

Sports, morality and body: The voices of sportswomen under Franco's dictatorship

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to study sportswomen's perceptions and experiences of women's sport in Francoist Spain (1939–1975). The main objective is to analyse the social, moral and aesthetic elements that are present in the experience of these athletes. This study was carried out with an intentional sample of 24 women from Andalusia, Aragon, Asturias, Basque Country, Catalonia and Valencia. They were interviewed by a network of researchers from six universities. Outstanding results show the existence of social limitations to start sports practice (particularly in the post-war period); the importance of sport as a character-building aspect; sport's remarkable influence on their body self-concept; and the incidence on sports of the mainstream moral

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discourse, which created a female model that even affected sports clothing. The main conclusion is that sportswomen in that period were pioneers and had to fight against most of society in order to develop their facet as athletes, as they would not follow the established model.

Keywords

Franco's regime, gender, history of Spain, social history, women's sport

Introduction

Research on the history of women in modern sports practice may be interpreted as studies on the processes of social inclusion for women, as women's incorporation into sport contributed in the past to their inclusion in the welfare society (Trangbaek, 2007).

In this context, studying the evolution of sport from a gender perspective provides us with social and cultural factors that are relevant to understanding the contemporary sports phenomenon and essential to rebuilding the role of women in the development of sport, association movements, education, public and private life, spectator sport, mass culture and competition in a society – that of the 20th century – mainly dominated by men.

In this sense, within the Spanish context, the study of women's sport during Franco's period is particularly relevant, as it encompasses almost 40 years in the 20th century and, in this period, sports underwent a clear fascist-like transformation (González, 1999), which is still influential in our times.

Although this topic has been pointed out by many researchers (as will suitably be justified in the section of theoretical background: *Women and sport in Franco's regime*), no research was based on the personal experiences of sportswomen of that time. In this sense, it is necessary to conduct studies that, like this one, are based on oral history as a source of data collection.¹

The fact of collecting data from the life stories of sportswomen who lived during Franco's regime is not only quite a novelty in comparison to previous studies on this topic, but it also creates a tool for the recovery of the historical memory in sport (particularly women's sport), as this is a historical period with scarce evidence in this sense and the possibility of data collection progressively decreases for purely chronological reasons. This kind of information (properly recorded, filed and catalogued) can be the basis for further research and for social dissemination.

With this perspective, we proposed this exploratory research with two main objectives: firstly, to analyse the social, moral and aesthetic elements that were present in the experience of women practising sport during Franco's regime (1939–1975), from an intentional sample of 24 oral history interviews in six regions: Andalusia, Aragon, Asturias, Basque Country, Catalonia and Valencia,² secondly, to recover and preserve the oral memory of women who lived in this dictatorial period in connection to sport and physical activity, with the aim of promoting the recovery of historical memory in this field.

With this twofold objective, we developed a project coordinated among Ramon Llull University, the University of Valencia, the University of Seville, the University of Zaragoza, the University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU) and the University of Oviedo, with researchers from these centres setting up a *Red de Investigación de Historia*

de las Mujeres y el Deporte (RIHMUD) [Research Network on History of Women and Sport],³ approved by the Programme ‘Women and Sport’ of the Sports Council (Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport).

To select the sample, we used two criteria, one related to the historical period when interviewees practised some kind of sport, with a division of two groups corresponding to the periods 1939–1960 and 1960–1975. The latter group corresponds to the developmental period, when the Spanish sports reality underwent remarkable changes. The other criterion refers to habitat size, with the sample having a similar representation of rural and urban environments. A detailed account of the information from every interviewee can be found in the Appendix of this article.

Once the sample was located, we carried out the interviews, which had two differentiated parts, one focused and another semi-structured with an open end. The first part was about the experiences of interviewees as sportswomen; the second, with questions presented in a pre-established order (Hammer and Wildavsky, 1990), was aimed at getting to know the social, moral and aesthetic determinants of these women’s sports experience.

These kinds of determinants, collected in previous studies (Pujadas, 2007), ultimately provide us with a wide vision of the interviewees’ sports experience. Social determinants include such aspects as socio-economic level, family, gender roles or social visibility of women’s sport. Moral determinants refer to religious pressure, moral values in sports practice, induced guilt or requirements of modesty. Thirdly, aesthetic determinants focus on such aspects as clothing, body self-perception or femininity.

In this sense, three dimensions were established, one for each kind of determinant. Every dimension had specific questions. Finally, the end of the interview was open so that interviewees could add what they considered appropriate in connection to their sports experience.

As required, before doing this kind of interview, the group of interviewers was specifically trained in order to guarantee the correct use of this technique.

Once the interviews were finished and the audiovisual and written material was transcribed and stored, two parallel data analyses were carried out by grouping them into categories particular to the social, moral and aesthetic dimensions. The triangulation of the categories resulting from the two analyses achieved a level of concordance higher than 90%, with the scarce discrepancies being solved by agreement of the teams involved in the analyses.

In the following sections, after the necessary theoretical background, we focus on the main characteristics of the three dimensions analysed. These results will be discussed, bearing in mind other outstanding previous research, and then conclusions will be specified.

Women and sport in Franco’s regime

During Franco’s regime, sport underwent a fascist-inspired transformation, as happened with all the other domains of society (González, 2005). Right at the beginning of the Regime, it was used as a useful mechanism to transmit its ideology and, so, as Cazorla Prieto (1979) observed, the regime had no doubt to submit physical education and the entire sports system to rigid discipline and control by public authorities, with

no possibility for social manifestation. Actually, what happened from 1939 was the replacement of the liberal sports system by a system of political control in the hands of *Movimiento Nacional* and, within it, of the *Secretaría General del Movimiento*, which was controlled by the domain of the sector that was ideologically identified with the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* (FET y de las JONS) [Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx of the Assemblies of the National Syndicalist Offensive] (Pastor Pradillo, 1997). The *Secretaría General del Movimiento* was divided into five areas: the *Frente de Juventudes* (FJ) [Youth Front], the *Sección Femenina* (SF) [Women's Section], the *Sindicato Español Universitario* (SEU) [Spanish Universities Syndicate], the *Obra Sindical de Educación y Descanso* (OSD) [Syndicated Action for Education and Rest] and, lastly, the *Delegación Nacional de Deportes* (DND) [National Sports Delegation].

Sport, as established in the Preamble of the Decree of 22 February 1941 that set up the DND (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 1941), is defined as a field in which the Phalanx State found one of the main tools for the global education of the Spanish man. Therefore, it was not a purely associative and pedagogical activity anymore and became an instrument with the main aim of disseminating the social and political model of an authoritarian state, particularly in the working class, which had to be taught in order to transform them into 'new men and women' who followed Francoist ideology (Delgado-Granados and Ramírez-Macías, 2014).

This idea was not new at all, but a copy from the Nazi and fascist ideologies regarding sport. In fact, as pointed out by Herrero (2002), the purpose was following the German model even though Franco did not decide to invest deliberately in this field (training, fields,...), which provoked a very poor sport development.

DND's structure was divided into three sections: federative sports, military sports and sports of the Movement. This was combined with a strict control concerning the dissemination of ideas in sports press and mass media (Viuda-Serrano, 2011).

From these sections, the most influential one for sport was sports of the Movement, since there were few federated sportswomen and, obviously, women could not access this field. The sports of the Movement included all the sport activities that were organized by the SF, the FJ, the SEU and the OSD. Within these organizations, the SF was the only one exclusively for women and, therefore, it would be the main agent in charge of feminine sport. The SEU (dedicated to the university context) and the OSD (specific from the working sphere) should not be forgotten.

Anyway, we must highlight that the training purpose was specifically marked in the sports of the Movement. In fact, through sport, these organizations' goal was not to transmit their ideological principles but the participants' affiliation to them. These organizations even searched in a specific way, among these men and women, for those who were highly capable, with the aim of attracting them for higher responsibilities within the *Movimiento Nacional*.

As Manrique (2012) states, the great organization that existed in sport did not leave any space for sport practice free from political control. This shows the importance that Francoism gave to sport and how it was used as a way to train.

However, the social materialization of the new era in Spanish sport was particularly sterile in the first two decades of Franco's regime, not only concerning the showier field

of international competition, but also, and especially, concerning the impulse of sports activity among the population. At the end of the 1950s, the adjustments carried out showed a change of tendency that would be apparent in the following decade, the beginning of the so-called developmental period (Santacana, 2011). During this period and up to the dictator's death, the obvious socio-cultural and economic transformations involved significant changes in the citizens' relationship with sport. These changes, which cannot be regarded as opening, were particularly sportive and not exclusively indoctrinating. The most remarkable changes were these ones: the public experience towards spectator sport through the emergence of TV (in this sense, football is worth mentioning as the main paradigm of spectator sport in Spain); the protagonists' cult of international sports feats, which happened despite shortages and lack of efficient policies for the preparation of top-level athletes (González, 2011); the enactment of the Law of Physical Education, 20th December 1961 (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 1961), which acknowledged physical education as an efficient instrument in the training sphere and as a preventive way of promoting health; and the development of new habits in connection with leisure and sport, foregrounding the campaign 'Sport for All', whose motto was 'we count on you'.

In the field of physical education and women's sport, Franco's period implied an important stop in their development, which had begun in Spain five decades before and which was strengthened during the 2nd Republic (Sánchez and Rivero, 2013). In particular, the special setback of high-level competitive sport (Olympic Games and international championships) must be pointed out, in which feminine participation was, in their best situations, testimonial and many times non-existent, as happened in London 1948 and Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games (Martín, 2010). It seems obvious that the not so much socio-sporting but structural effects in the Francoist political-sporting organization had a huge bearing on the process of expansion of the sports phenomenon among women.

From the beginning, taking the complex organization explained above into account, the role of physical education and sports in the education of women had a direct relationship with the roles that they had been given from the established social order. During Franco's regime, a woman was defined as a being substantially different from a man for religious and biological reasons. Works by such authors as Gallego (1983), Puig (1987), Barrachina (1989), Alted (1991) and Manrique (2010) allow us to establish the basic characteristics that determined the female model: being a mother and wife, always in the same context, the household, and always submitting to the male head of household. Physical education and sport became a simple instrument to educate mothers for bearing strong, healthy children, all seasoned with knowledge about child care and health, which were also fundamental elements in their education.

The justification for sports practice specific for women was derived, as was clearly explained by Manrique et al. (2009), from explanations that came from different fields (scientific-medical, religious, and political).

Firstly, scientific-medical arguments determined the need to establish a body hygiene and health programme, always on the basis of their main earthly mission: motherhood. Thus, exercise was always guided towards health promotion, trying to preserve their procreative function, which contributed to promotion of the stereotype of fragile people with little aptitude for physical effort. In line with this, the activities considered as appropriate to women were gymnastics, dance, swimming, hockey, skiing, basketball and

handball (Suárez, 1993). As explained by Zagalaz (2001), athletics were excluded from sports particular to the SF until 1961, due to the physical effort implied and because it was considered to be masculinizing.

Secondly, there are arguments based on the fundamentalist Catholicism of that time, which postulated that every physical activity for women had to strictly follow the ultra-conservative moral rules imposed by the Church. This included everything from their clothing to decorous behaviour, and the fact that sports practice should not be against good Christian customs. This fundamentalism could reach the extreme that, for example, in 1950 the Archbishop of Valladolid went as far as to forbid women from riding a bicycle as he considered it to be sinful (Alted, 1991).

Thirdly, traditionalist politics, from the beginning, used sport with an approach that subordinated it to the political ideal of service to the Nation, based on its indoctrinating potential (Chaves, 1960). Thus, sport and physical education were considered as physical preparation to fortify Spain: the man should be ready to serve his country, as well as the woman, but in this case she had to do so in her specific field, which was running the household and taking care of her children and husband.

It is also true that the changes produced in this developing period softened the sports indoctrinating force, but in the case of women, these changes were less substantial than in the case of men. Hence, even in the developing stage, there was a higher level of control and indoctrinating in feminine sport than in the masculine one.

The final aim was disseminating and consolidating the female model that the dictatorship intended to impose, since women were considered as the familiar basis and this was the basic unit that society tried to impose (Ramírez-Macías, 2012).

Social determinants of women's sport

This section refers to the social structures and determinants that had a relevant role in the sports practice of our interviewees.

Firstly, in relation to their immediate social environment, the role of the interviewees is usually considered to be that of people who broke the mould and even were against certain social stereotypes of their times. In this sense, we can clearly grasp some positive self-perception, but differentiated between people:

To me, what kept me going was self-respect (...) From the day I started as an athlete until the day I left... the first gymnastics member here in the South, that was me, the first female (...) breaking the mould. (ACP, 2011, personal interview)

However, this courage continuously came up against the social pressure on women in favour of the imposed female model. Hence, the attributes associated with those women who disregarded social control and the established model were not exempt from male chauvinistic forcefulness:

(...) due to the people's thinking, because they thought that we girls doing sport were half butch, and there was a tendency that the woman should not do sport, you see, those were complicated years for people who wanted to do sport like us, most certainly. (PSE, 2011, personal interview)

However, when referring to the social context, it is also important to emphasize some aspects that promoted sports practice for women. In this sense, both the existence of physical-sports practice in the field of formal education (physical education in educational centres) and the support from their friends had a crucial role in the promotion of sport. The following quote provides us with an illustrative example:

At school, we were a group of classmates or friends, those with whom you get along better, we were very restless, and then of course the gymnastics class was easy for us, we thought that it was a bit too routine, that it could hardly be called exercise, and then the father of a friend of mine who was already a coach because he used to coach us when we had the basketball team. (PFG, 2011, personal interview)

Equally important for the introduction into sport was the informal field of sociability in the sports field, represented by spontaneous sports practice developed in class, as well as familiar influence:

In the street, in those times, then, we played a lot in the street, there were swings, we played with spinning tops, hopscotch, and we played football a lot. Then, near Ciudad Jardín there was a children's park, and we also played there, you could do some gymnastics because there were hoops there ... (FLA, 2011, personal interview)

My father used to be a footballer, he had cousins who played basketball, he had a cousin who played table tennis (...) in the family there was this sports atmosphere. (PSE, 2011, personal interview)

In this context, the formal organization of women's sport came under the SF, the SEU, which also belonged to the Phalanx, and private sports clubs.

The first of these organizations had a remarkable role in the regulation of women's sport, particularly in Andalusia, Aragon and Asturias. In this sense, the explanation given by CML is worth highlighting:

(...) many people from here, from Zaragoza, people from known families, used, as I did, the Women's Section to do sport, because even in Mountaineers of Aragon they recognize this, if it hadn't been for the Women's Section, skiing... would only have been practised by an elite, nothing, just half a dozen families would have been in conditions to do so, first because of accommodation and then because there was nowhere to go to learn to ski. (CML, 2011, personal interview)

In its turn, the SEU provided access to sport for university women. It has to be noted that many of them joined this union because of the possibility that it offered them to practise sport and not because of ideological support:

Back then, we all belonged to the SEU and this way we had the right to do sports... it was some sort of being a federated member, I don't know if it was a federation, with the exception of not being professional. But at the University being federated meant belonging to the SEU, it was the SEU that controlled the games, everything. (FLA, 2011, personal interview)

Private sports clubs promoted sports practice and competition among sportswomen, but only in Barcelona and the Basque Country. Curiously, that was not the case in the other regions studied. As an illustrative example, you can read BDM's explanation about the club that she was a member of and the tennis competitions that this club took part in:

As I say, in Jolaseta we played tennis. When there were championships, you went with the Navarre people... Then there were some people and among them it was me... you would play singles, doubles and mixed, and it was a Basque-Navarre championship, now they call it the Euskadi championship, but then it was Basque-Navarre. Each province had a representative. As Jolaseta we were the best team in the province... All the clubs had teams but Jolaseta was the best. Then the champion was the representative of the club and Biscay in the Basque-Navarre. Then I was the representative of the club and Biscay. The championships organized by clubs were member championships, and then they were among clubs, and then the federation, that was more ... (BDM, 2011, personal interview)

Concerning the three organizations that held women's sport, the SF is worth mentioning, as it was the institution with hegemony in the field of sports activity for women. The perception that interviewees had of this hegemonic situation was polarized in two opposite positions. On the one hand, those who were members of the SF, such as PCF claimed that:

(...) there were many people, because with the Women's Section, which was the one to hugely mobilize Physical Education at school and many places, then we started to do gymnastics with the Women's Section, and for this reason I did the Physical Education course and also started to teach gymnastics. (PCF, 2011, personal interview)

On the other hand, other interviewees, who were not linked with this organization, did not appraise the task of the SF positively; this is the case of PSE and RPC:

(...) it was complicated first because there was a monopoly of the Women's Section, that the little sport we did was very monopolized by the Women's Section. (PSE, 2011, personal interview)

(...) I mean that those were moments that, at the level of sport, real sport and well done, right, the Women's Section did a great damage to sport, let's say. (RPC, 2011, personal interview)

In addition, and although there were organizations that, with more or less success, promoted women's sport, there were also other important barriers for the access to sports practice. According to the interviewees, the most important ones were the negative consideration of sport by parents, particularly mothers, the socio-economic determinants, especially in the post-war period, and the little support from the family when having to travel to participate in competitions.

Finally, other kinds of barriers are also worth mentioning, those that led to quitting sport, with the following ones being the most usual: economic needs that forced them to give up practising sport and take a paid job, marriage and sports injuries. Nevertheless,

the most determining factor for dropping out sports, according to the interviewees, was pregnancy and subsequent motherhood. A very clarifying example in this sense is PSE's life experience:

(...) because I married and got pregnant, I did, and I started the season but as I got pregnant, I have a brother-in-law who is a gynaecologist and he told me let's drop out this thing of sport (...) For me, it was very satisfying, I was very willing to have, have children, I mean, and I assumed that if I had children I wouldn't be able to do it as sports practice, it could be as a hobby to keep in shape one day a week and that's it. (PSE, 2011, personal interview)

In the few cases when motherhood and family life were combined with sports practice, it is noticeable that there usually emerged a sense of guilt about it:

(...) that of the family is what I did the worst because, of course, I would practically see my children, then, as much as men see them nowadays, almost like let me kiss you goodnight. (PIL, 2011, personal interview)

Therefore, as a summary, these sportswomen did not follow those patterns imposed on them, which caused them many problems in their immediate environment. However, there were also aspects that boosted their sports practice, such as the existence of Physical Education at school, their circle of friends, or those organizations that promoted the women's sport of the period. In particular, it is to be noted that 17 out of 24 interviewees had male agents in their environment as social agents that led them to sport practice. Mainly, these people were fathers (14 cases), although there were also brothers (two cases) and a secondary school teacher. The rest of the interviewees took up practising sport due to the SF.

In this respect, the task of the SF is well appraised by those interviewees from less developed areas of Spain, as well as by those with a similar ideology to that of Franco's regime; it is the contrary in the case of those who lived in industrialized areas or were alien to this organization. For the latter, the task of the SF was negative, and they assessed sports clubs as the organizations that better promoted women's sport.

In fact, the number of women who regarded positively the SF's role was 12. This is half of the interviewees, three of whom were from Andalusia, three from Asturias, three from Valencia and three from Aragon. It is also important to notice that all the women who were interviewed in the two most industrialized areas of the country, Catalonia and Basque Country, negatively regarded the SF's role.

Finally, the main cause for dropping out of sport was not the age or injuries, as could be expected, but marriage and, especially, motherhood. This meant that, despite being models that broke with stereotypes of the period, once they had achieved the big mission given to them by the regime, being mothers, they would usually quit sports practice to rear their children. Consequently, in those few cases in which this did not happen, feelings of guilt were frequent.

Thus, in the 24 interviews that were done, in just one case (IRM), quitting sporting life was due to an injury. The main reasons for quitting sport were marriage and motherhood (15 cases). Other secondary reasons was incorporation into working life (six cases),

looking after an ill relative and, as an exception, one of them (CRP) did not have to give up practising sport until she decided so.

Morality in women's sport

This section focuses on how the morality that Franco's regime tried to impose influenced sports practice among our interviewees.

To begin with, we should mention the agents of the moral order that were in charge of watching over the morality imposed concerning sport, which according to most interviewees were two: the SF and the Catholic Church. In this sense, it was the Church that had a more opposed position in relation to sports practice in women, as it considered women's sport to be immoral. To illustrate this statement, there are two striking examples:

Let me tell you another story, which she told me. That as they wore *puchos*⁴ (knickerbockers) to do gymnastics, when they went to mass, the priest, at that time, refused to administer her communion because she had been wearing *puchos*. (PCF, 2011, personal interview)

(...) and besides we used to have a bishop, Gregorio Modrego who even said that in swimming pools girls could get pregnant, I mean, you know those so, so stupid things. (RPC, 2011, personal interview)

However, some of the interviewees did not think that there was an opposition towards sport by the ecclesiastic profession. For example, concerning the role of priests and nuns in sport, LAI said that:

No, they wouldn't interfere. Doing gymnastics, being always on the beach, they would take you to the beach, and you could do anything on the beach (...) I don't think there was any problem, eh...it took them some years, but then, I don't think they intervened at all eh... (LAI, 2010, personal interview)

Secondly, and in this case unanimously, the interviewees recognize that, within this moral order that the authorities were trying to impose in that period, those sports for the male gender and those for females were clearly marked. In this sense, we can take PSE's comment as a reference:

There was an incredible difference between the sexes, I mean, then, sport was a referent, obviously, there were sports that women could not even think of doing. (PSE, 2011, personal interview)

More specific were ADL and RLF, who said about their hometowns, respectively:

Boys would play with boys, and girls with their teams, but there were not many girls. Basketball, handball and swimming, a little but they could also do that. (ADL, 2011, personal interview)

Well, there was no other option there. I don't remember... Football was for boys, and volleyball for us. (RLF, 2011, personal interview)

Thirdly, as far as the positive values of sport were concerned, all the interviewees stated that sports practice positively contributed to developing their character and education in values. The following quote can be considered an illustrative example:

It makes people very strong... very strong in adversity... in life problems, in things that... setbacks... I have friends that collapse in front of a mishap and... small, and I say, when it is big... then you'll see what your life is like... and I... I think it forges you... it shapes you as tough... and it also makes you more of a companion... no, honestly.⁵ (LMG, 2011, personal interview)

Nevertheless, in the immediate social environment of the interviewees (neighbours, friends' parents, workmates, classmates, etc.), the opinion on sport was not positive and they would usually be critical, considering that sports practice by a woman was immoral. This generalized idea was in the same line as the one advocated by the Catholic Church.

This situation, in some cases, led to quarrels that the interviewees still vividly remember today, as in the case of VBL:

There was a neighbour who was less pretty and called me everything. Yes, because I would show my legs. If that woman rose from the dead...! Once she challenged my mother: If it was my daughter, she wouldn't show her legs to all the men! Hush, hush, Teresa! And my mother was very upset (...). (VBL, 2011, personal interview)

This generalized tendency towards hostility led many of our interviewees to defend themselves by showing indifference towards these external comments. Some of them did so in a more moderate tone, such as BDM:

Now I don't know whether people from outside the club would say *look at them!* But I don't think so, because we were not doing anything wrong. (BDM, 2011, personal interview)

Others did so in a more categorical and independent way, such as CRP:

The thing is that I never asked what people thought because I didn't have so many contacts, and wasn't either interested in what they thought because that wasn't the point, let's say. (CRP, 2011, personal interview)

Despite this, this hostility did not increase when some of the interviewees, bravely escaping from the established order, decided to practise men's sports. Contrary to what could be expected, there was no absolute rejection in these situations, as IRM explained (football player in the *Real Club Deportivo Español* from 1971 until 1979):

No, no...no...their treatment was not contemptuous, the thing is that, of course, they didn't give it the significance that we wanted it to have but it wasn't contemptuous either, only that they would always say that it wasn't really taking off, that they wouldn't get anywhere because football is a men's thing. That is, things like that... but contemptuous, contemptuous... no, not really. (IRM, 2010, personal interview)

Nevertheless, some of the interviewees, and therefore sportswomen themselves, did feel total rejection of the idea that a woman could practise a sport particular to the male gender. Not only did these women not want to engage in sports particular to the opposite sex, but they also were against any women participating in them. This happened not because they thought that their own sport practice was at risk because of these transgressing facts, but because they had deeply assumed the imposed feminine model. The clearest example is MPA, who, when asked about the possibility of some of her peers playing football, replied:

Now this is very normal, but at that time it wasn't. If we had seen a woman playing football with men, we would have bitten her head off... (MPA, 2011, personal interview)

To summarize this moral dimension, the existence of moral agents, the Catholic Church and the SF, is to be emphasized, which marked the moral path to be followed by women's sport. For example, they would identify what sports were suitable for women and what sports were more particular to men. These agents had a remarkable influence on public opinion, which resulted in many arguments between these sportswomen and those in their immediate environment. Nevertheless, and despite these limitations, all the interviewees agreed on the positive influence of sports on every person's development of character and value system.

In this sense, only three of the interviewed women practised any sport that was regarded as masculine. In particular, one played football, another one parachuted and the third one rowed. Hence, most of the interviewees competed in sports that were regarded in Franco's time as feminine and that were supported by the SF, such as for instance volleyball, basketball, gymnastics, handball and hockey. There is just one exception, one who played golf, a very elitist sport in those days.

In the regions in the North of Spain (Asturias, Basque Country, Aragon and Catalonia), the existence can be noticed of five cases who did sport mountain training (as the main or secondary sports activity), always with a masculine person (boyfriend, husband or brother), but with the same level of strength.

Women's body aesthetics in sport

In this section, we will see the body determinants that were present in sports practice, which affected the kind of attire chosen by women to practice sport.

The kind of attire to practice sport by women has a relevant significance in view of the interviewees' answers. Franco's regime, through school institutions, the Church and Falangist organizations, took a deep interest in stressing the moral character of sports among girls, putting much emphasis on clothing. The use of knickerbockers, very wide skirts, petticoats, etc., is a good example of this:

When I started playing tennis, girls would play with stockings and petticoats and they would wear lace knickers, long as knickerbockers, and then a skirt and stockings and I ... (CML, 2011, personal interview)

A sort of fabric blouse and black plus fours. With this we would set off the day when we were going training there, towards... In Calvo Sotelo, where I'm saying, in that sports arena that was on the Diagonal, and as this was in Moya street, we would set off in uniform towards... towards... the sports arena. (CRP, 2011, personal interview)

The use of a kind of attire that would prioritize hiding the female body over comfort to practise sport, as well as the scarcity in clothing, resulted in a perception of discomfort observed in many of the answers collected, as for example:

Well, boy, at 14 and 15 you can wear a suit of armour and fly if what you want is to play. That was dreadful, it was a period with the knickerbockers, with a band on your waist and two bands below your knees, and on top a pleated skirt, that was really heavy. (FLA, 2011, personal interview)

This discomfort was due to the physical discomfort that meant practising sport with this attire imposed by the SF. Not wearing this attire implied breaking the imposed moral rules and, therefore, these participants could have problems with SF personnel. Nevertheless, from the developmental period, in the 1960s, there was an evolution in sports attire in favour of greater comfort and less moral control, as testified by those interviewees who started practising sport at that time or those who had already started in the first years of Franco's regime and still practised sport in the 1970s. In this sense, ACP's experience concerning the change of attire is worth emphasizing, not for the fact in itself, but for her emotionally charged answer when recalling this memory:

When they see me stepping out, with the bouquet, but they see me wearing a leotard, the same leotard as those standing there, you can't imagine, you can't even imagine (...) they weren't call ugly things, on the contrary. There she goes, so people can see that here in Spain we also have, in Seville, there are pretty women and, as well, what a beautiful leotard. (ACP, 2011, personal interview)

As well, sports practice had an influence on the self-perception (perceived body image) of the interviewed sportswomen. In view of their answers, we can establish three groups as follows.

There were those who talked about the positive influence of sport on their self-perception:

Then, like it or not, you were there playing, but you were also there showing off as cute as a button in front of them.⁶ (LVV, 2011, personal interview)

Those who talked about interference of self-perception towards sports practice:

There were many complexes, for example, I used to have friends... who... would not dare to play with short skirts and without stockings. (PIL, 2011, personal interview)

Lastly, there were those who talked about negative influence of sport on their self-perception. This negative influence was based on the fact that sports practice was not part of the imposed female model, but it was precisely the opposite:

I know some friends that stopped swimming because their shoulders would get broader.(PIL, 2011, personal interview)

Well, as I said we were butches, well, let's see, I've met many basketball players who were not butches at all, they were very pretty, but, well, they had a concept of a sportswoman that wouldn't suit us at all.⁷ (PSE, 2011, personal interview)

As a summary of this aesthetic dimension, the moral character of sports attire is to be highlighted, with priority given to hiding the body over comfort to practise sport. Fortunately, the developmental period allowed for a positive evolution in this sense.

Therefore, most of the interviewees (19 cases) claim that the imposed attire was not suitable to practise sport since it was heavy and uncomfortable and made movements difficult. However, as it was the imposed attire by the SF, there was no choice and they had to wear it.

As for the body image of sportswomen, the clear distinction in three groups is remarkable: those who considered that sport helped them have a better body self-perception (most of the cases, particularly 21 of the interviewees, belong to this group); those who considered that sport had a negative influence on their body image and quitted for this reason (this occurred in two cases, IRM, who played football and did not like excessively muscled legs and VBL, a swimmer who was disappointed with her back width); and finally those whose body self-perception ended up by limiting their sports practice, due to embarrassment or shyness or because it negatively affected their self-esteem (this only occurred in one case, LMG, who gave up kayaking because of the shame felt by publicly exposing herself in competitions).

Conclusions: body, morality and society in women's sport in Franco's Spain

The break-up that the establishment of Franco's dictatorship brought after the Spanish Civil War was immediately apparent in the centralization and political control of physical education and the entire sports system by the regime, as well as the development of a process of repression and purging in the association network of clubs and federations that had made up the traditional sports system (Santacana, 2011). The Second Republic had started a process to transform the traditional patriarchal mentality and to expand the practice and development of associations of women's sport (Pujadas, 2011), which was altered by the emergence of Franco's regime and the imposition of a new ideal of the Falanx woman (Barrachina, 1989), deeply influenced by Catholic traditionalism, based on abnegation, religion, procreation and family care.

Before the developmental period of the 1960s, women's sports practice was very limited (Pujadas, 2010). This can explain that our interviewees described themselves as 'pioneers' or 'daring', in a framework of social pressure that hindered their access. However, women's sports practice did not only depend on the mainstream discourse or the institutional network controlled by the Regime, but developed in different fields. First were those directly linked to State structures such as the SF of FET y de las JONS, which during the first period of Franco's regime had a relevant role in areas with few sports clubs, but their action was considered to be monopolizing and hindering in those areas in which there was a previous network of sport associations that had had a remarkable role in women's sport initiation. Together with this, women's sport was very often

linked to informal social domains, such as the street and peer groups. The family was also frequently mentioned by those women who found in the male members of their family – fathers, grandfathers or brothers – clear referents that acted as facilitators for their introduction into sports practice.

Familiar influence was crucial as a stimulus for women to start sports practice, but families with a hostile attitude were also usual, particularly those mothers who had a less enthusiastic or directly negative vision.

Concerning other obstacles for sports practice, the economic factor was one of the main barriers during the first period of Franco's regime. The context of those first years was marked by low salaries, a high unemployment rate and an income rate that was lower than the one in the pre-war period (Lacomba, 1976), although this factor affected both men and women.

Furthermore, our interviewees referred to the unavoidable role assigned to women from the beginning of Franco's period in their 'household, taking care of their husband and children' (Manrique, 2007: 7), which implied less time to practise sport. However, perhaps the greatest obstacle for women's sports practice during the dictatorship was the existing pressure in the shape of social control. This social control could be seen in the idea of sport as a male reality and the attribution of androgynous traits to sportswomen, and was only lessened when it was about activities such as gymnastics, in which women had a submissive role. However, many of the stories pointed at the fact that women's initiation into sport developed in family environments with a clear dissonance with the mainstream social perception.

After the creation of the DND in 1941, women's sports practice developed in close connection with the SF and the SEU (Santacana, 2011). The SF's task was well appraised by those interviewees from Andalusia, Aragon and Asturias, or recognized by those from Valencia, but ignored or negatively appraised in the Basque Country and Catalonia. The existence of a wide, consolidated network of sports associations in the Basque Country and Catalonia from the beginning of the 20th century (Manrique, 2010; Pujadas and Santacana, 1995) allowed women to have their sports initiation in sports clubs, thus avoiding organizations linked to the *Movimiento Nacional*. The SF lost some power to influence during Franco's second period, as can be seen in the fact that those interviewees that referred to their task more frequently are those who were born before 1936 or those who developed their sports activity in the first two decades of the dictatorial period.

The weight of the Spanish Church in the moral shaping of the woman's model (Muniesa, 1996) was heavier than that of the Falanx itself (Montero, 1986). The ideal of female purity and prudence imbued part of the Spanish society of the 1940s and 1950s, as can be seen in the interviewees' references to the influence of attitudes, as well as punishments, warnings and reprimands that they were given, particularly during the early stages of the dictatorship—for instance, not allowing them to leave home or banning sport practice or other kind of entertainment. The mainstream moral discourse could even imply an important pressure on customs, habits and ideas, particularly if it affected the external signs of morality or dogma, in the case of the Church (Muniesa, 1996). This pressure could be very significant among sportswomen, who in some cases felt guilty because sports practice was taking them away from their children, or because they were trying to overcome the feelings regarding the way they exposed their body through their sports attire. All this had a deep influence on the female ideal of 'mother and wife' and

on ‘the ways of feeling and applying a system of values, of behaving’ (Tuñón de Lara and Biescas, 1987), as can be grasped from our interviewees’ stories. Nevertheless, middle-class or middle-upper-class women, coming from the city and with a sports family background, perceived that the family would naturally assume their wish to practice sport. The relationship between women’s sports practice and family context seems to be not very relevant either from a moral or social point of view.

The body-aesthetic dimension was closely linked to the influence of mainstream morality and to the representation of the ideal model of Phalanx woman (Barrachina, 1989). The doctrine concerning clothing aspects that was imposed by the national Catholicism in the post-war period resulted in specific guidelines about the size of skirts and the use of stockings, as well as the attitudes of women in specific contexts, such as the beach (Abella, 1978). This doctrine caused many reactions in the women’s body self-perception, with their common denominator being the allusion to the female body model socially accepted as attractive in the eyes of men: the first kind of reaction was positive and related to sports practice (because the existence of attraction is recognized in the sports context or through the social acceptance of one’s own body); the second was a negative self-perception when doing sport; and the third was an androgynous, socially non-accepted self-perception due to the continued sports practice.

Those women who practised sport during the first years of Franco’s regime referred to the compulsory nature of using uniform at school age and also mentioned the unavoidable hiding of their body and overlapping of clothes. They also mentioned the sensation of discomfort and their difficult sports practice resulting from the need to comply with the guidelines concerning sports attire. All this confirms what historiography has frequently described about the promotion of ‘external appearance and obedience’ among SF students in the 1940s (Manrique et al., 2009), as well as the moral bias in ‘the style of clothing when doing physical activities’ (Manrique, 2011). Sportswomen who started or continued their sports practice in the 1960s noticed a process of change concerning the external appearance, with a tendency to liberalize customs and give priority to the sportswoman’s comfort. The laxity in the moral doctrine concerning clothing was celebrated by those sportswomen who began their sport practice in the middle of the post-war period and was perceived as a change that had an impact on women’s liberalization. This cannot be considered as separate from the social transformation in the more general fields of urban leisure, tourism and new aspects in the Press Act of 1966, which increased the liberalization of information and the transmission of new habits and customs (González, 2011).

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Notes

1. This study has led to an article about the general results of the oral research: Pujadas et al. (2012).
2. The Appendix collects the main data of the 24 interviewees.

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3. The main objectives of this network are the recovery of women's history in the framework of the social history of sport in the Spanish State and in every community studied by the research groups, as well as the development of studies coordinated among the different participating teams and universities. The network was set up in the year 2010 and has been recently enlarged with research teams from the University of La Coruña and Camilo José Cela University in Madrid.
 4. The term *puchos* is a synonym of *pololos* (knickerbockers): they were short loose trousers, adjusted at knee level; girls would put them on top of their skirts to do sport.
 5. With the word 'companion', the interviewee refers to friends from the opposite sex with whom they began her friendship after practising sport. It has to be foregrounded that, within this context, conditions were the same for men. This was not observed in other social spheres.
 6. By saying 'them', the interviewee refers to boys from her age, who watched her while practising sport.
 7. The interviewee means that the ideal of sportswomen (thin, skilful and particularly feminine) was not expected in women who, as she was, were strong and brave even though they were also sportswomen.

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Appendix 1

Information about the interviewees

Table 1. References about the interviewees.

Name	Year and place of birth	City	Region	Linking with SF (Y/N)	Socio-economic level	Origin (rural/urban)	Sports
CRP	1920, Barcelona	Barcelona	Catalonia	N	Middle	U	Mountaineering, climbing, fencing, skiing, and athletics
IRM	1952, La Línea de la Concepción (Cádiz)	Barcelona	Catalonia	N	Low	U	Football
PSE	1937, Barcelona	Barcelona	Catalonia	N	Middle	U	Basketball and swimming
RPC	1930, Barcelona	Barcelona	Catalonia	N	Middle	U	Swimming, tennis, mountaineering, and climbing
LAI	1924, Pola de Laviana (Asturias)	Pola de Laviana (Asturias)	Asturias	Y	Low	R	Handball
EAC	1930, Oviedo	Gijón	Asturias	Y	Middle	U	Basketball
LVV	1948, Gijón	Gijón	Asturias	Y	Middle	U	Volleyball
LMG	1945, Gijón	Gijón	Asturias	N	Middle	U	Canoeing, basketball, skiing, volleyball, and mountaineering
BDM	1929, Bilbao	Bilbao	Basque Country	N	Upper	U	Tennis and golf
MMJ	1933, Begoña (Biscay)	Bilbao	Basque Country	N	Upper	U	Swimming and football
MGC	1927, Vitoria	Vitoria	Basque Country	N	Middle	U	Swimming, skiing, mountaineering, and gymnastics
ELB	1933, Las Arenas-Getxo (Biscay)	Las Arenas-Getxo (Vizcaya)	Basque Country	N	Middle	U	Golf

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Name	Year and place of birth	City	Region	Linking with SF (Y/N)	Socio-economic level	Origin (rural/urban)	Sports
ACP	1943, Sevilla	Sevilla	Andalusia	Y	Middle	U	Gymnastics and parachute jumping
PCF	1925, San Vicente de Alcántara (Badajoz)	Sevilla	Andalusia	Y	Middle	R	Gymnastics, basketball, and handball
OMH	1935, Sevilla	Sevilla	Andalusia	N	Low	U	Basketball
FLA	1937, Sevilla	Sevilla	Andalusia	N	Upper	U	Basketball, handball, and volleyball
ADL	1921, Xàtiva (Valencia)	Xàtiva (Valencia)	Valencia	Y	Upper	U	Field hockey, football, handball, and swimming
MPA	1938, Xàtiva (Valencia)	Xàtiva (Valencia)	Valencia	Y	Middle	U	Volleyball, basketball, gymnastics, athletics, and swimming
RLF	1938, La Pobla Llarga (Valencia)	Xàtiva (Valencia)	Valencia	Y	Middle	U	Volleyball and basketball
VBL	1937, El Bergel (Alicante)	Valencia	Valencia	N	Low	R	Swimming
PFG	1952, Andorra (Teruel)	Andorra (Teruel)	Aragon	N	Middle	R	Basketball and athletics
PIL	1944, Zaragoza	Zaragoza	Aragon	Y	Upper	U	Tennis, swimming, athletics, and basketball
ASM	1933, Reus (Tarragona)	Zaragoza	Aragon	N	Middle	U	Spearfishing, horse riding, athletics, tennis, and mountaineering
CML	1928, Peralta (Navarra)	Zaragoza	Aragon	Y	Middle	U	Swimming, skiing, basketball, and tennis

SF: *Sección Femenina*.