

THE FOUNDATION OF FEMINIST THOUGHT
IN FASCIST SPAIN AND ITALY

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the 1920s, women were struggling to gain the right to vote and the debate around women's suffrage was emerging on a multitude of platforms and in various countries. New ideas on the liberation of women and advocacy of women's freedoms such as access to contraceptives, divorce and sexual education were reflections of these debates on gender doctrines of male construction of female identity. The "separate spheres" doctrine, created by John Rusk, describes how men and women belong in different societal roles.¹ The idea of separate spheres states that societal roles of public and private life are "segregated" by gender.² This doctrine tries to explain how power dichotomies interplay with government policies around gender. This historical precedent is instrumental in how women suffrage movements fought against these pre-existing paradigms of these traditional gendered depictions of womanhood. These power dichotomies are replicated through fascist ideologies, in which sexuality and promiscuity was increasingly monitored by the regime apparatus. By examining two previous authoritarian regimes, Benito Mussolini's Italy and General Franco's Spain, these gender inequalities can be tracked in modern women protest movements.

In the case study of Italy, women suffrage movements were increasingly gaining momentum in the Italian elections of 1922. The issue of women's suffrage was dubbed "the

¹ John Rusk, who held a series of lectures, titled *Sesame and Lilies*, in Victorian England in 1865. Rusk believed that women belonged in the domestic realm while men were suited to the "active, aggressive and intellectual domains of public life." He based this theory on the belief that a man's power is ultimately "the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender, with an intellect for speculation and invention and energy for adventure, war and conquest. The women, on the other hand, have a power for rule and an intellect for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision." In addition to this, Rusk believed that women needed to be protected due to their fragility.

² Andrea L. Miller, and Eugene Borgida. "The Separate Spheres Model of Gendered Inequality." *PLoS ONE* 11, no. 1 (January 22, 2016): 1–34. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0147315,4.

women's question.”³ Prior to this election, with the aftermath of World War 1, new female organizations, such as the National Women Pro-suffrage Federation, held newfound beliefs in support of women rights in the public working sphere. These women organizations advocated for women liberalization policies defending women rights and promoting women in power.⁴ In the election of 1923, Benito Mussolini promised to grant suffrage to women.⁵ However, once Mussolini established his dictatorship, he pivoted his position to promote traditional motherhood and, in trying to win support of the Vatican, by establishing new laws on sexuality and female promiscuity. These policies contributed to a dismantlement of women's freedoms and sought to keep women in the private domestic social sphere.

Similarity, in following the case study of Spain, General Francisco Franco, who established his regime in 1939, dismantled the previous Second Republic initiatives to newfound freedoms given to women such as women suffrage.⁶ In addition, Franco's regime placed newfound morality laws, repression of promiscuity and supported traditional motherhood roles.⁷ These policies sought to reinforce traditional gender spheres in sex education and influenced women in placing women in a domestic role. This held a profound impact on women careers in Franco's regime and it shows how the state apparatus influenced Catholic women organizations, such as Sección Femenina, which promoted these traditional values in child marriage loans and

³ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 384.

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ The New York Times, “Mussolini to Give the Vote to Women,” *The New York Times*, May 15, 1923, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1923/05/15/issue.html>.

⁶ Anna Lavizzari and Zorica Siročić, “Contentious Gender Politics in Italy and Croatia: Diffusion of Transnational Anti-Gender Movements to National Contexts,” *Social Movement Studies*, March 23, 2022, 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2022.2052836>

⁷ Inbal Ofer, “A ‘New’ Woman for a ‘New’ Spain: The Sección Femenina de La Falange and the Image of the National Syndicalist Woman,” *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (September 25, 2009): 583–605, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691409342657>.

women subsidies.

In this thesis, I use case studies of Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain to show the implications of fascist ideology on women emancipation movements. By examining these two regimes, I show how fascist gender ideologies have sought to dismantle women rights and advocate for traditional gender roles. I examine how feminist thought can be tracked by analyzing how it is replicated in gender issues due to the re-emergence of traditionalism and support of traditional patriarchal values. Both of these case studies show how gender ideologies can be tracked through social movements. By tracking how women influenced emerging feminist thought, it can show how women movements can influence the patriarchal backlash that occurs and how women oppose these gender roles. By accounting for how women themselves have held individual agency in both undermining and supporting fascism, this can affect how the liberation of women created a cultural backlash against women emancipation movements. I will examine how these power structures inherently infringe upon women's rights and dismantle women's sexuality.

This thesis is organized around two broad questions. First, How did fascists entrench traditional gender roles? In Section I, *Traditional Gender Roles, Gendered Professions and Women Individual Agency*, I will show how Mussolini and Franco imposed traditional gender ideologies. I also show how fascist ideologies influenced women's rights and political participation. In both cases, I show how these regimes supported traditional gender roles and how this influenced women rights and women's access to professions. Second, how did various individuals, organizations, and social movements challenge these gender roles? In Section II, *Feminist Movements, Protest and Traditional Gender Roles*, I explore how feminists worked to dismantle the patriarchal societies established by Benito Mussolini and Francisco Franco.

Furthermore, I discuss women's movements after Mussolini's and Franco's regimes collapsed and how the collapse of these regimes was a catalyst for women liberation movements. Finally, in Section III, *Gender Power Dynamics and Entrenched Traditionalism Affecting Women's Movements*, I discuss how these regimes have continued to influence current society through populist parties. It will examine how women political figures are participating in populist parties. I will explain how gender power dynamics are influenced by classism diffused throughout women liberation movements. Then I will examine how populist parties affect cultural backlash on sex education policies and backlash against gender studies.

In Section I, by examining how gender ideologies influence women's rights and participation in politics, I examine gender identity and gender divisions influence women in authoritarian regimes. By depicting how traditionalism is geared toward heterosexual masculinity, I expand on how these traditionalist narratives that influence women by expanding liberation and participation. I divide this into different sections. First, I examine the existing scholarship on traditional gender roles in Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain. Second, I examine references to women and gender roles in newspaper articles written during Mussolini and Franco's tenure. These traditional narratives are prominent in the regime's morality and religious attitudes, which are then promoted by entrenched institutions such as the Vatican. I show how the Vatican tried to limit sexual promiscuity and applied religious morality to gender roles. I will examine how Catholic female education supported these traditional values and how women struggled with gaining job opportunities due to sexist attitudes that reinforce gender roles. This section will examine individual agency in forms of self-expression by women writers and individual agencies in women resistance movements, undermining these traditional values.

In Section II, by examining why fascist leaders rely on women supporting their regime to

quell protest and factionalism, this thesis will depict how women's representation is being diminished or expanded into politics. This is promptly expressed in several news articles from *The New York Times*, and it is essential to how the news categorizes these protests of the regime. It shows the expanded influence of these protests and whether the regime sees them as a threat to the regime. The newspaper clippings and academic articles will depict how the prominent figureheads in the authoritarian regime handle these protesters. They will categorize which individuals make up the protest and whether these protests were cohesive. This shows whether there was a coordinated effort on the protest and which groups consisted of the protest contributing to the issues. This is important to differentiate whether these feminist protesters overlapped with other protest movements. This can be tracked through the use of education policies and protest efforts to dilute patriarchal influences. By showing how long-term effects influence traditionalism, it affects how women perceive themselves in societal affairs, and how media depictions of women influence feminist thought in new policies towards women suffrage, divorce, anti-honor killing, contraceptives and abortion rights.

In Section III, this section will discuss how these regimes have continued to influence current society through populist parties. I will discuss the comparisons of power dominance in the regimes and women led movements. This will show women influence how populism is depicted in these narratives of the nuclear family and traditional values. I examine how gender power dynamics influence women in politics and how classism is diffused throughout women liberation movements. This section will depict how these feminist movements can be impacted by populist parties and cultural backlashes on sex education stances. Through academic articles, books and newspaper clippings, this thesis will follow the correlation between anti-feminist thought and feminist discourse. It will be based on academic articles and books which discuss

gender and intersectionality. I will show the portrayal of how both countries are interlinked through these new feminist ideals. These books will promote themes of sexual liberty, discrimination, and gender laws. Along with newspaper clippings from *The New York Times* Archives, which will help determine women's opinions on issues such as divorce laws, access to contraceptives, and the right to vote and participate in politics. This thesis will examine how political leaders help generate the discourse of women's rights by alluding to certain gender stereotypes and women emerging in political areas. I will examine how LGBTQIA groups and women groups are affected by this dismantlement of sex education.

Often, the political discourse around feminism contradicts how these feminist movements encompass multiple, intersectional identities. It often fails to account for how gender ideology has changed and been challenged regionally, as each region is unique in its perspective and struggles for women's rights. It often fails to consider how gender ideology is distinctively taught individually, and the concept of traditional thought is evolving the narrative of women's perspectives on traditional roles. The literature on feminism and gender does not adequately encompass how the legacy of fascist regimes has influenced the role of women in contemporary Italy and Spain. However, these research methods need to account for the grayish areas of women's support of traditional values and their support of these traditional values being undermined as anti-feminism. I will decipher the complexity of women groups in Italy and Spain's patriarchal regimes, such as examining how women actively participated in politics while embracing their 'traditional' femininity and redefining what it means to protest politically. I will consist of several books contributing to the moral complexity of feminism in this era in personalistic narratives and personalistic interviews. This thesis will be supported by feminist thought before, during, and after fascist regimes.

Similarly, the literature focuses on the feminist narrative alluding to rhetoric around women's rights, such as characterizing how women gained the right to vote. Solely, examining traditionalism in fascist countries negates the influential feminist thinkers who criticized the fascist regime and those who fought the increasingly patriarchal society rooted in fascist ideology. In addition, it characterizes why feminist and traditional values are more complex, as many fascist organizations that include women and hold positions of power often try to alleviate women's issues. These juxtapositions are essential when examining how women's representation, gender issues, and women's participation affect how women were addressed in fascist regimes.

The research will then display how feminist thought changed after the fall of fascist leaders: Benito Mussolini and Francisco Franco, leading to the adoption of new constitutions and the struggle for democracy. It illustrates how political parties struggled to establish pluralistic democratic societies in societies once dominated by traditionalism. Therefore, feminist thought has been increasingly important as it shows how populists such as Silvio Berlusconi pivot their political platform toward women's issues. Examining feminist thought shows how traditionalism remains entrenched in society and why those defend these traditionalist narratives, which can lead to violence and terror. For change to occur, it analyzes how it must be intersectional between women's rights groups and other factions of society. Similarly, though depictions of anti-feminist discourse and violence contributed by those connected to the previous fascist regimes, this research will depict why this violence was so widespread due to new attitudes towards diminishing traditionalism.

In conclusion, this thesis transcribes how gender roles influence gender policy and gender issues being addressed by using Spain and Italy as case studies of gender discourse. Examining these gendered themes in society can showcase how gendered thought affects feminist narratives

and traditionalism. I show how societal standards affect women's representation and participation in government. By choosing case studies of Spain and Italy, I showcase how these two fascist countries differentiated in quelling feminist thought and promoting traditionalism. I show the interconnectedness and coordination of women's groups that fought traditionalism. Furthermore, I examine how power dynamics and patriarchal narratives are represented in the regime. These two case studies share overlapping themes of feminism, which counteracts fascism and expands scholars' understanding of how ideology evolves in different situations. It depicts how intersectionality affects feminism and how feminist ideology influences political protest. I explain how feminist leaders coexisted with other protest movements, and why these other groups catered to women's rights in furthering their advancement of democratic values.

II. SECTION I: TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES, GENDER PROFESSIONS AND WOMEN INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

Mussolini's Italy

This sub-section aims to show how gender constructs evolved in Mussolini's regime. I will first examine the rise of Benito Mussolini, and how he established himself by using propaganda, and how World War I impacted women. I will analyze the ramifications that women faced by participating in and supporting extreme ideologies. I will discuss how Mussolini used promises of women's suffrage to gain popular support among women and how this led to Mussolini being in power. Furthermore, I will discuss how Mussolini's regime and the Vatican targeted women's policies of sexuality and promiscuity. These regime policies were underlined with hypocrisy as male chauvinism and misogyny encourage male hypersexuality. I will show how Mussolini's regime supported male sexuality while dismantling female sexuality. I will discuss how these misogynist ideas are reinforced by the previous philosophy of futurism. I will examine why women supported futurist movements and become influential figureheads by supporting Mussolini's regime's policies. Mussolini's regime targeted women through a series of morality laws; these laws tried to limit women in society in coordination with the Vatican. I will explain how the Vatican used women's education to reinforce these narratives of domesticity by propagandizing negative views of women's higher education and class divisions among women to gain access to education. Even if women had higher education, I will show how women struggled to be hired in jobs available to women, such as nursing, teaching, and being radio announcers. The Vatican influenced women's sexuality by attacking western fashions as immodest and how women reacted against these initiatives. I will discuss how women held individual agency in using writing as a form of self-expression and how women often

participated in resistance movements against the regime, such as spying and smuggling weapons.

Prior to World War I, Benito Mussolini was born in a working-class village in Predappio, Italy. His father was a blacksmith and a socialist activist.⁸ His mother was a local school teacher and devout Catholic.⁹ As a young man, he worked as a school teacher who taught French and supported the Italian Socialist Party.¹⁰ He joined the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and edited the socialist newspaper *Avanti!*.¹¹ In 1913, Benito Mussolini had a reputation for being ruthless as he was known to “sack staff on *Avanti!*, who did not come up to his standards.”¹² In the September of 1914, Benito Mussolini quit being an editor for *Avanti!* as he denounced his support for the Italian Socialist Party as the party desired for Italy to remain neutral in World War I.¹³ Afterwards, Mussolini started his pro-war propaganda newspaper *Il Popolo d’ Italia*.¹⁴

The aftermath of World War I had several prominent effects on Italian society. As a nation, Italy joined with the Allies. However, Italians were ill-equipped to fight in the military conflict and the army was in disarray because of inadequate weapons and training, which resulted in several Italian defeats and massive casualties. Despite these high casualties, Italians received no territories from the treaties that ended the war.¹⁵ In addition to these problems, elite classism resulted in massive peasant strikes and army mutinies during the war. Italian generals, who had elitist backgrounds, often had issues of excessive infractions and brutality towards their

⁸ R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*. First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2020, 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹² R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 51.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*. First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2020, 21.

peasant soldiers.¹⁶ Many peasants were increasingly frustrated and idolized the Russian Revolution.¹⁷ These problems made Italians more open to accepting extreme ideologies such as fascism and communism.

In 1921, Mussolini founded the National Fascist Party (PNF), which appealed to the middle and working classes while being seemingly indecisive on party issues. Mussolini marketed himself as a “radical populist, using anti-bourgeois rhetoric and promises of access to land and voting rights to attract women, veterans, workers, and underemployed university graduates.”¹⁸ He engaged in populist rhetoric denouncing Italian elites and highlighting their inability to solve Italy's problems. Mussolini’s populism was affected by identity politics and ultra-nationalist ideas. He used historical interpretations of alluding to the previous Roman Empire as a malleable propaganda tool.¹⁹ By glorifying the past feats of ancient Italy, Mussolini appealed to Italians who wanted to appeal to this reclamation of traditionalism.²⁰ He played on new anxieties about new ideas of feminism, communism and modernity.²¹

In 1921, Mussolini’s National Fascist Party entered a coalition with Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti.²² The following year, Mussolini used the Blackshirts Squads, a paramilitary wing of the Fascist military, to stage a political stunt in 1922 called “March on Rome.” This was a political rally in which Mussolini appeared before foreign newspaper correspondents as a

¹⁶ R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 70.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 101.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 17.

¹⁹ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*. Studies on the History of Society and Culture: 42. University of California Press, 2001, <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b3114957&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 8.

²⁰ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*. Studies on the History of Society and Culture: 42. University of California Press, 2001, <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b3114957&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 8.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*. First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2020, 22.

political facade of a coup d'état. *The New York Times* writes that on October 24, in Naples, Mussolini declared, "It is now a matter of days, perhaps hours. Either they shall give us the government, or we shall capture it with a swoop on Rome. I tell you, I assure you, I swear to you that the orders, if necessary, will come." His followers applauded with shouts: "Rome or death!"²³ In reality, Mussolini created this facade to be seen in total control and created the belief that he held monumental popular support. Benito Mussolini was not in charge of the Italian armed forces, who were under the authority of King Victor Emmanuel III, and he never had "more than 30,000 in a country of about 40 million people."²⁴ However, this political stunt allowed elites to fear the Fascist military power, unaware of the ramifications of sharing this power with Mussolini. Despite the lack of popular support, Mussolini was elected Prime Minister with the approval of the political elites. On January 3, 1925, Mussolini announced he would become the first fascist dictator.²⁵

The narrative of Italian women in World War I is often unrepresented in history before Mussolini's regime. It is crucial to understand how women contributed to World War I to understand how Mussolini's regime influenced women's movements. During the war, women worked as nurses and journalists. However, in both of these professions, women struggled with sexism. Traditional narratives described these nurses and journalists as 'troubled women,' comparing them to 'adulterous' women. In many instances, Italian military generals referred to women working for the Red Cross as seductresses and blamed them for the lack of supplies.²⁶ However, pro-fascist women were portrayed more favorably in propaganda in World War I. For

²³ C. J.S. Sprigge, "When Mussolini Led the March on Rome," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, October 31, 1937), <https://www.nytimes.com/1937/10/31/archives/when-mussolini-led-the-march-on-rome-the-dramatic-scene-of-fifteen.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁴ Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*. First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2020,24.

²⁵ Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*. First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2020,26.

²⁶ R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945*,(New Work: Penguin Books, 2006), 46.

instance, the founder of the women's fasci movement, Elisa Rizzioli, led Red Cross nurses in both the First World War and the Libyan War. Unlike other Red Cross nurses, who were chastised as seductresses, Rizzioli's was declared heroic and was celebrated in fascist propaganda.²⁷ She was featured in Mussolini's paper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, depicting her program the Association Against Exaggerated Luxury Among Women and her association with the Fascist party.²⁸

Despite some women being applauded by the Italian public for their heroism, misogynist opinions began to fester about women who were left in charge of their households after their husbands left for war. This led to hysteria about women being 'unfaithful' to their husbands, resulting in violence. In 1916, it was common to find newspaper entries that wrote on honor crimes committed by peasant soldiers against their wives. Italian peasants believed their "wives might betray their 'honour' and wartime tales of a man furlough killing his women out of jealousy were common."²⁹ The defining of a woman with solely feminine duties created a reinforced stereotypical depiction to scrutinize or alienate anyone outside of these paradigms. These honor killings profoundly impacted how Italian men and women saw themselves in Italian society, which was increasingly violent and reactionary.

Due to this, the Italian public became drawn to extreme ideologies. Women were particularly active in the Communist Party of Italy (PCDI). Peasant women who joined the Communist Party led strikes over wages and riots targeting bakeries due to rumors of food rationing and bread being unavailable in Turin. One Communist riot left fifty people dead, due to the arrival of the army firing on the crowd.³⁰ In Empoli, on March 1, 1921, a communist riot led

²⁷ Ibid, 145.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 76.

³⁰ Ibid, 140.

by women workers was so uncontrollable that the pro-fascist local police were dispatched. One local law enforcement officer had his ear “bitten off by a working-class woman, while he was being kicked to death by two other ‘furies’...”³¹ Fascist newspaper commentators, writing about the rioters, emphasized the alleged “savagery” and “cannibalism” of the Empoli Communist women workers.³² These propaganda tactics were written by pro-fascist newspapers, which transformed the pro-communist women into grotesque and inhuman ‘savages’ similar to Ethiopian tribesmen after the Battle of Adua, an Ethiopian battle against the Italian army.³³ Many fascist reporters stated that other local women cried, “They are not Christians, believe me, they are not Christians.”³⁴ These local women were depicted as anti-communist, and in support pro-Christian morality. Thus, linking these Christian women in support of pro-fascist ideology. Despite the fact that many women did not believe in the fascist ideology, many women were portrayed as being pro-fascist to be anti-communist. Italian women believed that by siding with fascism, they would [save] Italians from the “Bolshevik beast.”³⁵ Italian women supported the pro-fascism movement, despite not accepting the entire ideology, as they believed it was the lesser evil of the two parties.³⁶

Mussolini used propaganda to appeal to women's support and promised women suffrage. In 1923, Anne O’Hare writes that when interviewing an anonymous Italian woman, she asked the woman if she would vote for Mussolini if women could vote. The woman answered, “Mussolini makes all these lazy men work. With pleasure, would I vote for Mussolini.”³⁷ This

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 140-141.

³⁵ Ibid, 145.

³⁶ Ibid, 146.

³⁷ Anne O’hake McCormick, “The Women March on Mussolini; A Drab Regiment of the New Democracy Face to Face With the Successor of the Caesars,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, June 17, 1923),

shows that women thought that Mussolini could be a beneficial change for Italian women. This was reflected in Mussolini's initial actions that supported women's coalitions and promised suffrage. The following year after the March on Rome, Mussolini supported women's suffrage on May 15, 1923, at the IX International Alliance for Women's Suffrage.³⁸ He declared that women should gain the right to vote in local municipalities because women would bring "their fundamental virtues of balance, equilibrium, and prudence."³⁹ In addition, Mussolini promised, "I wish to declare that the Fascisti Government will give its hearty support to every endeavor using the spiritual and moral uplift of womanhood."⁴⁰ Mussolini used this tactic to gain support for women, and thus, many women saw Mussolini as being able to grant more rights to women. By appealing to women's suffrage for local government, Mussolini gave women an incentive to support the fascist party and brought the party international prestige for supporting women's rights.

After Mussolini declared himself dictator over Italy, he limited his support for women's suffrage to gain support from the Vatican, which did not support women's suffrage.⁴¹ In 1925, He further limited this idea of women's suffrage by restricting women's participation solely to administrative elections. In addition, Mussolini placed restrictive limits on women's suffrage by requiring an age limit of 25 or older, a literacy certificate, and an annual tax of 40 lire, making

<https://www.nytimes.com/1923/06/17/archives/the-women-march-on-mussolini-a-drab-regiment-of-the-new-democracy.html>.

³⁸ Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Vol. 1st pbk. print. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 36.

³⁹ Ibid, 36.

⁴⁰ Anne O'hake McCormick, "The Women March on Mussolini; A Drab Regiment of the New Democracy Face to Face With the Successor of the Caesars," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, June 17, 1923), <https://www.nytimes.com/1923/06/17/archives/the-women-march-on-mussolini-a-drab-regiment-of-the-new-democracy.html>.

⁴¹ Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Vol. 1st pbk. print. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 35.

voting only available to wealthy women.⁴² Therefore, peasant women did not have the financial funds to vote nor the funds to acquire an education certificate, which was difficult to find as even wealthy women were schooled by Catholic nuns.⁴³ In *The New York Times*, Arnaldo Cortesi writes that Mussolini granted women the right to vote in municipal elections, “Soon afterward, however, elected Mayors were replaced by government-appointed ‘Podestas’ with the result that women lost the newly acquired right before having time to exercise it.”⁴⁴ In 1926, when Mussolini abolished local elections, Mussolini counteracted the promises he made towards women's suffrage.⁴⁵ Women then looked to women-led institutions to give them a political voice. Majer Rizzioli is an example of a woman who edited the *Rassegna femminile italiana*, a newspaper tied to the National Fascist Party (PNF), which discusses women’s autonomy in the *fasci*.⁴⁶ However, she was eventually fired from the newspaper, and the newspaper funded another publication.⁴⁷ In the 1930s, Mussolini’s regime had dismantled oppositional women's political organizations and allocated women to the domestic realm.⁴⁸ The dictatorship solely desiccated itself to the Catholic women groups and the fascist women organizations.⁴⁹

After Mussolini established his dictatorship, Mussolini geared his first public policies

⁴² Walter Littlefield, “Women Enfranchised in Italy; Mussolini Keeps His Promise to Mrs. Catt -- Few Natives Wanted Ballot,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 24, 1925), <https://www.nytimes.com/1925/05/24/archives/women-enfranchised-in-italy-mussolini-keeps-his-promise-to-mrs-catt.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁴³ Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Vol. 1st pbk. print. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 38.

⁴⁴ Arnaldo Cortesi, “Italy Puts Women in Secondary Role; Feminism Has Taken Backward Step in the 14 Years of the Fascist Regime. Stress Is Laid On Home Wide Aid Is Provided to Fit Them for the Bearing and Rearing of Children.,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, October 29, 1933), <https://www.nytimes.com/1933/10/29/archives/italy-puts-women-in-secondary-role-feminism-has-taken-backward-step.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁴⁵ Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Vol. 1st pbk. print. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 38.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 39.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 40.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

towards diminishing women's sexuality and limiting women to the domestic sphere. Mussolini passed Public Security Laws on prostitutes and sexuality, *articles 201, 204, and 21*, and created the Special Tribunal for the Defense of the State.⁵⁰ This institution would be in charge of patrolling issues of "sexual deviancy" and abortion, which were now "crimes" against the Italian race and carried higher penalties than previously."⁵¹ These new laws established that the concept of sex and sexual promiscuity were solely dedicated to marital sex.⁵² Pope Pius XI sets the agenda for Catholic Action. He states, "To revise the family, restoring to matrimony the halo of its sacramental dignity; to spouses a sense of their obligations and a consciousness of their responsibility."⁵³ Therefore, Mussolini and the Vatican worked together to create a cohesion family doctrine of repression against sexuality and 'immoral' desires by the regime.

However, there was a hypocrisy to the nature of these relationships as Italian members of the bourgeois had mistresses and engaged in illicit sexual crimes. Johnathan Dunnage tracked the Italian Interior Ministry Police and the sexual culture of *squadrismo*. He found that Italian police officers were sexually promiscuous and committed sexual crimes leading to scandals:

"accusations of indecent acts (*atti osceni*) and rape (*violenza carnale*); the latter juridical term was also used to define sexual relations with girls under the age of consent..."⁵⁴ These sexual accusations faced little to no repercussions as Italian judges often cited that there was 'no case to

⁵⁰ Ibid, 44.

⁵¹ Antonio Barocci, "Political Arrests of Women under Fascism: Gender and the Special Tribunal in Italy 1926–1928," *GeoJournal* 87, no. 2 (August 14, 2020): pp. 749-764, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-020-10275-4>, 758.

⁵² Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 45.

⁵³ Camille M. Cianfarra, "Pope Scores Women's 'Immodesty' and Bowing to 'Tyranny of Fashion'; Pope Pius Greets An Audience of Newly Married Couples," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, October 7, 1940), <https://www.nytimes.com/1940/10/07/archives/pope-scores-womens-immodesty-and-bowing-to-tyranny-of-fashion-pope.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Dunnage. "Policemen and 'Women of Ill Repute': A Study of Male Sexual Attitudes and Behaviour in Fascist Italy." *EUROPEAN HISTORY QUARTERLY* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 72–91. doi:10.1177/0265691415618606, 78.

answer.⁵⁵ In another case, a married police officer was having an affair with a 24-year-old girl. Her family, wishing to avoid a scandal, requested that the police officer be transferred.⁵⁶ Although not explicitly stated by the Italian officers, it was most likely that the police officials blamed the women for being “trouble” arising from extra-marital relationships, “they presented the girl as being primarily responsible for the affair; [the police commander] alleged that her family ‘was not among the most upright’, though it is not clear from the documentation what this meant.”⁵⁷ This led to a dismissal by Italian courts which gave the perpetrator little repercussions by the regime against these sexual crimes committed by Italian police officers. Therefore, it led to the creation of a culture of sexual crimes without repercussions. These depictions of sexuality were misogynistic and the accepting male promiscuity.

These ideas of male promiscuity replicate themselves in glorifying Mussolini’s sexual affairs.⁵⁸ The glorification of Mussolini’s sexual partners is estimated to be around 400 women.⁵⁹ Benito Mussolini had several prominent affairs with women of aristocratic background: Margherita Sarfatti, Leda Rafanelli, and Clara Petacci. Margherita Sarfatti was Jewish and was born into a wealthy Venetian family. She was one of his financial contributors to his initial political campaign in the 1920s.⁶⁰ Another, Leda Rafanelli, was an anarchist and libertarian who was well-read books on gender and racial equality.⁶¹ Clara Petacci was the daughter of a Vatican physician, she was instrumental in gaining Vatican support for his regime.⁶² Benito Mussolini

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 83.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 343.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 342.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ R. J. B. Bosworth, *Claretta: Mussolini’s Last Lover*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsebk&AN=1460191&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 850.

⁶² Ibid, 1199.

used these women to gain connections with the upper elite; thus, his actions were a model to other elites in the regime. Benito Mussolini boasts, “If I, Mussolini, had had a truck with all the women they claim for me, I would have to have been a stallion rather than a man.”⁶³ This sexist commentary contrasts how Mussolini viewed his sexuality while placing little regard for the women who desired him. These women faced more reputational damages from their promiscuity than Mussolini, as seen in Ida Dalser. Mussolini and Ida Dalser had an affair, and he had an illegitimate child, Benito Albino. Ida Dalser sold her successful salon to finance Mussolini’s newspaper, *Il Popolo d’Italia*.⁶⁴ However, Mussolini, wanting to appear as a family man to the Italian public, abandoned Ida, declaring her ‘mad’, and had her sent to an insane asylum.⁶⁵ Cornelia Tanzi, who was a poet and sexually promiscuous, and Countess Giulia Carminati di Brambilla are lesser-known examples of Mussolini’s hypocrisy against female promiscuity. In Clara Petacci’s letters, she states, “Mussolini repeated on more than one occasion, what he disliked was the way that Tanzi and Brambilla went around the country boasting they had bedded him.”⁶⁶ These attitudes of promiscuity differed in Mussolini’s hypocritical tolerance for male sexuality.

As the repression of female sexuality was occurring, there was a state-sponsored incentive to promote a propagandized depiction of traditional narratives. Mussolini’s regime began to exclude women from public forums. Women became solely domestic actors, and there were distinct divisions between sex. Mussolini’s fascist regime saw women in politics as “being twice rebellious: to the State and to ‘Nature,’ because it was supposed that they were predestined

⁶³ Ibid, 653.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 955.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 1002.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 1346.

to the home and the role of wives and mothers.’⁶⁷ Mussolini’s familial ties reflected these traditional propagandized values. He and his wife, Rachele Mussolini, had five children: Edda (oldest daughter), Anna Maria (youngest daughter), Bruno (oldest son), Vittorio (middle child, son), and Romano (youngest son).⁶⁸ Women who entered the male-dominated public sphere were characterized as threatening their reproductive system and exhibiting ‘masculine’ traits.⁶⁹ This was detrimental to the fascist state because the fascist philosophy allocated women to their reproductive mission. In 1921, in a popular sociological dialogue, the state propaganda organization, the Gruppo Femminile Fascista Romano Statue, produced mass propaganda campaigns about the belief that working women would be robbed of their femininity and turned into ‘virile women.’⁷⁰ Benito Mussolini reiterated this propaganda when remarking, “This special tribunal works excellently but will work even better in the future if it adopts the measure of excluding women from the public during sittings.”⁷¹ Benito Mussolini’s comments on female hysteria in public gatherings show that he supported the idea of the separation of sexes by believing only men belong in the public sphere. He depicts his shows as the narrative of women not being professional enough to attend public forums fueled by misogynist propaganda. In Mussolini’s rhetoric, women are seen as fickle and overly dramatic, thus, contributing to the idea that women do not belong in politics.

⁶⁷ Antonio Barocci, “Political Arrests of Women under Fascism: Gender and the Special Tribunal in Italy 1926–1928,” *GeoJournal* 87, no. 2 (August 14, 2020): pp. 749–764, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-020-10275-4>, 760.

⁶⁸ R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 343.

⁶⁹ Barbara Spackman “Fascist Women and the Rhetoric of Virility.” In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition., 100–120. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt2tw.9>, 101.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷¹ “Full Text of Mussolini’s Speech Outlining His Plans for a Greater Italy; His Vision of Power Put into Words Premier, in Terms Matter of Fact, Yet Vivid, Paints Army of 5,000,000, Strong Navy, Huge Air Force. Sees All This Accomplished by 1935 or 1940 by That Time, He Predicts, Italy Will Have a Population of 60,000,000 and Occupy a Position of Authority. Complete Text of Mussolini Speech,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 29, 1927), <https://www.nytimes.com/1927/05/29/archives/full-text-of-mussolinis-speech-outlining-his-plans-for-a-greater.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

Mussolini used misogynist propaganda to further impact how women were viewed. This misogynist propaganda had political roots in futurism. Futurism was influential in creating general ideas around male superiority. Mussolini's regime reflected these ideas of a male superiority complex in the prior depictions of Futurism. This political theory, founded in the aftermath of World War I, describes hyper-masculine views in the early discourses of women's reproductive rights based upon male superiority and radical nationalism. Many male futurists believed that humanity and new technology would enable society to coexist without the weakness of femininity. Clara Orban examines how fascist philosopher Filippo Marinetti describes how women are portrayed in two dichotomies: the mother and the outcast.⁷² Lucia Re explains that these two women's stereotypes contradict each other as they objectify women as mothers and erotic objects.⁷³ Filippo Marinetti argues that these dichotomies are primarily due to men's sexualization and objectification of women's reproductive systems. Orban states, "a man who does not know how to give joy and strength to a woman must not impose his will or company on her. [A woman] does not belong to man, but to the future and to the development of the race."⁷⁴ These depictions of hypermasculinity reflect how futurist thought impacted fascist gender roles. *The New York Times* reported that Vahdah Jeanne Bordeaux interviewed Mussolini on his opinion of women, which mirrors Filippo Marinetti's depiction of women. Mussolini states, "I do not like the idea of women trying to walk in men's shoes, literally as well as figuratively speaking. Being feminine, women should try to remain so. When forced by

⁷² Clara Orban, "Women, Futurism, and Fascism." In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition., 52–75. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt2tw.7>, 54.

⁷³ Lucia Re, "Fascist Theories of 'Woman' and the Construction of Gender." In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition., 76–99. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt2tw.8>, 85.

⁷⁴ Clara Orban, "Women, Futurism, and Fascism." In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition., 52–75. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt2tw.7>, 55.

circumstances to earn their living, so long as they remain in their proper role, they are admirable.”⁷⁵ Furthermore, Mussolini’s regime reflects these gender dichotomies, laying the foundation for male superiority. Later in the interview with Bordeaux, he repeated that women do not ‘take themselves seriously’ and that it is in ‘their nature’ to fail when placed in a position of power.⁷⁶

However, it is important to note that women supported futurist dialogues of power and female subordination to the male patriarchal structure. Female authors contributed to the sexist attitudes by referencing them as mother figures for the Italian state. Lucia Reexamines how Beatrice Cappa Marinetti, the wife of Filippo Marinetti, viewed womanhood in support of traditional roles. She advocated for a futurist vision of society which did not find She writes, “Rather than a libération of [women], the futurist vision at this juncture invokes a réduction of woman to sexual object and instrument of procréation... [Women are] passive, parasitical, peaceful, pacifist and therefore past-oriented rather than future-oriented.”⁷⁷ In the 1930s, women who supported fascist ideologies borrowed ideas written by women who supported futurism. Teresa Labriola, a main supporter of the fascist ideology, “clarifies the core of the [Fascist] definition of women's identity: to be the symbols of patriarchal values and, at the same time, the social agents of the patriarchal morality that emphasized subjection to male authority within the family and in society at large. The typical and original feminine function of a woman is precisely that of forcing pure values into every generation of men.”⁷⁸ By including female voices in the

⁷⁵ “Woman Inferior, Asserts Mussolini,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 6, 1927), <https://www.nytimes.com/1927/03/06/archives/woman-inferior-asserts-mussolini-play-an-important-part-as-a.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Lucia Re, “Fascist Theories of ‘Woman’ and the Construction of Gender.” In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition., 76–99. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt2tw.8>, 254.

⁷⁸ Mariolina Graziosi. “Gender Struggle and the Social Manipulation and Ideological Use of Gender Identity in the

narrative supporting women in domestic roles, it shows the significance of the female narrative in futurism. This gives an overarching perspective on how women replicated sexist attitudes. However, these women's commentary is contradictory because these female philosophers exerted power in a male-dominated sphere rather than confined to the domestic household realm.

This support of male superiority is displayed in the Vatican's depiction of women's rights. By promoting traditional values and demonizing promiscuity, the Catholic Church played an integral part in how Italian women felt the oppressive power of the Fascist State and the Catholic Church. Before Mussolini's regime in 1908, the issue of youth education was a platform for anti-feminist movements and an issue that was subjected to the Italian women's organization, the National Council for Italian Women.⁷⁹ The rise of Pope Pius XI's establishment of the Catholic Action youth organization was initially geared toward young boys but incorporated young girls in 1918.⁸⁰ By 1922, the Catholic Action was divided into five main groups, two of which were geared toward women (the Union of Italian Catholic Women) and young girls [Gioventù Femminile].⁸¹ Initially, the Fascist regime and Catholic Church fought over who would control the student education system. In 1929, Pope Pius XI and Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty, which recognized Catholicism as the official state religion.⁸² By threatening to withdraw their support from Mussolini if the regime failed to give the Catholic Church control of the education system, the Vatican showed the extent of its power over the regime.⁸³ Pope Pius XI states, "The

Interwar Years." In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition., 26–51. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt2tw.6>.

⁷⁹ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 140.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*. First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2020, 100.

⁸³ "Pius Gives Education View," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, September 5, 1929), <https://www.nytimes.com/1929/09/05/archives/pius-gives-education-view-pope-advocates-harmony-between-church-and.html>.

treaty and the concordat must either stand or fall together even if this should mean the fall of the Vatican city-state.”⁸⁴ Thus, showing the significant amount of power influence the Vatican held over Mussolini’s regime, which redefined women’s roles in Italy. Therefore, in cohesion with the Vatican's support, Mussolini’s regime targeted the ‘modern’ women to transform them into what they deemed ‘proper’ women. These ‘proper’ women upheld the traditional values of motherhood that the Catholic Church protected. These Church policies laid the foundation for how women viewed the “allure and dangers of modern fashion, the mass media, and urbanized sexual behaviors. Church institutions shaped new female role models and new moral codes. To do so, they drew on zealous professionals, congregations of the faithful, and a far-flung, well-established press.”⁸⁵ This was a lingering effect of the Vatican's on limiting new modern stances on femininity.

These traditional narratives were replicated through new negative views on women's education. Higher education was perceived as a negative distinction for women as it deviated from traditional household depictions of a nuclear family model. These negative attitudes about higher education were based on women's stereotypes. Benito Mussolini states, “The more virile and intelligent a man is, the less need he has of an [woman] as an integral part of himself. Women are a charming pastime, a means of changing pastime, a means of changing one’s trend of thought, but they themselves are rarely, if ever, serious. women love easily and are tragically serious while intensely interested, but love is a transitory thing, never permanent with them.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Arnaldo Cortesi, “Pope Pius Takes Mussolini to Task on Treaty Speeches,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, June 6, 1929), <https://www.nytimes.com/1929/06/06/archives/pope-pius-takes-mussolini-to-task-on-treaty-speeches-declares-he.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁸⁵ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 11.

⁸⁶ “Woman Inferior, Asserts Mussolini,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 6, 1927), <https://www.nytimes.com/1927/03/06/archives/woman-inferior-asserts-mussolini-play-an-important-part-as-a.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

This replicates the depiction of how Benito Mussolini's regime saw women, and these attitudes of women being 'fickle as a reflection itself in women's higher education. The anti-feminist rhetoric was used in the university system, as common phrases insinuated by male colleges were sexist comments such as, "We don't want women at school / we want them naked, laid out on the couch."⁸⁷ Women who received higher education were deemed immoral as they were shrinking away from their proper place and practicing independence.⁸⁸ *The New York Times* reported that higher education for women made them violate social convictions by "attending classes with men, working with them in laboratories and walking down the streets in the daytime with [male] students."⁸⁹ Therefore, college or higher education made women immoral by hanging out publicly with men breaking traditional models. By not allowing women into conventional schooling because it is male-dominated creates a cyclical cycle of institutional sexism, shaping sexist attitudes around women not attending universities for higher education. *The New York Times* depicted the prevalent sexist attitudes of the regime in ordinary prejudice against women. The author, Edwin Hullinger, provides his perspective when he interviews a former colleague, "I know one young university graduate, a native of Sicily, who did not become reconciled with her family until ten years after she left home to fit herself to become a teacher."⁹⁰ This shows that higher education was a social stigma for women, even if these women desired to enter professions geared toward women.

⁸⁷ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 161.

⁸⁸ Edwin W. Hullinger, "Italian Women Are Slowly Winning Their 'Rights'; They Rejoice That Two of Their Sex Have Been Elected to the New Academy Created by Mussolini," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 28, 1926), <https://www.nytimes.com/1926/03/28/archives/italian-women-are-slowly-winning-their-rights-they-rejoice-that-two.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Edwin W. Hullinger, "Italian Women Are Slowly Winning Their 'Rights'; They Rejoice That Two of Their Sex Have Been Elected to the New Academy Created by Mussolini," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 28, 1926), <https://www.nytimes.com/1926/03/28/archives/italian-women-are-slowly-winning-their-rights-they-rejoice-that-two.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

However, there were more limitations to having these programs only accessible to young women with a high school or middle school education. This required women to be in an acceptable social class that could afford to send their daughters to school. School tuition was high, around 5,000 lire annually, with additional travel fees to urban areas and school fees for uniforms and books.⁹¹ For rural peasant families, many young girls were seen as an extra set of hands for income and sent to work in factories. Thus, young girls often made up only 24 percent of fifth-grade classrooms.⁹² These women's professions were not accessible to the lower class and peasant women. Benito Mussolini gave various forms of recognition to women in higher social classes. He appointed two women, Ada Negri, and Grazia Deledda, to be awarded chairs in Italy's new Academy to represent 'Italian fascist culture.'⁹³ However, both of these women were part of the bourgeoisie upper class, and both had a career as accomplished writers before Mussolini's regime. However, even if women were from upper-class families and had some limited mobility, many women who attended universities could not find a job, despite having a diploma.⁹⁴ With these societal pressures and institutional sexism, university-educated women had few career options free from stigma.

A majority of women entered professions geared toward the educational and health sectors. Mussolini's regime established several governmental initiatives to make these occupations available to women. The regime established professional boarding schools where 'young single ladies,' in the upper and middle classes, would become educated in nursing and

⁹¹ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 161.

⁹² *Ibid*, 155.

⁹³ Edwin W. Hullinger, "Italian Women Are Slowly Winning Their 'Rights'; They Rejoice That Two of Their Sex Have Been Elected to the New Academy Created by Mussolini," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 28, 1926), <https://www.nytimes.com/1926/03/28/archives/italian-women-are-slowly-winning-their-rights-they-rejoice-that-two.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁹⁴ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 159.

receive a State Diploma at the end of their schooling.⁹⁵ It allowed women a certain level of mobility in society and gave them another opportunity besides teaching. This allowed them to gain income, despite being lower than a male's wage in the field.⁹⁶ Despite having lower wages than their male colleagues, this allowed women to have a professional identity. In addition, it allowed them to have access to equality and a living wage. However, women who sought higher education or tried to work in the public male-dominated society were often accused of stealing jobs from men once they were hired. This was even applied to elementary school teaching, deemed a women's profession.⁹⁷ After World War 1, there was a new push to acquire male teachers to reinforce ideas that education should be dedicated to a male-dominated profession, which undercut women teachers.⁹⁸

In addition to women's access to professions in nursing and teaching, few women also worked as radio announcers. *The New York Times* reports, "Although Premier Mussolini is known to be somewhat like the ex-Kaiser in holding women's spheres to be bound by the limits of kitchen, nursery, and church, one occupation connected with public life is completely dominated by the daughters of sunny Italy. All of the eleven professional radio announcers in the kingdom are women. There are three in Rome, three in Turin, two in Milan, and one in Naples, Genoa, and Bologna."⁹⁹ Thus, these few women had jobs such as news reporters besides being a

⁹⁵ Loredana Piervisani, Palomba Antonella, Albanesi Beatrice, Rocco Gennaro, Stasi Serenella, Vellone Ercole, and Alvaro Rosaria. "The Nurse in the Mirror: Image of the Female Nurse during the Italian Fascist Period." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.) 77, no. 2 (February 2021): 957–72. doi:10.1111/jan.14679. 959

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 959.

⁹⁷ Mariolina Graziosi. "Gender Struggle and the Social Manipulation and Ideological Use of Gender Identity in the Interwar Years." In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition., 26–51. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttt2tw.6>, 30.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ "Women Radio Announcers Rule the Air in Italy," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 24, 1931), <https://www.nytimes.com/1931/05/24/archives/women-radio-announcers-rule-the-air-in-italy.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

nurse or a teacher. Notably, most of these women were located in bigger urban areas, and eight were in northern cities, thus showing that women's job availability depended on regional factors. In addition to this, these women were of the upper class, showing that women in the upper classes had greater mobility than those of the lower classes. This reflects how Mussolini's regime targeted upper-class women with more opportunities.

Catholic women's organizations, the Union of Italian Catholic Women and Gioventù Femminile, were created to maintain these traditional social values. One social value that these women's organizations enforced was the morality of traditional dress policies for Italian women of the regime. Through these organizations, the Vatican integrated itself into upholding traditional dress and modesty policies. In 1928, Pope Pius XI stated, "The 'shameless "immodesty" of the dress of too many modern women results in 'insults to the eyes of God and cause for temptation or disgust in the eyes of the world."¹⁰⁰ This depiction of immodest dress and immorality was used to attack Western sentiments and the liberalization of women's fashion. Pope Pius XI alludes to the decline in immoral women's fashion designs as a "danger that may bring an end to their purity," which women submit to "the tyranny of fashion..."¹⁰¹ Therefore, Mussolini's regime viewed Western fashions as immoral; thus, women needed to conform to more modesty and Italian-made clothing. This was aligned with a state initiative on supporting Italian wool led by Achille Starace, secretary of the National Fascist Party.¹⁰² This Italian-first initiative never fully gained support from women. Women influenced the fashion industry so

¹⁰⁰ "Pope Condemns Dress of Modern Women; Says It Results in 'Insults to Eyes of God' and Disgust to the World.," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, February 27, 1928), <https://www.nytimes.com/1928/02/27/archives/pope-condemns-dress-of-modern-women-says-it-results-in-insults-to.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁰¹ Camille M. Cianfarra, "Pope Scores Women's 'Immodesty' and Bowing to 'Tyranny of Fashion'," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, October 7, 1940), <https://www.nytimes.com/1940/10/07/archives/pope-scores-womens-immodesty-and-bowing-to-tyranny-of-fashion-pope.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁰² Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 223.

much that eventually, the Italian designers stated, “If you really must wear Parisian creations,’ say, Italian tailors, at least buy them from us. Have them made by Italian workmen with Italian materials.”¹⁰³ The individualistic desire to buy Western clothing and the adaptation of Western dress trumped the morality complex that the Vatican and Italian regime supported.

The women's fashion industry was influenced by Western aesthetics. Women of higher social classes viewed American fashion as an outlet for self-expression. Before Mussolini's regime, The Italian Women Consortium for the Valorization of Italian Products promoted these liberal feminine products.¹⁰⁴ They inadvertently created resistance networks, allowing for women's discussion and a new ‘consciousness’ around women's rights. *The New York Times* reported that the Vatican's decisions to target the women's fashion industry ultimately failed because women preferred Western fashions. *The New York Times* reports, “When the Italians and Parisian models were paraded before the feminine portion of Italy's population, the battle between patriotism and vanity was short-lived, and victory rested most decidedly with the latter.”¹⁰⁵ This decision ultimately shows that women desired to buy Western styles. However, it is an oversimplification if the act of buying clothes is just because Italian women desire Western aesthetics. Women's individual agencies showed that they actively boycotted Italian fashion goods, leading to a silent protest against the traditional values that the church promoted against

¹⁰³ Arnaldo Cortesi, “Fascist Modes Fail to Please Women; Feminine Sex Prefers Style to Patriotism and Clings to Popular Paris Gowns. 4 Women Claim One Man Fingerprint Theory Is Exploded in Strange Case of Double Identity Which Baffles the Police.,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 20, 1927), <https://www.nytimes.com/1927/03/20/archives/fascist-modes-fail-to-please-women-feminine-sex-prefers-style-to.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁰⁴ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 223.

¹⁰⁵ Arnaldo Cortesi, “Fascist Modes Fail to Please Women; Feminine Sex Prefers Style to Patriotism and Clings to Popular Paris Gowns. 4 Women Claim One Man Fingerprint Theory Is Exploded in Strange Case of Double Identity Which Baffles the Police.,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 20, 1927), <https://www.nytimes.com/1927/03/20/archives/fascist-modes-fail-to-please-women-feminine-sex-prefers-style-to.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

Western clothing. The Vatican and Mussolini's regime policies achieved limited success due to women's cohesion and their ability to be individual agents, seeing women's fashion as a form of self-expression and protest.

Despite women being confined to the domestic sphere, women engaged in multiple subtle forms of self-expression. Victoria de Grazia, who studies the cohesion of Italian women's organizations involved in the Catholic Church, explains that scholars often negate women's resistance efforts because they correlate that since women groups failed to organize publicly, they failed to resist Mussolini's regime individually. By dismissing women's efforts in the private sphere, the previous scholar's perceptions of women's rights have failed to consider that these women's political culture was reactionary to their individualism in the private environment. Grazia states that having women invest in their "individual goals, family needs, and social commitments to the dominant political beliefs and institutions. Mussolini's dictatorship redefined the boundaries between public and private, thereby altering the relations between state intervention and individual initiative and collective engagements and private lives."¹⁰⁶ This depiction is important to understand how women 'subtly' protested the regime because women had individual agency in the private realm to influence attitudes about the regime policies limiting sexuality.

When examining their writing as a form of expression for challenging the patriarchy, it becomes clear that women were active. The journal entries of Sibilla Aleramo, who wrote the book *Una donna* in 1906, gained popularity before Mussolini's regime and gave a discourse on women's independence, by showing the main protagonist's struggle with being dependent on her

¹⁰⁶ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 15.

husband and domestic abuse.¹⁰⁷ During Mussolini's regime, Aleramo associated herself with women's feminist circles in Fascist Italy. She had multiple affairs with women and wrote love letters questioning the gender standards in Mussolini's regime. Aleramo writes, "You don't divide humanity into masculine and feminine, but into active and passive...In every way, the fact is that active or passive, in the physiological and psychological order, the men would always be men in their shape (maybe the language is not scientific, but it's not important), and the women will always be women (Aleramo 1982, 53)."¹⁰⁸ Her poetry has underlying themes of sexuality, promiscuity, and the questioning of morality. It shows how women would publish literature that questioned their notation of self-identification with conceptual ambiguity. This allowed women to discuss the questioning of freedom when patriarchal forces prevented Italian women from discussing issues of merging identity and themes of sexuality. Sibilla Aleramo's poem *La Pensierosa* reflects questioning self-identity and the struggle for self-reflection in a fascist regime. Sibilla Aleramo's poetry states, "Oh, these words and these names, that you have taught me to use, these concepts that I have to present to you in the exact contours that you love, this clash between my inner rhythm and the rhythm of the forms you have found! How do I free myself?"¹⁰⁹ Fiora Bassanese believes this poem alludes to Rene Decarte's 'I think, therefore I am.'¹¹⁰ Sibilla Aleramo is the feminist version of this as 'I love; therefore, I am. 'In this interpretation, Aleramo's experience with love is connected to her existence in society. Aleramo is conflicted over her independence in a society that stresses conformity. Therefore, she plays on

¹⁰⁷ Enza De Francisci, 2021. "Aleramo's Una Donna via Ibsen's A Doll's House." *FORUM ITALICUM*, October. doi:10.1177/00145858211046538, 752.

¹⁰⁸ Ellen Zitani. "Sibilla Aleramo, Lina Poletti and Giovanni Cena: Understanding Connections between Lesbian Desire, Feminism and Free Love in Early-Twentieth Century Italy." *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 6, no. 1 (April 2009): 115–40. <https://search-ebshost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sxi&AN=45306432&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 130.

¹⁰⁹ Fiora Bassanese, *Sibilla Aleramo: Writing a Personal Myth*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 137–65, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt2tw>, 146.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

her femininity as a strength against conformity.

These qualities of critical thinking are reflected in Aleramo's depiction of sexuality and sexual desires. Sibilla Aleramo alludes to mythic qualities in her writing, which promotes themes of sexuality. In Sibilla Aleramo's poem, *Una notte in carcere*, she questions the depiction of freedom and sexual desires:

My freedom lay prostrate that night as in a tomb, that beautiful myth for which I lived
aflame lay prostrate. Shores and roses and woods a long way off. And no creature grieved
for me, no one in the night to wait for me a long way off. Naked soul, what peace!... Yet
men and their justice might, poor men, persist in error, dawn might not return my
freedom... On the rain-swept night and on the world beyond these iron bars, perhaps error
flared... In the cell's dark shadows, I then felt a naked certainty arise in me, marvelously I
felt all my life absolved, dense with dreams, passionate and rough, expiated every day, a
life of deeds and tears, and the heavens opened now and again to smiling arches, in flight.
Limpid marvel, transparent mystery, to be light, yes, to have wings as during this night of
imprisonment in the cell just like a tomb.¹¹¹

In Aleramo's poetry, the reader develops a longing for freedom, which materializes in multiple forms of thought. It contributes to how the illusion of nakedness and the nakedness of the soul indicates peace during the regime. This poetry can depict how society cages femininity and self-independence by upholding traditionally masculine values. Feminist writers like Sibilla Aleramo were independent agents in Mussolini's regime, writing about their self-identity and desires in a regime that sought to dismantle notations of sexuality. By having these poems gain popularity, women acted as individual agents and challenged parochial thought.

However, it is important to note that Aleramo was promoted in many bourgeois elite social circles. Aleramo's experience differed from the average working-class woman as her audience was of the upper and middle classes and had enough education to read her works. Aleramo's social connections included prominent fascist Auturo Onofri, a famous poet, Julius Evola, a theorist of feminine inferiority, and Margherita Sarfatti, Benito Mussolini's lover and a

¹¹¹ Ibid.

feminist author.¹¹² This shows that Sibilla Aleramo associated herself with a circle of the upper bourgeoisie individuals in Fascist Italy, and her writing gained notoriety despite being in a male-dominated society. Aleramo could associate herself with multiple personas and influential people who upheld different values. She is important when examining how women correspond with fascist philosophers and intellectuals of the regime. Her writing illustrates how feminist thought and feminist thinkers worked in metaphorical terms to discuss the imagery of sexuality. This idea of sexuality differentiated from the traditional piously that was commonly depicted in the regime's propaganda by the public audience. The writing medium was a conduit to express one's sexual desires and sense of femininity. It presents a source of individualism and sexual deviancy in fascist Italy by categorizing how women held their distinct form of consciousness in feminism and women's protest against fascism.

The resistance offered a metaphorical sense of liberty in its mobility, allowing women to reinvent themselves. Caroline Moorhead states, "Fascism had trapped them in domesticity and segregation. This new life offered them adventure, the company of boys, intense friendships with other staffette, and the chance to decide their own fates. Having embarked on resistance with a simple act of kindness, helping escaped prisoners, they were now eager to do more; the role of staffetta promised endless opportunities."¹¹³ Resistance movements appealed to Italian youth by allowing an intersectional arena to find new identities and promote individualism. By seemingly promoting equality as a strength of this newfound liberty, it allowed for cohesion among women to voice their ideas and opinions. By following these women's autobiographies, Chiara Bonfiglioli gives different insights into different perspectives of the women in these resistance

¹¹² Ibid, 145.

¹¹³ Caroline Moorehead, *A House in the Mountains: The Women Who Liberated Italy From Fascism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2019),126-127.

groups showing the multidimensional approach of incorporating and encouraging further cooperation between these women fighters in these resistance moments. It enabled women to reinvent themselves by having more mobility and breaking from traditional gender structures. Marisa Ombra, who was one of the leaders of UID and a staffetta, “ 'an unbounded freedom was before us, and our enthusiasm, our naiveté, led us towards fantasies in which other worlds, other relationships, other meanings given to life, appeared to us as certainties.’”¹¹⁴ These women perceived themselves as subjects when joining the resistance as rejecting the boundaries of bourgeoisie familial values that hindered them from pursuing different passions.

The act of spying and resistance movements were primarily an effort of women and their active engagement in trying to overthrow the fascist regime. Caroline Moorhead describes the uncertainty when protesting the fascist regime and the reliance on cohesion among other staffetta. She gives the allegory of a local schoolgirl who joined the resistance, Micki Cesan, a staffetta who was a schoolgirl in Turin, carrying “coded messages that came through from Brindisi on her bicycle, stuffed into a secret opening in the handlebars...”¹¹⁵ These staffetta missions were coordinated efforts led by Italian women to send for new information among various skills with various ingenuity on delivering messages for the resistance. The staffette had various jobs, such as carrying messages, transporting weapons, acting as nurses, and political commissars, arranging escape routes, and stealing explosives.¹¹⁶ This shows that women held prominent roles in redefining women roles in the regime, and they held independent agency as staffettas.

¹¹⁴ Chiara Bonfiglioli. “Red Girls’ Revolutionary Tales: Antifascist Women’s Autobiographies in Italy.” *Feminist Review* 106, no. 1 (2014): 60–77. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2013.39>, 66-67.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 211.

¹¹⁶ Caroline Moorehead, *A House in the Mountains: The Women Who Liberated Italy From Fascism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2019), 171.

By 1945, women resistance numbered around “70,000 women were in the Women’s Defense Groups, and 35,000 women were troops in the field... Forty-six hundred women were arrested, tortured, and tried, 2,750 were deported to German concentration camps, and 623 were executed or killed in battle.”¹¹⁷ Chiara Bonfiglioli, who examines several women's autobiographies engaged in anti-fascist resistance movements.¹¹⁸ Bonfiglioli describes how Rossana Rossanda, who joined the resistance after the Milan bombing, describes how she initially felt compelled to join the resistance fighters “as a recognition of something that could not be put off anymore. I made connections, I reconnected things, words, silences, events I had brushed up against but had been willfully blind to.”¹¹⁹ This narrative shows how women like Rossana joined resistance movements after the war affected them. Simultaneously, women were affected by changing attitudes toward a newfound responsibility which enabled them to hope for a better society.

In conclusion, this subsection aimed to show how gender constructs evolved in Mussolini’s regime, despite fascist ideology confining women into traditional roles. This section examined by Benito Mussolini used propaganda to influence how he established himself and how he supported women's suffrage movements, then to gain the Vatican’s favor, and dismantled women's coalitions and suffrage. It shows how Mussolini and the Vatican aim to target promiscuity and sexuality while being hypocritical through male sexuality paradigms. By showing how futurist movements influenced the regime, this section shows how women's support for these movements critically affected how women portrayed themselves in fascist Italy.

¹¹⁷ Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Vol. 1st pbk. print. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 274.

¹¹⁸ Chiara Bonfiglioli. “Red Girls’ Revolutionary Tales: Antifascist Women’s Autobiographies in Italy.” *Feminist Review* 106, no. 1 (2014): 60–77. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2013.39>, 66.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 66.

It aimed to show how the Vatican used women's education to reinforce these narratives of domesticity by propagandizing negative views of women's higher education and class divisions. It also showed the struggles women faced in their professions and the struggle for women to gain access to higher education. Finally, this section discussed how women authors held individual agency through their writings about promiscuity and sexuality through conceptual ambiguity. Finally, it discussed how women participated in Italian Resistance movements through individual acts of spying and smuggling weapons.

Franco's Spain

This subsection will examine how General Franco's regime influenced gender dichotomies in Spain. By examining Franco's regime, I show how gender norms affected feminist thought and how this influenced gender dichotomies. In subsection, I will examine how the historical precedent in the Spanish dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera influenced extreme ideological parties in the 1936 elections. It will show the significance of women gaining the right to vote in these elections and how the Second Spanish Republic collapsed after new initiatives to land reform, leading to the Spanish Civil War. This subsection will examine how women are integral to the Spanish Civil War and the significance of female figureheads such as Dolores Ibarruri and Pilar Primo de Rivera. Furthermore, this subsection will discuss how Franco's regime and the Catholic Church coordinated on gender policies and how they supported the regime's policies toward upholding traditional values in the state education system. It will then examine the Sección Femenina marriage loans and child subsidies the Spanish government gave. It will show how women had limited job availability and women's professions revolved around being approved by Franco's regime, such as nursing and teaching. It will talk about how the regime targeted sexual promiscuity and prostitution laws.

In the 1920s, prior to General Franco's regime, economic problems were challenging the Spanish dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera due to massive war campaigns in Morocco and hyperinflation of its currency.¹²⁰ Although the Spanish forces were meant to withdraw from Morocco, Spanish forces remained in the conflict due to ultra-nationalism in the war efforts and the difficulty of the Spanish not wanting to face reputational damages due to the massive casualties among the Spanish African Army.¹²¹ The eventual defeat of the Moroccan army also contributed to the debt, as Spain lacked the financial funding to maintain this new territory. The Spanish currency, the peseta, was massively overvalued and depreciated by one-third due to an international depression after World War I.¹²² These financial conflicts contributed to the Spanish government's collapse, as these economic conditions threatened Spanish financial stability.

In addition to this, there were internal governmental problems that plagued Spain during General Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. When General Rivera launched a series of reforms geared toward opening Parliament to the general public.¹²³ The new changes reconfigured parliament so the Spanish public would elect half of the parliament in universal elections. These universal elections would allow women voters, who would be allowed to vote for the first time.¹²⁴ This is significant because women voters could bring to the forefront new policies geared toward women. Scholars estimate that about 7.5 million voted out of the eligible 13 million voters.¹²⁵ Another new parliamentary change was that the Senate was to be replaced

¹²⁰ Shannon E Fleming, and Ann K. Fleming. "Primo de Rivera and Spain's Moroccan Problem, 1923-27." *Journal of Contemporary History* 12, no. 1 (1977): 85-99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260238>, 86.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 90.

¹²² Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923-1977* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 871.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 845.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 829.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*.

by a small elite group called the Council of the Realm, elected by the Spanish King Alfonso XIII.¹²⁶ The Council of the Realm would hold new powers of ratifying laws and power over the judicial branch.¹²⁷ This proposal held little favor with the Spanish elites as it reorganized the established hierarchical structure and gave the Spanish king absolute power.¹²⁸ However, the Spanish public supported the maneuver, and there was an extremely high voter turnout in the election of 1933. The Spanish populace approved of these new elections and contributed to the drastic divide between the difference of opinion from the Spanish public's perspective and elites.

This division deepened the polarization of the debate around new governmental policies. This was an unintentional effect of General Rivera's government policies which increased the national average literacy rate to 73%.¹²⁹ This literacy rate was reflected in female student enrollment and literacy, which had risen by 1930 from 60-65%.¹³⁰ These gains were influenced by Spanish Catholicism as Catholic values became incorporated into the Spanish education system, such as the revision of school textbooks.¹³¹ The Catholic Right influenced National Catholicism, an ideology incorporating ultranationalism with traditional Spanish Catholic values.¹³² This is seen in the revisionist history of school textbooks which taught that Spanish society needed to 'restore' its initial greatness and that modern society was a 'divergence' from this inauthentic Spain.¹³³

The fall of the dictatorship due to the abduction of General Miguel Primo de Rivera

¹²⁶ Ibid, 845.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Boyd, Carolyn P. "The Primo de Rivera Dictatorship, 1923–1930: The Origins of 'National Catholicism.'" In *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975*, 165–93. Princeton University Press, 1997. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv173f1nm.11,169>.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 170.

¹³¹ Ibid, 175.

¹³² Ibid, 168.

¹³³ Ibid, 184.

(1930) and the exile of King Alfonso XIII (1931) left fascism and communism ideologies to become the ideological basis of political and regional parties. These political parties were oversaturated in the public discourse. They heightened the political instability of the political landscape in Spain. On the Nationalist side, there were several political parties divided by monarchy sentiments and fascist ideologies: Acción Española (Monarchist, who backed King Alfonso XIII), *Comunión Tradicionalista* (who backed Ultra-Catholic Monarchy), *Falange Española de las JONS* (fascist monarchy, led by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of dictator Miguel Rivera), *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS* (eventually led by Franco and overall the party that unities were Carlist and Falangist).¹³⁴ On the Republican side, parties were organized by communist ideologies and pro-democracy sentiments: *Unión Republicana* (originally *Partido Republicano Radical*, right-wing Popular Front), *Partido Socialista Obrero de España* (the Spanish Socialist Workers' party), *Partido Comunista de España* (the Spanish Communist Party), *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (the party of Marxist Unification), *The Libertarian Movement* (anarchist).¹³⁵ There were several regionalist parties: *Izaquierda Republicana* (Galician autonomy party), *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (counterpart to *The Catalan League*), *Ligula Catalana* (*The Catalan League*), and the *Basque Nationalist Party*.¹³⁶ The new formation of political and regional parties created a fractured discourse founded on an extreme ideological basis. This further increased the division in society, and as a result, no party held a significant amount of the vote.

In the 1936 elections, these political parties had to consolidate into two main blocs. The

¹³⁴ Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), 273-339.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

left and center-left formed a coalition under the Progressive Popular Fronts.¹³⁷ The opposing party was a coalition of the Carlist pro-monarchy parties and right-wing parties under the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas.¹³⁸ In the 1936 elections, the Popular Front won the election against the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas. This event established the Second Spanish Republic, which wanted more radical reforms through new democratization efforts and supported new socialist policies, such as the desire to collectivize Spanish land.¹³⁹

The repercussions of the new government's policy toward land reforms led to furious Nationalists.¹⁴⁰ In 1936, the Nationalists, led by General Francisco Franco and with the support of the Spanish military, launched a coup d'état, overthrowing the democratically elected government. The escalation of this conflict led to the Spanish Civil War from 1936-1939.¹⁴¹ The Non-Intervention Committee was created to limit the war and prevent foreign involvement. It was monitored by the United Kingdom and France. However, covert aid was given to both sides of the conflict, including ground troops.¹⁴² During the Spanish Civil War, the Spanish Nationalists relied on their fascist allies of Germany and Italy to send supplies and weapons.¹⁴³ The Republicans were given aid by the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁴ The following years began a bloody and brutal conflict. However, the Republicans lacked cohesion due to internal disputes on Basque and Catalan independence.¹⁴⁵ On April 1, 1939, Nationalists entered the city of Madrid, which

¹³⁷ Ibid, 1174.

¹³⁸ Ibid,1336.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Austin Carson. "The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)." In *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics*, 99–141. Princeton University Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv346p45.6>, 99.

¹⁴² Ibid, 100.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 229.

established a military dictatorship in Spain led by General Francisco Franco.¹⁴⁶

Several prominent women played a significant part in the Spanish Civil War. Dolores Ibárruri led the Spanish Communist Party. She portrayed herself as a motherly figurehead of the Communist Party and alluded to her motherhood as a powerful female narrative.¹⁴⁷ She presented herself as “the mother of the Republic, the mother of the Revolution, and when she spoke to the fighting men, calling upon their courage and their willingness to fight for the Republic, she did so as a mother.”¹⁴⁸ Women like Dolores Ibarruri rallied soldiers to reclaim notions of motherhood to gain more power for themselves in a male-dominated society. In addition, many women joined the Spanish nurses joined with the International bridges nurses, who trained Spanish nurses.¹⁴⁹ After Franco’s regime was in power, many women volunteers were either sent home, exiled, or sent to notorious women's prison camps. In Madrid, Ventas Prison was considered a ‘house of horrors.’ Angeles Garcia Madrid's autobiography, *Requiem por la libertad*, describes the “many victims of torture, illness, verbal abuse, rape, hunger, and insanity with whom she shared cells during that time.”¹⁵⁰ Her memoir shows that many women faced the repercussions of siding with the Republicans in the war.

On the Nationalist side, Spanish women fought in the women-run organization, the Sección Femenina, established in 1934.¹⁵¹ This was led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, the daughter of

¹⁴⁶ Stanley G. Payne, "Civil Wars within a Civil War." In *The Spanish Civil War*, 216-30. Cambridge Essential Histories. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139026154.020,229.

¹⁴⁷Brigitte Studer, and Regan Kramer. “Communism and Feminism.” *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, no. 41 (2015): 126–39. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26273633>, 135.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Loredana Piervisani, Palomba Antonella, Albanesi Beatrice, Rocco Gennaro, Stasi Serenella, Vellone Ercole, and Alvaro Rosaria. “The Nurse in the Mirror: Image of the Female Nurse during the Italian Fascist Period.” *Journal of Advanced Nursing (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)* 77, no. 2 (February 2021): 957–72. doi:10.1111/jan.14679., 958.

¹⁵⁰ Shirley Mangini. “Memories of Resistance: Women Activists from the Spanish Civil War.” *Signs* 17, no. 1 (1991): 171–86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/317445,182>.

¹⁵¹ Aurora G Morcillo and Northern Illinois University, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco's Spain* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 24.

the former dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera. During the Spanish civil war, women sections of the Sección Femenina and de las JONS, the women section of the Falange, helped deliver aid and by September 1936, had around 80,000 women volunteers.¹⁵² Helen Graham states that women, part of the Sección Femenina, were part of an army “of unmarried, economically independent women officers preaching the gospel of domesticity and subservience to their female clientele. While there are obviously war-related demographic factors that help explain the post-war phenomenon of the SF, it is nonetheless true that over time it played a far from [an] insignificant part in disrupting gender relations and dynamizing social and cultural change.”¹⁵³ Women in the Sección Femenina experienced a disruption of gender norms as women participated in the war effort. This new liberalization of women would soon be hypocritical due to Franco’s regime supporting traditional gender roles.

In Franco's regime, traditional values were upheld by state institutions and the Catholic Church. Through the state-led education system, Franco’s regime created policies geared towards heteronormative family values. In support of traditional gender roles, the regime began to close down schools that taught secular western ideals. These western ideals encouraged critical thinking for women and their independence. Franco’s regime pivoted these education policies to match a “Christian Civilization,” in which the Spanish Labor Charter reflected Catholic views of morality and womanhood.¹⁵⁴ The Spanish Labor Charter prohibited married

¹⁵² Aurora G Morcillo and Northern Illinois University, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco's Spain* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 24.

¹⁵³ Helen Graham. *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction*. Very Short Introductions: 123. Oxford University Press, 2005, <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b1635474&site=eds-live&scope=site,76>.

¹⁵⁴ Aurora G. Morcillo. 2010. *The Seduction of Modern Spain: The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politic*. Bucknell University Press. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b5983213&site=eds-live&scope=site., 24>.

women from working in factories and workshops.¹⁵⁵ In Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), he recommended: “an equal distribution of capital to allow workers to live with dignity. The right to work was associated with the ability to sustain the family, a task entrusted to men. Women, according to the encyclical, need protection from the “crime” of having to work.”¹⁵⁶ The Catholic Church and Franco’s regime initiatives supported these depictions of motherhood.

One of these initiatives was allowing the women-led organization, The Sección Femenina, to be in charge of offering marriage loans and child subsidies. These policies were geared towards women to promote motherhood. They gave additional income in a state-subsidized wage so that these traditional roles could be followed by middle and low-income women.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, to support traditional values, the Spanish fascist state decided that giving economic incentives might encourage the families to uphold the traditional feminine nuclear family model. Franco’s regime passed The Public Order of December 2, 1938, which “proposed an increase in male workers’ salaries so they could provide for their families as breadwinners and keep their wife’s at home.”¹⁵⁸ These incentives were not given to women themselves rather than to their husbands who had profound impacts on women as they resulted in hunger and economic hardships. Franco’s regime decided these policies would be subtle factors influencing motherhood and supporting more traditional values.

The Sección Femenina controlled multiple education platforms, such as local high

¹⁵⁵ Aurora G Morcillo and Northern Illinois University, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco’s Spain* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 34.

¹⁵⁶ Aurora G. Morcillo. 2010. *The Seduction of Modern Spain: The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politic*. Bucknell University Press, 34.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁵⁸ Aurora G Morcillo and Northern Illinois University, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco’s Spain* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 34.

schools to women's institutions, such as the Teresian Institute, that focused on the traditional idea of Spanish women. These education platforms supported: “Traditional” feminine values—marriage and motherhood, domestic work, public service, and self-abnegation—formed the bedrock of agency policy. Every duty that women had within the state centered on this idea of service, and of those duties’ motherhood was the “job” most central to the healthy state.”¹⁵⁹ The Sección Femeninas’ led initiatives to support women who wanted to work within the confines of traditional service industry jobs such as waitressing, working as day laborers or domestic servants. In Franco’s regime, many young rural girls moved to urban areas for a better living wage and became domestic laborers called *sus labores*.¹⁶⁰ Despite limiting job availability for women in the public sphere, the Sección Femeninas initiative gave women more opportunities to pursue employment than confining them solely to the domestic sphere.

Despite efforts to keep women confined to the domestic sphere, women were employed in the profession of nursing. Franco’s regime supported Catholic Church organizations, and women organizations such as the Sección Femenina in deciding state policy initiatives centered around nursing. Julia Hudson Richard follows the intertwinement of the state apparatus, the Catholic Church, and the women's organization Sección Femenina. Franco’s regime believed that women could work in nursing because the profession held feminine qualities supported by the regime. Pilar de Rivera states that good female nurses should show specific feminine qualities of ‘politeness and being non-confrontational’ to male staff. She remarks that women must “show absolute subjection to the doctors.”¹⁶¹ The Sección Femenina colluded with the

¹⁵⁹ 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, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2015.0018>, 89.

¹⁶⁰ Aurora G Morcillo and Northern Illinois University, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco’s Spain* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 71.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

Catholic Church to require women to have good moral standards and go through religious training to become nurses.¹⁶² Therefore, women who were nurses were still subject to the male hierarchical structure of Franco's regime, despite having a career.

In addition to nursing, women could become public school teachers for girls as schools were segregated between boys and girls.¹⁶³ The Secondary Education Law established strict guidelines on secondary education. In order for young girls to receive their diplomas, they had to pass home economics, a course taught by women professors which focused on arts, crafts, mending, sewing, and household work.¹⁶⁴ The director of primary and secondary school, Jose Pemartin, spoke about the need to keep “women away from the university” as he believed a “[women’s] place is at home.”¹⁶⁵ However, the regime did employ women instructors from their own universities, such as the Institute for Women’s Professional Training.¹⁶⁶

By confining women to the domestic sphere, Francisco Franco’s regime, in cooperation with the Catholic Church, targeted sexual promiscuity. Franco’s regime policies that outlawed prostitution were not officially implemented until 1956.¹⁶⁷ However, the Patronato de Procción del a Mujer was a state initiative established in 1941 that sought the “surveillance and rehabilitation of the prostitute's body and soul.”¹⁶⁸ This led to a series of new laws which made abortion, adultery, and contraceptives illegal.¹⁶⁹ Magdalene houses were established by the church and the Sección Femenina as shelters for ‘repentant’ women.¹⁷⁰ These houses were

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 93.

¹⁶⁴ Aurora G Morcillo and Northern Illinois University, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco’s Spain* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 44.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 45.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 76.

¹⁶⁸ Aurora G. Morcillo. 2010. *The Seduction of Modern Spain: The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politic*. Bucknell University Press, 91.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 92.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 95.

prisons, often in derelict and decaying conditions. Many of the women staying there were often victims of rape in the Spanish Civil War.¹⁷¹ Women prisoners of the Spanish Civil War were also victims of physical and mental abuse that occurred in Magdalene houses described in Garcia Madrid's autobiography, "Rape was daily fare; the abuse of power by men against women, under those circumstances, acquired dramatic proportions. The so-called 'reds' were less than nothing to the macho fascists. The rape of female prisoners had nothing to do with sexual desire; it was simply an act of power, humiliation, sadism."¹⁷² The Foundation for the Protection of Women published a report on these cases, blaming them as instances of the "modern lifestyle" and due to "urban settings."¹⁷³ These attacks on promiscuity and of "immorality" shows how the Catholic Church and Franco's regime attack sexuality to encourage traditional lifestyles.

Despite Franco's regime and the Catholic Church's efforts, women held power in church-sanctioned behavior, and the female Guard Corps (Cuerpo de Celadoras) watched over some of the inmates at Magdalene's houses.¹⁷⁴ These women had to get certification from the regime and be taught educational correction programs.¹⁷⁵ Several women's organizations, such as The Foundation for the Protection of Women, Sisters Adoratrices, Oblates, and Sisters of the Good Shepherd, provided aid to these Magdalene houses.¹⁷⁶ Women, who were unmarried, could be able to attend college, work for the government, and have a driver's license if they were approved

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 104.

¹⁷² Shirley Mangini. "Memories of Resistance: Women Activists from the Spanish Civil War." *Signs* 17, no. 1 (1991): 171–86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/317445>, 186.

¹⁷³ Aurora G. Morcillo. 2010. *The Seduction of Modern Spain: The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politic*. Bucknell University Press, 104.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 99.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 100.

by the Sección Femenina.¹⁷⁷ In Franco's regime, these governmental approvals were integrated into how women perceived themselves in society.

In conclusion, this section explains how gender constructs influenced how gender was viewed in Franco's regime. I showed how historical precedent influenced extreme ideologies and the 1936 elections. This section showed how women participated in the Spanish civil war and the repercussions. Furthermore, I demonstrated how Franco's regime and the Catholic Church coordinated on gender policies which were based on moral standards, and how the regime upheld traditional values in the state education system. I showed how women had limited job availability, and women's professions revolved around being approved by Franco's regime, such as nursing and teaching. Finally, this subsection showed how regime policies targeted sexual promiscuity and prostitution laws.

¹⁷⁷ Timothy Mitchell. 2017. *Betrayal of the Innocents: Desire, Power, and the Catholic Church in Spain*. Reprint 2016. University of Pennsylvania Press. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b5384712&site=eds-live&scope=site,120>.

III. SECTION II: FEMINIST MOVEMENTS, PROTEST, AND TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

Mussolini's Italy

This subsection will track how gender dynamics influence protest and feminist thought and can carry over into new legislation toward women's rights. I will discuss how Mussolini's propaganda was geared toward youth and university students. I will explain how female students lacked cohesion as women favored individualism and experienced different intersectional familial pressures, which dismantled women's organizations in universities as a cohesive force. I will then explain how women's resistance movements of sabotage and factory strikes led to women's cohesion in protest against Mussolini's regime leading to the collapse of the regime. This women's cohesion is enhanced by the demystification of Mussolini's image and the coordination of women's suffrage movements, pro-divorce legislation, honor killings, and abortion demonstrations.

When Mussolini rose to power in the 1920s, he did so with the help of university students and student-led organizations. In 1923, Student protests occurred over the New Education Law, which was a newly enacted law that made students retake their examinations, despite taking them in previous schooling, before being admitted for the following school year.¹⁷⁸ This event was a catalyst for students to undertake massive strikes in the form of protest. These protests showed that students could be mobilized as a political force for fascist ideology against new democratic values. When Mussolini's regime gained control over the university education system. Mussolini's regime began to target students, and male students were required to take a

¹⁷⁸ "Italy to Suppress Students' Rebellion; Mussolini and Cabinet Stand Firmly for Enforcement of the New Education Law.," The New York Times (The New York Times, December 6, 1923), <https://www.nytimes.com/1923/12/06/archives/italy-to-suppress-students-rebellion-mussolini-and-cabinet-stand.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

paramilitary course for conscription for military service. Male students would join the Young Fascist ranks and, at age 21, become full members of the Fascist party.¹⁷⁹ Mussolini called on youth groups to install pro-fascist slogans such as “Books and muskets make a perfect fascist.”¹⁸⁰ Students who desired change were searching for a newfound identity and the wake of the destruction of the First World War. Students were compelled to follow new radical ideologies. The Fascist Party gave students “...a voice that is listened to, that will count in the elaboration of doctrine, in the formation and transformation of institutions, and in the renewal of myths.”¹⁸¹ By indoctrinating students into the fascist party, Mussolini ensured that the youth upheld fascist beliefs at these university systems.

Women students' resistance to the Italian regime was much more individualized as women failed to have cohesion around a collective solidarity vision. Female students lacked identity in fascist ideology as these fascist narratives upheld the subordination of women by having women belong solely in the domestic sphere. Women joined Gruppi Universitari Fascisti (GUF), this fascist organization was open to both, male and female students. This organization lacked a cohesive vision for women. Women sections held little to no support from the fascist party, and they lacked older women as alumni to help with funding.¹⁸² There was little initiative for women in university newspapers and few careers available to women. Women had various intersectional identities upon entering university and different familial pressures. Maria Peron of

¹⁷⁹ Camille Cianfarra, “Schooling for Young Totalitarians; in Germany, Italy and Russia Education Is Built around a Concept of the State Totalitarians Go to School Italy Totalitarian Schools Russia Germany,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, October 2, 1938), <https://www.nytimes.com/1938/10/02/archives/schooling-for-young-totalitarians-in-germany-italy-and-russia.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁸⁰ Herbert L. Matthews, “Mussolini Bids Students Keep Rifles Handy; ‘Not a Cowardly Peace but an Armed Peace,’” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, November 16, 1939), <https://www.nytimes.com/1939/11/16/archives/mussolini-bids-students-keep-rifles-handy-not-a-cowardly-peace-but.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁸¹ Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Vol. 1st pbk. print. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 95.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 161.

Padua states, “[I] never had a political idea, I’m only Catholic, a believer...”¹⁸³ This sentiment of individualism replicates itself through women in resistance movements, thus, women did not see themselves as a larger political force.

The Italian Resistance changed how women saw themselves as a cohesive unitary force for change. Women made up a significant part of the Italian Resistance movements and were effectively holding various successes at opposing Mussolini’s regime. Women Resistance fighters numbers are greatly underestimated by scholars due to women being unable to directly confront fascist politics, many women found protest in the form of sabotage and information skills. *The New York Times* consecutively held reports on northern Italian cities, in which factory protests included women and placed northern universities in the center of unrest for Mussolini’s regime. In 1941, *The New York Times* states, “These sources reported a breadline riot in Trieste on the morning of Jan.18, during which twenty women were arrested as “defeatists.” The women, it is reported, were released early the next morning after they had been forced to swallow castor oil administered by blackshirt secret police.”¹⁸⁴ This shows the brutality of the regime's secret police, OVRA, toward women rioters. Factory women were “instructed in small acts of sabotage, like sewing military boots so poorly that they fell apart.”¹⁸⁵ Women contributed significantly to dismantling Italian and German operations by organizing protests. Women-led demonstrations against the Germans often produced significantly positive results. Caroline Moorhead describes how in Carrara, “when ordered to evacuate the town by the Germans, the women staged an enormous demonstration, and the Germans backed down. In Schio, after

¹⁸³ Ibid, 284.

¹⁸⁴ “New Reports of Rioting; Added Details of Disorders in Italy given in Belgrade,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, January 28, 1941), <https://www.nytimes.com/1941/01/28/archives/new-reports-of-rioting-added-details-of-disorders-in-italy-given-in.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁸⁵ Caroline Moorehead, *A House in the Mountains: The Women Who Liberated Italy From Fascism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2019), 270.

drunken militiamen assaulted three young girls, the GDD organized a two-day strike, which spread and paralyzed the area.”¹⁸⁶ These demonstrations against the fascist regime were also often collaborated efforts in women responding to the war. This is apparent in the depiction of women rioters in major metropolitan areas clashing with soldiers, “Italian reports to Madrid said that rioting was occurring in Rome, Florence, and Naples. They told of a number of clashes between Italians and German soldiers, mostly fist fights. They described women walking the streets with squalling infants in their arms, crying: “We want peace. Badoglio does something quickly. We don’t want our cities bombed again. Rome churches were crowded day and night, these reports said, with thousands praying for peace.”¹⁸⁷ These women participated in nonviolent protests against Mussolini’s regime. There were consistent forms of resistance in which women actively participated in demonstrations during the regime's collapse. Women were the initial spark of massive protests. An NBC correspondent related the “story of an Italian woman who ran after a contingent of Nazi troops marching through the streets of Rome, screaming at the theme hysterically. Soon, he added, a great mob of Italians had joined in with the women screaming and shouting at the troops.”¹⁸⁸ This shows that these protests, which women groups led, resulted from a coordinated effort as a response to the war, and staffetta targeted these centers of unrest to protest the regime.

The death of Mussolini held a profound impact on dismantling the glorification of his image. In the events prior to his death, Mussolini fled with his mistress Clara Petacci to Lake

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 271.

¹⁸⁷ “Italians Ask Peace in Riots in North; Fear Cities Will Be Bombed Because Badoglio Ignored the Allies' Offers Secret Radio in Appeal Five Left Wing Parties Call on Workers to Refuse Further Collaboration with 'Traitor',” The New York Times (The New York Times, August 1, 1943), <https://www.nytimes.com/1943/08/01/archives/italians-ask-peace-in-riots-in-north-fear-cities-will-be-bombed.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁸⁸ “New Reports of Rioting; Added Details of Disorders in Italy Given in Belgrade,” The New York Times (The New York Times, January 28, 1941), <https://www.nytimes.com/1941/01/28/archives/new-reports-of-rioting-added-details-of-disorders-in-italy-given-in.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

Como, retreating towards Switzerland, where he had plans to go to Spain.¹⁸⁹ They were spotted by local resistance members, and they were both shot by Allied forces.¹⁹⁰ On April 29, 1945, Allied forces took their bodies to the Milan Piazzale Loreto, where the Italian public venerated their anger, and their bodies were hung up on display.¹⁹¹ The collapse of Mussolini's regime left women in a unique position as they would use the following coordination tactic to lead protest movements for women's rights. Even after Mussolini's regime, patriarchal order placed emphasis on maintaining these social hierarchies. The existing fascist leaders faced new initiatives from the Italian government to begin purging fascists from political institutions and the Italian government led a "special commission in charge of dismissing fascists from their positions had already been created in 1943. Parallel to this initiative, a series of trials began in order to throw light on the political responsibilities held by people linked to the fascist past. In other words, between 1945 and 1946, fascists were prosecuted all over Italy; some of these were arrested, and others were forced to live clandestinely. For some of these fascists, staying in Italy was dangerous and they seized every opportunity to flee in search of safer destinations."¹⁹² However, despite these initiatives, women's legal codes still had barriers to women's rights as they were left untouched by the Italian government. The Lateran Treaty of 1929, between Mussolini and the Vatican, remained a part of the new constitution due to the Vatican's influence.¹⁹³ This led to the question of women's involvement and women's advocate for issues

¹⁸⁹ Caroline Moorehead, *A House in the Mountains: The Women Who Liberated Italy From Fascism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2019), 409.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 412.

¹⁹² Matteo Albanese and Pablo Del Hierro, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century: Spain, Italy and the Global Neo-Fascist Network* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 69.

¹⁹³ Arnaldo Cortesi, "Italians Acclaim New Constitution Creating Republic; Charter, Voted 453 to 62, Goes into Effect on Jan. 1--King's Family Forever Banned Liberal Democracy Set Two-House Legislature Fixed, Women Get Equal Rights-- De Nicola Is President New Constitution Adopted in Italy," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, December 23, 1947), <https://www.nytimes.com/1947/12/23/archives/italians-acclaim-new-constitution-creating-republic-charter-voted.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

such as divorce, abortion, and voting.

The first major right women gained was the right to vote in Italian elections. In 1944, women moved to new universal elections, which would determine the outcome of democracy in Italy.¹⁹⁴ In 1946, the first universal elections were held to debate whether Italy would remain a monarchy or a republic.¹⁹⁵ This gave women the power to vote on delegates to write the Italian constitution.¹⁹⁶ Feminist thought carried over to how women saw themselves in Italian society. After the elections of 1944, women played an integral part in implementing Article 3 of the new Italian constitution, which gave women equality “before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, politics, personal and social circumstances.”¹⁹⁷ The several main parties were running in the Italian Parliament in the elections of 1944. These parties were the Italian Christian Democrats, the Communist Party, and the Common Man Party.¹⁹⁸ Women's issues were the main focus of the elections as women's issues intertwined with the Vatican's influence over women's rights. The Vatican supported anti-divorce and pro-life morality arguments to new women voters. Pope Pius XI urged that women held a “Christian responsibility” to vote for the Christian Democratic Party and must “join in a fight against public corruptors of innocence and juvenile purity” and going so far [as to urge] the State, ‘with wise laws’ to ‘fight immoral spectacles and

¹⁹⁴ A. C. Sedgwick, “Women May Vote In Italian Regime; Universal Suffrage Proposed by Badoglio Government in Return to Democracy May Day to Be Observed ' Day of Battle' Is Proclaimed for North -- Full Aid to Allies Stressed as First Aim,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, April 28, 1944), <https://www.nytimes.com/1944/04/28/archives/women-may-vote-in-italian-regime-universal-suffrage-proposed-by.html>.

¹⁹⁵ Arnaldo Cortesi, “Italy Goes to Polls Quietly; Women Glory in First Vote; Party Leaders Voting in the Elections Held Yesterday in France and Italy,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, June 3, 1946), <https://www.nytimes.com/1946/06/03/archives/italy-goes-to-polls-quietly-women-glory-in-first-vote-party-leaders.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Caroline Moorehead, *A House in the Mountains: The Women Who Liberated Italy From Fascism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2019), 456.

¹⁹⁸ “Italy's Elections,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, November 14, 1946), <https://www.nytimes.com/1946/11/14/archives/italys-elections.html?searchResultPosition=4>.

drawings in the press, in the films, on the stage, and on the radio.”¹⁹⁹ The Vatican initiatives attacked women's values, and in the 1950s, the Vatican held significant control over the desire to limit these notations of femininity and promiscuity.

In the 1950s, the Vatican was instrumental in controlling how Italians viewed divorce as in opposition to pro-divorce stances and policies towards promiscuity. The pro-Vatican Christian Democratic party in the Italian parliament upheld this issue of the questioning of being able to access divorces. The Italian government’s divorce policies were debating whether the legalization of divorce is applicable based on Article 39 of the Italian Constitution, which states that the state has civil prerogatives to regulate civil marriage and aspects of religious marriage as it recognizes the rights of the family. Despite anti-divorce opponents' belief that the legalization of divorce violates the Lateran Treaty of 1929, between Mussolini and the Vatican.²⁰⁰ This not only shows the significance of the Vatican's power in interpreting marriage laws but how Mussolini’s regime affected feminist policies after the collapse of the regime. Italian women perceived this as unjust as they saw the need for the legalization of divorce. Women's protests coordinated with political slogans, as local newspapers would print ways to kill their husbands inconspicuously. *The New York Times* reports, “There are ways of ridding oneself of an unwanted spouse, from recipes for the perfect uxoricide to an elaborate stratagem involving

¹⁹⁹ Sam Pope Brewer, “Pope Asks Rebuff For Left In Italy; Urges Women to Vote Against Parties Seeking to Limit Freedom of Church,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 13, 1946), <https://www.nytimes.com/1946/05/13/archives/pope-asks-rebuff-for-left-in-italy-urges-women-to-vote-against.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁰⁰ Arnaldo Cortesi, “Italians Acclaim New Constitution Creating Republic; Charter, Voted 453 to 62, Goes into Effect on Jan. 1--King's Family Forever Banned Liberal Democracy Set Two-House Legislature Fixed, Women Get Equal Rights-- De Nicola Is President New Constitution Adopted in Italy,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, December 23, 1947), <https://www.nytimes.com/1947/12/23/archives/italians-acclaim-new-constitution-creating-republic-charter-voted.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

predated postcards, but now a lawmaker has come up with a new idea: make divorce legal.”²⁰¹

Women organized themselves into positions of power as a distinct voting bloc favoring pro-divorce parties, figureheads, and politicians. The issue of divorce was decided due to this public pressure by women in a public referendum in 1974, with pro-divorce at 59.1% to anti-divorce at 40.9%.²⁰² There was also social pressure on Italian illegitimate children who belonged to unmarried parents due to marital issues, 28.6²⁰³

This issue of divorce was due to the retaliation of the issues of honor killing for Italian women. Feminist distinguished the hypocritical nature of the legalization of honor killings, which was enacted in Mussolini’s regime, in the 1930s.²⁰⁴ There were limited sentences for men who commit adultery, not a criminal act subject to the state judicial apparatus.²⁰⁵ However, women who committed adultery were sentenced to a minimum one-year jail term to two years.²⁰⁶ In 1966, Sicilian courts sentenced only “2 years and 11 months- imposed on a Sicilian who killed a professor over the seduction of his daughter, who was above the age of consent.”²⁰⁷ This court case inspired a series of protests against honor killings. Italian women saw the horrors of honor

²⁰¹ Luigi Barzini, “Divorce in Italy? Mamma Mia! Divorce in Italy?,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 17, 1968), <https://www.nytimes.com/1968/03/17/archives/divorce-in-italy-mamma-mia-divorce-in-italy.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁰² “Pain’ Voiced by Pope on Italy’s Divorce Vote,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 16, 1974), <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/05/16/archives/-pain-voiced-by-pope-on-italys-divorce-vote.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁰³ Robert C. Doty, “Italians at Rally Back Divorce Bill; Thousands Mass in Rome in Support of Measure to End ‘Hypocrisy and Cruelty’ Church Stand Assailed National Television Network Also Target--Police Halt Protest Attempt by 30,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, November 14, 1966), <https://www.nytimes.com/1966/11/14/archives/italians-at-rally-back-divorce-bill-thousands-mass-in-rome-in.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁰⁴ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 90.

²⁰⁵ Luigi Barzini, “Divorce in Italy? Mamma Mia! Divorce in Italy?,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 17, 1968), <https://www.nytimes.com/1968/03/17/archives/divorce-in-italy-mamma-mia-divorce-in-italy.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Robert C. Doty, “Italy Reviewing Crimes of Honor; Penalty May Be Harsher for Divorce, Italian Style,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, July 21, 1966), <https://www.nytimes.com/1966/07/21/archives/italy-reviewing-crimes-of-honor-penalty-may-be-harsher-for-divorce.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

killings, which were cases of irrational sporadic violence against women based on toxic masculinity ideals. Honor killings were attached to the Italian Penal Code Article 587, which legalized “crimes of honor,” resulting in the death of a spouse, daughter, or sister who could receive a jail sentence of 3-7 years.²⁰⁸ Often, Italian men are acquitted and “congratulated by the court and escorted home in triumph by applauding friends and family.”²⁰⁹ These problems of honor killings contributed to how male misogyny still persisted after Mussolini’s regime. Honor killings were so prevalent that they were dubbed “Divorce-Italian Style.”²¹⁰ In addition, many feminists viewed that Italian Penal Code 544, as unjust and immoral as it called for acts of reparative marriage, which permits rapists to marry their rape victims.²¹¹ Women enacted a series of anti-honor killing and anti-reparative marriage slogans: “If you rape me, you can marry me. If I betray you, you can kill me.”²¹² These issues of honor killing and reparative marriage were banned in 1981, showing that Mussolini’s regime policies still affected women long after the regime had collapsed.²¹³ However, Italian laws on male repercussions of honor killing didn’t change until 1996, despite being banned by the 1981 law.²¹⁴

The Vatican's support of anti-contraceptives in favor of abstinence policies and anti-abortion legislation affected how Italian society saw women's issues after the collapse of Mussolini’s regime. Women organizations such as the Communist party supported pro-choice policies and contributed to how feminists protested women's issues such as abortion and

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Luigi Barzini, “Divorce in Italy? Mamma Mia! Divorce in Italy?,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 17, 1968), <https://www.nytimes.com/1968/03/17/archives/divorce-in-italy-mamma-mia-divorce-in-italy.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²¹⁰ Paul Hofmann, “In Italy, a Change of Heart on Honor,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, July 13, 1980), <https://www.nytimes.com/1980/07/13/archives/in-italy-a-change-of-heart-on-honor.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

contraceptives. During the Mussolini regime, abortions were criminalized in the Penal Code of 1931, with court trials sentencing women for getting an abortion, for 2-5 years, and these had drastic impacts on doctors administering abortions.²¹⁵ However, the implications of the Vatican supporting Mussolini's regime policy on abortion impacted how Italian society viewed abortions. The Vatican still upheld opinions that sexual desires were considered sinful and immoral.²¹⁶ In 1975, during the Second Feminist Wave Feminism, Italian feminists rallied against Mussolini's regime's anti-abortion laws and the lack of sexual education around contraception.²¹⁷ The issue of abortion, was divided among Italian political parties divided between the Christian Democrats and Communists. The pro-abortion activist desired to repeal the Penal Code of 1931, against anti-abortion legislation; to do this, they needed 50,000 signatures.²¹⁸ In 1977, "About 5,000 women demonstrators marched through Rome tonight to demand the right of choice in having abortions in Italy."²¹⁹ These pro-abortion women's demonstrations led to the legalization of abortion for specific cases in which childbirth would be a health danger.²²⁰ Despite the initial success of this protest, in 1977, the referendum to repeal the law ended with the Christian Democrat Party killing the bill by a narrow margin in the Italian Senate.²²¹ However, in 1981, the Italian Parliament approved the measure that women over 18 years old have the right to ask for

²¹⁵ Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Vol. 1st pbk. print. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 58.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

²¹⁷ "Voting on Abortion Is Light in Italy," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 18, 1981), <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/18/world/voting-on-abortion-is-light-in-italy.html?searchResultPosition=11>.

²¹⁸ Marvine Howe, "Legal Abortions Sought in Italy," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, July 25, 1971), <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/07/25/archives/legal-abortion-sought-in-italy-womens-liberation-group-collect.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²¹⁹ "5,000 Italian Women Demonstrate for Right of Choice on Abortions," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, December 11, 1977), <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/12/11/archives/5000-italian-women-demonstrate-for-right-of-choice-on-abortion.html?searchResultPosition=17>.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ Alvin Shuster, "Abortion Bill in Italy Is Defeated by a Two-Vote Margin in Senate," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, June 8, 1977), <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/06/08/archives/abortion-bill-in-italy-is-defeated-by-a-twovote-margin-in-senate.html?searchResultPosition=34>.

an abortion in the first 90 days of pregnancy if there is a threat to the health of the mother. An abortion may also be justified for social-economic reasons, in rape cases or if there is a danger that the child may be deformed.²²² The legalization of abortion in various instances shows how women participated in overturning previous Mussolini's regime policies and how the Vatican influenced Mussolini's regime by targeting sexuality.

These women's issues faced a series of obstacles in creating a path toward liberation movements. After Mussolini's regime collapsed, how Italians viewed women's rights and sexuality. I show the confounding problems that Mussolini's strict legal code affected women's rights and how this legal code helped reinforce traditional values which infringed on women rights. This section showed how these policies were a lengthy endeavor that took decades of women's activism and women's protest. This shows how Mussolini's regime impacted Italian attitudes toward passing women's policies and how the Vatican contributed to limiting women's rights on the basis of morality.

Franco's Spain

In Spain, this subsection will examine how Franco's regime influenced patriarchal attitudes towards women. I will examine how changing attitudes in the 1960s allowed for women to gain access to various professions and women's education being open to universities. I will depict how the formation of the Student University Student Unions (S.E.U.) affected student protests against Franco's regime, leading to university closures. I will track how General Franco allowed for changes in the constitution to appease the protestors. However, despite this, I will show how women protestors and student protestors mobilized against Franco's regime. During

²²² Henry Tanner, "Italian Voters Affirm Liberal Abortion Law by Better than 2 to 1," The New York Times (The New York Times, May 19, 1981), <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/19/world/italian-voters-affirm-liberal-abortion-law-by-better-than-2-to-1.html?searchResultPosition=41>.

the collapse of Franco's regime, I will show how the Spanish monarchy, and other entities supported anti-regime protests. This subsection will discuss how female university students, women strikers, women intellectuals, and housewives supported the ideas of feminist thought through intellectual critical thinking and protesting regime policies against women. Furthermore, after Franco's regime collapse, this subsection will show how Franco's regime policies influenced women's suffrage, abortion, contraceptives and divorce laws.

During the 1950s, women's attitudes were changing in Franco's regime, by women being allowed more opportunities in new careers supported by the regime, and these government-support magazines adjusted to the changing acceptance towards working women. Two women's magazines, *Medina* and *Teresa*, show different marketing toward different areas of womanhood.²²³ The magazine, *Medina* promoted traditional motherhood values, marketing cleaning and household products to women.²²⁴ Women in Franco's regime had new attitudes about gaining a profession outside the domestic sphere. In the university women's magazine *Teresa*, where fashion layouts featured clothes that would be "comfortable and flattering both in the office and 'out and about.'" The models were urban sophisticates, and many of the fashion spreads featured women in professional and social situations. This contrasts the previous *Medina* depiction of women being housewives in the private realm.²²⁵ In 1961, Franco's regime passed the Law of Political, Professional, and Labor Rights, which eliminated gender-specific language in the labor laws and legalized work for both, married and unmarried, women.²²⁶ This law allowed for more careers available to women; thus, more women foresaw college as a viable

²²³ 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, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2015.0018>, 92.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

option for women. In the 1960s, college admittance for female students doubled.²²⁷ This enabled more urbanization in Spain and gave way to a rise of cafe culture, *the tertulia*. In these cafes, students would have discourses on various subjects and debates.²²⁸ These cafes allowed for the freedom of ideas to be circulated and debated, despite Franco's regime's control over public information. This would lead to coalitions and student organizations forming in opposition to Franco's regime.

In the 1950s, a student organization, S.E.U. or the Spanish University Student Union, led a student protest which was caused by students protesting the lack of attention to students' necessities.²²⁹ Initially, this student organization was operated by Franco's regime apparatus and headed by Pilar de Rivera. Its main task was to help students find careers after college.²³⁰ Women were also part of S.E.U. However, women were often encouraged to promote traditional values of motherhood in a university setting.²³¹ Women faced various forms of sexism and had to face different risks when joining the protest that was led by S.E.U. Therefore, women's participation in the protest was inconsistent. When Spain joined the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, an international organization that promotes intellectual free thought. This led to reactionary protests as students which included women activists. Many students felt that the international facilitation of intellectual thought was a facade created by

²²⁷ Aurora G Morcillo, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco's Spain*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2000. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b1489013&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

²²⁸ Louie Dean Valencia-García. *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain: Clashing with Fascism*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, 119.

²²⁹ Camille M. Cianfarra. "Youths' Criticism in Spain Is Rising; Unrest amid Students Called a Top Problem for Franco --Censorship Assailed Spanish Youth 'Preoccupied'," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, January 6, 1956), <https://www.nytimes.com/1956/01/06/archives/youths-criticism-in-spain-is-rising-unrest-amid-students-called-a.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

²³⁰ Aurora G Morcillo and Northern Illinois University, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco's Spain* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 113.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 117.

Franco's regime. In reality, students believed that it was contradictory to Franco's regime crackdowns on criticism against the government. In reaction, new student magazines celebrated and published work by anti-regime figureheads like Jose Ortega, sparking condemnation from the regime.²³² However, despite this widespread protest many protests that occurred in the 1950s towards Franco's regime were local and regional protests. Other instances of student protest in the 1950s were often small-scale acts of defiance due to fear of the brutality of the regime forces.

However, the acts of protesting in the 1960s were of a grandeur scale and desired democratic changes such as the ability to form student unions and to organize. One of the first violent reactions was students opposing the "government-controlled syndicate to which all students in Spain have been compelled to belong since the civil war."²³³ These protests were met with violence from the police regime. In 1966, student protests escalated university closures in Barcelona, Madrid, Granada, and Valencia. On April 28, 1966, Franco's regime closed the University of Barcelona due to the Democratic Association of Barcelona, a student led organization proposing an indefinite strike; around 800 students demonstrated in Barcelona before being dispersed by police.²³⁴ In 1968, the student-led Democratic Students Syndicate joined in labor riots coordinated with student demonstrations.²³⁵ This shows that these protests were multifaceted coordinated approaches to organizing against the regime.

²³² Camille M. Cianfarra, "Youths' Criticism in Spain Is Rising; Unrest amid Students Called a Top Problem for Franco --Censorship Assailed Spanish Youth 'Preoccupied,'" *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, January 6, 1956), <https://www.nytimes.com/1956/01/06/archives/youths-criticism-in-spain-is-rising-unrest-amid-students-called-a.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

²³³ "Police in Madrid Battle Students; Many of 5,000 in Protest and 4 Teachers Arrested Police in Madrid Battle Students," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, February 25, 1965), <https://www.nytimes.com/1965/02/25/archives/police-in-madrid-battle-students-many-of-5000-in-protest-and-4.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²³⁴ Tad Szulc, "University Is Shut by Franco Regime; Barcelona Student Unrest Said to Be Spreading," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, April 29, 1966), <https://www.nytimes.com/1966/04/29/archives/university-is-shut-by-franco-regime-barcelona-student-unrest-said.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²³⁵ Tad Szulc, "Spanish Protesters Turning to Politics," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, January 12, 1968), <https://www.nytimes.com/1968/01/12/archives/spanish-protesters-turning-to-politics.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

To subdue the protesters, General Franco wrote a new constitution giving one-fourth of the state deputies elected by influential families and married women.²³⁶ In 1967, Franco appointed 65 new members to the Spanish parliament, and half of these were selected by the Spanish public.²³⁷ These protests profoundly impacted why Franco's regime began allowing liberalization by allowing for new elections in the Spanish parliament. Franco's regime appeared to have feared the organization of women's coordinated action against the regime. Erica Chenoweth and Zoe Marks, who examine why autocrats appeal to women's rights, found that women's participation in mass protest movements against autocratic regimes have been successful.²³⁸ This is because women's protests have encouraged intersectional mobilization and women rely on using 'creative tactics' such as strikes to coordinate against the regime.²³⁹ Despite new elections for the Spanish public, student protests still desired more freedoms and political rights. General Francisco Franco declared that the student demonstrators were "attempting to throw us into a catastrophic situation such as the one from which we started," referring to the Spanish Civil War.²⁴⁰ General Franco declared that he would not hesitate to impose a state of exception and that "without a well-established authority and an ultimate decisive power, there can be no peace, no order, no law."²⁴¹ Franco's regime imposed a harsh backlash on protesters by using the state militias and local regional police.

²³⁶ Ted Szulc, "Franco Names, 65, Mostly Faithful Backers of His Regime, to the Spanish Parliament," *The New York Times*, September 21, 1967.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ Erica Chenoweth, and Zoe Marks. 2022. "Revenge of the Patriarchs: Why Autocrats Fear Women." *Foreign Affairs*, March 1. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgac&AN=edsgac.A694983391&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 105.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Tad Szulc, "Franco, Opening Cortes, Pledges to Curb Unrest," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, November 18, 1967), <https://www.nytimes.com/1967/11/18/archives/franco-opening-cortes-pledges-to-curb-unrest.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The Spanish monarchy, Prince Juan Carlos, had a profound impact on the university protest. Despite Franco giving him a platform to swear fidelity to the regime, Prince Juan Carlos states, “I am closer to the young. I admire them and I share their desire to find a better, more genuine world. I know that in the rebelliousness that worries so many there lives the best generosity of those who want an open future, often with impossible dreams, but always with a noble desire for the good of the people.”²⁴² He added, “the cult of the past must not be a brake on the evolution of a society that is changing with dizzying rapidity.”²⁴³ In 1974, students protested joining communist-backed workers' commissions as an alliance against the regime.²⁴⁴ These protestors were joined by Nicolas Franco, nephew of Francisco Franco, who stated that he was “against fascism and in favor of a peaceful egalitarian, democratic coexistence, without privileges for any class.”²⁴⁵

During the collapse of Franco’s regime, many women also participated in these student-led protests and workers' protests. Women would be integral to how these university students protested against Franco’s regime, in 1959, an interview with a female student appeared in a *New York Times* article discussing dissent among the youth in Franco’s regime. Her opinion reflects her male counterparts “We grew up after the Civil War. All this regime does is exalt its ‘victory’ over other Spaniards, the wonderful ‘Monument’ We want an end to it. We want to forget and

²⁴² Richard Eder, “Juan Carlos Vows Loyalty to Franco, but Voices Sympathy With Young; Juan Carlos Swears Fidelity to Franco,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, July 24, 1969), <https://www.nytimes.com/1969/07/24/archives/juan-carlos-vows-loyalty-to-franco-but-voices-sympathy-with-young.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ “Students in Spain Clash with Police,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 10, 1974), <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/05/10/archives/students-in-spain-clash-with-police.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁴⁵ “Nephew of Franco Joins in Protests,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, April 4, 1975), <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/04/04/archives/nephew-of-franco-joins-in-protests.html>.

make Spain a modern country.”²⁴⁶ In 1962, fifty women protesters were arrested for demonstrating with workers on strike, which included prominent women from Franco's elite social circles. They included Gloria Ridruejo, wife of Dionisio Ridruejo, an anti-regime poet, and Gabriella Sanchez Mazas, daughter of Rafael Sanchez Mazas, a former Franco cabinet minister.²⁴⁷ Women protestors who tried to organize a women's demonstration were prominent daughters of fascist intellectuals Gabriella Pradera, Rafael Sanchez Mazas, and Dolores Medio.²⁴⁸ In 1970, The International Congress of Women was led by the Sección Femenina to encourage debate around women's familial rights and professional rights and honor women's contributions.²⁴⁹ Marta Portal, a women leader who was not a member of the Sección Femenina, spoke out, calling for education to install “a sense of equal efficiency and blindness to sexual differentiation at an early school age would encourage intellectual equality and help improve the mediocre performance [of girls] at pre-university levels.”²⁵⁰ Women housewives were also a part of various protests tied to boycotts. On February 21, 1975, a *New York Times* report discussed how women had boycotted goods amidst rising prices and took to demonstrating with students, “Housewives and students took part in a mounting part in Madrid today, and the police fired

²⁴⁶ Benjamin Welles, “Spain's Students Are Angry Young Men; among the Youths Who Will Someday Be the Country's Leaders, Discontent with Franco Runs High, and Underground Political Parties Are Growing, for Good or Ill,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, October 11, 1959), <https://www.nytimes.com/1959/10/11/archives/spains-students-are-angry-young-men-among-the-youths-who-will.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁴⁷ Benjamin Welles, “50 Women Seized in Madrid Rally; Demonstration for Strikers Is Dispersed by Police,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 16, 1962), <https://www.nytimes.com/1962/05/16/archives/50-women-seized-in-madrid-rally-demonstration-for-strikers-is.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Inbal Ofer, “A ‘New’ Woman for a ‘New’ Spain: The Sección Femenina de La Falange and the Image of the National Syndicalist Woman,” *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (September 25, 2009): 583–605, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691409342657>, 600.

²⁵⁰ Inbal Ofer, “A ‘New’ Woman for a ‘New’ Spain: The Sección Femenina de La Falange and the Image of the National Syndicalist Woman,” *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (September 25, 2009): 583–605, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691409342657>, 602.

several warning shots to break up silent demonstrations in the center of the city.”²⁵¹

On November 20, 1975, General Franco died after 36 years of ruling Spain. Prince Juan Carlos is acting as chief of state.²⁵² After Franco’s death, the pressure of the regime continues military dictatorship created more reactionary protests as “Teachers, musicians, brick-layers, actors, factory workers, students, journalist, public employees, actors, factory workers, students, journalist, public employees, including even policemen, housewives, doctors, soldiers, truckers—they are part of a long list of Spaniards who have struck, demonstrated, protested or otherwise manifested nonconformity with things as they are.”²⁵³ This shows that these protest grew into more intersectional protest encompassing many different identities. King Juan Carlos appointed Adolfo Suárez as Prime Minister to advocate for democratic reforms.²⁵⁴ In 1976, a parliament referendum led to the approval of general elections in Spain. Adolfo Suárez stated that “The point of departure is the recognition of pluralism in our society — we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of ignoring it.”²⁵⁵

Women suffrage was regained with the emergence of elections for the public referendum. Although women gained the right to vote in universal elections in 1933, during the second republic. Franco’s regime elections were only open to bourgeoisie women and political elites supporting the regime. In 1967, Franco opened parliamentary elections to the public, allowing

²⁵¹ “Wave of Protests Mounting in Spain,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, February 21, 1975), <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/02/21/archives/wave-of-protests-mounting-in-spain.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁵² Henry Giniger, “Franco Is Dead in Madrid at 82,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, November 20, 1975), <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/11/20/archives/new-jersey-pages-franco-is-dead-in-madrid-at-82-juan-carlos-to-take.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁵³ Henry Giniger, “Spain After Franco Is Torn by Disorder He Fought,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 4, 1976), <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/03/04/archives/spain-after-franco-is-torn-by-disorder-he-fought.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁵⁴ Raphael Minder, “Adolfo Suárez Dies at 81; Led Spain Back to Democracy,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 23, 2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/24/world/europe/adolfo-suarez-dies-at-81-first-elected-spanish-prime-minister-after-franco.html?searchResultPosition=21>.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

for “16.5 million heads of families and married women of a population of 32 million” to be eligible to vote.²⁵⁶ With the death of Franco and the new general elections of 1978, women began to lead in political platforms and vote. The 1978 elections led to the approval of a new constitution that held specific provisions geared toward women. Dolores Ibarruri, the president of the Communist Party, *La Pasionaria*, declared that after voting in the 1978 election, she felt “great emotion and satisfaction because a democratic constitution that we have all struggled for is going to be approved.”²⁵⁷ This constitution allowed for the legalization of divorce, for women to open a bank account, for decriminalizing contraceptives, and for new matrimony equality.²⁵⁸ However, these constitutional changes lacked a systematic legal code of laws, which slowed down this legalization process, and public attitudes against these changes affected how women's rights progressed.

Simultaneously women's protests occurred against the Vatican initiatives in Spain for anti-abortion rights. One of the first instances of women protesting for abortion access was in 1975, when a group of “about 30 women unfurled a banner protesting the Vatican’s stand against abortions, the Spanish group, including some priests, tried to pull down the signs.”²⁵⁹ This attitude reflects in the 1980s. Public polls indicated only “20 percent in favor” of abortion and

²⁵⁶ “Spain Voting Today In Direct Elections,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, October 10, 1967), <https://www.nytimes.com/1967/10/10/archives/spain-voting-today-in-direct-elections.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁵⁷ James M Markham, “New Spanish Constitution Gets Big Majority, But Abstentions Are Heavy,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, December 7, 1978), <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/12/07/archives/new-spanish-constitution-gets-big-majority-but-abstentions-are.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

²⁵⁸ Alan Riding, “Women to the Fore! (What Would Franco Say?),” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, May 30, 1989), <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/05/30/world/women-to-the-fore-what-would-franco-say.html?searchResultPosition=41>.

²⁵⁹ James M. Markham, “New Spanish Constitution Gets Big Majority, But Abstentions Are Heavy,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, December 7, 1978), <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/12/07/archives/new-spanish-constitution-gets-big-majority-but-abstentions-are.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

roughly “42 percent” in certain cases.²⁶⁰ In 1980, abortion was still viewed negatively by the Spanish public. The trial of Bilbao 11 was marked by protests by a multitude of women, including high-profile actresses, singers, and journalists.²⁶¹ Initially, on April 11, 1980, the *New York Times* reported, “Screaming policemen waded through 300 women who had peaceably locked themselves in the main courthouse here last fall to protest the trial of 11 women charged with the crime of abortion.”²⁶² In addition, women sent 1,300 petitions to have abortions in protest. This ultimately resulted in the judge suspending the trial, but not before women protests in Madrid had to be broken up by having police drive buses at them to disperse them.²⁶³ On March 26, 1982, the court acquitted ten women who had undergone ‘illegal abortions, only convicting the women who carried out abortions to 12 years and 10 months, despite insisting that [they] should be pardoned.²⁶⁴ In 1986, the Spanish parliament authorized a law that authorized abortions if the fetus is damaged, where the pregnancy results from rape or threatening a woman's health.²⁶⁵

The legalization of contraceptives occurred in 1977, bringing new ideas about female

²⁶⁰ James M Markham, “In Spain, Feminism Clashes with Tradition; Women's Groups Proliferate Two Laws Have Changed Attitudes toward Abortion Loopholes for the Wealthy Many Men Feel No Pressure,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, April 11, 1980), <https://www.nytimes.com/1980/04/11/archives/in-spain-feminism-clashes-with-tradition-womens-groups-proliferate.html?smid=url-share>.

²⁶¹ Reuters, “Spanish Women Cleared In Abortion Cases,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 26, 1982), <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/26/world/around-the-world-spanish-women-cleared-in-abortion-cases.html?searchResultPosition=3>.

²⁶² James M. Markham, “In Spain, Feminism Clashes with Tradition,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, April 11, 1980), <https://www.nytimes.com/1980/04/11/archives/in-spain-feminism-clashes-with-tradition-womens-groups-proliferate.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁶³ “Spanish Court Suspends Abortion Trial in Bilbao,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, October 27, 1979), <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/27/archives/spanish-court-suspends-abortion-trial-in-bilbao.html>.

²⁶⁴ Reuters, “Spanish Women Cleared In Abortion Cases,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 26, 1982), <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/26/world/around-the-world-spanish-women-cleared-in-abortion-cases.html?searchResultPosition=3>.

²⁶⁵ Alan Riding, “Women to the Fore! (What Would Franco Say?),” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, May 30, 1989), <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/05/30/world/women-to-the-fore-what-would-franco-say.html?searchResultPosition=41>.

promiscuity.²⁶⁶ The bill that legalized contraceptives dismantled a previous Franco-era law that called for a jail sentence of one to six months and could produce fines of up to 125 to 2,500 for a business selling contraceptives.²⁶⁷ This was led by a coalition with the Democratic center Union Party, and despite the initial reforms on contraceptives, the party desired an advertising ban. However, this policy initiative was defeated by one vote in the Spanish parliament.²⁶⁸ A well-known women's lawyer in Madrid, Cristijna Alberdi stated that despite the changes, "What has been done up to now?.... Only two laws have been changed. Women are no longer being sent to jail for adultery, and contraceptives have been decriminalized. A proposed reform of the paternity section of the civil code has been dying of scorn in Parliament since last September because there are many men who have illegitimate children who do not want to recognize them. And since the church believes in the indissolubility of marriage, to accept this reform it would have to accept the legality of two families."²⁶⁹ This shows that there were problems of legitimacy for children who were born out of wedlock.

In post-Franco Spain, divorce laws were approved in 1980 for couples that have lived apart for at least two years.²⁷⁰ Prior to this, public opinion showed that "a solid majority of Spanish men and women favor some kind of divorce law." However, in the initial drafts of this divorce legalization the debate around whether Spanish judges could deny divorce due to if the

²⁶⁶ "Spain Acts to Legalize Contraceptive Devices," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, December 18, 1977), <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/12/18/archives/spain-acts-to-legalize-contraceptive-devices.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ "Spain Lifts 40-Year Rule barring Contraceptives," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, April 28, 1978), <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/04/28/archives/spain-lifts-40year-rule-barring-contraceptives.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁶⁹ James M. Markham, "In Spain, Feminism Clashes with Tradition; Women's Groups Proliferate Two Laws Have Changed Attitudes toward Abortion Loopholes for the Wealthy Many Men Feel No Pressure," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, April 11, 1980), <https://www.nytimes.com/1980/04/11/archives/in-spain-feminism-clashes-with-tradition-womens-groups-proliferate.html?smid=url-share>.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

divorce causes “grave damage to the children or a spouse.”²⁷¹ Specifically, women saw this as a way to maintain a patriarchal influence in that many Franco-era judges were men. In addition, the conservative party supported that divorce should be legalized only if the Roman Catholic Church saw this act as an “irreparable breakdown in the marriage.”²⁷² Adelina Gomez Reus, a feminist lawyer and activist states, “The public powers have set themselves up as supreme arbiters of the private conduct of individuals, who have to ask permission, like eternal children, to exercise their free will. The law does not make divorce a right, but a remedy for an evil. They should remember: Every person has the right not to be saved if he does not want to be saved.”²⁷³

The collapse of General Francisco Franco’s regime due to intersectional protest and the desire for democratization. This section showed how women fit into these protests against the gender paradigms and how gender was integral in politics. It showed how the regime tried to appease protestors by allowing changes open to women protestors. This subsection showed how Franco’s regime had lingering effects on feminist discourse on women’s rights to women’s suffrage, abortion, contraceptives, and divorce laws.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² “Madrid Law May Allow Divorce after Two Years of Separation,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, January 27, 1980), <https://www.nytimes.com/1980/01/27/archives/madrid-law-may-allow-divorce-after-two-years-of-separation.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

²⁷³ James M. Markham, “In Spain, Feminism Clashes with Tradition; Women’s Groups Proliferate Two Laws Have Changed Attitudes toward Abortion Loopholes for the Wealthy Many Men Feel No Pressure,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, April 11, 1980), <https://www.nytimes.com/1980/04/11/archives/in-spain-feminism-clashes-with-tradition-womens-groups-proliferate.html?smid=url-share>.

IV. SECTION III: GENDER POWER DYNAMICS AND ENTRENCHED TRADITIONALISM AFFECTING WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The ramifications of Mussolini and Franco's regime affected the gender discourse and how the ideals of Catholic morality have traditionally reinforced gendered roles in society. In comparing Franco's regime in Spain with Mussolini's Italy, these two separate regimes both encouraged Catholic beliefs of immorality towards female promiscuity and sexuality. These regimes both supported the Vatican's morality depiction of gender roles and the supposed dangers of female sexuality. Thus, these fascist regimes placed strict boundaries on the women belonging to the domestic traditional role. In addition, these identities are placed around hierarchical structures of domination and subordination in patriarchal societies. Daria Colella, a feminist scholar who examines feminist movements and gender violence, explains that usage of 'gendering of space' can replicate itself through policies geared toward the "disciplining female sexuality aims at controlling and diverting women's labour into colonizer's hands, consequently disrupting the patriarchal power of the colonised (Fanon 1980)."²⁷⁴ This is seen in how these fascist regimes use the "segregation" of men and women into their own individual societal spheres to dictate how women portray themselves and to discourage female emancipation and feminist protest. Furthermore, Colella explains that by these regimes targeting female sexuality it becomes a "the metaphor for racial, economic, and political power."²⁷⁵ Fascist depictions of female subordination narratives are an instrumental factor in how sexism can be tracked through

²⁷⁴ Daria Colella. "Femonationalism and Anti-Gender Backlash: The Instrumental Use of Gender Equality in the Nationalist Discourse of the Fratelli d'Italia Party." *Gender & Development* 29, no. 2/3 (July 2021): 269–89. doi:10.1080/13552074.2021.1978749, 274

²⁷⁵ Daria Colella. "Femonationalism and Anti-Gender Backlash: The Instrumental Use of Gender Equality in the Nationalist Discourse of the Fratelli d'Italia Party." *Gender & Development* 29, no. 2/3 (July 2021): 269–89. doi:10.1080/13552074.2021.1978749, 274

power politics, which are intertwined within the separate spheres' doctrine. These domination and subordination narratives are geared toward women revolving around a domestic lifestyle.

After the collapse of Mussolini and Franco's regime, women's rights have been steadily gaining momentum as women have slowly been gaining access to abortion, contraceptives, and divorce laws. However, women still face various degrees of sexism in advert, hostile and benevolent sexism by populist far-right parties. In a psychological study, in 2015, on the application of sexism and the separate spheres replicating itself to current society, Andrea L. Miller and Eugene Borgida found that 'the Separate Spheres Model' has evolved to encompass a "nuance and more positive tone" of benevolent sexist dichotomies than advert sexism.²⁷⁶ This new multipolarity of sexist dichotomies is due to the intersectionality and pluralistic definitions of gender and various levels of discrimination and oppression.²⁷⁷ Women are not diluted to a "universal category" and "invoking intersectionality implies a move from categories of difference to processes of differentiation and systems of domination."²⁷⁸ By examining how sexism can be depicted in gender ideology, it shows how power dynamics can exclude women and how sexism can be often misinterpreted or misunderstood. Michel Foucault, a feminist philosopher states "We, on the other hand, are in a society of "sex," or rather a society " with a sexuality" : the mechanism of power are addressed to the body of life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, it's stamina, its ability to dominate or its capacity for being used."²⁷⁹ These power dimensions of masculinity and femininity are replicated through how sexism is transformed into societal attitudes and feminist politics. In this section, I will

²⁷⁶ Andrea L. Miller, and Eugene Borgida. "The Separate Spheres Model of Gendered Inequality." *PLoS ONE* 11, no. 1 (January 22, 2016): 1–34. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0147315, 30.

²⁷⁷ Sine Nørholm Just, and Sara Louise Muhr. "'Together We Rise': Collaboration and Contestation as Narrative Drivers of the Women's March." *Leadership* 15, no. 2 (April 2019): 245–67. doi:10.1177/1742715018809497.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vintage Books, vol. 1 (London: Random House Inc, 1978), 147.

examine how sexism plays an influence in rhetoric towards women rights gained, and how the distinctness of classism plays into which women have access to these rights.

In depicting how Mussolini's regime affected these political party bases, harmful attitudes towards women's rights can be fundamentally traced to how entrenched gender policies were upheld against women. These sexist attitudes are prevalent in far-right Italian politicians in promoting sexism and anti-gender discourses. In the rise of Berlusconi in the 1990s, affected how women are portrayed in Italy by upholding traditional values that the La Lega Nord and the Christian Democrats, a popular political party that held the support of the Vatican in the 1970s-1980s, supported through policies toward limiting women sexuality and women's rights. In 1994, Silvio Berlusconi, who was a television tycoon and far right populist, established his own political party, Forza Italia.²⁸⁰ In the 1994 elections, the La Lega Nord joined together with Forza Italia and post-fascist party Alleanza Nazionale, a southern party which held roots in the MSI, a violent far right party which held previous fascist members in Mussolini's regime.²⁸¹ This far right coalition of political parties created a far right stronghold on Italian parliament and politics. In 2007, these far-right coalition parties formed the Popolo della Libertà (PDL), led by Berlusconi and Mussolini's granddaughter Alessandra Mussolini, who is related to Romano Mussolini, Mussolini's youngest son.²⁸² In the early 2000s, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi made multiple media appearances where he dismissed or objectified women. Notably, in a media appearance in 2009, when he was questioned about financial stability by a

²⁸⁰ Andrea Mammone, Emmanuel Godin, and Brian Jenkins. *Mapping the Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe: From Local to Transnational*. Routledge Studies in Extremism and Democracy. New York: Routledge, 2012. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsebk&AN=459811&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 80

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² "Former Fascist Flying the LGBT Flag; Mussolini's Heir Has Come out in Favour of Gender Fluidity and Same-Sex Parents, Writes Tom Kington." *The Times (London, England)*, February 11, 2023. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgin&AN=edsgcl.736626291&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

female student, his response was, “Berlusconi suggested that she should marry a rich man like his son. In a similar situation, he said, ‘Young ladies, please, first your telephone number and then the questions’. On some official occasions, he did not hesitate to ogle the body of his female interlocutor. Some people excused these actions as jokes or as ‘an appreciation for women’; however, many others saw Berlusconi’s behavior as clear evidence of sexism perpetuated by a person serving in an institutional role.”²⁸³ Alessandra Mussolini’s contradictions on same-sex marriage and gender fluidity have recently made headlines in *The London Times*. In 2006, She has stated, “I am fascist and proud of it,” before adding: “Better fascist than a faggot.”²⁸⁴ Similarly in 2012, she said “she was worried about the children of same-sex parents seeing them “rolling around in bed... But in an interview with *The Times* more than a decade later [in 2023], she said she now believed there were no rules about parenting, “The most important thing is that you can give love,” she said”²⁸⁵ This quotation represents how women politicians themselves face increasing pressure to uphold these traditional morality stances, only being contradictory when the political support narrative changes. Italian women populist leaders in politics must portray themselves to gender stereotypes in these populist parties that are essentially portraying themselves as compassionate and honest versus male political stereotypes of strength and assertiveness.²⁸⁶ Thus, when studying female politicians scandals, women who act in a more

²⁸³ Maria-Paola Paladino, Sara Zanoboni, Fabio Fasoli, Jeroen Vaes, and Chiara Volpato. 2014. “Why Did Italians Protest against Berlusconi’s Sexist Behaviour? The Role of Sexist Beliefs and Emotional Reactions in Explaining Women and Men’s Pathways to Protest.” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 53 (January): 201–16. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsfra&AN=edsfra.28562144&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

²⁸⁴ “Former Fascist Flying the LGBT Flag; Mussolini’s Heir Has Come out in Favour of Gender Fluidity and Same-Sex Parents, Writes Tom Kington.” *The Times (London, England)*, February 11, 2023. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgin&AN=edsgcl.736626291&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Cucchi, Silvia, and Nicoletta Cavazza. “More Guilty If Woman: The Role of Gender and Causal Attribution in Political Scandals’ Impact.” *Journal of Social Psychology* 161, no. 2 (March 2021): 173–81. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=149121669&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

stereotypical masculine way are subject to a more severely negative connotation and thus face more reputational damages.²⁸⁷ Perhaps this is why many Italian politicians align themselves in clear distinct roles of traditional values and why Italian women still feel the ramifications of how these populist neo-fascist narratives portray women rights and uphold women in traditional values.

In the elections of 2018, Giorgia Meloni, who is in the Brothers of Italy a political party descended from the MSI, played on narratives of symbols that alludes to Mussolini's regime such as fascist monument backdrops, and in 2019, in running for elections she describes herself as "a woman, a mother, an Italian, and a Christian", and stating that without their identity and forgetting their roots people will lose their awareness and the ability to defend their rights"²⁸⁸ In 2022, Giorgia Meloni joined the Nord League and Forza Italia in coalition won Italian elections to become first female Prime Minister.²⁸⁹ The danger of Georgia Meloni is that she promotes women equality, yet makes it abundantly clear that this is not universally applicable to all women such as immigrants.²⁹⁰ Georgia Meloni uses capitalizes on the past allusions to Mussolini's fascist regime to support anti-feminist policies in Italian politics. By upholding Mussolini's regime support of traditional gender policies, it shows how Italian far-right politicians are dismantling sexuality and placing women in power that uphold a certain personified set of traditional values.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Daria Colella. "Femonationalism and Anti-Gender Backlash: The Instrumental Use of Gender Equality in the Nationalist Discourse of the Fratelli d'Italia Party." *Gender & Development* 29, no. 2/3 (July 2021): 269–89. doi:10.1080/13552074.2021.1978749, 276-277.

²⁸⁹ Nick Squires, "Giorgia Meloni: How 'the Most Dangerous Woman in Europe' Has Confounded Her Critics," MSN (The Telegraph, March 16, 2023), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/giorgia-meloni-how-the-most-dangerous-woman-in-europe-has-confounded-her-critics/ar-AA18IiNI>.

²⁹⁰ Daria Colella. "Femonationalism and Anti-Gender Backlash: The Instrumental Use of Gender Equality in the Nationalist Discourse of the Fratelli d'Italia Party." *Gender & Development* 29, no. 2/3 (July 2021): 269–89. doi:10.1080/13552074.2021.1978749, 280.

In Spain, General Franco's regime still impacts gender discourse in populist parties such as Vox, where the regime is supporting traditional narratives and impacting women's rights, to support an ultra nationalist neo-fascist agenda, which alludes to Catholicism as its basis. The Spanish populist party, Vox was founded in 2013 and in 2017, turned its political agenda to include gender politics as a form of promoting 'natural family' as a state legislation policy by promoting child care and the depiction of 'good' women against the immoral status quo which influence.²⁹¹ In 2019, Vox has openly established campaigns against second wave feminism in the coinage of the term *feminazi*, which correlates feminist with desiring more access for women rights with extremism and the belief that these feminist supremacists desire totalitarian feminism in a hierarchical structure that places masculinity and masculine traits as inferior.²⁹² This movement has used the inclusion of women feminist propaganda to fuel this backlash on feminine values, one of the main female figures is Rocío Monasterio, who openly calls for women equality, however, this equality has limitations as Monasterio accuses women who align with feminist values as "criminalizing men" and accuses feminist of "wasting public resources" association feminist with "clientelism and corruption."²⁹³ In 2019, Rocío Monasterio, "What we are all about is giving a voice to the average Spaniard, the Spaniard on the street. For those who aren't ashamed of our history, of our national symbols, or our traditions, of our King, or of all what our country represents."²⁹⁴ Therefore, showing how far right Spanish populist parties have capitalized on the usage of morality to influence how women feminist are portrayed and how women rights are viewed, replacing women back into the domestic sphere.

²⁹¹ Marta Cabezas. "Silencing Feminism? Gender and the Rise of the Nationalist Far Right in Spain." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 47, no. 2 (Winter 2022): 319–45. doi:10.1086/716858, 331.

²⁹² *Ibid*, 334.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, 337.

²⁹⁴ Rama José et al., *Vox: The Rise of the Spanish Populist Radical Right* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), 139.

The rising women's equality in matrimonial and the liberation of women's rights after the collapse of Mussolini and Franco's regimes did not dismantle the growing anti-women sentiments in gender ideologies. In structural family dynamics, in contemporary politics far-right groups use the gender attitudes to justify "male dominance (i.e., women lack traits necessary to rule, women need guidance from men) and for antagonism towards women, who might challenge men's dominance."²⁹⁵ These right-wing narratives of gender discourse have used structural family roles to uphold antiquated roles of male domination by female subordination. Women liberation movements and those deemed 'feminist' are becoming increasingly under attack as right wing groups begin using these issues of gender by promoting themes of the naturalization of gender roles.²⁹⁶ These far-right groups began to present the constructs of gender in a theorized antiquated depiction on gender which is seemingly underlined as natural and the stratification of gender notations is under attack.

Many women faced several challenges in sexist attitudes and new laws did not change these hierarchical attitudes. Women experienced that many of these laws of antiquity were used as judicial precedents, which is seen in the prior sections on issues of the Spanish abortion trial, Bilbao 11, or the debate around whether the Lateran Agreement is still applicable in determining divorce in Italy. In Spain, José Ignacio Pichardo and Monica Cornejo-Valle, argue that these anti-women legislation policies put forward by Spanish far right group Vox, relies on "the memory of the church's support for Franco's regime. The authors have also identified four key

²⁹⁵ Maria-Paola Paladino, Sara Zanoboni, Fabio Fasoli, Jeroen Vaes, and Chiara Volpato. 2014. "Why Did Italians Protest against Berlusconi's Sexist Behaviour? The Role of Sexist Beliefs and Emotional Reactions in Explaining Women and Men's Pathways to Protest." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 53 (January): 201–16. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsfra&AN=edsfra.28562144&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

²⁹⁶ Paolo Gusmeroli, and Luca Trappolin. 2021. "Narratives of Catholic Women against 'Gender Ideology' in Italian Schools: Defending Childhood, Struggling with Pluralism." *European Societies* 23 (4): 513–32. doi:10.1080/14616696.2021.1943484, 518.

actors of the anti-gender movement in Spain: the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, anti-abortion associations, the neoconservative lobby, and the political parties of the far-right, where the original leadership of the Catholic hierarchy passed to lay organizations.²⁹⁷ The latter included Vox, at a time when the party had not yet achieved representation in Spanish democratic institutions.²⁹⁸

The influence of previous historical institutions such as the Vatican has influenced how Catholicism led to the dismantlement of women gaining rights in contraceptives and abortion. In Franco's regime, sexuality was not a topic discussed in women's health industries. Therefore, gynecologists in Franco's regime had limited access to information on women's health and limited knowledge about women's bodies. Franco's regime also limited public information regarding "birth control, abortion, masturbation, lesbianism, or even sex education" and considered these issues as immoral to be discussed by gynecologists and their patients.²⁹⁹ Thus, women doctors in Franco's regime avoided the conversation and "prided themselves on their exemplary moral decorum, which usually meant that certain themes were simply not mentioned, even for purposes of condemnation."³⁰⁰ Thus, even women health professions in Franco's regime were affected by the regime's initiatives to valorize the silence of sex education due to upholding moral superiority and to allow for moral condemnation on those that were considered 'impure.' Similarity in Mussolini's Italy despite the government program the National Agency for Maternity and Infancy, O.N.M.I., which provided care for 9,617 institutions and provided

²⁹⁷ Cabezas, Marta. "Silencing Feminism? Gender and the Rise of the Nationalist Far Right in Spain." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 47, no. 2 (Winter 2022): 319–45. doi:10.1086/716858, 324.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Timothy Mitchell. 2017. *Betrayal of the Innocents: Desire, Power, and the Catholic Church in Spain*. Reprint 2016. University of Pennsylvania Press. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b5384712&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 122.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

medical infant care.³⁰¹ Male doctors were depicted as more professional than midwives.³⁰² In addition Mussolini's regime tightened birth control information and banned information in the penal code July 1, 1931 on the "display, sale, possession, distribution, manufacture, and importation of literature, engravings, lithographs, drawings, objects, and so on the offended public decency."³⁰³ These policies which support absence and ignorance about sexual education are still present in current societies in Spain and Italy.

In 2017, Ilaria Maria Sala reported how the church in Italy has made inaccessible abortion, although legalized by Law 194. The establishment for women's abortion clinics have been financially drained due to "cuts to the state health care system, many clinics today are Catholic, and those refuse to provide even information or basic services to women seeking an abortion. What's more, they are partly funded with taxpayer money: 0.8 percent of personal taxes are directly allocated to the Church, unless taxpayers specifically ask to opt out..."³⁰⁴ This shows how interconnected the Italian healthcare system is with the Catholic Church, showing how the Vatican affects the amount of funding for women. This places limits on women about accessing information on abortion, and abortion services. Assunta Sarlo, a journalist and activist with the feminist group *Usciamo dal Silenzio* (Let's End the Silence), states how these religious forces have affected abortion stances due to significant "political allies" and "because the reputation of abortion is such that choosing to be a gynecologist who carries out this type of procedure is akin to career suicide."³⁰⁵ Therefore, despite abortion being legalized in Italy due to

³⁰¹ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993), 64.

³⁰² *Ibid*, 65.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, 55.

³⁰⁴ Ilaria Maria Sala, "Abortion in Italy, a Right Wronged," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, November 13, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/13/opinion/abortion-italy-conscientious-objectors.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

the Vatican influence women might have to rely on unsafe practices or migrant to neighboring countries to have an abortion. Dr. Juan Diego states, “...most abortion providers working in Italian hospitals disagreed with the idea that abortion should be partially or entirely paid for by women, because women with low income may try to have unsafe abortions.”³⁰⁶ This was a concern in Italy, in 1975, when Italian women would fly to London and other European nations where abortions were legal. However only wealthy Italian women could do this and thus, lower classes had to rely on unsafe medical procedures.³⁰⁷ Women protested that abortion laws should be changed, but there are still caveats in the abortion law that make abortion access hard to get in various regions in Italy due to “the high rates of conscientious objection to abortion care among gynecologists. These rates have dramatically increased over the last decade, attaining 70% among gynecologists at the national level, and over 80% in the South and in key regions in the North – Veneto – and in the center – Lazio (Italia, Ministero della Salute, 2016), affecting access to abortion care and provoking an intense political debate...”³⁰⁸ In regards to contraceptives, both Spain and Italy have legalized them; however, in both cases women must pay for them.³⁰⁹ However, in Spain, many gynecologists believe that this is an alternative to the middle and lower classes from getting an abortion. They believe that legalizing contraceptives is a way to be a self-preventative method to decrease abortion rates. Dr. Juan Diego states, “Contraception is the first thing that must be free of charge if we want to decrease abortion rates ... It’s [a way of] preventing it ... the only way is by getting people to use contraceptives ... but as long as

³⁰⁶ Silvia De Zordo, “From Women’s ‘Irresponsibility’ to Fetal ‘Patienthood’: Obstetricians-Gynecologists’ Perspectives on Abortion and Its Stigmatization in Italy and Cataluña.” *Global Public Health* 13, no. 6 (June 2018): 711–23. doi:10.1080/17441692.2017.1293707, 716.

³⁰⁷ “Voting on Abortion Is Light in Italy,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, May 18, 1981), <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/18/world/voting-on-abortion-is-light-in-italy.html?searchResultPosition=11>.

³⁰⁸ Silvia De Zordo, “From Women’s ‘Irresponsibility’ to Fetal ‘Patienthood’: Obstetricians-Gynecologists’ Perspectives on Abortion and Its Stigmatization in Italy and Cataluña.” *Global Public Health* 13, no. 6 (June 2018): 711–23. doi:10.1080/17441692.2017.1293707,713.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*,716.

contraceptives are not free of charge, abortion should not be freely provided ... Of course, taking a pill that costs 20 euros per month, people say ‘well ... if I get pregnant, I take some pills that they give me for free and that’s it!’³¹⁰ This shows that not only abortion is viewed negatively due to the catholic church influence, it shows that there is a class division in who is eligible for abortions and who can afford to have abortion.

These struggles of abortion rights are affected by class division and intersectionality in deciding the importance of women's issues. It is important to further understand the implications of this exercise of feminist thought and feminist values divided among class divisions. This created tensions with the lower working classes due to the belief that these women represented bourgeois femininity. Richard Stites explains that the availability of self-expression depended on class.³¹¹ Women’s issues, such as divorce, voting rights, property rights, and equality, were divided by these considered upper and middle-class issues. This created a division in how feminists’ market themselves, which alienated lower and working-class women, “Most feminists were alienated by socialist demands and took little interest in labor and social questions. And such feminist movements ended in a cull de sac, caught between traditional and radical enemies, and fighting for suffrage which would have little meaning when (and if) granted before the revolution.”³¹² This puts in perspective that women differentiated between classes on ideas of women's equality. Sine Nørholm Just and Sara Louise Muhr state that feminist scholars often ignore how feminism in itself is intersectional with “class, ability, sexuality, age, and religion have cemented how feminism is perceived differently by women who do not enjoy the privilege of being cis-gendered, white, straight, abled-bodied, etc. “Woman” is not a universal category

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Richard Stites, “Women and Communist Revolutions: Some Comparative Observations,” *Studies in Comparative Communism* 14, no. 2-3 (June 1981): 106–22, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3592\(81\)90002-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3592(81)90002-8), 108.

³¹² Ibid.

and not even within one particular intersection of categories do women face the same levels of discrimination.”³¹³ Therefore, gains made by women often involved a cohesive effort which relied on the intersectionality of the classes. However, these gains mean that women's freedoms are often diluted in the different types of identities. These different types of identities often vary the degree of difficulty in which women face sexism. Lucia Re states “Women were not barred from any branch or level of the educational system, a system that produced, for example, the Nobel Prize winner Rita Levi Montalcini and women such as Natalia Ginzburg and Elsa Morante. The main axis of discrimination after the Gentile reform was across social class rather than gender difference (although this of course meant that lower-class women were doubly discriminated against and had the highest illiteracy rates); only the elite were promoted, so as not to overload the market for intellectual labor.”³¹⁴ The intellectual bourgeoisie feminism of these regimes never accurately depicts the internal class struggles which occurred underneath these women's ideologies.

These power dynamics are becoming increasingly apparent in how new populist parties use rhetoric to undermine feminine social programs such as abortion, contraceptives, and promiscuity. Anna Lavizzari and Zorica Sirocic analyze anti-gender movements fueled by the Catholic Church’s rhetoric and biblical allegories to dismantle public discourse on promiscuity and sex. These authors show that Christian far-right movements frame a struggle against gender ideology to promote traditional values to include a broad range of “issues, such as same-sex marriage, adoption, ‘uterus for rent,’ abortion, and women’s rights, and linked these issues to a

³¹³ Sine Nørholm Just, and Sara Louise Muhr. “‘Together We Rise’: Collaboration and Contestation as Narrative Drivers of the Women’s March.” *Leadership* 15, no. 2 (April 2019): 245–67. doi:10.1177/1742715018809497.

³¹⁴ Lucia Re, “Fascist Theories of ‘Woman’ and the Construction of Gender.” In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, NED-New edition., 76–99. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt2tw.8>, 88-89.

‘decline in family values’ and changes in gender roles.”³¹⁵ The support of these traditional narratives and the dismantlement of sex education further questions on how the construction of sexuality is integral to questioning female identity.

This is depicted in how sexual education lacks cohesion in both contemporary Spain and Italy, where the issue of sex is generally deemed a private affair. Mar Venegas states that in Spain, “there has long been no official policy on reproductive and sexual health, nor minimum standards for the provision of sex and sexuality education, since the subject is not mandatory in schools (Parker, Wellings, and Lazarus 2009).”³¹⁶ This is an area of concern as not maintaining a standard for sexual education creates condemnation of sexual topics and ignorance of sexuality. This mirrors previous depictions of how sexual education was incorporated under the fascist rule in the rudimentary level of understanding female sexuality, “The general tendency was to see anything that happened to women's bodies, including menstruation and menopause, in pathological terms. Activities to be avoided by menstruating women were bathing, drinking alcohol, eating ice cream, exercising, studying, and making love. Women were especially unsuited for the medical profession, the male doctors observed; they had also observed that prolonged involvement with either sports or sex led to an unfortunate "masculinization" of women.”³¹⁷ This lack of awareness of female sexuality and the underlying desire to keep women from becoming masculine is depicted in Mussolini’s regime in Italy. Victoria de Grazia states

³¹⁵ Anna Lavizzari, and Zorica Sirocic. “Contentious Gender Politics in Italy and Croatia: Diffusion of Transnational Anti-Gender Movements to National Contexts.” *SOCIAL MOVEMENT STUDIES*, March. doi:10.1080/14742837.2022.2052836.

³¹⁶ Mar Venegas. 2022. “Relationships and Sex Education in the Age of Anti-Gender Movements: What Challenges for Democracy?” *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning* 22 (4): 481–95. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1354687&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 486.

³¹⁷ Timothy Mitchell. 2017 *Betrayal of the Innocents: Desire, Power, and the Catholic Church in Spain*. Reprint 2016. University of Pennsylvania Press.<https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b5384712&site=eds-live&scope=site> <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00022a&AN=txi.b5384712&site=eds-live&scope=site>, 122.

that “but there were no classes to teach sexuality, not even biology. Nor were sex manuals easy to come by... This led to two positions. One held that female sexuality had to be repressed, though, in young women, this gave rise to flightiness and even hysterical reactions... The other argued that female sexuality needed to be managed.”³¹⁸ This shows that men often led the lack of female awareness around sex, and thus women lost their sexual identity, which is an integral part of their femininity. In contemporary Italy, these themes of prohibiting sexual discourse are being displayed increasingly by far-right Catholic groups, as seen in the discussion on LGBTQIA groups in Catholic schools in Italy. In interviewing a primary school in Turin, Italy, a report describes these far-right attitudes as concerning because they “disregard gender inequalities” and demonize “anyone promoting the denaturalization of gender and sexuality, beginning with the LGBT community.”³¹⁹ This form of extreme othering is a reflection of not only the lack of awareness of the LGBTQIA movements caused by ignorance of sexuality but also the innate fear of modernity in emerging perspectives on sexuality.

In this section, I examine how the ‘gendering of space’ affects women feminist and places women in gendered spheres. I analyze how women face various levels of oppression and how far right parties use female subordination tactics. I showed how, both Mussolini and Franco’s regimes affected entrenched gender dichotomies and how this has been seen in far right populist women leaders. I have shown the struggle of women’s rights and the cultural backlash against new gains of feminine discourse influenced far right agendas on dismantling women rights such as abortion and sex education.

³¹⁸ Victoria de Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Vol. 1st pbk. print. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 136.

³¹⁹ Paolo Gusmeroli, and Luca Trappolin. 2021. “Narratives of Catholic Women against ‘Gender Ideology’ in Italian Schools: Defending Childhood, Struggling with Pluralism.” *European Societies* 23 (4): 513–32. doi:10.1080/14616696.2021.1943484.

V. CONCLUSION

Both Mussolini's and Franco's regime illustrate the systematic entrenchment of gender doctrines revolving around separate spheres reinforcing women stereotypes and sexist ideology. This thesis aimed to study how fascists entrenched gender roles in society. In Section I, *Traditional Gender Roles, Gendered Professions and Women Individual Agency*, I showed how Mussolini and Franco imposed traditional gender ideologies by discussing gender roles and how this influenced women's professions such as nursing and teaching. I showed how gender ideology is systemic and is replicated through barriers on women's education and sexist stereotypes. I examined women rights and women's access to professions. I analyzed how the Catholic Church influence morality and how this affected women rights. In Section II, *Feminist Movements, Protest and Traditional Gender Roles*, I explored how feminist's movements and women protest movements fought against gender ideologies established by Benito Mussolini and Francisco Franco. I examined significant women rights gained by dismantling fascist gender ideology around abortion, divorce, honor killing and women suffrage. Furthermore, I discussed women's movements after the collapse of these regimes and how this was a catalyst for women liberation movements. Finally, in Section III, *Gender Power Dynamics, and Entrenched Traditionalism Affecting Women's Movements*, I discussed how these regimes have continued to influence current society through populist parties and how women populist leaders are supporting this cultural backlash. I examined how women political figures are participating in populist parties and the gendering of social spheres. I explain how these gender dichotomies influence depictions of male hierarchical structures and explain how gender power dynamics are influenced by classism diffused throughout women liberation movements. Then I examine how populist parties affect cultural backlash on sex education policies and backlash against gender

studies.

In this thesis, I use the case studies of Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain to show the implications of fascist ideology on women emancipation movements. By examining these two regimes, I show how fascist gender ideologies have sought to dismantle women rights and advocate for traditional gender roles. I examine how feminist thought can be tracked by analyzing how it is replicated in gender issues due to the re-emergence of traditionalism and support of traditional patriarchal values. Both of these case studies show how gender ideologies can be tracked through social movements. By tracking how women influenced emerging feminist thought, it can show how women movements can influence the patriarchal backlash that occurs and how women oppose these gender roles. By accounting for how women themselves have held individual agency in both undermining and supporting fascism, this can affect how the liberation of women created a cultural backlash against women emancipation movements. I examine how these power structures inherently infringe upon women's rights and dismantle women's sexuality.

In further research, this information can be used to track how the historical legacy of gender has affected women's rights in the current political context of Spain and Italy. It can discuss how these fascist ideologies have been systematically entrenched in areas of laws, social issues and depictions of anti-feminist rhetoric. Furthermore, on further study, I plan to use this information to understand how current technological inventions such as social media has affected these discussions on gender. The usage of understanding how these gender doctrines have affect women movements can help society better understand how women's movements can protest various forms of oppression and why women acting as individual agents can have a significant impact on society. It can showcase a historical narrative that examines how women affect fascist

regimes. It characterizes the complexity of fascist organizations and how women gained positions of power in these organizations.

Finally, by using this research to understand women in politics, it can depict how women's networks can use different strategies to protest oppression and how this can replicate itself in how autocrats appeal to women support. Gesine Fuchs, who studies women and Non-Governmental Organizations, states that women protesters use both "political mobilization and strategic litigation – a strategy which uses the justice sector to achieve legal and social change by means of test cases – and often succeed in achieving public acknowledgement and domestic enforcement of women's rights by state institutions and non-state actors alike."³²⁰ By studying how these women organizations and women movements fight against fascist ideology, feminist protest can be better understood in examining how women are discriminated against on the basis of sex. By examining historical precedent of feminist protest in women movements, scholars can gain a better understand of how these social factors are entrenched in government.

These case studies illustrate how backlash can be linked to anti-feminist rhetoric and explain how this backlash was linked to traditional narratives of femininity being threatened. Examining this backlash is important to the international community because it shows how entrenched these social standards are and the systematic international oppression that women must endure regardless of their nation. This discrimination is becoming subtler as "female subordination runs so deep that it is still viewed as inevitable or natural rather than seen as a

³²⁰ Gesine Fuchs. 2013. "Using Strategic Litigation for Women's Rights: Political Restrictions in Poland and Achievements of the Women's Movement." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 20 (1): 21–43. doi:10.1177/1350506812456641.

politically constructed reality maintained by patriarchal interest, ideology, and institutions.”³²¹

This reality is implicated throughout the international spectrum as women's issues are often ignored in cultural differences or designated as state domestic affairs. Women's rights and women's violence in the international sphere are often misrepresented, “Yet rather than receiving recognition as a major world conflict, this violence is accepted as normal or even dismissed as an individual or cultural matter.”³²² Women face the social pressure of conformity and assimilation discrimination, which can be challenging to determine and protest against discriminatory policies. Kenji Yoshino states, “Now a subtler form of discrimination has risen to take its place. This discrimination does not aim at groups as a whole. Rather, it aims at the subset of the group that refuses to cover, that is, to assimilate to dominated norms.”³²³ Understanding and depicting the implications of these powerful narratives can help facilitate more opportunities for women's rights and more discussion on intersectional identities. It can help explain the increasing belief that if women’s rights are to progress, these issues must be addressed internationally. Otherwise, women's rights will remain stagnant, and these undermining issues will still plague women in the modern global society. By depicting gender norms, women inherently face societal pressure of conformity and assimilation, reinforcing traditional narratives. Understanding and describing the implications of these powerful narratives facilitate more opportunities for women's rights and more discussion on intersectional identities. It explains the increasing belief that if women's rights are to progress, these issues must be addressed internationally. Otherwise, women's rights will remain stagnant, and these undermining issues will still plague women in modern global

³²¹ Charlotte Bunch. 1990. “Women’s Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 12 (4): 486–98. doi:10.2307/762496, 491.

³²² *Ibid*, 490.

³²³ Kenji Yoshino. 2006. “The Pressure to Cover.” *The New York Times Magazine*, January 15. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgac&AN=edsgac.A140935617&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

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