

Feminism in Spain- A personal story.

Exploring Feminism in Spain through the experiences of three generations of women in my family.

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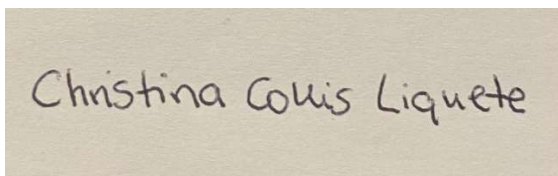
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I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed: Christina Collis Liquete

A photograph of a piece of light-colored paper with the name 'Christina Collis Liquete' written in dark ink in a cursive, handwritten style.

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1. Introduction

This essay explores the evolution of feminism in Spain. I grew up in Spain and when I was fifteen years old, I moved to England, where I completed my secondary education before starting university in Ireland. Living in England and Spain has given me a chance to experience, as a woman, the differences in culture, religion, and attitudes towards women in both countries.

In this essay I explore the recent progression of feminism in Spain through the experience of three generations of women in my family: my grandmother, my mother, and my sister. The reason why I decided to write about this topic is because growing up I was fascinated by the stories my grandmother told my sister and I about her childhood and teenage years, as Spain was so different back then. I was curious to find out more about my grandmother's and mother's experiences as women in Spain during the Franco dictatorship and compare it to my sister's experience in the Spain of today.

In order to do my primary research, I interviewed three generations of women in my family: my grandmother, my mother, and my elder sister, between the 29th of November 2022 and the 12th of December 2022. I used a semi-structured interview script which allowed the interview to feel more like a conversation. For each interview, the phone call lasted around forty-five minutes and I used Microsoft Word to create a transcript of the calls. Writing about my family's experiences has been very interesting for me as I have learnt things about their lives that I did not know. However, the risk is that my research is less objective than if I had chosen to interview a random sample of women in Spain. As they are my family, they were happy to take part in my research and they felt they could trust me to share their stories.

Although they have all been raised in Spain, my grandmother, mother, and sister have had very different lives as women. Both my mother and my sister have spent time living in England, and that gives them a different perspective that my grandmother does not have. They both have a higher level of education as my grandmother only completed basic schooling. My grandmother was married at the age 22 and had her first child by the age of 23, my mother was married at 24 and had her first child aged 32. My sister is 26, is not married and is not planning on having children for the time being. My grandmother started working at a young age but gave up when she got married and did not work again until she was in her 30s. My mother started working at the age of 23 and my sister started her first proper job after graduating from university at the age of 22.

2. Feminism in Spain in the XX and XI centuries

The word feminism was first used in the 19th century by French philosopher and socialist Charles Fourier, who understood that the key to women's emancipation was to put an end to their legal and economic subordination to men (Offen, 1988, p.45). Day (2016) defines feminism as: *"an interdisciplinary approach to issues of equality and equity based on gender, gender expression, gender identity, sex, and sexuality as understood through social theories and political activism."* "Feminism has historically progressed from being a critical study of gender inequity to a clearer focus on how gender and sexuality are constructed socially and performatively. This means that feminists today seek to achieve change in areas that impact the lives of women such as: reproductive rights, social justice, equal pay, sexual harassment, and discrimination rather than just have a theoretical discussion.

Feminism has evolved in different countries at different rates throughout history. This essay explores the history of Spanish feminism through the lived experience of three generations of women in my family.

Throughout the 19th century, Spain was a very conservative patriarchal society heavily influenced by the Catholic Church. In 1933 the Second Spanish Republic gave women the right to vote and participate in elections in the same way as men, allowed divorce and sought to end the power of the Catholic Church; this was Spain's first experience with democracy. However, the Second Republic did not last long: in 1936 the Spanish Civil War brought an end to all those liberal advances. Feminist voices such as: Margarita Nelken, María Martínez Sierra and Carmen de Burgos were all important pre-Republic writers who influenced feminism in Spain. The fact that General Francisco Franco won the war meant that Spain became a conservative dictatorship for nearly four decades and feminist discourse largely disappeared from Spanish society, as the dictator removed all rights for women. There were fewer opportunities for women to pursue professional careers, and their responsibilities as mothers and wives were made more important. Abortion, contraception, and divorce were all forbidden under Franco's dictatorship. It was not until Franco's death in 1975 and the advent of democracy that things began to change.

3. *"The perfect wife"* - the role of women in the Franco regime

In 1936, General Franco led a military coup against the democratically elected republican government of the time, which led to the Spanish Civil War. After winning the war with the help of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, General Franco ruled Spain between 1939 until his death in 1975. During and after the Spanish Civil War, General Franco and his followers had a clear idea of how they wanted Spain to be in the future. Franco persecuted political opponents, suppressed the Basque and Catalan languages and cultures, controlled the media and the life of Spanish citizens. As Franco aged, some of these limitations were progressively relaxed, and after his death in 1975, the country became a democracy. I grew up in Catalonia, a region of Spain where Franco suppressed the Catalan language and culture. I never learnt about the Spanish Civil War at school, instead I learnt about the history

of Catalonia which shows how Catalans want to revive their history and culture which Franco had tried so hard to erase.

Franco's regime aligned its values closely to those of the Catholic church. These ideals were very strict societal roles that restricted rights for women. My grandmother, Rosario Coterá, was born in Spain in 1940 and grew up in the post-war period. Her upbringing was very humble as the consequences of the Spanish Civil War left Spain in poverty. My grandmother and her younger sister were raised by their grandmother and aunts as their father was a sailor who had to provide for the family and their mother passed away from cancer when they were little girls.

My grandmother was raised as a Catholic. I asked her if women were treated differently to men in Spain through religion in which she responded: *"At that time, what influenced women a lot was religion, Catholicism. Since I was a little girl, I was taught to be a good woman, to be a good person. A good woman for me means not to be rude, not to talk back, not to speak badly, and to be polite."* Religion was also a huge contributor when it came to how women should behave. My grandmother also quoted *"Women had to be above all a good mother and educate her children well and educate them in religion above all."* In those times in Spain, the Church and the Francoist regime were closely aligned. To raise "well behaved" and good Catholic children was a woman's priority, to provide for the family and work was a man's priority. My grandmother married at age 22, as in those days marrying young was the normal thing to do. Because Spain was a strict Catholic country, women were also expected to be virgins until marriage, although the same rule was not applied to men. The dictatorship, together with the Catholic church developed and implemented a number of pro-family and pro-nationalists' policies. For instance: the subsidies and special allowances for large families, mandatory leave for working women once they married and the banning of all divorce that had been legalised under the Republic (Scott, 2022). The medical profession (all male at the time) supported this patriotic call; for example, Antonio Vallejo Nagera who was

the chief military psychiatrist of the Franco regime, did not hesitate in saying that *“the personality of women resided in the womb, which was, the female capital organ.”* (Morcillo, 2010).



Figure 1 Photograph of my grandmother with her friends on her wedding day.



Figure 2 Photograph of my grandparents' wedding in Aviles (Spain) in 1962.

As I already noted, the Francoist ideology believed that the woman's ultimate destiny was motherhood and to maintain a happy household through their traditional feminine values. Policies under Franco encouraged women to leave paid work upon marriage, and to have more children as the country's population had decreased because of war casualties. *"Once confined within the home, they were much easier to control."* (Carbayo, 1998, p.35). Women who were married could only work with the permission of their husband. In the Franco dictatorship, there were several legal means that were put in place to ensure that men had full authority on the rights of women and children in their family circle. Married women were under the guardianship of husbands. They were forbidden to perform sales transactions, and it was illegal for a woman to sign for a job or open a bank account without their husband's authorization. Nor could they apply for a passport, transfer goods, testify in court or accept an inheritance without their husband's permission (also known as *padre de familia* which means father of the family). That is what life was like for the women of my grandmother's generation. If the wife worked outside the home, the husband could force his wife to give him her salary. Women who left home, even if they escaped from an abusive husband, could be arrested, and imprisoned which again reinforced the idea that women were men's property. My grandmother explained that *"The woman was the one who had to be a good woman because her husband made a living at that time. The husband brought the money home, so you had to love them and respect them."* As most women at that time had no economic independence, my grandmother had never had her own bank account until my grandfather passed away in 2017, so she always had to check with my grandfather every time she spent money. She explained that her husband expected to run the finances as he believed it was his role. Women were expected to cook, clean, take care of the children, whilst men worked to provide for their family. Although, later in life, my grandmother also worked outside the home, she was still expected to do everything in the home. It shocked me to find out that my grandfather never helped my grandmother with their children as they were their children, not only hers. She said: *"Your grandfather never got up in the night to change a nappy and I don't think he ever changed a nappy in his life."*

My grandmother started working in the late 1970s, which was very unusual at the time for women to have a job and provide for their family. It was only because my grandfather suddenly got very ill and he worried about what would happen to the family if he passed away, so my grandmother started working to contribute to the family's finances. It was interesting to find out that my grandmother, as a woman, felt that she had earned more respect working outside the home as a florist running her own business. *"When I started working in the 70's, I valued myself more, and people valued me too. Before working, I was 'the wife of ', but when I started working people started calling me by my name and your grandfather was referred to as Rosario's husband and that annoyed him"*. She had a name for herself instead of being referred to as a man's property. Shockingly, even though they both worked long hours, my grandfather still did not help with any of the household chores or the children, instead my grandmother did everything because he would say that people would laugh at him for doing what seemed to be women's work, men had to be macho, and women had to be feminine. *"Your grandfather would come home from work and sit down to watch TV. Whereas I would come home from work and have all the responsibilities for the house and the children."* To help with the housework or the children was seen as embarrassing and emasculating for a man at that time in Spain. *"Men at that time were very sexist, your grandfather was too, and he recognized it over the years."* This very rigid way of understanding masculinity, meant that my grandfather did not enjoy the time with his children, something that he became more aware of when he had grandchildren; by then times had changed and expectations for men were different and this meant that he could enjoy playing with the grandchildren or taking them out to the park.

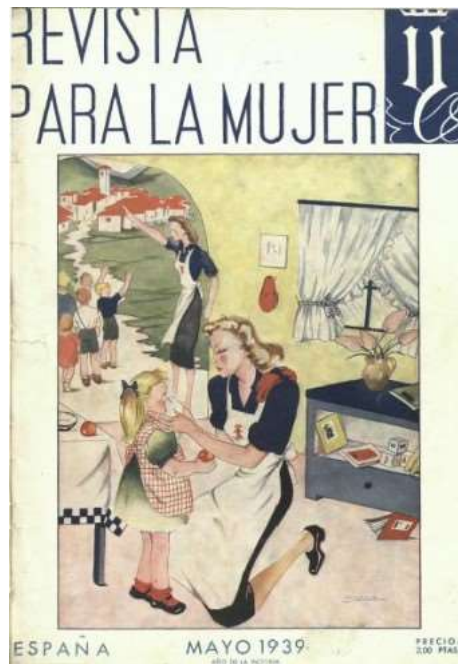


Figure 3 Women's magazine cover from 1939, transmitting the values of the regime.

Franco's dictatorship also developed its own form of officially endorsed anti-feminism at the same time. Fundamental Catholic ideas that defined rigid societal responsibilities for women were the foundation of the fatherland that Franco's dictatorship envisioned. This was largely supported through the works of "Sección Femenina" or Feminine Section. The "Sección Femenina" in Francoist Spain was an important organisation in defining Spanish womanhood. Its mission was to shape Spanish women, encouraging women to become exemplary wives and mothers (Davidson, 2010), and therefore it fulfilled a key role in promoting the idea that women were inferior to men and that their key role was to be a good wife and mother. Its views were promoted through the radio and magazines and through organised compulsory sessions for women. The Seccion Femenina promoted a better quality of living through things such as physical education and exercise which set the organisation as an influence in Spanish society in the early post-Civil War period in Spain and until 1977. With more than 500,000 members, it became Spain's biggest and most influential women's organisation following the Civil War. I asked my grandmother if she was ever involved or knew what the Seccion Femenina was. She proceeded to respond: *"We did gymnastics at the school, which was run by the Women's Section. They wanted women to change and be more*

modern". My grandmother only remembers how the Seccion Femenina was involved with her school introducing a gymnastics class, which surprised me as growing up I had a sports class in school, and I thought it had always been the norm for both girls and boys to have a class where they were allowed to exercise. In my grandmother's experience, the Seccion Femenina had had a positive influence as it gave women an opportunity to exercise, something that men were allowed to do too. Although I am sure that not all women in my grandmother's generation would have had the same positive experience as her with that Spanish fascist movement for women, the movement played a key role in transmitting the conservative values of the Church and the State. Despite the very rigid roles society assigned to women during Franco's regime, women were not excluded from higher education, which is a positive thing.

4. Transition to democracy – "things did get better..."

Franco chose Prince Juan Carlos to be his successor and Spain in 1969 became a monarchy again (Juan Carlos' grandfather was King Alfonso XIII who left Spain voluntarily in 1931 following the elections that led to the proclamation of Spain's Second Republic). Despite Franco's beliefs that the dictatorship would continue under Juan Carlos, the young prince took action to turn Spain into a constitutional monarchy as soon as he became king following Franco's death in 1975. The censorship that Franco had imposed was eased, political parties were legalised, and elections were held in 1977 for the first time since 1936, and a new Constitution was approved in 1978. Spain's peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy had a significant impact on women's issues as many of the rules that had oppressed them disappeared: from 1975 women no longer needed their husbands' permission to travel, be employed or own property, laws against adultery that banned sexual intercourse between a married woman and a man who was not her husband and which could lead to imprisonment for women, were repealed in 1978; divorce also became legalised in 1981, a massive change in what was still a Catholic country and a huge step towards change

for women. And in 1985, abortion was legalised in situations when there was a significant risk to the mother's physical or mental health, such as in cases of rape or a malformation of the fetus (Garay 2022).

My mother, Elena Liqueste, was born in Spain in 1963 whilst Franco was still in power. She had a very traditional upbringing and despite being the eldest, had less freedom than her younger brother. She still remembers the day Franco died although she does not have a clear sense of what life was like under Franco, as she was very young at the time: *"When Franco died, I was about 12 years old, so I don't really remember very much about what life during the Franco regime was like."* However, she does remember how things changed after Franco's death and the excitement of the transition to democracy. She proceeded to explain that during that time there was a lot of excitement but also uncertainty. *"Some older people like my grandma were worried about what was going to happen, whether the army would take control again as Franco had done which led to the Civil war. There was a lot of excitement and a sense of possibility and, you know, good energy and enthusiasm. I remember it as the start of a positive time."* My mother also explained that even though Franco was a dictator, some people liked him because it was all they knew: *"Some people did like him because they felt he had brought peace and prosperity to the country, and they didn't know anything different."*

My mother grew up in a very strict household, she was the eldest sister and had three siblings: one brother and two sisters. *"My father was very old fashioned. He believed that women and men should behave differently and therefore there were different rules for me and for my brother, even though he was three years younger than me, so he had a lot more freedom."* It was interesting to find out that even my grandmother would ask my mother to make my uncle's bed *"he could obviously make his own bed, so I wouldn't do it"* and when my mother refused, my grandmother would do it for him, which is a very old-fashioned way of understanding what men should do and what women should do. Women's expectations when

my mother was growing up were not much different to when my grandmother was growing up *“something that my father used to say often is that it was not good enough to be good, you have to be seen to be good. Social life in Spain at that time was all about appearances. It was very important in that society that women should behave in a certain way, and how they should dress, and you know, they should be polite and quiet and basically submissive, I guess is the word.”* As I previously mentioned in my grandmother’s interview, religion played a huge role on how women had to behave. My mother went to convent school for the whole of her education; and she was very lucky because she had a good experience there.

“My experience of the Catholic church was different from that of my mother’s. Whilst when she was young the church was very oppressive, particularly towards women, the nuns in my school focused on helping us to develop into good people rather than just good Catholics, instilling positive values and encouraging us to question things. My understanding of Christianity growing up was almost socialist in its view. I didn’t know this at the time, but I guess the nuns sympathised with the “Liberation Theology”, a movement that came from Latin America that sought to address the practical problems of the poor as well as spreading the catholic faith, so the nuns were very active in our community. Whilst the values of my upbringing were still very traditional and it was clear to me that there were different expectations from men and women, I think that was due to the very conservative environment of a provincial town rather than my convent education The school was a caring and open environment, and all the nuns were university educated.”

Some of my mother’s friends who went to convent school did not have such a positive experience. The fact that the values of the state and the values of the Catholic Church were the same meant that the view of the role of women was very old fashioned. I asked my mother if women had the same opportunities as men during their studies and her response was:

“I think so, although some families may not encourage their daughters to study some subjects because some people still believed that the place for the woman was fundamentally in the home and getting married and having children. Places at university were available, there were no legal barriers for women to study what they wanted but social and cultural barriers did exist at the time because of the different expectations for men and women.”

I found it fascinating to know that my mother's upbringing as a woman was not that different to my grandmother's, there had been some improvements although men still had more power *"things did get better by the time I was young and there was more freedom, but still there were expectations for young women to behave in a certain way."* Social norms had changed somewhat but expectations were still different for men and women *"Women my age did not expect to be virgins by the time they married, but they would only have sex with their boyfriends close to their wedding time. Sleeping around was still not the done thing for women, although it was clear that men did."* My grandfather was also a huge influence in my mother's life, as he was someone she had to look up to, and he was very strict *"My dad used to say there were two kinds of women: those one would marry and those one would not (i.e., women with a bad reputation)."* It has been shocking to find out that my grandfather would say those things at that time, but again, it was a very sexist society. Divorce was not an option during Franco's time and therefore couples had to stay together, whether the relationship worked or not, *"when I was growing up divorce did not exist, so none of my friends' parents were divorced or separated. When the country became a democracy, divorce was legalised, and couples were able to split up. However, the Catholic church still does not recognise divorce."*

My mother's experience is interesting because she has worked in higher education institutions in Spain and England. She found Spanish organisations to be very hierarchical and almost always dominated by men, with mainly women in junior admin roles and mainly men in senior leadership positions. Some of her colleagues had wives at home who would take care of the children and the housework, so they were never in a hurry to go home at the end of the day and would be happy to start a meeting at 6:00 PM, whilst my mother knew she had to get home to cook dinner for us. Whilst working in Spain, my mother was exposed to sexual harassment by a senior and much older colleague, something she felt unable to report to HR as she did not think they would support her. Working in England she has never experienced sexual harassment although she does not believe men and women are treated

equally in the workplace, mainly since in most organisations there are many more senior men than women. She also believes that, despite equality legislation being in place for a long time, the pay gap between men and women is still an issue. When I asked my mother about what it was like to work in both countries, this is what she had to say: *"in my experience, employers in England are more respectful of family life and less likely to ask you to work late on a regular basis. In Spain, in my experience, working long hours was taken as a test of your commitment to the organisation and that was really unfair; I was just as committed as my male colleagues - I just had another job to do when I got home! Also, many sexist behaviours that are still commonplace in Spain are no longer accepted in England."*



Figure 4 My mother (third from the right) with her team at IESE Business School in 2008.

I asked my mother what she knew about feminism growing up in Spain and this is what she had to say: *"I was not really aware of feminism growing up. I grew up in a patriarchal society where men were expected to be in charge. Although the nuns at my school provided strong female models, they were not really a model I was hoping to follow. It was only really after Franco died and Spain became a democracy that I began to see women in senior roles: as judges, politicians and so on."* My mother said that her parents always encouraged to go into

further education, although her dad would say that it was not so important for women as their future was to marry and have children. I was quite shocked when my mother told me that her dad always said to her that her brother was brighter than her, but that she worked harder despite the fact that she was more academic than he was.

To conclude my interview with my mother, I asked her what the word feminism means to her, and her answer did not surprise me. *“To me, feminism means men and women having the same rights.”* because although she grew up with two parents who had a very old-fashioned mindset, my mother firmly believes that all human beings should have equal rights.

5. The changing role of women in Spanish society today

Franco was able to keep the peace, order, and stability up until his death 1975 partly thanks to his alignment with the Church. Catholics represent most of the population in Spain and Catholicism had a strong historical and cultural presence in the country. However, the importance of religion in Spanish daily life has greatly decreased in the 40 years of secularism after Franco's death.

My sister Anabel Collis was born in England in 1996, when she was five years old my parents decided to move back to Spain, and she went to Catholic school there. My sister and I were both raised as Catholics, as that was seen as the thing to do in Spain although neither of us practice or have religious beliefs today. My sister mentioned that:

“Growing up in a Catholic environment as a woman, was very sexist even though I did not realise it at the time. We were always told that abortion was a sin and that you had to stay virgin until you were married, these statements were never said to men. Women were still taught from a young age that they had to behave in a certain way, for example, in school girls had to wear skirts and dresses below knee length as they were not supposed to show too much skin, too much cleavage, cannot wear too much

makeup, ... Although what I was taught was not what I wanted to do. In my generation, we had more freedom than in my grandmother's generation."

When she was eighteen, she moved to the UK to go to university for three years. After she graduated, she decided to go back to Spain and started working there. Moving to Spain to work meant a huge cultural shock for her; she experienced behaviours that would have been unacceptable in the UK but seemed to be common in Spain. She was lucky to get an internship for a very well-known skin care brand in Barcelona, which she thought would be a great opportunity, until she experienced sexism in the workplace. Being the youngest person in the team and seeing that other women put up with such behaviours, she felt she had to accept it.

In Spain women's issues have improved in recent years. Even though all forms of discrimination have now been formally abolished by new laws women spend more hours doing the housework and there is still a pay gap between men and women. Spanish women put in an average of 26.5 hours per week of unpaid labour, including childcare, housework, cooking, and cleaning, while men only put in 14 hours (Govan, 2018). On the other hand, in the UK, British women work 20 hours of household tasks per week and men work 11.5 hours per week (Ibbestson, 2022) so in both countries women still do the larger share of work in the home.

Due to the younger generations' perception of machismo as being antiquated, Spanish women are swiftly catching up to their European counterparts. However, there remains some trace of macho culture today. In Spain, women are paid 19% less in the private sector and 13% less in the public sector than men (Thorp, 2022). Despite how females are portrayed in the media as sharing power with men, they continue to play the traditional roles of mothers and homemakers who are subordinate to men. In the UK, women earn 19.3% less in the private sector and 9.3% less than men in the public sector on this measure so it is interesting to note that the gender pay gap is quite similar in both countries.

When my grandmother was young, the Catholic Church was the only institution that allowed a man and a woman to get married in Spain. Over time, Spain began to allow civil marriages where religion such as Catholicism was not involved in the ceremony. In 1998 a new law was approved allowing civil partnerships, providing the same legal rights for couples of the same or different sex.



Figure 5 My sister at her graduation in England in 2018.

My sister's experience is interesting to me because having grown up in Spain she then went to university in the UK, worked part-time whilst at university and then moved back to Spain after graduation, so she has experienced working and studying in the two cultures. To begin the interview, I asked my sister if she considers Spain a country that respects women's rights and her thoughts were:

"I don't feel like Spain is an equal country for both men and women because it's a very sexist country. In my experience, especially after I came back from studying in the UK, it was a big cultural shock because I was used to walking around without anyone

catcalling me and when I came back to Spain, I experienced more harassment. For example, guys grabbing me on nights out without consent, catcalling on the streets is super common especially if you are a girl and you are walking alone it does not matter what time of day it is, it is quite scary no matter where you live if it is a nice neighbourhood or not it is not nice to experience."

The power of social media today has had a huge positive impact for women in Spain to express themselves or bring women together to create a greater force *"now we can share our experiences amongst each other to the rest of the world, I can actually see what's going with every woman I know, and everyone on social media encourages us to film whenever a specific encounter with a man has occurred like a man following a woman on the street, it is easy to share to help each other and to have proof"*. However, social media also brings an expectation that women need to have perfect bodies and always look their best, which to my mind focuses too much on physical appearance and risks portraying women as sexual objects, turning back the clock on some of the advances gained since Franco's death.

The 8th of March is a significant date for feminism in Spain as it is the International Women's Day. On this day, protests across the country march to highlight the impact of women in the workplace as the gender pay gap in Spain stands at 19% less, as well as the time that women have spent working in housework in comparison to men. On the other hand, gender violence is also a huge reason why women protest on this day. For many years, Spain has paid close attention to issues of women's rights and violence against women. With every new occurrence of gender violence, it inspires thousands of women to demonstrate in the streets to the call of "not one more". Social media is also a very powerful tool to express awareness and gather evidence with recordings. In Spanish media and on TV, gender-based violence and gender justice receive a lot of attention under the heading "Violencia de Genero." My sister believes that women protest on the 8th of March because there is still a big pay gap between women and men in Spain, *"women have to fight a lot harder and a lot more than men to reach their goals"*.

Since Franco's death, feminism has become more mainstream, in 2019 close to six million women went on strike on International Women's Day (BBC 2018). Unions called on women to strike both at work and at home in what was labelled "a feminist strike". Mass protests also erupted after a high-profile rape case now called "La Manada", in which a gang of five men accused of sexually assaulting an 18-year-old girl in 2016 in Pamplona during the "San Fermín" festivities, were released on bail. High profile cases such as this one encourages more women to speak out against gender-based violence.



Figure 6 A protest against gender violence in Spain in 2019 (credit Juan Medina).

On the other hand, despite the many achievements towards equality, in 2013 a new Spanish populist radical right political party named VOX was founded. It is the first time that a far-right party has become popular since the death of the dictator Franco in 1975. This political party argues that measures to fight gender violence are discriminatory and ideological against men (Local, 2019). The political party VOX wants to undo policies that feminists have long fought for such as abortion and gender-based violence laws that they say discriminate against men. Conservative groups see these elections as a chance to make themselves heard. Both the political right and the left in Spain say that they seek equality although ironically there are only male candidates in the running to become the next Prime Minister. Nevertheless, after

the 2019 elections, the Spanish congress is the most gender equal in Europe with 46.8% of female representation.

6. Conclusion

In the last few decades there has been a lot of progress when it comes to women's rights in Spain, with important legislation in place to secure those rights. Nevertheless, there is still more that needs to be done. For example, at the legislative level, there is still discrimination between men and women in the succession to the crown (male heirs take precedence over their sisters, as is also the case in England) and gender violence against women is constantly present in the news. According to Spanish government statistics, at least 1,125 women have been killed by partners or ex-lovers since 2003 (Kassam, 2021).

Working on this essay, I have learnt so much about my family's history and the experiences of three women in my family. By comparing my grandmother's, my mother's, and my sister's experiences in Spain throughout the years, I have learned how Spain has dramatically changed when it comes to women's rights although there is still a long way to go. Spain is not as religious as it used to be. In my grandmother's era and during my mother's childhood, religion was mandatory and a woman's primary purpose in life was to be a mother, raise catholic well-educated children and to be a good housewife. In my sister's generation, religion has become more of a choice and largely disappeared from young people's lives. A woman's purpose nowadays is not just to be a mother, women have a choice if they want to have children or not. Nowadays, even though there is still a gender pay gap, women in Spain have more opportunities to have a career than they did during the Franco regime. It has also been interesting to note that, whilst my grandmother did all the cooking and cleaning, in our household, my mother and stepfather distribute the housework between them which shows how times are changing. I have also learnt about the Seccion Femenina which I was not aware of before. On one hand, it had a negative impact on most women in Spain as women

were raised to believe that they were subordinate to men. On the other hand, by interviewing my grandmother I learnt that in her experience, the Seccion Femenina had a positive impact as physical education was implemented in schools thanks to the organisation, giving girls a chance to exercise for the first time, something that only men were allowed to do before.

I have concluded that it is very important to have laws in place to protect women's rights, as I have seen the impact of legislation to improve the lives of women in Spain over the years, but also that society changes slowly and that the path to equality is not a smooth one. I believe every one of us, men, and women, need to be aware of injustice and call it out when we see it, as each one of us has a role to play in creating a world in which men and women truly have equal rights.

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