender the conflicts of the future which portend bloody reprisals and painful surprises”.¹⁶

The government, even recognising that state intervention in the social question had been postponed for too long, entrusted the commission with “undertaking a detailed diagnosis of the working and living conditions of the working population”, at the same time as collecting the opinions of representatives of property, capital and labour who, in view of their knowledge and experience, can demonstrate to public opinion the ills associated with each region and each location, the remedies applicable, the part which affects the law and that which corresponds to individual initiative, adding to these main services the most important one of bringing labour, capital and land closer together and into contact.¹⁷

Thus, the commission also acquired a mediatory and advisory function in the resolution of acute social conflicts. This dual role of collecting data and opinions inspired the first survey carried out in 1883, conferring it with an unusual character among the European administrative¹⁸ social surveys that, inspired by the same goal of contributing to improving social conditions, emphasised the empirical principle of sticking to the facts. Although guided by the positive principle of distinguishing between facts, theories and values, the very formulation of the questionnaire demonstrated the difficulty of separating these three aspects. This was particularly clear in relation to women’s work – one of the eight priority subjects for the government – since the categories used in the questions of this section of the questionnaire were characteristic of the model of domesticity that conservatives, social reformers and various currents of the workers’ movement defended.¹⁹ The survey for the collection

clases populares a la Catalunya de la Restauració segons les topografies mèdiques, Barcelona: Altafulla, 1995.

¹⁶ Real Decreto de creación de una Comisión de estudio de cuestiones obreras [Royal decree for the creation of a commission for the study of the social question], *Gaceta*, 10 December 1883, in *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 1, p. cxliv.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. cxlvii. For the emergence of this same public surveys in other European countries, see Pierre Karila-Cohen, “L’état des esprits: L’invention de l’enquête politique en France, 1814–1848”, *Revue d’histoire du XIXe siècle* 38 (2009), pp. 39–141; Karila-Cohen, “La formation d’un savoir composite: les enquêtes sur l’opinion sous la monarchie constitutionnelle (1814–1848)”, *Revue d’Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 19/2 (2008), pp. 29–49.

¹⁸ Eric Brian, “Statistique administrative et internationalisme statistique pendant la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle”, *Histoire & Mesure* 4/3–4 (1989), pp. 201–224.

¹⁹ Mercedes Arbaiza, “La cuestión social como cuestión de género: Feminidad y trabajo en España”, *España Contemporánea* 21 (2000), pp. 395–498.

of the *Información oral y escrita* (Oral and written information) is, therefore, a source which offers access to the social discourses on the gender relations which structured the survey. It also covers other aspects previously not addressed in the historiography, such as its reception by the commission's informants, in addition to empirical information on the working practices and working times of women in the different economic models of fin de siècle Spain. This information, sometimes supported by detailed quantification, sometimes excessively impressionistic, in any case allows us to access the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation on women's uses of time.

Once the survey had been completed and the final reports drafted by the commission, the latter had to convene a congress attended by the "representatives of property, capital and labour" in order to analyse "the ills associated with each region and each location, the remedies applicable, the part which affects the law and that which corresponds to individual initiative, as a step prior to drafting any bill that would be considered appropriate to submit to the government".²⁰

The responsibilities of this first commission were expanded with the task of "preparing different bill proposals to address the so-called social question" through the creation of a new CRS in 1890 and its successor, the Institute for Social Reforms in 1903, thus consolidating the role of the state in debating and preparing social reform.²¹ Many of the opinions and legislative proposals generated in these years were inspired or supported by the *Información oral y escrita*, but the influence of the anti-interventionist currents delayed the approval of the first labour laws, which effectively launched social policy at the beginning of the twentieth century. Moreover, these first laws affected women and children, as in many other countries.²²

Taking as the main source the analysis of the *Información oral y escrita* – the publication of which, although not complete, spanned five volumes and 3,000 pages

²⁰ Real Decreto de creación de una comisión de estudio de cuestiones obreras [Royal decree for the creation of a commission for the study of the social question], p. cxlviii.

²¹ The principal law proposals by the CRS were: a bill proposal referring to women's work, April 1891; bill proposal regarding child labour, April 1891; opinion on preparing a bill proposal to establish mixed juries in Spain, June 1893; opinion preparing a bill proposal to establish industrial tribunals, 1901; bill proposal regarding councils for conciliation; opinion of Gumersindo de Azcárate regarding the establishment of labour statistics, March 1894.

²² Gloria Nielfa Cristobal, "La regulación del trabajo femenino: Estado y sindicatos", in *Historia de las Mujeres en España y América Latina*, ed. Isabel Morant, Madrid: Cátedra, 2006, pp. 313–352; Ulla Wikander, Alice Kessler-Harris and Jane Lewis, *Protecting Women: Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States and Australia, 1880–1920*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

– this article aims to analyse the discourses, perceptions and practices of the uses of time by men and women in various working-class sectors and trades, in different areas of Spain with differentiated models and levels of economic development.

The first section consists of a detailed presentation of the *Información oral y escrita* survey. The second and third sections are devoted to analysing the information on working times in rural and industrial areas. In the fourth section, I address the crisis in the traditional balance between production and reproduction introduced by industrialisation, as it appears in the reports presented by experts and institutions. I will pay particular attention to its consequences concerning the lack of time for domestic and care work, due to the separation of productive and reproductive spaces, the extension of working hours, the replacement of piecework by day labour and the consequent loss of autonomy on the part of women in the management of their time.

1. *The CRS Social Survey: The Información oral y escrita (1883–1884)*

The 1883 commission met for the first time on 16 January 1884 to begin its work on “collecting all the data and background necessary to establish the state of affairs and the needs of the working classes; to collect the main declarations of public opinion in relation to the causes of this state of affairs and to the means to remediate it or improve its unfavourable aspects and to give its opinion on the problem and especially the solutions which could lead to bill proposals”.²³ The lack of economic resources and of skilled professionals, and the intention to involve the different conflicting social sectors in the results, gave rise to an unusual design of the procedures to undertake the survey.

To collect the information, provincial and local commissions were created, in which all the social sectors were to be represented, although finally the workers’ presence was minor, as only 10 of the 52 members of the provincial commissions and 5 of the 23 members of the local commissions were workers. The rest were landowners, industrialists and traders, civil servants, liberal professionals, political representatives, jurists, intellectuals, and ecclesiastical and military representatives.²⁴ They were not, therefore, people with specific training to carry out the duties

²³ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 1, p. ci.

²⁴ In Germany, the Verein für Sozialpolitik, created in 1872 to negotiate the social issue, approved a resolution for the organisation of state surveys that nominated a local commission under the authority of the local police and with the equal participation of employers and employees, together with a priest, a teacher or a physician. But, contrary to the Spanish commissions, it should itself undertake the survey by inspecting workplaces. It also privileged the publication of expert opinions and the ideas interviewees had about solving problems.

with which they were entrusted. These commissions called on different kinds of associations, and on experts in any of the subjects to which the survey referred, in order to compile their reports on the living conditions of peasants, workers and artisans. Professional, employer, worker and cultural associations, charities, credit companies, universities, civil servants, engineers and intellectuals designated their representatives to present their reports to these commissions. The reports could be offered in writing or in oral presentations before the commission. The *Información oral y escrita* reports, augmented by "any other source of information considered relevant", were to be sent to the national commission with a summary "referring to the situation of the workers, as regards the general currents of opinion in the province or location, in relation to its causes and its remedies, and the opinion of the different commissions on these two aspects".²⁵

On the government's initiative, the local commissions were initially formed in those municipalities where a greater degree of social agitation had been observed.²⁶ Thus, they were the main industrial centres of Catalonia, Galicia and the eastern coast of Spain, the most troubled areas of rural Andalusia; as well as mining areas, and some places whose economic development was poorly known at the time. However, subsequently, at their own request, other locations and associations were added. It was not, thus, a survey in the strict sense of the term, because it did not intend to perform an extensive large-scale study or to cover a representative sample of the Spanish population. Political criteria influenced the formation of the first commissions.

The response was very unequal and not one woman or women's association took part in the oral sessions or submitted a written report to the commission. There was, however, significant workers' resistance, especially in towns with predominantly anarchist and socialist associations that refused to participate, as occurred in the province of Barcelona, the most industrialised of Spain. In Barcelona, for example, the provincial commission only received two brief replies from the Centro Industrial de Cataluña (Catalan Industrial Centre) and from the Centro Obrero de Barcelona y Contornos (Labour Centre of Barcelona and its hinterland) which, without providing any information on the issues raised, denounced the false expectations generated by the government, questioned its reforming will and directly raised the demands which had triggered the conflicts of the previous two decades: the passing of laws to restrict child labour, to limit working hours to a minimum of eight and a maximum

See Irmela Gorges, "The Social Survey in Germany before 1933", in Bulmer, Bales and Sklar, *Social Survey in Historical Perspective*, pp. 316–339.

²⁵ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 1, p. clvii.

²⁶ Castillo, "Estudio introductorio", p. 105.

of eleven, a ban on female labour in jobs “unsuitable to their nature”, among others.

The survey addressed a wide range of issues from among those that had played an important role in the workers’ mobilisations from 1840 to 1880. The eight issues that the government deemed a priority for investigation were elaborated by the commission into 223 questions grouped in 32 sections.²⁷ Of these 223 questions, 25 were directly related to the use of time (the question numbers are in brackets): working days, days of unemployment, number of holidays per year (66, 119 and 201); piece-rate work and its repercussions on productivity, and on time for work or family (77 and 208); the length of the working day in different trades (85–94, 207); gender (95) and ages; commuting times to and from work, breaks for food or rest (105, 106 and 110). Two others addressed the consequences of the work time of parents (mother and father) on the care of children (58) and elderly (59), depending on the modality, location and length of work (58). The use of time by children was also the subject of particular attention, as the commission was especially interested in the effects of child labour on school attendance (107–110). It also incorporated various questions aiming to determine the inequalities in the working time of men and women and to learn whether these inequalities were the result of sexual segregation or whether they occurred in the same sector or trade (95); and whether the employment of women was due to the low wages of men and whether the male wage was a “family wage” (69 and 94).

Women’s work – which Catholics and social reformers perceived as a social and moral problem – was approached specifically in a particular group (Group 16) of eleven questions (93–104). Although, following the instructions of the commission, questioners encouraged the respondents to separate the factual information from opinions, some of the questions were in themselves steeped in theory, and forced people to look at their situation from a model which, on many occasions, was foreign to them, as demonstrated by the difficulties of some respondents in having to describe their experiences within the framework of the proposed categories.

²⁷ The questions were classified in the following groups: 1. Guilds; 2. Strikes; 3. Mixed Juries; 4. Association; 5. Disabled from working; 6. Economic condition of the working class; 7. Domestic industries; 8. Moral condition of the working class; 9. Condition of the working family; 10. Social and political condition of the working class; 11. Wages; 12. Participation in benefits; 13. Work hours; 14. Women’s labour; 15. Child labour; 16. Cultivation of the land; 17. Agricultural workers; 18. Farm owners; 19. Share-cropping; 20. Renting of rural land; 21. Census institutions; 22. Territorial credit; 23. Agricultural credit; 24. Communal properties; 25. Public land; 26. Credit-giving and insurance institutions; 27. Charitable institutions; 28. Emigration; 29. Hereditary succession/inheritance; 30. Taxes; 31. Industries exploited by the state; 32. Public works.

Indeed, some of these questions evidenced the new conception of the family economy that social reformers saw as a solution to the social problem “caused” by women’s work: the development of the male-breadwinner model. Question 94 manifestly confronted this model with the persistence of the dual-income model in Spanish society: “Does the woman look for work outside the home out of absolute necessity or out of a desire to increase the advantages of the family?” The rest of this group of questions, far from being neutral, showed that women’s work, as denounced by the workers’ associations, was considered a cause of the deterioration of the working conditions of male workers. These ideas underlie the questions about the relation between the entry of women to certain occupations and male wages (98, 100, 102-103). Moreover, the presence of women in the labour market was considered not only as one of the factors which worsened the working conditions of male workers, but also as a threat to the morality of women and of the working class as a whole. Question 97 looked to explore public opinion on the “influence of the life of the workshop or of the factory on the morality of single and married women and on the way in which the latter perform their duty in the family”.

The “information” on the labour practices of women was not only transmitted in the answers to these questions but also in many other parts of the survey. The questions do not make clear the breadth or the richness of the information contained in the reports; perhaps for this reason the survey has not been used for the topic at hand. The participants quite frequently went beyond the intentions and concepts of those responsible for the surveys. Thus, for example, the answers to the questions about harshness or kindness in conjugal relations (56) opened a window to understanding the use of time by men and women – the time shared in farming or artisan families working together, or, on the contrary, the lack of family time due to differentiated jobs for men and women, to long working days or to the separation created by migration. The answers to the questions about emigration (184–189) also contain very valuable information on the effects of fathers’ absence on women and children.

Many of the answers showed that reality was poorly adapted to the model of domesticity underlying the questions of the survey. Even if, according to the various models of regional economic development, the differences in women’s work were very important, these differences occurred within cooperative family economies in which all the family members were supposed to contribute.²⁸ The

²⁸ In the last two decades, researchers of different regions of Spain, either of peasant family economies or maritime or industrial and urban settings, have gathered new data showing that the under-registration of women’s work by the population census was far greater than expected. According to this new data, female employment was a generalised experience for the majority of the working classes either in rural or in industrialised

perception of women's work varied considerably from one region to another. These differences were deeply rooted in the social and economic context that defined the working conditions of women (and men) – the social relations in which the work was carried out, the total length of the working day, work schedules and work intensity and the distance from the home – but also in the conditions of household reproduction, such as type of family, family and neighbourhood networks, number of children and husband's work.

Not all the municipalities and provinces provided systematic quantitative data on women's work or working hours. As shown in Table 1, the survey gathered information on working hours of 54 male and 44 female trades. Although rather impressionistic, many other reports collected significant qualitative evidence on men and women's working time in the labour market and the conflicts between female productive and reproductive work.

Beyond regional differences, the conclusion on women's work in Spain by Dr Alejandro San Martín, in the contribution of the Ateneo de Madrid, was categorical.

In relation to working hours, at least in Spain, they are the same for men and women. Sometimes women, on earning a higher day's wage or having a greater share of the profit (if it is piecework), work for a large part of the night, despite the day job.²⁹

As we will show below, according to the majority of the written and oral reports, the “problem” was not women's work but the conditions in which it was developed and how these affected domestic and care work.

regions, including married women and those with young children. See Pilar Pérez-Fuentes, “Women's Economic Participation on the Eve of Industrialization: Bizkaia, Spain, 1825”, *Feminist Economics* 19/4 (2013), pp. 160–180; Mercedes Arbaiza, “Orígenes culturales de la división sexual del trabajo en España (1800–1935)”, in Gálvez and Sarasúa, *¿Privilegios o eficiencia?*, pp. 89–217; Luisa Muñoz-Abeledo, “Actividad femenina en industrias pesqueras de España y Portugal (1870–1930)”, *Historia Contemporánea* 44 (2012), pp. 17–48; Gracia Moya, “El trabajo de las mujeres en la recolección de la caña de azúcar en el litoral granadino durante los siglos XIX y XX: Una aproximación al mundo de las arrumbaoras, egoyaoras y monderas”, in *XIII Coloquio Internacional de la Asociación Española de Investigación de historia de las Mujeres*, Barcelona, Universidad de Barcelona, 2006, CD-ROM; Concepción Campos Luque, “Female Labour Force Participation Rates in the 19th Century Andalusia: Antequera”, *Investigaciones de historia económica: revista de la Asociación Española de Historia Económica* 10/3 (2014), pp. 191–201; Cristina Borderías, “Revisiting Women's Labor Force Participation in Catalonia (1920–36)”, *Feminist Economics* 19/4 (2013), pp. 224–242.

²⁹ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 2, p. 156.

Table 1.
Working hours and daily wages (in reales) according to occupation in Spain
(1889–1893)

	Male				Female			
	Work hours	Commute (hours)	Lunch break (hours)	Daily wage (rls)/annual work days	Work hours	Commute (hours)	Lunch break (hours)	Daily wage (rls)/annual work days
Madrid								
Printing workers	10	-	-	14/269	-	-	-	-
Carpenters (construction)	9-11	2	1	14/293	-	-	-	-
Ironworkers and blacksmiths	8-10	-	-	12-14/-	-	-	-	-
Tinsmiths	7-10	-	-	14/-	-	-	-	-
Masons, quarrymen	8-10	2	-	10/220	-	-	-	-
Tailors/ Dressmakers	5.5 for half the year; 11.5 for the remainder	-	-	16/300	12	-	2	4-10/-
Metalworkers (women burnished metal)	10-11	2	2	14/280	12	-	-	9/280
Bakers	9-10	-	-	-	12	-	-	-
Seamstresses (homework)	-	-	-	-	10	-	2	4-10/-
Weavers	9	-	-	-	10	-	-	-
Average	9-11			14-16/-	10-12			4-10/-
Valencia								
Tailors/ seamstresses	11-12	-	-	12-24/-	11-12	-	-	6-12/-
Brickmakers (factory)	9-12	-	-	18/-	12	-	-	4-6/-
Cabinetmakers	10	-	-	12-16/-	10-12	-	-	2-6/-
Silk-thread factories	12	-	-	9-14/-	14	2	1	4-6/-

Ceramic tile works	10	-	1	10-12/-	10	1	-	4-6/-
Agricultural day labourers	10	-	2	5-8/250	10	-	2	2/250
Metalworkers	8-10	-	-	8-10/-	8-10	-	-	3/-
Espadrille makers	12-14	-	-	8-10/-	12-14	-	-	2-4/-
Weavers (factory)	10-14	-	-	14/-	12-14	-	-	4-6/-
Papermakers (factory)	10-14			6-10/200	10-14	-	-	2-2.4/200
Average	9-14			6-24/-	10-14			2-12/-
Tobacco workers (factory)	-	-	-	-	9-12	-	-	4/-
Matches and candle workers (factory)	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	5-10/-
Bonnet makers (factory)	-	-	-	-	10-12	-	-	4-10/-
Average in female occupations	-	-	-	-	9-14	-	-	4-10/-
Alicoy (Alicante)								
Weavers (factory)	9-12	-	-	11-12/250	14+	-	-	2-4/250
Papermakers	9-12	-	-	8-12/275	12	-	-	2.4/275
Avila								
Upholsterers	10	-	-	24-30/210	12	-	-	9-10/210
Candle, match and soap workers	10	-	1	9-18/210	11	-	-	4-6/240
Tailors, shoemakers	10	-	-	13-14/210	10	-	-	4-6/210
Carpenters	10	-	-	8-10/210	-	-	-	5/210
Agricultural day labourers	6-7 in winter; 13-14 in summer	-	3.30 (3 meals)	8/210	6-7 in winter; 13-14 in summer	-	-	3-5/210

Burgos								
Factory workers	10-12	-	-	10/240	10-12	-	-	4/240
Agricultural labourers	10-12	-	-	6-10/210	6	-	-	2/210
La Coruña								
Ironworkers	10	-	-	10-16/-	-	-	-	-
Weavers	12	-	-	12-14/-	14	-	-	4-5/-
Tobacco and match factories	12	-	-	10-16/-	13+	-	-	3-6/-
Salt-curing factories	15	-	-	9/-	15	-	-	4/-
Shoemakers, bakers	10	-	-	5/-	12	-	-	
Agricultural labourers	10	-	2	4/200	10	-	2	"Always less"
Seamstresses	-	-	-	-	10	-	2	4/-
Roustabouts	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	3/-
Jaén								
Foundry, metalworkers, bricklayers, carpenters	10-12	-	1.30	10-12/300				
Miners	8	2+1	-	8-12/300	8			4-5/300
Agricultural workers	12	-	1.30	7-9/-	12	-	1.30	3.5-4.5/-
Seamstresses, servants, launderers	-	-	-	-	"All day"	-	-	2-4/300
Navarre								
Agricultural workers	10 in winter; 12-14 in summer	-	2	4-10/210	-	-	-	-
Factory workers: matches	10	-	2	10/210	12	-	2	4/-
Factory workers: weavers and linen	10	-	2	10/210	12	-	2	4/-

Seamstresses (sewing, mending), clothes ironing, espadrille makers	-	-	-	--	12	-	-	4/-
Oviedo								
Furniture makers, tailors	10-12	-	1.30-2	20/270	-	-	-	-
Typographers	10-12	-	1.30-2	14/270	-	-	-	-
Bricklayers, silversmiths, woodcarvers	10	-	1.30-2	12/270	--	-	-	-
Metalworkers	8-10	-	1.30-2	12/270	-	-	-	-
Commerce	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Average male occupations	8-14	-	-	12-20/-	-	-	-	-
Miners	12-14	-	1	12/270	12-14			4-6/270
Seamstresses, salt-curing, canning, foodstuffs, spinners and cloth-makers, tobacco and match factory- workers, resellers	-	-	-	-	12-14	-	-	4-5/270
Average female occupations	-	-	-		12-14	-	-	4-5/-
Palencia								
Bricklayers, quarrymen	11-12	-	-	14-20/200	-	-	-	-
Hat makers	10-11	-	1.30	16/275	10-11		1.30	6/275
Shoemakers, ironworkers, carpenters	11-12	-	-	6-10/300	-	-	-	-

Blanket production	10-11	-		8-10/300	10	-	-	4-10/300
Typographers	10	-	-	8-/275	-	-	-	-

Source: My own elaboration from Santiago Castillo's facsimile edition of *Información oral y escrita*, originally published from 1889–1893, Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1985. Note: where there is no mention of the existence of male or female workers in a specific trade, the relevant space has been left blank.

2. Working Times of Rural Women

The reports on the situation of agriculture and agricultural work in Spain stated that it was impossible to draw general conclusions on rural workers, such were the differences: these included variations in land ownership and use, systems of production, forms of remuneration and contracts, but also in the annual working days and in the length of the working day and schedules, among other aspects.³⁰ The seasonality and pluriactivity of the majority of peasants and day labourers make it even more complex to study work time and more difficult to generalise. This is more so in the case of women's work, if we take into account not only paid but also unpaid work, both in the labour market and in the family.

Both in rural areas with a predominance of agricultural work, and in those with "domestic industries" in which the household was the locus of production and reproduction, the descriptions of women's work reflect the traditional co-existence and combination of both paid and unpaid work within the household. The answer to question 94 for the rural province of Badajoz is paradigmatic of the complex meaning of "domestic" work, which included paid and unpaid tasks.

Women's work is purely domestic: mending clothes for the family, cleaning these clothes and the house, sewing and other manipulations of linen that the husband collects (for the market), care for some domestic animals which they may have, providing them with more than enough tasks. They are also occupied in agriculture as day labourers when these household tasks (paid and unpaid) permit them.³¹

Most of the reports reveal an apparently non-conflictive coexistence between paid and unpaid work. In the rural areas in which domestic industries were in crisis or had disappeared, measures were demanded of the state to encourage new ones so that families could complement the agricultural resources with manufacturing work.

³⁰ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 192–253.

³¹ Ibid., vol. 4, p. 335.

In rural locations with a predominance of agricultural day labour, the reports indicate that the majority of the working day of wives was used for “domestic” tasks, which, depending on the area, included the raising of domestic animals, cultivation of the orchard, and production and conservation of food for self-consumption or for sale. This situation was, however, subject to several variations over the year, due to the seasonal nature and irregularity of agricultural income. Thus, at sowing and harvesting times, it could change completely, the salaried employment of all the members of the day-labourer households being a priority. At these times, the working times devoted by women to the market or to the family were reversed, and their working hours in the fields could be similar to those of their husbands. In such agricultural contexts, it is very difficult to talk about a single and constant model of economic organisation by families and about regularity in the relations between work time for the market and for the family throughout the year.

With some frequency, the list of the many jobs performed by women is preceded by a declaration of the priority of domestic work, as “they work without neglecting to attend to their home duties”, “once they finish their housework” or other similar statements. It is difficult to know to what extent these answers were influenced by a question which implicitly implied the consideration that the fundamental duty of women was to care for the family. Indeed, the answers appear to establish a moral primacy for, rather than a quantification of, the time dedicated to one type of work or another.

The work of women is that of the domestic home and care for the family. But they also work outside the home. However, if an activity is performed that is not related to these obligations, they are reduced to the work of their gender, that is, to making clothes for sale. Outside the household, they also work on the land, or in milliners or dressmaking workshops, and they also do sewing in private houses. Those dedicated to rural work perform it under the same conditions as men and are exposed to the same weather conditions as men, since their working day is of the same length or longer because they do not enjoy breaks as the men do. Reserved for women are the lightest operations among those offered in the cultivation of the field or the harvesting of fruit, but their labour is very useful as without them some jobs would be very expensive and difficult.³²

It is also very frequent that, in the face of question 94, which implicitly presents the activity of women as an anomaly, before describing the jobs undertaken by women, informants invoke tradition and custom to defend their legitimacy:

³² *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 536–537.

“it is natural in this town (that women work)”, “as is the tradition in this town” or “women work as it is the custom of these places”.³³

This was more frequent when the activities were carried out outside the household, either in purely agricultural labour or in manufacturing. This was the case in several villages in the province of Palencia, an agricultural area with a long proto-industrial tradition in the making of wool blankets, in which all the members of the family contributed, “as has always been” the case, to the household economy.

In many families men, women and children work and, thanks to this gathering of their labours, they lighten the lives of the family [...] the agrarian workers have to seek, as much the husband as the wife, their sustenance outside of the house; the blanket-makers, even with the whole family working, can barely attend to their tranquil and humble subsistence.³⁴

The CRS report on Palencia is one of the few that include quantitative data that corroborates the above statements: in the city of Palencia, there were 2,730 male workers, including field hands and farm workers (1,411) and factory workers (1,319); and 4,817 female workers.³⁵

In the province of Ávila, an eminently agricultural, livestock and mountain economy, with small, traditional, artisan workshops – flour mills, blacksmiths, food-picklers or for paper or matches – but with little or no presence of manufacturing, the final report by the provincial commission, after hearing from different locations, stated that “in the countryside, women are employed in tasks in equal proportion to men and no differentiation exists in the tasks they execute”,³⁶ while in the capital of the province the sexual division of labour was more frequent:

³³ In his summary of the national report, San Martín includes the following list of female trades that were still done in the home: clothes-making; lace-making; thread-spinning; stocking-making; embroidery; weaving; ironing; fashion; clothes-making for stores; glove-making; shoe decorating or finishing; sandal-making; child-caregivers; tending to animals; collecting and preparing milk, butter and cheeses. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 151–152.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 497.

³⁵ Wool production in Palencia has been studied by Ricardo Hernandez, “El trabajo en la industria textil de Tierra de Campos a mediados del siglo XVIII: la fábrica de Astudillo”, in Gálvez and Sarasúa, *¿Privilegios o eficiencia?*, pp. 113–136. The CRS report on Palencia is one of the few that include quantitative data that corroborates the above statements: in the city of Palencia, there were 2,730 male workers, including field hands and farm workers (1,411) and factory workers (1,319); and 4,817 female workers.

³⁶ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 4, p. 178.

Worthy of all praise are the efforts made by the wife of the day labourer; save rare exceptions they are to improve the economic condition of the family. She applies herself to all kinds of jobs and sacrifices. Today she is a water-carrier, tomorrow a laundress, the next day a fruit or vegetable seller. There are those who go to work on Saturday to personally save their husband's wages from bad vices, in spite of which, in more than one case, she receives a beating as her reward. There are those who look for work, who, in moments of great hardship, use their credit or beg for alms in the houses where they serve as a maid.³⁷

This description shows that frequent absenteeism or alcoholism by men in poor day-labourer families often led women to play a very active role in the family economy. In this social and family context, women's contribution to the family was not always secondary. Pluriactivity was a common practice, and in the poorest families it was women who resorted to credit or charity.

The reports on the mining areas, where demand for female work outside the household was very low, demonstrate that the problem was not that women worked but rather where and how they did it. In these areas, there was a widespread underground female labour market. Women worked running boarding houses, offering rooms and personal jobs, such as room cleaning, washing clothes, preparing meals for young miners, as was the case in two of the three mining areas in which the survey was held (Vizcaya and Jaén).³⁸ However, they also did many other jobs in their own house or in the houses of others, almost always in private spaces. When they did so outside the house, whether

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 145. We cannot enter into this question here, but this reference demonstrates the numerous ways in which women contributed to the family economy, not only through wages, but also through credit and the reliance on charity, which at this time was still important for families. For Barcelona, see Montserrat Carbonell, "Montes de piedad and Savings Banks as Microfinance Institutions on the Periphery of the Financial System of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Barcelona", *Business History* 54/3 (2012), pp. 363–380; Carbonell, "Using Microcredit and Restructuring Households: Two Complementary Survival Strategies in Late Eighteenth-Century Barcelona", in *Household Strategies for Survival, 1600–2000: Fission, Faction and Cooperation*, ed. Laurence Fontaine and Jürgen Schlumbohm, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 71–92. In other countries as well, the reliance on non-wage sources of income was a not-insignificant contribution for families. See Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, "Old Questions, New Data, and Alternative Perspectives: Families' Living Standards in the Industrial Revolution", *The Journal of Economic History* 52/4 (1992), pp. 849–880.

³⁸ For women's work in mining areas near Bilbao, see Pilar Pérez-Fuentes, *Vivir y morir en las minas*, Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 1995.

in the mines or in the fields, this tended to be in family groups. The CRS survey confirms and expands on this information for the Linares mines (Jaén):

The wife of the worker also dedicates herself to the laundering of clothes because, there being many workers, there is much clothing to be washed; they also take clothes to wash and iron from well-to-do houses and earn, on working the whole day, 1 to 1.5 pesetas [...] They also sew for individuals and for seamstresses by hand and using machines. In addition, many married women dedicate themselves to raising or breastfeeding the children of others. It is also customary for them to leave their children with relatives and friends, so they can work as servants all day and sleep at home, as only single women sleep in the house in which they are servants. In the countryside, the woman also performs the weeding and the harvesting of olives; she also reaps and harvests the wheat that remains, retaining for this 50 percent of the profit [thereof]. And she works as well in the mines in the mechanical preparation of the minerals to make the first separation of rich mineral and gangue. Many women and boys also act as water-carriers and work a lot in the summer.³⁹

Women's work in rural areas cannot be reduced to an image of poverty and was not exclusive to the most impoverished families. Some reports explain that the relatively satisfactory living standards of the rural population were due to women's work. This was indicated in the Vizcaya report, which referred to the tough work of women in agriculture, but also in jobs traditionally considered to be male.

Women's work is one of the factors that contribute the most intensely to the general well-being which is observed in this province and to the development of its wealth. Women from Vizcaya can be seen to share with farm labourers the tough tasks required by agriculture in the barren fields of Vizcaya. Among the working class or those limited to a purely casual working day, the woman of this province does not limit herself to living in her house and caring only for purely domestic labour; instead, after completing these, she dedicates herself to work that can be rough or excessive at times, but which without any doubt contributes to increasing the well-being of their families and making misery more difficult in cases of sickness and industrial crises. Also, it is not unusual to see them running a business by themselves with considerable skill and activity.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 5, pp. 176–177.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 613.

In the light of the reports by the local and provincial commissions, San Martín concluded that in rural Spain women's work was not seen "as a problem" since with paid work, either agricultural or in domestic industries at home, women guaranteed the time the family work, caring for the children and the elderly.

3. Changing Working Times of Women in Industrialising Regions

San Martín, responsible for the report of the Ateneo de Madrid, recognised the difficulty of offering a general report on "women's work in Spain" given the lack of sources, the enormous diversity of work forms and conditions in the different regions and provinces, as well as between trades and jobs.

When the moment arrives in this report to face how to report on the subject of women's work, I am confronted with two major difficulties: that of categorically answering the specific questions of the questionnaire, since to complete the statistical gaps a greater activity and intelligence beyond my own would be required; second, there is the difficulty of synthesising in a few paragraphs the complexity that any progress-loving spirit perceives regarding the social functions of women, because these are probably not yet well defined.⁴¹

"Not well defined" is a particularly revealing expression of the societal change taking place in Spanish society at the end of the nineteenth century. It could be applied to debates between liberals, social reformers and workers' associations from the middle of the century. It acutely captures the very moment of transition from traditional to new gender models and the contradictions between the new discourses of domesticity and the real, more complex family economies at the end of the century. It summarises the resistance to the new ideology of domesticity defended in the final conclusions of the report: that the work of wives should be limited to their domestic duties, and that if the economic constraints of the family make additional work compulsory, they should look for a way to do it at home where they could be assisted by their daughters, which could thus avoid the immorality of mixed industries.⁴²

Industrialisation was already well advanced in the middle of the nineteenth century in some areas of Catalonia. However, it was in the last decades of that century when the process of industrialisation extended to other regions – Galicia, Vizcaya, Valencia, Alicante, Asturias – although in general it was concentrated in specific locations with a proto-industrial tradition rooted in the eighteenth century. In some of these areas, the leading industrialising sectors were those of

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 149.

⁴² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 157.

textiles and other consumer-goods industries with a high female labour demand, contributing to the perception of female labour as a "social problem".⁴³

The report of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (Free Educational Institution) in Madrid began by stating that "the working-class woman labours in alarming proportions as has never been seen before".⁴⁴ However, as the reports reveal, the problem was not the labour of women, but the decline of domestic industries, the generalisation of the day wage in place of piece-rate work, the lengthening of the working day, and the progressive rigidity of labour discipline in workshops and factories. These were the changes that caused alarm among respondents to the survey because they broke the traditional relation between unpaid family work and paid labour.

Most of the reported conflicts against the hiring of women in male trades stated that as industries became feminised, the working day was lengthened (and wages fell). When the forms of work and the length of the working day made them compatible with domestic work, there did not seem to be any conflict regarding women's work.

The progressive location of the new factories and workshops away from residential neighbourhoods increased commuting times, extending the working day. This also meant that meals often had to be taken outside the house, at the workplace, in canteens, or even in the street. Thus, changes in the time dedicated to work meant that the husband, as much as the wife, had to spend nearly the entire day outside the home, causing resistance in different social sectors, as is evinced in the CRS reports.

The impact of the longer working day was greater on female workers because, as a consequence of gender segregation, labour agreements not only established wage differentials but also differences in the length of the working day for men and women's trades. Moreover, the wide availability of female labour was used by employers to "retain women for more hours than those permitted, even under threat of dismissal".⁴⁵ Some reports, such as those of the Workers' Association of Alcoy and provincial commissions of Valencia, Gijón, Vizcaya and Madrid, attributed the longer working day to the fact that "women's work was very often unregulated".⁴⁶ The information

⁴³ Joan W. Scott, "Statistical Representations of Work: The Politics of the Chamber of Commerce's *Statistique de l'Industrie à Paris, 1847-48*," in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, ed. Steven Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 335-363.

⁴⁴ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 1, pp. 380-382.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 114.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 4, 376. See also vol. 1, p. 183, vol. 2, pp. 88, 140.

in the survey is overwhelming in this respect. Almost all of the reports from industrial locations, either by mayors, provincial commissions or working-class associations, point out that in mixed trades women worked the same or even more hours than men and definitively more hours when the jobs were exclusively female (Table 1).

In Alcoy, the only industrial centre in the province of Alicante, with a textile-production and paper-manufacturing tradition that began in the eighteenth century, gender differences in working hours varied depending on the economic sector. In the words of the paper industry union, “female work is today so generalised that one can be sure without risk of erring that two-thirds of women are employed in factories and workshops outside the home”, adding that: “The worst [aspect] of women’s work was the hours [...] the women work from dawn to dusk without specific hours.”⁴⁷ Meanwhile the provincial commission, referring in general to all industries, stated that women worked one or two hours less than male workers.⁴⁸

According to the report of the provincial commission of Valencia, “few women were already working in the household next to their family; as an exception, we can mention the cap industry, in which 600 women work with just their sewing machine and doing piecework [...] but the most common in this province is for women to abandon the home in order to exercise their trade in the factories”.⁴⁹ Women worked in large numbers in the blanket, silk yarn and textile factories (which were in the process of changing from domestic work to big factories), in the small pottery, tile, mosaic and brick factories, in the paper mills, and in the espadrille, fan, shoe and lace workshops. Based on the statements of the bricklayers, carpenters, painters, fan-makers, bakers, shoemakers, and silk-thread spinners and weavers of different towns – Alcira, Ayora, Onteniente, Gandía and Sueca – the provincial commission of Valencia concluded that: “Only in some industries do men and women work together and, although there are some exceptions in which men and women work the same hours, as in the brick- and tile-making factories, in general women work even more hours than men.”⁵⁰ A paradigmatic example of this is represented by silk industries in which the average was 10 hours per day, “but women in silk-thread spinning used to work 14 or more and 14 to 16 hours when they are paid by piece-rate.”⁵¹ This was confirmed by the *Ateneo-Casino Obrero*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 115. Report of the provincial commission of Alcoy.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 64.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 111.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 112.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 107.

(Workers' Athenaeum) of Valencia, which stated that "when men and women work together in the same industries, women work even more hours".⁵²

In Madrid, the wives of quarrymen, ironworkers and metalworkers "all work and for more hours than their husbands".⁵³ The reports of the majority of Spanish industrial municipalities are very similar. Thus, it is also said that the working days of female workers were equal to or exceeded those of male workers in the tobacco, match, textile and salting factories of La Coruña.⁵⁴ In the province of Asturias, women were fundamentally employed in agriculture and in the mines, where, washing or sieving coal, they earned half of the male miners' wage even though they worked the same number of hours. The same occurred in the tobacco, match, food preserve, yarn, textile, lace and lace-edging factories.⁵⁵ In the same province, the representative of the Ateneo Casino-Obrero of the municipality of Gijón indicated that the long working hours made it even more difficult to care for the family than in other areas of Spain due to the high birth rates.⁵⁶

4. (Without) Time for Unpaid Family Work

The disappearance of domestic industries and the lengthening of the working day created a shortage of time for housework and care for the family, as well as a conflict between market-based work and housework – a conflict whose resolution should be based, according to the liberals and the bourgeois social reformers of the commission, on extending the model of bourgeois domesticity to the working classes, and excluding married women from the labour market.

Domestic industries, as well as piece-rate in urban and rural manufactures, which were progressively diminishing, appear in all reports as allowing greater autonomy for women in the management of their working times, making it easier to combine factory and household work: "Piecework allows the married woman to attend to her domestic duties. But, in the great silk factories on the outskirts [of Valencia], they are paid a daily wage and work such long hours

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 175.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 93.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 35.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 375–376. In Catalonia, the length of work time in feminised sectors was even higher at the beginning of the twentieth century: it was 11–12 hours in textiles, compared to 8 for masons, 9 for carpenters and 10 for metalworkers. See Enrech, *Industria i ofici*. This difference would increase if domestic service were included.

⁵⁶ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 5, p. 455.

that they cannot attend to the home”.⁵⁷ Yet, the commission member from the Society of Silk Art reported that the female workers

in the capital are free; they can go at whatever time they want and they can leave work for one or two hours and then attend [...] Thus, as a result of piecework they have freedom of action to leave the workshop when they want and this favours the requirements that women have for some extra hours to care for the needs of domestic life.⁵⁸

Effectively, for these working women with a fixed schedule and working 11-hour days, it was the paid work time that determined the quantity of hours that could be dedicated to household work. Considering the minimum of an 11-hour working day, and taking into account commuting times, in the winter the working day could span from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. In these conditions, the time available for household work was very limited and, as such, mothers were unable to perform childcare work before nightfall.

The reports provide some indication of the tasks that consumed the most amount of time, as well as those considered the most important, but again these could vary between rural and urban areas and in accordance with their economic development. However, the survey does not include elements to “measure” or “estimate” the specific hours, or the participation of men in household tasks, although studies in other countries indicate that in rural societies, and in general in preindustrial society, they may have participated more than in contemporary societies.⁵⁹

The reports speak more about the domestic chores that women working in factories or workshops left undone than about those that they used to do. The tasks that most frequently appear as neglected due to lack of time are childrearing and attending to children and elderly parents, cooking, laundering, and making and mending clothes.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Report of the Society of Silk Art, vol. 3, p. 113.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Report of the Society of Silk Art, vol. 3, p. 248.

⁵⁹ Cowan, *More Work for Mother*; Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. Richard Wall has estimated that, according to Frédéric Le Play’s study of families in the north of Spain, married women from farming and fishing families dedicated 44 percent of their time to working in the home and caring for the children, and 81 percent to household work and the family economy, combined. Wall, “La contribución.” See Frédéric Le Play, *Les ouvriers européens: études sur les travaux, la vie domestique et la condition morale des populations ouvrières de l’Europe, et sur les rapports que les unissent aux autres classes, précédées d’un aperçu de la méthode d’observation*, Paris: Impr. Impériale, 1855.

Table 2.

Unpaid household tasks in Spain (1889–1893) mentioned in the CSR survey

Rural areas	Making clothes for the family Laundering clothes for the family Housecleaning Sewing and otherwise manipulating linen obtained by the husband Caring for domestic animals Making cheese and butter Salt-curing of meat Preserving food in jars Caring for/watching over children Breastfeeding
Factory/urban areas	Pan-frying food Making meals to take outside the home Making sauces Mending clothing Laundering, ironing and sewing clothes (on Sundays) Taking care of the children (by mothers or other women)

Source: My own elaboration from Santiago Castillo's facsimile edition of *Información oral y escrita*, originally published from 1889–1893, Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1985.

4.1 Who Cares for the Children?

The reference to the lack of time to care for children and to their “state of abandonment” is, in part, a rhetorical device to argue in favour of the male-breadwinner model. This “lack of care” affected children under the age of six because, at that time, children used to begin to work at the age of seven, often alongside their parents. We know that in areas in which the stem family predominated (Galicia, Basque Country, Navarra, Catalonia), other members of the family, most frequently the grandmother, but also other female relatives, assumed responsibility for childcare.⁶⁰ In tobacco factories, workers could take their children to the mill, where retired female workers looked after them.⁶¹ In Catalan textile factories, it was more frequent for retired female workers to take

⁶⁰ Cristina Borderías and Llorenç Ferrer-Alòs, “The Stem Family and Industrialization in Catalonia (1900–1936), *The History of the Family* 22/1 (2017), pp. 34–56.

⁶¹ Lina Gálvez, *Compañía Arrendataria de Tabacos, 1887–1945: Cambio tecnológico y empleo femenino*, Madrid: Lid, 2000.

care of the children of the younger workers in their homes.⁶² It was also common for older daughters to stay at home to take care of the little ones, as the survey stated: “Agricultural workers, both the husband and the wife, have to search for subsistence and they must leave the eldest child in charge of the youngest children, thus preventing them from attending school.”⁶³

At such an early date, there were not many factories that offered childcare facilities, but in some highly feminised industries this had already been put into practice, as was the case in tobacco factories and some textile factories. Thus, childcare was in the hands of networks of relatives and neighbours, or of young wage-earning or elderly women. As some reports show, the lack of time to attend to children also affected their “walk to school”: “The children go alone because neither the father nor the mother can accompany them; for this reason, in some places it was proposed as well that schoolteachers be tasked with accompanying the children home.” For the same reason, many parents did not want their children to go home to eat lunch, but rather to do so in kindergartens because “they have kitchens and so they can take food because it is not convenient for them to walk alone down the street to return home”.⁶⁴

Judging from most of the reports regarding factory workers, the time for childcare was limited to the night hours and, therefore, occupied a very small part of their day, with children being in the care of others most of the time.

4.2 *Where and How to Eat when Time is Lacking*

We know little about the time for the acquisition and preparation of food in working-class households. Historiography has paid more attention to working-class nutrition and diets than to the work of preparing meals. Many studies on the living standards of agricultural day labourers mention that food was provided by their employers. It was also common for male day labourers themselves to prepare it in the fields (like sailors in boats, or construction workers on building sites). As for workers in the manufacturing industry or factories, meal breaks varied in accordance with the degree of proximity of the work place and the home. In most large cities like Madrid, but also in Valencia or La Coruña, it was said that commuting could take between one and two hours, so both the mid-morning snack and lunch were taken outside the home: in the *cantinas*, in the

⁶² Montserrat Llonch, “Inserción laboral de la inmigración y sistema de reclutamiento de la fábrica textil, Vilassar de Dalt, 1919–1945, *Boletín de la Asociación de Demografía Histórica* 12/2–3 (1994), pp. 149–161.

⁶³ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 5, p. 497.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 240.

factory itself or even in the street. This was very common among construction and public-works workers: "The worker needs an hour to reach the workplace, and another to return, half an hour to eat some potatoes or an orange with a bit of bread ... upon leaving work they have to walk a league to return to their home."⁶⁵ This was also the case for other trades. Comparing the situation of the metalworkers of Seville and those of Madrid, the survey states that:

In Seville, they enter work at 7, they stop for half an hour for lunch and at 4.30 each worker returns home. In Madrid, they wake at 5 to begin work at 6; at 12, they rest two or three hours, during which time you can see them sprawled out on the streets, eating on the ground; finally, they leave work at night and arrive home at 9, without there being time for anything save sleep [...] This is the difference between the working class of Seville and that of Madrid.⁶⁶

The situation of female workers was very diverse, depending on the place and trade. Seamstresses began their working day at 10 a.m. if they worked in private houses and at 8 a.m. in workshops; they rested for two hours at midday, having lunch at home, and returned in the afternoon and remained until nightfall. But the descriptions of female factory workers show that they did not usually eat at home:

The operators [of the tobacco factories] eat in the factory installations, either finding something in the kitchens which they all have [...] or partaking in victuals which they bring and heat up there; and although they do not have a precise designated time, in general they eat between 1 and 2, in the same factory workshops, some of which already have canteens. The kitchen service and its rates are under the supervision of the head of the establishment.⁶⁷

They did not generally eat at home even if they were married: "the married woman, to earn something to help the husband in the subsistence of the household, has to leave her little ones in the hands of another person, she and her husband having to take their meals in whatever public establishment."⁶⁸

In Gijón, a coastal town in the northern province of Asturias, the long working-hours gave rise to a very peculiar system to resolve the matter of midday meals:

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 175.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 156.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 36.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 177.

As they [female workers] cannot attend to preparing the food either, it is necessary for them to hire other women who dedicate themselves to cooking a certain number of [bowls of] stews; those that do not rely on this procedure, to save money or for another reason, make the midday meal in a hurry and running, generally in a frying pan and, for this reason, these are relatively expensive and always scarce; and at night having a little more time they prepare a meal.⁶⁹

In some parts of Catalonia where married women activity rates were high, a very specific and particular consumption offer arose that did not exist anywhere else in Spain: the sale of cooked legumes. Female workers in textile industries had one-and-a-half hours to eat and, therefore, they did not have time enough to cook a complete meal, so they purchased legumes on their way home from the factory and they simply reheated them in a pan with a bit of oil or, if wages allowed, with a piece of bacon or sausage. Even today, Catalonian markets are the only places in Spain where there are stalls selling cooked legumes.

One of the few publications about daily life in the city of Barcelona at the end of the nineteenth century stated that “male workers ate alone in canteens – where very substantial stew was served at a very good price – because wives and adolescent or adult children work in different places and far from each other”.⁷⁰

Only one of the reports refers to a male worker making dinner because of the lateness with which his wife, a worker in Madrid, returned home: “I know one worker of the society [workers’ association] who, when he arrives home, must make dinner himself.”⁷¹

4.3 *The Wardrobe: Make, Mend, Launder and Iron*

Some workers’ monographs published in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as ethnographic and even medical reports, note that the workers acquired their clothes (often second hand) in street markets and cheap stores and very rarely made them at home. The time dedicated in workers’ homes to clothes seems to have been, fundamentally, that of mending or repairing rather than making, although there is evidence that not even female workers had much time for this: “the bricklayers wear torn pants”.⁷² Some reports requested the introduction of

⁶⁹ Ibid., vol. 5, p. 456.

⁷⁰ Rafael Chichón, *La Vida en Barcelona: la vida material: la alimentación*, Barcelona: José Cunill y Sala, 1898, p. 56.

⁷¹ *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 1, p. 183.

⁷² Ibid., vol. 1, p. 107.

“classes of measuring and making clothes in the girls’ schools so that the female workers could make clothes for their family and thus save money”.⁷³

Although without specifying the times consumed by these tasks, there are also numerous references to sewing or mending “by candlelight” and to “staying up late” to finish mending clothes; and, not only in regard to sewing, but in general all types of household chores were noted as being done “at night”, “at nightfall” or “when they returned home”. Even so, it seems that laundering the clothes, as well as the thorough cleaning of the house, was done once a week, most frequently on Saturdays. Hence, the Catalan saying “*fer dissabte*” (to do Saturday) refers to the day reserved for the cleaning of the house and clothes, a day on which factory hours finished at noon. On those days, the washing of clothes was done in the public washrooms and in shifts that used to be weekly. The connection of houses to the water system led to the construction of common laundries in patios and on rooftops before they arrived in private homes, but also shifts were established among the neighbours, which were also usually weekly, although those who lived on the lower floors, and had higher status, had the right to access the laundry more frequently.

Conclusions

To date, the *Información oral y escrita* has been used in the literature as a source to study the working-class and reformist discourses concerning the new problems generated by the formation of modern labour markets, including the emergence of new models of masculinity and femininity and of new gender relations. Although with the limitations that we have already mentioned, this source also contains privileged material to analyse the working times and salaries of men and women in different trades, which to date had not been analysed as a whole. Some local or sectorial studies have pointed out that the working days of women were sometimes longer than those of men. Through the systematisation of the quantitative and qualitative information contained in this source, it appears clear that the extension of working hours during the first industrialisation phase affected working-class women in general. In the new industrial establishments, women worked more hours than men because they did so in sectors which were not regulated or not protected by the workers’ associations. If we add the unpaid work carried out for the family, the difference in working times was even greater. What is now called the “total workload” was, thus, higher for female industrial workers. It was not just the progressive separation between the home and the factory but, above all, the prolongation

⁷³ Ibid., vol. 3, p. 252.

of working hours that altered the traditional balance between production and reproduction and made it increasingly difficult to reconcile both tasks.

From the mid-nineteenth century, the presence of women in the new industrial labour markets was contested by certain sectors of the workers' movement, which saw in it one of the causes of the deterioration of their working conditions: the loss of control of work processes, deskilling, the increase in the number of foremen, and falling wages. However, it was above all a threat to maintaining their hierarchy in the family and their social status. This resistance gradually increased in the second half of the nineteenth century, to the point of demanding legal measures to restrict women's access to certain trades, to limit their working hours or to demand equal pay as a measure to discourage the recruitment of female labour in male occupations. The workers' movement sought allies for its demands in the social reformist currents, which considered female work to be a factor of impoverishment and moral degeneration of the working classes and deemed the organisation of the family based on the bourgeois domesticity model as a foundation of social order. However, the weight of the anti-interventionist currents succeeded in curbing the measures to limit female work.

The *Información oral y escrita* intended to gauge the state of public opinion in this respect and to compile empirical data to verify the effects of female work on the labour conditions of male workers, working-class economies and family life. The survey shows that the labour market had achieved a high level of segregation, in which men and women rarely occupied the same jobs, and therefore competition was reduced to sectors which were in a minority in the country overall. It was among the spinners and weavers of the new textile factories of the industrialising regions, in some sub-sectors of clothing and of the pottery industry, where certain traditionally male occupations were being feminised. However, not one of the reports of the working-class associations, not even in those textile branches which most explicitly denounced the competition of female labour, advocated their total exclusion. Only the mutual relief association for silk workers in Valencia and the workers of the wool fabric factories suggested that they reclaim the jobs from which they had been ousted by women, although they defended the need of families and the right of married women to continue working in "the tasks of their sex".

What caused the greatest reluctance among social reformers was the progressive difficulty women had in reconciling the work in the new factories with care for the family.⁷⁴ However, the model of domesticity which emerged

⁷⁴ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 381.

in the questions of the survey was greatly diluted in the reports, which were to inspire the government's social policy. Even those reports supporting the male-breadwinner model as a more rational and efficient model for the family economy recognised its lack of viability given low male wages, and therefore reduced their recommendations to limiting women's work to the "occupations characteristic of their sex" and "reducing their working hours", so as not to endanger their reproductive function. However, even so, they were obliged to recognise that "an inconvenient job was undoubtedly preferable to confinement at home without work".⁷⁵ In a society whose industrialisation was based on low male salaries and on intensively resorting to female labour, the model of domesticity continued to be an unachievable "ideal". Therefore, women's work was not the problem at stake but rather the reorganisation of working times to ensure that the dual presence of women continued to be viable.

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⁷⁵ Alejandro San Martín, *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 2, p. 157; Ramiro P. Liquiñano, *Información oral y escrita*, vol. 2, p. 376.

