

The Opinions of Spanish Women Concerning the Dictatorship of Francisco Franco

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Bio:

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Abstract:

During the dictatorship of Francisco Franco in Spain (1939–1975), women's roles were limited to mother and housewife, with no involvement in politics. The political transition to a constitutional monarchy in 1978 granted women new civil liberties. However, women were rarely interviewed in public opinion polls at the time. A convenience sample of eight female Spaniards living in Valencia, Spain, who experienced life under Franco's dictatorship were surveyed. These women were contacted through the Director of Administrators for International Programs (AIP). The women were asked their opinions concerning Franco, King Juan Carlos I, dictatorship, democracy, and their national/political identity as women. We found support for Franco, especially among women who were better off economically and well educated.

Introduction

From 1936 to 1939, Spain was raging with civil war. Generalissimo Francisco Franco had risen to defeat the monarchical system and establish his dictatorship, which would last for 36 years. During this time, societal and political oppression were severe. As in any dictatorship, public opposition to the government was not tolerated, and anyone who took a stand against the government would most likely disappear or be killed. Women had very few civil liberties; they were only allowed to be housewives and were not permitted to hold jobs or opinions for that matter. Their role was to stay silent in their husbands' shadows, taking care of the house and children.

In 1975, upon Franco's death, a constitutional monarchy was established. This new democracy gave the citizens of Spain new freedoms to enjoy. Women were especially affected by this transition. Their roles both in the household and in society were permitted to change virtually overnight. The question to be asked is how much did they change and how did they feel about it?

Rationale

I chose to do this study for two reasons. First, I have been interested in this field of study for quite some time. I began taking Spanish language courses about 9 years ago, I am an International Studies and Spanish double major, and I went on a study abroad trip to Valencia, Spain, in the summer of 2003. After falling in love with the language and then being exposed to the Spanish culture and national history through my classes, it only took a short, 5-week visit to Spain to inspire me to do some kind of research in that geographical location. Because my concentration within my field of study is International Politics, it was easy to identify a certain area in which to begin. Second, not much research has been done specifically on women's

opinions concerning this particular political transition. Therefore, in an effort to narrow my topic of study further and to rectify this lack of research, I chose to focus on women.

Research Questions

With my research, I intended to find answers to the following questions:

- How do women, adults when Franco ruled, view Franco as a person and political leader?
- How do these women view their own positions in politics and society today?
- How much have their positions changed?
- How do they compare the governments under Franco and after Franco?

The focus of the research was on answering the first question in particular.

Literature Review

There are only four studies that investigate the opinions of Spanish women toward the Franco regime. Rubio-Marin (2003) addresses the limited freedoms of women during the Franco regime. The author states, "Under Franco, women were relegated to the private realm and oppressed in a patriarchal family structure which was conceived as the main cell of civil society" (Rubio-Marín, 2003, p. 239). Women were expected to quit their jobs on marrying so that they could retreat to the home to cultivate and take care of their families. During Franco's regime, a woman's place was in the home and clearly not in the workforce or politics.

Radcliff (2001) specifically addresses the issue of female political identity. The political transition caused women's place to change from "different" to "equal." She also explains that most democratizers agreed that women's liberties must be addressed because their status under Franco was equal to that of the mentally incapacitated, lacking the basic legal autonomy required of a free citizen. Additionally, the construction of female citizenship is still being worked out to this day.

The third article (Narotzky & Smith, 2002) resulted from fieldwork done in Vega Baja del Segura in Spain. Quotes from women in the area reveal contradictory ideas held by women in their search for political identity. The authors of the article interpret one quote as “both support for the hegemonic ideology of the Francoist regime, together with a veiled critique of the Falangist violent procedures of punishment...” (Narotzky & Smith, 2002, p. 220). This interpretation very clearly shows the approval yet disapproval of the Franco regime. The authors state that even today there is a collective silence among women because of their experiences with past suffering and repression.

Comment:

Aquilar and Humlebaek (2002) verify my suspicion that Spain is still somewhat divided in its opinions of Francisco Franco. The authors clearly state that a division still existed between Francoists and their opposition in 1985, 10 years after Franco's death. In 1984, 21% of the population said that Franco's regime was the best they had seen in the last 60 years. Not only did Franco's followers stay loyal to him, many Spaniards admitted to there being good aspects alongside the bad ones during Franco's regime. Furthermore, many associate Francoism with order and economic prosperity. This article revealed that the current political party in power, the conservative Partido Popular, admitted nothing when the liberal workers' party labeled it Francoist in 1996. It was not until February of 2002 that the Partido Popular party agreed to condemn the dictatorship. It is obvious that Francoism is still an issue hotly debated.

Hypotheses

1. Upper-class women will have a more favorable attitude toward Franco than other women will.

This hypothesis was formed based on the typical relationship between a dictator and the upper class. On average, the upper class in a dictatorship is favored by the dictator and tends to become richer while the lower class tends to get poorer.

2. The more religious Catholic women will have a more favorable attitude toward Franco than other women will.

This hypothesis was formed based on the religious preferences of Franco. He believed strongly in the Catholic faith, and for this reason, I argue that those who were in religious agreement with him would have a more favorable attitude toward him.

3. Women with higher levels of education will have a more favorable attitude toward Franco than other women will.

This hypothesis is closely related to the first. Women who could afford to get an education were most likely within the upper class, which, according to the first hypothesis, was likely to have a more favorable attitude toward Franco.

Methodology

I composed a survey of 43 questions, which were divided into sections, including background information, political opinions, opinions of Francisco Franco and King Juan Carlos I, and societal opinions (refer to Appendix A). To obtain a pool of subjects, I contacted the Director of Administrators for International Programs (AIP), which was the school in Valencia, Spain, that I attended in the summer of 2003. Because the AIP program includes staying with a host family, the Director of AIP had direct access to a group of women who happened to meet the criteria for participation in the research, in that they currently live in Spain and also lived there during the Franco regime. These women were asked to volunteer to participate in this study.

Limitations and Challenges

The first limitation of this study was the lack of a local pool of subjects. Working on a project that required overseas research while not being overseas myself proved to be quite challenging. Second, although I have been speaking Spanish for about 9 years, the language barrier still proved to be a limitation. Third, working with the Institute Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Texas to get approval to perform the research was a long process of revision and resubmission of the information letter, consent form, and survey. Along the way, some unpreventable delays kept the surveys from being administered on my original time schedule. My major professor had planned to go to Spain in the summer of 2004 with the study abroad program and had intended to administer the surveys for me. However, she got severely ill during her stay in Spain and was unable to distribute the surveys. Ultimately, the questionnaires were mailed to the AIP office. After reviewing them, the Director of AIP wanted some changes made to omit my personal information and that of my major professors, so new surveys had to be printed and re-sent. Much time passed between the sending of the surveys and the receiving of the completed ones. Once they finally came in, I was disappointed to see that only eight women had chosen to participate. All the participants did sign the informed consent forms as required by the UNT IRB. Because of the small number of cases, none of the results are statistically significant. Thus, this study is a pilot project for the larger study I plan to pursue while in graduate school.

Data analysis for the research data included calculation of frequency and percent distributions calculated for the sociodemographic characteristics of the women, as well as for the independent and dependent variables in the study. Contingency table analysis was used to

analyze the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the study.

Inferential statistics were not appropriate for use in this study because of the small sample size.

Results

I will discuss the frequencies for the variables included in the survey in the following section. Most of the women surveyed, 62.5%, are currently married, and 87.5% of the women surveyed were married during the Franco regime. All of the women surveyed have children. Twenty-five percent of the women surveyed are between the ages of 41 and 50 and the remaining 75% are between the ages of 51 and 60. The current economic status of the participants was measured and we found that 12.5% of the participants are ranked in the lower to middle class, 75% are ranked in the middle class, and the remaining 12.5% are ranked in the upper class. The participants' economic status during the Franco regime was also measured, revealing that 37.5% of the participants were ranked in the lower to middle class, 25% were ranked in the middle class, and 37.5% were ranked in the upper class. All of the participants lived in the city during the Franco regime. During the Franco regime, the women's ability to economically provide for their families varied quite a bit from somewhat unable to extremely able to provide for their families. The modal category, containing 37.5% of the participants, is an average ability to provide economically for their families. Thirty-seven percent have a high school diploma, 50% have a bachelor's degree, and 13% have a master's degree. The women vary in religiosity from not at all to very religious; 12.5% stated they were not at all religious; 25% stated they were somewhat religious; 25% stated they were above average in religiosity; and 37.5% stated they were very religious. In terms of religious affiliation, 87.5% of the women align themselves with Catholicism and 12.5% with other religions. Most, 87.5% of the

participants, claim to have had the same religion during the Franco regime while 12.5% stated they do not have the same religion as they did during the Franco regime.

The two dependent variables in the study were (1) the participants' opinions of Franco, and (2) their opinion regarding whether or not Spain was more peaceful under Franco. Among the eight participants, 12.5% responded that Franco was a very bad person; 37.5% responded that he was a bad person; 25% responded that he was a good person; and 25% had no opinion. Participants were asked opinions of whether or not society was more peaceful under Franco or not; 62.5% responded no, 25% responded somewhat, and 12.5% responded yes.

The cross-tabulation of certain dependent and independent variables reveals interesting results. Tables 1 and 2 compare the same dependent variable, their opinion of Franco, with two independent variables to see if there is any relationship. In Table 1, the dependent variable—what kind of person was Franco?—is cross-tabulated with the participants' ability to provide economically for their families during the Franco regime.

In reviewing the data from Table 1, it seems that the more able the women were to provide for their families, the more positive their opinions of Franco were, which provides support for my first hypothesis, although the data can only be successful at this time because of the small sample size. In Table 2, the same dependent variable was compared with the women's level of education to see if it had any effect on their opinions of Franco. From the data, it appears that as the women's level of education increased, their opinions of Franco got better, which provides preliminary support for my third hypothesis.

In Table 3, the dependent variable is cross-tabulated with their ability to provide economically for their families during the Franco regime. This table does not show an apparent relationship between these two variables.

In Table 4, the same dependent variable is compared with the women's levels of education. Once again, education seems to have a positive relationship with the dependent variable. It seems that, as the level of education increases, so does the positive opinion of whether or not society was more peaceful under Franco.

Tables 5 and 6 contain frequencies of two additional variables that provide insight into women's opinions of Franco that might prove useful in future research. Table 5 contains frequency data for whether or not the women respected Franco. An examination of the data reveals that 75% of the women respected Franco and 12.5% respected him somewhat, compared to only 12.4% who did not respect him. Table 6 contains frequency data for the participants' evaluation of Franco's leadership of Spain. Fifty percent of the sample believe that his leadership was good or somewhat good, while 37.5% believe that it was bad or very bad, with 12.5% having no opinion. Again, the tendency is for the women to perceive Franco as either good or neutral.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study revealed that older women continue to perceive Franco positively nearly 30 years after the end of his dictatorship. The perceptions are especially likely to be positive if the women were better able to support their families during his regime, and if they are well educated.

I would make a few changes if I were to continue this research. First, I would revise the survey. Many of the questions had far too many responses to choose from making the data hard to classify and sort. For example, in the opinion questions, the answers would be either yes or no, rather than absolutely not, somewhat, yes, very much yes, definitely, and no opinion. Fewer response options would provide clearer tendencies, if they exist, in cross-tabulations with independent variables. Also, I would do more to encourage free response comments. In this

survey, a space was left for the women to leave comments if they had any, but no one utilized that space. In the next survey, I would re-word that area, emphasizing the importance of their comments to the accuracy of the research.

Second, I would go to Spain and be involved with the data collection. This way, I could more easily monitor the progress and encourage more women to participate, which would hopefully render the statistics more significant.

Experience and Benefits

After being involved in research as an undergraduate, I have learned many things that will help me be more successful in graduate school. First, I gained knowledge of the basic research procedure: discover a problem, develop a purpose and rationale for research, develop research questions, form hypotheses, compile a literature review, decide on a methodology, and so on. Second, I gained experience in drafting a survey, working with the IRB, and using the SPSS (Statistical Package in the Social Sciences) data analysis program. Third, I had several opportunities to present my research pre-proposal, proposal, and preliminary findings. Most importantly, I went through all of this, not on my own, but with dedicated professors who were there to help me through it all for the first time. Overall, I have gained much wisdom for future projects and have developed a base proposal for future research in graduate school.

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Table 1. The Relationship Between Ability to Provide for Family Under Franco with Perception of the Kind of Person Franco Was

Crosstab

			Ability to Provide for Family Economically under Franco?			Total
			Less able to provide	Average	More able to provide	
What Kind of Person Was Franco?	Bad	Count % within Ability to Provide for Family Economically under Franco?	1 50.0%	3 100.0%	0 .0%	4 50.0%
	No opinion	Count % within Ability to Provide for Family Economically under Franco?	1 50.0%	0 .0%	1 33.3%	2 25.0%
	Good	Count % within Ability to Provide for Family Economically under Franco?	0 .0%	0 .0%	2 66.7%	2 25.0%
Total	Count % within Ability to Provide for Family Economically under Franco?	2 100.0%	3 100.0%	3 100.0%	8 100.0%	

Table 2. The Relationship Between Education with
Perception of the Kind of Person Franco Was

Crosstab

			Current Level of Education			Total
			High School	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	
What Kind of Person Was Franco?	Bad	Count	3	1	0	4
		% within Current Level of Education	100.0%	25.0%	.0%	50.0%
	No opinion	Count	0	2	0	2
		% within Current Level of Education	.0%	50.0%	.0%	25.0%
	Good	Count	0	1	1	2
		% within Current Level of Education	.0%	25.0%	100.0%	25.0%
Total	Count	3	4	1	8	
	% within Current Level of Education	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 3. Relationship of Ability to Provide for Family Under Franco with Perception of Whether Society Was More Peaceful Under Franco

Crosstab

			Ability to Provide for Family Economically under Franco?			Total
			Less able to provide	Average	More able to provide	
Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	No	Count	1	2	2	5
		% within Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	Somewhat	Count	1	1	0	2
		% within Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	0	0	1	1
		% within Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	2	3	3	8	
	% within Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	25.0%	37.5%	37.5%	100.0%	

Table 4. Relationship of Education with Perception of Whether Society Was More Peaceful Under Franco

Crosstab

			Current Level of Education			Total
			High School	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	
Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	No	Count	2	3	0	5
		% within Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	40.0%	60.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Somewhat	Count	1	1	0	2
		% within Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	0	0	1	1
		% within Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	4	1	8	
	% within Society More Peaceful Under Franco?	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%	100.0%	

Table 5. Frequency Distribution for Respect for Franco

		Respect Franco?			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	1	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Somewhat	1	12.5	12.5	25.0
	Yes	6	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	8	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Frequency Distribution for Evaluation of Franco's Leadership of Spain

		Franco's Leadership of Spain			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very bad	1	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Bad	2	25.0	25.0	37.5
	Somewhat good	1	12.5	12.5	50.0
	Good	3	37.5	37.5	87.5
	No opinion	1	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	8	100.0	100.0	