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MULTIPLE TIMES A REBEL

*The Intersections between Gender, Nationalism
and Religion within Feminist Independentist
Organizations in Catalonia*

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Intersectionality has so far been used as a framework to combat the universalist features of Western feminism. An intersectional lens has been used to bring to light the multiple oppressions that women face, which does not solely focus upon gender, but also includes: race, ethnicity, nationality, etc. This research will expand on this theory to demonstrate that an intersectional framework can also show how women have reclaimed their agency within feminist activism. Within the case study of Catalonia, feminist independentist organizations have been examined in order to see how the intersections between gender, nationalism and religion are present within their activism. As the Nationalist-Catholic Franco regime had a severe impact upon the local and historical context of Catalonia, this study will show how these concepts are interrelated and how this has shaped the multiple oppressions that Catalan women face. Besides, it will elaborate upon how this resulted in a more mobilized and intersectional form of feminism. Also, by applying an intersectional lens to study these women, the limitations and frictions that this new form of feminism entails have been examined.

Introduction

*A l'atzar agraeixo tres dons: haver nascut dona,
de classe baixa i nació oprimida.
I el tèrbol atzur de ser tres voltes rebel.*

*I am grateful to fate for three gifts: to have been born a woman,
from the working class and an oppressed nation.
And the turbid azure of being three times a rebel.*

Within this Poem *Divisa* (Motto) by the Catalan poet Maria Mercè Marçal in the book *Cau de llunes* in 1977 we can see how she defines the various ways in which she has been oppressed: because of her gender, her class and her nationality. However, she defines this as a strength rather than a weakness. She argues that these multiple oppressions have made her three times a rebel (Abrams, n.d). This research will have a more in-depth focus upon these multiple oppressions that Catalan women face and how this translates to an intersectional form of feminism. Regarding intersectional feminism, specific attention will be given to the concepts of gender, nationalism and religion.

As this research is conducted in Catalonia, I will briefly explain the historical context in which it is situated. Since the 17th century there is a strong sentiment of independentism from Spain within Catalonia. After General Franco won the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the end of the Catalan autonomy and its repression started. After Franco's death, Catalonia still wanted independence from Spain. However, around 2009, certain events happened that fueled dissatisfaction amongst the Catalan population, such as economic repressions because of the financial crisis. This resulted in symbolic referendums of independence by several municipalities in Catalonia. The call for a binding referendum was considered illegal by the Spanish government, but happened anyway in 2017. It resulted in a lot of police violence and arrests. Since then the conflict continues (Rodriguez, n.d.).

Within this situation, women were repressed because of their Catalan identity, but also because of their gender. Hence they experienced multiple oppressions based on their identity (Gallagher Kearney, 2012, p. 6). They found that gender equality was not really an issue within the political agenda for independence of the leftist parties that they were active in (Alonso, 2018; Rodó-Zárate, 2016). This awareness has resulted in a strong feminist mobilization within Catalonia. Whilst nationalism has had for a long time a negative association for feminists, these

Catalan women engage within nationalist politics to reclaim their agency and see it as an opportunity to create an independent, feminist and anti-capitalist state (Alonso, 2018; Cabezas, 2022; Roqueta-Fernández, 2019).

Furthermore, this research will also focus upon the role of religion, as the gender conservatism that was promoted during the National-Catholic dictatorship under Franco meant a set-back to women's rights (Cabezas, 2022). This resulted in a negative association towards religion for many women in Catalonia. Even though, the church in Catalonia did play an important role during the independence process, this negative association remained. Therefore, it is interesting to see how these women relate to religion and secularism (Astor, 2020).

I will approach intersectionality as an open system in which the interconnections and tensions between different dynamics such as race, gender, class and nation can be investigated (Cho et al., 2013, p. 788). Besides, I will see how it can be used as a framework to study not only the various oppressions that women face, as has been done by Crenshaw (1991), but also to show how within this particular context, it can be used to study feminist activism. According to Rodó-Zárate (2019), activism is an important mechanism for the development of intersectional thought. Therefore, I will see how Catalan independentist feminists have faced multiple oppressions and how they have articulated this into a more intersectional form of feminism, but I will also use an intersectional lens myself to study their activism and dynamics.

Hence, this research will show how the concepts of gender, nationalism and religion are interrelated within different feminist independentist movements and how their activism reflects particular articulations of these concepts. The purpose of my study is to find out whether this has resulted in a more intersectional form of feminism within the local and historical context of Catalonia. Also, I will research what the implications are of this. My specific objective is to research the ideological values that persons within feminist independentist movements in Catalonia have and how they propagate this through their activism. Therefore, my research question is: *How do gender, nationalism and religion intersect within different feminist independentist organizations in Catalonia?*

This research will investigate the fluidity of the concepts of nationalism, feminism and religion the different meanings they can have in different situations. In the context of Catalonia, it will examine how agency can be claimed and previous negative associations to these concepts can be translated into new forms of liberation and emancipation. The key question that I will ask is how the various oppressions that these women have faced, have resulted in a more intersectional and mobilized form of feminist activism. Regarding independentism, the Catalan language and its' comparison to other oppressed nations such as Latin America will be

investigated. Beside a feminist and independentist state, anti-capitalism as an essential factor for these women will be examined. Furthermore, as the Nationalist-Catholic Franco regime has resulted in a negative association towards religion it will be interesting to see how secularism is being regarded. Besides, the role that age plays regarding the perceptions of these concepts will be taken into account, as some women of older age have still experienced the Franco regime. I will argue that being aware of these local contexts can pose a challenge to a more universal or western form of feminism. However, within this research I will also elaborate upon the limitations and tensions that arise when taking an intersectional approach and I will question whether an intersectional approach also means that it is more inclusive. Within the next section, I will briefly introduce the different organizations that I have researched.

For this research I have interviewed women of the feminist organization *Feministes per la Independencia* (Feminists for Independence), *Hora Bruixa* (Witch Hour) and the *Esquerra Independentista* (Independentist Left), of which more specifically the *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (Popular Unity Candidacy) and *Endavant* (Forward). The women of *FxI* define themselves as a group that demands a free country but also aspires to be independent of patriarchy, capitalism and militarism (*Feministes per la Independencia*, n.d.). They consist mostly of older women who were raised during the dictatorship of Franco. The women of *FxI* meet every Thursday in *Ca la Dona* in Barcelona. This is a common place that has been given by the city council of Barcelona so feminist groups could meet and start initiatives.

The other feminist collective that I will discuss is *Hora Bruixa*, they define themselves as feminist, anti-capitalist and revolutionary (*Hora Bruixa*, n.d.). This is a collective from *Sant Cugat del Vallès*, a town near Barcelona and they have overall younger and very active members. I have also spoken to women that were involved in the political left *Esquerra Independentista* (EI), which advocates a feminist, independent republic for the Catalan Countries and challenges right-wing populism and fascism (Enguix Grau, 2021, p. 226). Besides, I have spoken to women from *Candidatura Unidat Popular* (CUP) and *Endavant*. *CUP* is a national assembly political organization, which works for an independent, socialist, ecologically sustainable country, territorially balanced and detached from patriarchal forms of domination (CUP, n.d.). *Endavant* is the strategic organization, they make their decisions in assemblies where militants participate (Enguix Grau, 2020, p. 233).

Within this section I will elaborate upon how I will organize this research according to the different chapters in order to answer my research question. Within the first chapter I will give an overview of the literature that has been produced around the topic of gender, nationalism and religion within the academic debate on a global and Catalonia level. The second chapter

will elaborate upon the theoretical lens of intersectional feminism. The third chapter will be about my methodology and account for the specific methodological choices that I have made and why they suit my research best. Within the fourth chapter I will elaborate more upon the context of intersectional feminism within Catalonia. The fifth chapter will focus more upon Catalan intersectional feminism itself and the different aspects that it entails. The sixth chapter will elaborate upon the conflicts and differences that arise between Catalan independentist feminism and other types of feminism, both within Spain and Catalonia itself. Finally, I will end with a conclusion.

Chapter 1 Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter I will elaborate upon the literature that has been produced around the topic of my research. This literature review will set the basis of my area of study, argument, and research question. Firstly, I will elaborate upon the debate around nationalism and gender, which was initially a difficult relationship for feminists, but also developed as a basis of opportunity. Secondly, I will elaborate upon the concepts of gender and religion, the negative association that is tied to this interlinkage and its connection to secularism. Thirdly, I will focus upon intersectionality, which proves to be a necessary tool for studying identity politics. Finally, I will end with a conclusion in which I will argue that researching the intersections between feminism, nationalism and religion is essential for understanding the activism of feminist movements in Barcelona.

1.1 Nationalism and Gender

Within nationalist literature, the relevance of gender relations has for a long time been neglected (Alonso, 2018, p. 462). However, scholars such as Abdo (1991) and Yuval-Davis (1997) have contested this view by explicitly including gender in the analytical discourse around nationalism. Yuval-Davis (1997) argues that women are regarded as the reproducers of the nation and its boundaries, both in a biological sense and in a cultural and symbolic sense. Within this regard, women are regarded as an essential part of the survival of the nation state.

However, whilst the importance of gender for nationalism became more acknowledged, it was perceived in a negative sense. Feminist studies showed that women's bodies were regarded as national territory and thus controlled, used, disciplined and raped in order to achieve national victories and stable state demography's (Abdo, 1991; West, 1997). Besides, there was a fear that through nationalist sentiments, cross-regional solidarity amongst women could not be achieved (Alonso, 2018). Therefore, feminists had a difficult relationship with the concept of nationalism, as it was perceived to have a negative effect on women and revolutionary identities were seen as clashing with feminist identities (Abdo, 1991, p. 19). However, this reveals a paradox because whilst women are used as symbols and restricted by their otherness, they also have agency regarding their participatory role in the reproduction of the nation state

(Cabezas, 2022). Thus, there is a tension between those who see nationalism as a threat for women's rights and those who see it as an opportunity.

Several scholars have criticized the negative stance towards nationalism of mainly Western feminists as obscuring the heterogeneity of women and its significance (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Crenshaw, 1991; Rodó-Zárate, 2020a; Spelman, 1988). Spelman (1988) argues that their promotion of an essential 'womanness' disregards several differences such as: race, class, religion, ethnicity and culture. Within this sense, the notion of sisterhood has been problematized, as it excludes these aspects of identity. In order to avoid a post-colonial relationship between Western feminists and non-Western feminists, it should be acknowledged that feminist goals cannot be the same in different historical contexts (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983).

Today's women around the world have demonstrated that they can both be definers of nationalism and of feminism (West, 1997). According to West (1997) these women within feminist nationalist movements are reconceptualizing their agency with regards to nation states (p. xiii). Besides, she argues that we should recognize the way these women define feminism and nationalism themselves, as the cultural and historical contexts in which it emerges are essential (p. xv). However, she argues that aspects which are shared cross-culturally within these local contexts, can be regarded as a sort of universal feminism. She dismisses the critique of a 'western' discourse, as she argues that: "feminist social movement activists have been demonstrating on a daily level through their organizing over the past twenty years that there can be a global phenomenon of feminist nationalism" (West, 1997 p. xv).

Thus, we can see how the academic debate has shifted from a negative connotation between nationalism and feminism towards a positive connotation. Western feminists have been criticized for universalizing the women's struggle over other historical and locally specific struggles. However, there are also voices that argue that a more global initiative of social movements is possible. Within the case of Catalonia, we can also see how there was first a hesitation of feminists towards nationalism, but that this later on changed with the emergence of feminist movements.

1.2 Nationalism and Gender within Catalonia

For a long time, feminist organizations within Spain were also very hesitant to engage with nationalism (Alonso, 2018; Cabezas, 2022; Roqueta-Fernández, 2019). This has its roots within the history of Spain, as the gender conservatism that was promoted during the National-Catholic dictatorship under Franco meant a set-back to women's rights (Cabezas, 2022, p. 322). This will be elaborated further on in the section on gender and religion. This period has resulted in a breach between society and the Catholic Church hierarchy. As a result, policies such as same-sex marriage or abortion have not been modified so far by anti-gender advocates as they do not enjoy the support of the population, who still remembers the church's support for Franco (p. 324).

We see this dilemma between gender and nationalism, within the Catalan independence process as well. According to Roqueta-Fernández (2019), this can be illustrated by the fact that the Catalan hegemonic feminist movement has not incorporated the struggle for self-determination within its demands and the way women within the independence referendum of the first of October 2017 were displayed (p. 100). She argues that Catalan feminist organizations did not take into account the repression of feminist policies in Catalonia (p. 101).

According to Alonso (2018) this has been the result of a high level of decentralization within the feminist movements in Spain. This means that region-specific issues such as territorial debates remain rather marginal and did not influence the Catalan hegemonic movement significantly. Rodó-Zárate (2016) argues that the reluctance to engage with territorial issues has its roots in the fear of the feminist movement of being co-opted by public institutions. However, Alonso (2018) argues that this is paradoxical as women played a significant role within territorial activism (p. 471). Thus, the initial hesitation for nationalism resulted in the fact that hegemonic Catalan feminist organizations were not really engaged with the independent movement, despite the active participation of women within social movements concerned with territorial issues.

However, some women's organizations and grassroots platforms did emerge in response to the referendum process (Alonso, 2018; Rodó-Zárate, 2016). *Feministes per la Independència* (Fxi) was the only autonomous organization that engaged with issues of territory and nationalism (Alonso, 2018, p. 472). Besides, far left parties such as CUP also actively engaged in grassroots campaigning (p. 475). For this reason, I have chosen to study *Feministes per la Independència* and CUP as my case studies for this research, next to *Endavant* and *Hora Bruixa*.

Nevertheless, a remaining problem that the feminist pro-independentist groups encountered was that gender was not really an issue within political agenda for independence (Alonso, 2018; Rodó-Zárate, 2016). Roqueta-Fernández (2019) argues that the celebration of the referendum showed the differentiation between masculinity and femininity roles in relation to the nation. Jobs which were perceived as masculine, such as the local police and the firemen, were presented as the heroes who protected the citizens from the also masculine sectors of the state security, which were presented as the evil forces who were beating helpless grandmothers during the referendum violence (p. 104, 105). Therefore, because of all these negative connotations described above, the feminist pro-independentist organizations wanted to incorporate feminist values to a process that was seen as patriarchal (Alonso, 2018, p. 472). Thus, rather than staying away from nationalism, because of its patriarchal and negative associations, these groups engaged with nationalism in order to incorporate a more positive stance towards it.

Studies have also shown that there are positive associations possible between nationalism and gender in Catalonia (Alonso, 2018; Rodó-Zárate et al., 2019; Rodó-Zárate, 2020; Nash, 1996). Furthermore, Alonso (2018) has argued that nationalist sentiments can also be expressed through a liberatory framework (p. 617). Within the case of Catalonia, this is very important as it shows that the struggle for independence should not only be regarded in relation to the national identity but that it can also contribute to broader social change. This explains why new feminist groups within Catalonia are so engaged within the independence movement (p. 620). It is even being argued that the integration of Catalan women into the independentist movement has formed their view of feminism (Nash, 1996, p. 45).

Besides, Roqueta-Fernández (2019) has shown that including feminism within the independentist movement can also challenge the patriarchal status quo. She argues that this has been illustrated by several conferences, such as one which opted for a feminist and LGBTBI republic held in Cornellà de Llobregat in Barcelona from February 22 to 23, 2019. The participants claimed that disengagement from the state also provided chances for disengagement from racist and colonial power relations (p. 106).

Thus, the nationalist-Catholic Franco regime initially resulted in a negative association of feminist groups in Catalonia towards nationalism and religion. However, we have also seen that new feminist pro-independentist organizations have reclaimed their agency regarding independentism. Within the next section I will elaborate whether the same has been done with religion, or whether the negative association from the Franco period remains. First, I will elaborate upon the role of religion and secularism within the broader literature around gender.

1.3 Religion and Gender

As we have seen so far, on the one hand within the nationalist literature gender relations have often been neglected. Whilst on the other hand, in the feminist literature, nationalist, ethnic and religious relations have often been neglected. Thus, an intersectional approach is needed that incorporates all different aspects of identity. Nevertheless, when looking at the literature around nationalism and feminism in Catalonia, what is missing is the religious, spiritual or secular connection.

Various scholars have been questioning the traditional assumption that secularism is inherently tied to sexual liberation and women's emancipation and religion to oppression and gender inequality (Butler, 2008; Mahmood, 2013; Scott, 2018). Mahmood (2013) is one of the scholars who challenges the neutrality that is associated with secularism. She argues that secularization did not only consist of a separation between the church and the state, but that it should be seen as a form of religion in harmony with the politics of liberalism and rationality (p. 48). Often the tensions between the concepts of religion, secularism and nationalism play out in sexual politics and the body (Butler, 2008). Therefore, it is very important to take the religious and secular dimension into account when studying issues concerning gender, sexuality and nationalism.

According to Scott (2018) there is made distinction between the public sphere, which is connected to reason and being objective and the private sphere, which is connected to passion and subjectivity (p. 68). Within this sense, gender differences were divided into the separate spheres. The public and private spheres were portrayed as complementary opposites, in which the world of market and politics was symbolized by a man's world and the family and religious domain as woman's (p. 31, 32). However, in practice it is not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between the public and the private sphere, nor between religion and secularism or men and women. This can also be seen within the debate around abortion.

The Catholic church has a long history of interfering within sexual politics, especially with reproductive matters such as abortion (Klassen, 2019). They promote a model of sexuality which is based on the heterosexual, reproductive nuclear family. In recent years, abortion regulations have resulted in heavy protest movements around the globe. Recently, this has also been the case in the United States. After the Supreme Court ruled to overturn *Roe vs Wade*, which meant that within some states it would be hard or impossible to get an abortion, there was a wave of pro-life and pro-abortion demonstrations, both in the United States and abroad. This shows us that abortion regulations remain a topic of heavy debate (Palma, 2022).

According to Klassen (2019) it is very paradoxical that very private matters such as abortion have shifted to the public sphere under the notion of secularism, as secularism has been perceived to separate the public from the private (p. 22). This also shows us that a clear distinction between the private and the public is not possible, just as a clear-cut separation between religion and secularism is also not possible.

Thus, feminist groups have had a negative stance towards religion because of the discourse that places religion in an oppressive light and might associate themselves rather with secularism. However, we have seen that the distinction between secularism and religion is not as clear-cut and that secularism does not necessarily guarantee gender equality. Therefore, it is interesting to see what the stance is of feminist pro-independentist organizations in Catalonia regarding religion and secularism.

1.4 Religion and Gender in Catalonia

When looking at the specific case of Catalonia, we can see how religion, in the form of Catholic hegemony, played an important role during the Franco dictatorship from 1939 to 1975. According to Morcillo (2010), during the Franco regime there were ongoing tensions between the attempt of the regime to control and discipline the bodies of women in favor of its National Catholic ideals and the new socio-economic changes that posed a threat to that control. The Franco regime tried to repress the image of the liberated woman by replacing her with a pious, motherly and devoted true Catholic woman. However, pressing women into these roles only made them fight back more heavily. When Spain opened up in the 1950s and 1960s to the consumer economy, it made room for the new, modern Western woman who was everything the true Catholic woman did not represent: rebellious, sexual and adventurous (p. 14).

This process can also be seen within feminist movements in Spain. Nyhagen and Halsaa (2016), have argued that because of the submissive and family centered role promoted by the church, the women's movement in Spain was for a long time on a small note. However, during the dictatorship feminists were already working to improve the position of women within the Catholic church. When the dictatorship ended, this resulted in a fast emergence of several women's movements who had a strong opposition towards the Catholic church (p. 13).

Thus, because of the privileged position of the Catholic church during the Franco dictatorship and its control over women, women's movements had a negative association with the Catholic church. Therefore, it is interesting to research what the connection and association

of today's feminist organizations within Catalonia is with regard to religion and specifically the Catholic church.

According to Griera (2020), the secularization process is very diverse within Spain. Territories such as Catalonia and the Basque Country, which are known to have a high percentage of independentist sentiments, also have a higher percentage of secularization. Besides this territorial difference, age difference plays an important role. The younger generation, especially those who live in urban and northern areas, have a higher level of secularization amongst them (p. 321, 322). Therefore, my study will also focus upon the role of age and territory regarding the secularization level and stances towards religion in Catalonia. As a result, an intersectional approach will be taken where all these different elements will be taken into account when studying feminist independentist organizations in Catalonia. In the next section, I will elaborate more upon the importance of taking an intersectional approach when studying issues concerning identity politics.

1.5 Intersectionality

Within feminist literature, the intersection between racism and sexism has for a long time not been present, whilst it is for people in real life. Therefore, when studying identity politics several scholars have argued that it is very important to recognize intragroup differences (Butler, 1999; Crenshaw, 1991, 1998; Rodó-Zárate, 2020). Butler (1999) problematizes the category of woman herein. She argues that identity categories which have been seen as essential for feminist mobilization, actually only constrain the cultural variety that feminism is supposed to dedicate itself to (p. 187). Initially Crenshaw (1991) her research was focused on the experiences of black women's lives in order to show that these women faced double marginalization and that the intersections between racism and sexism cannot be understood when looking at these dimensions separately (p. 1244). She responds to the criticism that intersectionality is only suitable for black women by arguing that intersectional studies have been motivated by a wide range of power relations and that insights are put into practice in various ways (Cho et al., 2013, p. 807).

Besides, Rodó-Zárate and Jorba (2020), refute the criticism towards intersectionality as causing fragmentation and lacking solidarity. They argue that a person is not fragmented just because their identity consists of several social positions. According to them, a person is whole precisely because several aspects can be identified (p. 10). This illustrates that researching the

intersectionality between various markers of identity is still crucial when studying social movements and political processes. Within this sense, religion, gender, sexuality and nationalism should all be taken into account when researching feminist pro-independentist groups in Catalonia.

1.6 Intersectionality in Catalonia

When taking an intersectional approach to the case of Catalonia, one can see how women experience multiple oppressions (Gallagher Kearney, 2012; Rodó-Zárate et al., 2019; Rodó-Zárate, 2020). During the dictatorship under Franco, the Spanish government attempted to eradicate the culture and language of Catalonia. Whilst women experienced repression based upon their Catalan identity because of the nationalist ideology of Spain, they also suffered from the oppressive Spanish and Catalan patriarchal cultures. Thus, women faced gender oppression and oppression of the Catalan culture and language (Gallagher Kearney, 2012, p. 6). Rodó-Zárate (2020) has argued that focusing upon marginalized regions' expression of multiple oppressions within social mobilizations offers new insights. Within this sense, the focus upon minority languages challenges the hegemony of the English language and cultural imperialism. Besides, she argues that focusing upon the intersectionality between gender and national identity within stateless nations, gives new insights into the relationship between nationalism and feminism (p. 610).

Furthermore, Rodó-Zárate (2019) has also done research into lesbian activism in Barcelona and concluded that activism is an important mechanism for the development of intersectional thought. She criticizes the fact that academia is often perceived as the place of knowledge, whilst proposals within activism are often silenced (p. 161). Rather she proposes to analyze how activist groups relate to various oppressions within their activism from an intersectional perspective (p. 156). Thus, researching discourses and activism of feminist independentist organizations in Catalonia can shed new light upon intersectionality regarding identity politics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen how the Nationalist-Catholic Franco regime meant a set-back to women's rights. Therefore, initially the women's movement globally and in Spain had little

interest in combining feminist thought with nationalist values. However, post-colonial feminists have reclaimed the agency of women's rights by arguing that nationalism can serve as a form resistance and political activism.

Nevertheless, because of the strong ties that the Catholic Church had with the Franco dictatorship, secularism is stronger within the autonomous region of Catalonia and amongst the younger generations. Within the Catalan case, nationalist and feminist sentiments have been very strongly present. Still, the connection with religion within these movements has not extensively been researched so far. Therefore, my thesis will center upon the intersections between feminism, nationalism and religion within feminist pro-independentist organizations in Barcelona. Regarding my intersectional approach, I will focus upon the role of the body, age and territory within women's activism. Within the following section I will elaborate upon my theoretical framework in order to expand on how I will use the concepts that I have mentioned so far.

Chapter 2 Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Within this chapter I will elaborate upon the theoretical lens of intersectional feminism that I have chosen for my research. First of all, I will elaborate upon the theories of feminism and intersectionality. Secondly, I will justify why I have chosen the theoretical lens of intersectional feminism for my research. Thirdly, I will elaborate upon the critiques that have been posed to this lens and elaborate upon this. Fourthly, I will exemplify some of the key concepts which I will use in this research which are: nationalism, gender, religion and secularism. Finally, I will argue in my conclusion that an intersectional lens is essential in order to conduct historically and locally specific research.

2.1 Feminist theory

As has already been described to some extent within the literature review, traditional feminism has been criticized for only representing first-world, white women's perspectives (Cho et al., 2013; Rodó-Zárate, 2020; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Within this sense, white feminism has been labelled as colonial and neo-imperial (Cho et al., 2013, p. 804). However, non-Western feminist scholars have argued that intersectionality serves a central role in connecting contemporary feminism with postcolonial discourse (p. 806). The importance of intersectionality for feminist theory has also been argued by Rodó-Zárate (2020), who says that the debate around nationalism and gender would benefit from an intersectional framework, as it shows that national identity can serve both as a site of oppression and of resistance within feminist theory and that women play a key role in this process. Furthermore, she argues that studying intersectionality within local contexts may challenge the hegemonic discourse of white feminism (p. 609). Thus, intersectionality can complement feminism in a way that is less imperial and more inclusive. Intersectional feminism can shed new light on existing academic debates by studying locally and historically specific activism.

2.2 Post-colonial/Intersectional Feminist Theory

The term 'intersectionality' firstly emerged in the work of Kimberly Crenshaw (1991) and accounted for the multiple experiences of black women in the United States. In her later work together with Cho and McCall (2013) she elaborated upon the term and argued that

intersectionality plays a central role in all questions concerning gender, race and other power relations (p. 787). They argue that intersectionality can be best interpreted as an analytical awareness. Within this sense, an analysis can be seen as intersectional when issues of sameness and difference are studied in their relation to power (p. 795). This results in a: “conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 795). Thus, within this sense a woman is not only identified by her gender, but other factors such as race, ethnicity, religion and nationality are also taken into account.

Besides, Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) argue that intersectionality offers a framework which contests power by linking theory to social and political struggles on the ground (p. 800). These battles on the ground by women in disadvantaged positions bring these struggles from the margin to the center, whilst at the same time challenging distinctions between the particular and the universal and offering a framework that extends the place and context of Crenshaw’s earlier work (p. 801). According to them, an intersectional lens brings to light several layers of power and domination (p. 804). Thus, the shortcomings of white feminism, which have been labeled as imperialist and hegemonic, can be overcome by adopting an intersectional approach, which is more sensitive to historical and cultural difference.

However, beside using intersectionality as a framework to study oppressions and domination, Rodó-Zárate (2020) has argued that intersectionality can also be used as a framework to study feminist activism. She argues there has been a genuine development of intersectional thought within feminist social movements all over the world (p. 621, p. 622). According to her, there have been several modes of intersectional thought that emerged in the same time period and had the same characteristics, such as lived experience, multiple oppressions and political activism (p. 622). She has studied Catalan independentist feminism and argues that when intersectionality is studied at the margins, this can be regarded as a challenge to the hegemony of the English-speaking world. Besides, she highlights that there are always several visions of oppression, a person can be both at the margin and at the center, both the oppressor and the oppressed. This means that whilst Catalan women were deprived because of their Catalan identity with regard to their Spanish identity, they also belonged to the privileged group of white Europeans with regard to their colonial history (p. 630). This is very important as it illustrates the complexity of oppression and the different power relations that are at play.

Thus, an intersectional lens has served as a challenge to Western feminism by identifying the multiple oppressions that black women have faced. However, within this research I will

show that an intersectional lens can also be applied to the context of Europe and that it can serve as a tool to see how this oppression has been converted into a more intersectional form of feminism.

2.3 Justification

Therefore, adopting an intersectional feminist perspective will provide a suitable orienting lens for my study of questions around gender, nationalism and religion within independentist feminist groups in Catalonia. This lens will shape the type of questions that I will ask, as intersections between different aspects of identity will be taken into account. An intersectional approach will bring the multiple oppressions that Catalan women face to light and how they relate to each other. Besides, this lens will demonstrate how nationalism can serve as a form of opposition within activism and how women take their agency within this. Adopting an intersectional feminist lens within my research also indicates my position as a researcher, on the one hand as an insider as I relate to the women's perspective, but also as an outsider as I do not relate to the Catalan and Spanish sentiments. Furthermore, adopting an intersectional feminist perspective fuels my motivation to strive for more contextual research, which values the importance of time and space and to let the voices of marginalized groups on the ground be heard.

2.4 Critiques

Some of the critiques that have been posed to an intersectional feminist approach have already been mentioned to some extent in the section above. These critiques revolve around Crenshaw's earlier work and question whether an intersectional approach is capable of bringing anything other to light than the marginalized perspective of black women (Cho et al., 2013, p. 788). However, Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) respond to this by arguing that in practice, intersectional analysis has been used in various ways. These ways show that there are numerous ways to conduct intersectional analysis and that it is an open rather than a closed system, which centers around the overlapping issues of race, gender, sexuality, nation, etc. (p. 788). Besides, they argue that these debates are still very lively and not like to end soon, as all of these issues are still very relevant (p. 789). Thus, I will study intersectionality not as a fixed category or set of criteria, but rather see what the term entails within the specific context of my case study.

Most importantly, it means that I will take into account various aspects of identity that influence, conflict and exist next to another at the same time.

2.5 Nationalism

As mentioned before, my research will circulate around the key concepts of nationalism, gender, religion and secularism. Therefore, I will elaborate upon these concepts. When talking about 'nation', this is mostly described as a socially constructed community that generates a sense of belonging (Rodó-Zárate, 2020, p. 610). Anderson (1991) has described three fundamental characteristics of this constructed community: limitedness in the form of boundaries, freedom in the form of sovereignty and fraternity in the form of community (p. 7). Within this sense, nationalism has been linked often with the heteropatriarchal family as it was regarded as the foundation of correct citizenship and normal binaries (Rodó-Zárate, 2020, p. 611). According to Yuval-Davis, (1997), women were attributed the special role of reproducing the nation, which resulted in restrictions and violations of their reproductive rights. However, this role has been challenged by women in political identity struggles who proved that their activism went beyond mere symbolism (Yuval-Davis et al., 1989; Rodó-Zárate, 2020). This brings us to the connection between the concepts of nationalism and gender which will be discussed in the next section.

2.6 Gender

I will rely upon the definition provided by Yuval-Davis (2006) of gender being: "a mode of discourse that relates to groups of subjects whose social roles are defined by their sexual/biological difference" (as cited in Rodó-Zárate & Jorba, 2020). According to Enguix Grau (2021), the category of nationalism is as powerful as gender and both have multiple and overlapping meanings attributed to it, depending on the historical moment and their imagined certainty. She argues that both are mobilized through bodies, times and spaces and that gender and nation mutually construct each other (p. 228). Within national projects, gender has played an important role in the form of producing certain notions of femininity and masculinity and has served as an important marker for inclusion, citizenship and exclusion (p. 229). Thus, she argues that our understanding of both gender and nation are very culturally and historically specific. Within this sense, the concept of gender has infinite meanings and approaches to power relations and privileges (p. 228). Another important concept that has often been related

to the body and gender have been religion and secularism. Within the next section I will elaborate upon these concepts.

2.7 Religion and Secularism

As has been mentioned in the literature review, secularism has been represented as guaranteeing gender equality (Enguix Grau, 2021, p. 7). However, according to Scott (2018) secularism should not be treated as a fixed category, but rather as a discursive set of power relations, which should be examined within its historical context. Thus, just as with nation and gender, secularism is not an objective definition but it is rather analyzed how the term has been used in various ways and with what effects. This does not mean that the reality of secularism is being denied, but rather that the context and time in which the meaning of the term was articulated and implemented is being examined (p. 4). For the purpose of this research I will rely on the definitions of secularism defined by Scott (2018), which holds: “secular (referring to things nonreligious), secularization (the historical process by which transcendent religious authority is replaced by knowledge that can only originate with reasoning humans), and secularity (a nonreligious state of being)” (p. 5).

Within this secularism discourse, women have often been associated with religion. Just like the feminine, religion was often regarded as the source of irrationality, violence, traditionality and hierarchy. Therefore, there was a tendency to regulate both the female sex and religion and move them to the private sphere in contrast to the secularized public sphere (p. 35). However, according to Fedele and Knibbe (2013) religion and spirituality should also be considered as existing alongside many discourses. Both spirituality and religion cannot be relied on in a simplified matter. Within this sense, the religious can only be thought of in relation to the secular, just as the spiritual is intrinsically linked to the religious (p. 4).

Conclusion

In conclusion, adopting an intersectional feminist perspective for my research will make me aware of the shortcomings of feminist theory by adopting a more inclusive and culturally and historically specific approach. Within this sense, I will regard nationalism, gender, religion and secularism as dynamic concepts which have different meanings over time. Adopting an intersectional feminist approach to research the activism of pro-independentist feminist

organization in Catalonia can shed new light on different forms of intersectionality and feminism.

Chapter 3 Methodological Framework

Introduction

Within this chapter I will account for the specific methodological choices that I have made and why they suit my research best. I have taken a social constructivist stance to the production of knowledge and used an interpretative paradigm to reveal the underlying visions and opinions of my research participants. Besides, I have used qualitative research methods of participation, observation, discourse analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Furthermore, I will reflect upon the limitations that these choices entail and end with a conclusion.

3.1 Qualitative Research

Within my research I have taken a social constructivist stance to the production of knowledge. This means that I sought to understand the world in which I live and study. I follow Creswell and Creswell (2018) by arguing that, as individuals develop multiple and various subjective meanings of their experiences, this leads to a complexity of understandings rather than narrowing definitions into just a few categories. Therefore, it is my goal to rely upon the view of my participants as much as possible. I have guaranteed this by framing broad and general questions, so the participants could construct their own vision. I am aware that their visions are shaped mainly through interactions with others and the historical and cultural context that they live in. Besides, I recognize that my own background and the cultural and historical experiences that I have encountered also influenced my research. In sum, I interpreted the visions of my participants about the concepts of nationalism, gender, religion and intersectionality in order to generate a pattern of meaning (p. 8). Thus, by using an interpretative paradigm, I do not claim that my findings have a commonality in them, but rather try to reveal the underlying meanings that my participants attach to these concepts.

3.2 Discourse Analysis

In order to gather my data, I have used qualitative methods. I did this by conducting ethnographic fieldwork, using in-depth interviews, observation, participation and discourse analysis methods. My research has taken place in and around Barcelona as it is at the heart of

the Catalan movement. I have researched the feminist collectives of *Feministes per la Independència* (Fxi) and *Hora Bruixa* and the political movement *Esquerra Independentista*, of which I have spoken to women of CUP and Endavant. Since this research tries to capture the different narratives on gender, nationalism and religion constructed by women active in social movements. I have selected these organizations as they were amongst the first to actively speak out in the debates around gender and nationalism in Catalonia, as I have mentioned in my literature review.

Regarding qualitative participation and observation, I have made field notes on the behavior and the activities of the members of EI, Fxi and *Hora Bruixa*. As has been argued by Musante (2011), participant observation allows the researcher to take part in the activities, interactions and events of a group as a means to learning the implicit and explicit features of their lives and culture (p. 1).

Regarding discourse analysis, I have analyzed mostly qualitative visual and digital materials, through photographs, website main pages and social media. Whilst the importance of textual material has for a long time been recognized, only recently scholars have given consideration to the importance of visual data in modern mass media and especially in social movement activism (Corrigall-Brown, 2012; Doerr et al., 2013; Mattoni & Teune, 2014). According to Doerr, Mattoni and Teune (2013), within social movements, images have served an important role in mobilization. The use of colors, fashion, symbols and gestures have been important factors in the construction of the identity of activist and their culture. These factors are used as a linkage between different age groups and different protests. In this sense, the body has been used as a powerful tool of self-expression (p. xiv). As such, I have focused upon the body and the way fashion, colors and symbols were being used as a means of provocation or symbolism within independentist feminist organizations' activism.

3.3 Semi-structured In-depth Interviews

As I have mentioned above, I have conducted in-depth interviews with several members of the different feminist collectives. These interviews can be regarded as representing the broader discourse around gender, nationalism, religion and intersectionality in feminist movements in Catalonia. I have used the data from these interviews and combined them with information I obtained from discourse analysis, observation and participation. The questions in these interviews have addressed the stances the interviewees had upon issues of gender, nationalism,

religion and intersectionality. However, as these are academic concepts, I have formulated the questions in an open way that allow for their own interpretation and vision. Therefore, the interviews are semi-structured, open-ended and few in number in order to stimulate the opinions of the participants. I have used snow-ball sampling as a way of gathering my interviewees. This means that interviewees have helped me to recruit future interviewees. Whilst the interviewees were fine with me using their own names, I have chosen to use pseudonyms as it more standard in research as the consequences regarding anonymity cannot always be overlooked. However, I did use the real names of the organizations.

3.4 Limitations

Discourse Analysis has been criticized for being too ideological and biased. However, this has been tackled by Wodak and Meyer (2009), who argue that discourse analysis is very open-ended and that one's own stance is always explicitly stated. Furthermore, other scholars have criticized discourse analysis for considering concepts such as gender, race and ethnicity as stable factors across contexts (Mills, 2004). However, as has been highlighted in the literature review, it is extremely relevant that concepts such as nationalism, gender and religion are always considered within their historical and local context. Therefore, I will not consider these concepts as fixed entities, but rather as being continuously in a flux. Besides, the Catalan language may be regarded as a limitation to this research, however the interviews have been conducted in Spanish and most of the discourse analysis has been visual, which means language was not a barrier.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by adopting a social constructivist stance to the production of knowledge I have tried to interpret the underlying meanings and visions of the members of the feminist movements of EI, FxI and Hora Bruixa. By conducting discourse analysis, observation, participation and semi-structured in-dept interview I have discovered the ways these women use their speech and body in order to communicate their ideologies and visions and the power relations that underlie them.

Chapter 4 The Context of Intersectional Feminism in Catalonia

Introduction

Within this chapter I will elaborate upon the feminist movement within Catalonia and the political, cultural and historical context in which it evolved. The first and second section of the chapter will illustrate how women in Catalonia faced multiple oppressions, also within leftist organizations, which resulted in a feminist consciousness and mobilization. The third and fourth section of the chapter highlight the historical circumstances, which led to times of higher and lower mobilization of feminism in Catalonia. The fifth section will elaborate upon the role of religion and class within the independentist movement in Catalonia. Besides, within the sixth section the 2010 abortion law will be elaborated upon and the negative image that this had for religion regarding the conscientious objection. The seventh part concerns class, as the independentist feminist movement it is inseparably linked to a strong critique of capitalism. Finally, I will end with a conclusion. For this chapter I have used personal communication from in-depth interviews, observations and participation as my primary data sources. For my secondary data I have used literature around the feminism, nationalism and religion in Catalonia.

4.1 Multiple Oppressions

As has already been described to some extent in the literature review, within Catalonia, women have faced multiple oppressions (Gallagher Kearney, 2012; Rodó-Zárate et al., 2019; Rodó-Zárate, 2020). This being in the form of oppression of the Catalan culture and language and because of patriarchal oppression based upon their sex (Gallagher Kearney, 2012, p. 6). The Catalan poet and activist Maria Mercè Marçal, which has been quoted in the introduction, already developed an idea about the intersections between gender, nation and class in the 1970s and 1980s (Rodó-Zárate, 2020). Participant Agnés from FxI was active within the same political party as Mercè Marçal. This woman is today 90 years old and told me how her father, who was also a Catalan activist, already made her aware of the double marginalization that women faced in Catalonia. He told her: “Watch out, you are a woman, and women and black people in this world are very harassed. Always keep this in mind. you have to always be in defense of your

gender” (Agnés, March 31, 2022, Barcelona). This quote made her aware that the feminist topic is always related with other topics.

As has been argued by Cabezas (2022), the gender conservatism that was promoted during the National-Catholic dictatorship under Franco meant a set-back to women’s rights. This has also been argued by participant Agnés from FxI who was always fighting for the feminist cause, even in a time where there was no attention for it in the communist party that she was active in. She worked in a center for women, which helped them when they faced domestic violence and abortion. She told me that it was especially women of police officers that faced violence, but that it was hard for her to help these women as the Franco regime was favoring a situation of patriarchy and police violence (March 31, 2022, Barcelona). Thus, the women who were raised in the patriarchal Franco regime developed a form of feminism that went hand in hand with their struggle for class liberation and independence.

4.2 Gender Oppression within the Leftist Parties

Elaborating upon this, women in Catalonia encountered that gender was also not really an issue within political agenda for independence (Alonso, 2018; Rodó-Zárate, 2016). Participant Marta from FxI was politically active in the anarchist movement during the Franco period. She was very aware of the double marginalization and patriarchal power relations that were also present within the leftist movements. She noted:

I began to see a problem of class, of difference of sex. It was very different to be a woman, right? I remember that I was involved with very radical anarchist groups and they did not let me go to the action. They let me go buy and organize the things that I was already capable of. But why wouldn’t I be capable? Why couldn’t I go to the action? That’s always hard for me to understand, right? That we women had to be more in organizing things than in more radical positions. And I defended a more radical position, I could have the same positions as them. That is where my commitment to feminism came from (Marta, April 4, 2022, Barcelona).

Within this quote we can see the necessity that these women felt to also distinguish themselves as feminist, beside their objectives to fight for independence and class liberation. As these women experienced oppression based on their sex in the leftist movements that they were active in, it shows us that gender equality is not necessarily a result of the liberation of other struggles. Besides, a strong emphasis for women to take on passive tasks and a submissive and family centered role, can still be seen today (Nyhagen & Halsaa, 2016, p.13). Within political parties

today in Catalonia, the majority of the highest positions are still occupied by men. On December 2021, only one out of six candidates who were active in the political campaign for the Catalan elections was a woman (Blanco et al., 2018). According to participant Martina from FxI this is because women still work from home. She argued that even if they ‘freely’ prefer to take care of the children, this has its roots in the patriarchal heritage of the Franco period (April 25, 2022, Barcelona). Thus, to understand activism of women in Catalonia today, it is important to understand the cultural and historical context of these women in Catalonia. However, rather than being hesitant to engage with nationalism, as has been seen by other feminist organizations in Spain, these women chose to actively change the discourse and include the feminist struggle within the struggle for independence and class liberation (Alonso, 2018; Cabezas, 2022; Roqueta-Fernández, 2019).

4.3 Grass Root Movements and Mobilization

In general, the Catalan society can be understood as being very easily mobilized. According to Marta Roqueta-Fernández (personal communication, March 31, 2022, Barcelona), this has its roots within the Franco period, when people had to organize themselves amongst small assemblies to keep the Catalan culture and language alive. This grass-roots mobilization increased between 2009 and 2011, fueled by the feelings of injustice over the failure of recognition of the Catalan state (García Agustín, 2021, p. 12). This is also illustrated by the Barca-Madrid Champions league match on the 30th of March 2022 (see figure 1), which I attended myself as well. The Camp Nou stadium was sold out with 91,553 spectators, and this set a world record of most attendants ever for women’s soccer ("Barcelona v Real Madrid", 2022). Within the Camp Nou stadium, independentism was also strongly present. ‘Els Segadors’ (The anthem of independentist Catalonia) was sung and the ‘Estalada’ (Catalan independentist flag), was fully present. Besides, in 2013 this was also illustrated by the Via Catalana (Catalan Way), which was a 400-kilometre human chain as a way to support the Catalan independence from Spain (‘Catalan Way’, 2022). According to Roqueta-Fernández (personal communication, 31 March, 2022), this shows that people in Catalonia are very involved in social and political groups. It is also why feminist movements and manifestations are so large and quickly mobilized.



Figure 1. Camp Nou Stadium, March 30, 2022 (own photo).

4.4 The Process of Feminist Mobilization

During the dictatorship of Franco (1939 - 1975) men were the head of the household and therefore held large legal privileges at the expense of women. Married women were not allowed to travel or work without the permission of their husbands. The nuclear family was one of the building blocks of Franco's National-Catholicism. However, this deterioration of women's rights during the Franco regime, resulted in a gradual rise of the feminist movement (Cabezas, 2022, p. 322). After the dictatorship ended, there was an explosion of civil and political movements in Barcelona, also feminist ones. During the *Primeres Jornades Catalanes de la Dona* (First Catalan Meeting of Women) which was held in 1976, groups of women from all over Spain met in assemblies, without hierarchies and independent of political institutions (Gibernau Mitjana, 2017). This marked the first huge event after the dictatorship, with more than 4.000 women attending to combat gender oppression. However, this was only possible because there was already an existing network of feminism during the dictatorship period, in the form of women's groups and community-based associations (Rodó-Zárate, 2019, p. 155). Nevertheless, the conference was regarded as the beginning of the feminist movement in Spain (Iveson, 2019, p. 20).

During the 1980s, there had been major legislative changes, such as the regulation of marriage and divorce, the decriminalization of abortion and the emergence of institutional

feminism, marked by the creation of organizations such as the Catalan Women's Institute in 1989. After these transformations, there was a kind of political relaxation again. However, it turned out the conquest of these changes and rights was not enough to achieve real transformation as there was still gender inequality (Gibernau Mitjana, 2017). According to participant Alba from CUP and FxI, people had the feeling that they already had achieved everything and most of the people demobilized (April 25, 2022, Barcelona).

However, the mobilization rose again as a response to the 2008 economic recession, which led to the tightening of budgets and cuts to public spending. From 2007 to 2012, the unemployment rate tripled and inequality and poverty was rising, which led to an increased bitterness and awareness towards the Spanish government financial policies (García Agustín, 2021, p. 9). As has been elaborated on in the introduction, this triggered the unilateral declaration of independence and the referendum on the 1st of October 2017. The suppressing of the Catalan Autonomy from 2017 until 2018 and the trial of twelve separatist leaders in 2019, led to new tensions and increased mobilization, also under feminist organizations (p. 3).

According to participant Sofia from Endavant, Catalan feminists find themselves now again in a time of less mobilization because of the impact the COVID19 pandemic had. The manifestations of the 8th of March still continue, but it is less than in 2017 and 2018. She also elaborated upon the importance of understanding the historical context in order to understand the fluctuations in mobilization. She highlights that the social movement process is never linear, that it always has moments of going forward and going backwards and that they are now in a time of regression. This has an impact on all political struggles, also the feminist one (April 21, 2022, Barcelona). This demonstrates how according to her, different struggles are interrelated, as political impacts regarding the independence process and the global health crisis also influence feminist mobilization. Besides, by arguing this, she challenges the Western concept of linear progress and rather argues that there are periods of progress and decline.

4.5 Religion and Secularism

As has been mentioned within the literature review, Catalonia is the most secular region of Spain (Astor, 2020, p. 159). It might be argued that the negative association with the Church comes from the perceived influence of the Church regarding the repression of the Catalan national identity during the Franco dictatorship (p. 164). During the Franco regime there were ongoing tensions between the attempt of the regime to control and discipline the bodies of

women in favor of its National Catholic ideals and the new socio-economic changes that posed a threat to that control (Morcillo, 2010, p. 14). Due to this National-Catholic Franco regime, women in Catalonia had a negative association with the church, as it had meant a deterioration of their rights in this period.

However, within Catalonia Catholics actually played an important part in defending the Catalan culture during the Franco regime (Astor, 2020, p. 167). Within Catalonia, The Abbey of Montserrat and Catholic publishing houses, supported the publication of both religious and non-religious text in Catalan, which was prohibited at the time. Besides, Catalan pro-independence religious associations were supported and political dissidents were given refuge by Catholic actors. When the end of the dictatorship approached, Catalan Catholic leaders were very explicit about their preference for democratic transition. Therefore, according to Astor (2020) the strong secularizing trends in Catalonia comes more from a general perception of Catholicism being, “conservative, outmoded, and quintessentially Spanish” (p. 165).

Participant Alba from CUP and FxI also argued that an important part of the leftist revolutionary movement is actually linked to the religious world in Catalonia. She mentioned that the workers’ commissions union met in church premises, because there were many priests who defended the labor movement (April 25, 2022, Barcelona). Besides, there are ‘Los Cabos’ (the Scouts), who are young people that are linked to the church and are also very active in political movements, both feminist and independentist. Participant Agnès from FxI elaborated upon this and noted that the church in Catalonia was not like the rest of Spain. However, she argued that the national Catholicism during the political struggles of the 70s, had such a negative association for people in Catalonia, that this is why people separated from the church anyway (March 31, 2022, Barcelona).

4.6 Abortion

Besides, another important aspect connected to religion is the abortion situation in Catalonia. In 2010, the enactment law Sexual and Reproductive Health and on Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy, marks a radical change in abortion regulation in Spain. However, the debate has caused a great amount of conflict, especially the regulation about the informed consent of underage women for aborting and the conscientious objection by healthcare professionals, which means refuse to perform abortions for ethical and moral principles (Requejo, 2011, p. 397). In Catalonia, historically, there has been a tradition of religious centers and municipal entities offering health services. They receive money from the Department of Healthcare to

offer universal healthcare to all the citizens in their specific area. Regarding abortion, it happens that these religious hospitals, which are financed with public money, refuse to perform abortions. This has resulted in 42% of the gynecologists in the Catalan public health system, who rely upon ‘conscientious objection’. This number is very high, it even reaches 67% in the province of Lleida. Thus, despite the law being very open to abortion, in practice a lot of clinics will not take out the procedure. This has also resulted in a negative association with religion, especially amongst feminists (Roqueta-Fernández, personal communication, May 16, 2022, Barcelona).

4.7 Anti-capitalism

Another important struggle beside feminism and independentism is the class struggle in Catalonia. As the Spanish feminist movement emerged in a time of anti-Franco sentiment and the labor movement, it is inseparably linked to a strong critique of capitalism (Gibernau Mitjana, 2017, p. 11). This can especially be seen in the Catalan pro-independence left movement Esquerra Independentista. They explicitly combine feminism, independentism and anti-capitalism in their statements (Enguix Grau, 2021, p. 226). However, participant Mia from Hora Bruixa argued that other feminist organizations, who do not define themselves explicitly as such, on a theoretical level still share an ideology similar to Marxist and socialist dynamics. She says: “In the end, it's like what you know and that is what you'll end up producing” (Mia, April 6, 2022, Barcelona). Within this quote we can see how according to her the Marxist struggle is interconnected with the feminist struggle. Thus, as the Marxist and socialist movements were involved with the independentist movement, and the independentist movement was there when the feminist movement rose in Catalonia, all these dynamics are interrelated because they all emerged in the same local and historical context and environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, within this chapter we have seen how women in Catalonia have faced multiple oppressions, which has resulted in an intersectional form of activism. Furthermore, we have seen that within leftist organizations there was also gender-inequality, which raised feminist awareness. Besides, in order to understand the historical context of activism in Catalonia the

mobilization rise and stagnation periods have been examined. We have seen how the Catalan case demonstrates that feminism on the ground does not evolve in a linear process, but has periods of stagnation and progress.

Regarding religion, it has been argued that there is a negative stance towards the catholic church as it is related to the Nationalist-Catholic Franco regime, which has meant a deterioration of women's rights. Even though within Catalonia the church promoted a more independentist stance, it is still the most secularized region. As a result of the 2010 abortion law there have risen new critiques to the church as the law allowed for conscientious objection. In practice, this has meant that a lot of women do not have access to abortion in certain parts in Catalonia, which is regarded as very problematic by feminists. Regarding class, it has been argued that the anti-capitalist struggle is very much related to the feminist and independentist struggle. Therefore, anti-capitalism is an integral part of the independentist and feminist movement. Within the next chapter, I will elaborate more upon the different intersections of activism within Catalonia.

Chapter 5 Catalan intersectional feminism

Introduction

Within this chapter I will analyze my findings and link them to the theory about intersectionality, more specifically, with gender, nationalism and religion. Within the first and second parts, I will elaborate upon intersectional feminist activism within Catalonia. The third part of this chapter will elaborate upon the intersections between feminism and independentism within Catalonia more specifically. The fourth part will focus upon the role of Latin America and the Catalan language herein. The fifth, sixth and seventh parts will focus more specifically upon religion and secularism within Catalonia. The eighth part will focus upon the importance of class and anti-capitalism for intersectional feminists in Catalonia. The last part will briefly highlight other important aspects of Catalan intersectional feminism, namely environmentalism, pacifism and anti-racism. Finally, I will end with a conclusion. For this chapter I have used as primary sources: in-depth interviews, participation and observation within the organizations elaborated upon in the introduction. As secondary data I have used literature on gender, nationalism and religion in Catalonia.

5.1 Intersectional Feminist Activism

According to Rodó-Zárate (2020) several societies throughout the world have developed models of intersectional thought during the same time period, with characteristics such as: the lived experience, multiple oppressions and political activism (p. 622). Within the case of Catalonia, I have already elaborated upon the multiple oppressions that women face, therefore in this section I will elaborate upon the political activism of feminist groups and their lived experience. As has been mentioned by Cho et al. (2013), intersectional thought categories are always changing and influenced by other categories and dynamics of power (p. 795). The women from the organizations that I have interviewed are also very well aware of these dynamics, as is evident in the following quote of participant Martina from FxI: “You can't divide the different parts of a human. The fact of being human, means being one and in each human person everything intersects” (April 25, 2022, Barcelona).

Within this quote we can see how on a theoretical level, she is aware that a human identity consists of different aspects, which are always influenced by other aspects. Besides, she argues

that understanding the historical and local context of the people on the ground is very essential. This is also evident in the following quote of her: “Catalonia cannot be understood without its historical relationship with the rest ... Here, at a political level we have lived against Francoism” (April 25, 2022, Barcelona).

This is important as studying intersectionality within the local context, may actually challenge the hegemonic discourse of white feminism (Rodó-Zárate, 2020, p. 609). Furthermore, the historical context of Catalonia also explains why there are such strong grass-root organizations, as has been explained in the previous chapter (Roqueta-Fernández, personal communication, march 31, 2022). This has also been evident within the following quote from participant Sofía from Endavant: “We are not the leaders; we are the people who have organized themselves to make the revolution. What we need is for more people to organize themselves. We are organizations, but we are nobody, the people liberate themselves” (April 21, 2022, Barcelona). Here we can see the ideology behind their non-hierarchical way of organizing social movements. She stresses the importance of a bottom-up revolution and grass-root mobilization.

However, participant Mia from Hora Bruixa explained that whilst the majority of feminist collectives work on a very local level, their end goal is to transcend the national level and fight for liberation at an international level. Thus, whilst a non-hierarchical way of local mobilization is preferred, the end goal should transcend the local level. This can be linked to West (1997) her argument that women have demonstrated to be both definers of nationalism and feminism. According to her, aspects which are shared cross-culturally within local context, can also be regarded as a sort of universal feminism (p. xv). Thus, whilst the organizations that I spoke with in Catalonia operate on a very local level, their end goal is to transcend the local, which can also be interpreted as a striving for a universal feminism.

5.2 Unity despite Diversity

Another important aspect that the women from the different Catalan organizations stressed, is the fact that feminism is a ground for achieving coherence, despite great diversity. Rodó-Zárate and Jorba (2020) have also argued that intersectionality does not lead to fragmentation, but that it can actually make a person whole when several aspects can be identified (p. 10). According to participant Alba from CUP and FxI, the unity of action is much bigger in Catalonia than in other regions because it has been practiced for decades. She argues that feminist unity in

Catalonia multiplies each action by three and that separately they would not move anywhere nor be as strong (April 9, 2022, Barcelona).

Besides, participant Martina from FxI, argues that: “The document which is made every year on the 8th of March needs to be studied in the universities, because a consensus is reached with a great diversity and that is only achieved within feminism” (April 25, 2022, Barcelona). Within this quote we can see how Martina underlines the important of reaching coherence within feminism, despite differences that exist. This is also argued by participant Marta from FxI, who says that only within feminism great diversity can be overcome, as it is a sector which allows for conversation. Besides, she argues that intersectionality allows you to look at another person in another way, thus that differences are not regarded as a problem (April 4, 2022, Barcelona). This shows how these women perceive feminism and intersectionality, as for them it is a unique tool for cooperation. Hence, it can be noted that feminist unity in Catalonia has resulted in more mobilization. When looking at these quotes, it seems that there is a lot of unity between women in Catalonia and that their form of intersectional activism is very inclusive and allows for conversation between different opinions. However, in the next chapter I will demonstrate that this unity can also result in difficulties, tensions and that it can sometimes even be regarded as exclusionary.

5.3 Independentism

When looking at how these women practice their activism in their daily lives, intersectional aspects can also be examined. Within figure 2, we can see the women of FxI during the Catalan Way in 2013. The women of FxI use the symbol of the Roman goddess Venus to represent their feminist values, but then in yellow instead of purple, because yellow is the color of independentism. Participant Laia from FxI was wearing the yellow female symbol as a brooch on her shirt when she was seeing me for our conversation in a café. Besides, when these women participated in the Via Catalana, they also wore yellow clothes, with the femininity symbol on their shirts, as can be seen in the image. Moreover, we can see the Enstelada, the Catalan independence flag, in the hands of the two women on the right. This shows how they express their intersectional activism of both independentism and feminism in a physical way with their bodies, through the use of colors, symbols and flags.



Figure 2. Via Catalana September 11, 2013, Barcelona (Source: Feministes Per la Independencia, n.d.).

5.4 Language and Latin America

With regard to the Catalan identity, language plays a very important role. As has been argued by Rodó-Zárate (2020) focusing upon marginalized regions' expression of multiple oppressions within social mobilizations offers new insights. Within this sense, the focus upon minority languages challenges the hegemony of the English language and cultural imperialism (p. 610). A typical and important festivity day in Catalonia is Sant Jordi, which is when loved ones give each other books and roses. Within this festivity day, the intersection between independentism and feminism can clearly be seen. A large part of the books sold is published in Catalan, this is important as it spreads the Catalan language and identity. The organizations that I have interviewed also participate in the selling of books and sell feminist books written in Catalan. According to participant Martina from FxI, this is important as the largest amount of feminist books are currently written in Spanish or English, thus to challenge the hegemony of the Spanish and English language, as has been argued by Rodó-Zárate (2020) it is important that the Catalan language is spread. Besides, political parties and organizations, such as CUP and Hora Bruixa have their own stalls on this day, which they also use to promote their ideologies and recruit new members (see figure 3).



Figure 3. Sant Jordi, April 23, 2022, Barcelona (Hora Bruixa, April 25, 2022).

Moreover, when I joined my first meeting of FxI on March 24, the importance of the Catalan language also struck me. The women argued that the main language in politics, schooling, etc. needed to stay Catalan otherwise it would disappear. As Iveson (2019) has argued oppressed groups and their language can be ideologically removed from specific areas, which underlines the power of language (p. 5). The women argued that they did not want an eradication of Spanish, because it would certainly prevail as it is also spoken in the rest of Spain and Latin America. However, according to them Catalan needed to be spoken in order to survive. Nevertheless, one of the women really did not like to speak Spanish to me because it felt oppressive to her. When she did speak Spanish, it was with an Argentinian accent even though she was not from Argentina herself, because she could identify with the people from Latin America as they were also oppressed by Spain.

The comparison of Catalonia with Latin America is something I noticed more often, as Catalonia is seen as the last colonized country by Spain. These women argued that Latin America also experienced this oppression and colonization by Spain, therefore there is a kind of sisterhood understood from their side. Interestingly, when I joined the meeting of FxI, they also stressed that the Dutch should support the Catalan people, as the Netherlands has also been occupied by Spain during the Eighty Years' War. What stood out is that these women knew about something in the Dutch history from so many years ago, but it illustrates how important independence and international recognition is for them. Within the next section I will focus more upon the role of religion and secularism within intersectional feminism in Catalonia and for the women I interviewed in specific.

5.5 Religion

When I asked the women from the various organizations about religion, it was often responded in a quite negative way. As they have a negative association with the Franco period, they also want to get rid of religion. However, as has been argued before, the church in Catalonia had a different role during the Franco period and was actually promoting the Catalan identity (Astor, 2020). Nevertheless, this has apparently not changed the opinion about religion of the women that I have spoken to. When I joined the FxI meeting on March 24, 2022 at first it seemed as though some of the women were a bit hesitant about me joining them. Especially when I mentioned that my master was about ‘religion’, one woman wanted to know if I was raised religious. I felt like I needed to convince her that I was not religious, but that my study was more about gender, ethnicity, class and secularism. When she understood that I was studying intersectionality rather than solely religion, she seemed to accept me. This situation can be explained by the following quote from participant Sofia from Endavant:

What we have experienced in our territory was the repression of people and women by the church, at the defense of the deeply patriarchal and exploitative Spanish national project. The struggle of the people, of women, of independentists, of workers has always been through secularism. In our context, the church is synonymous with patriarchal, capitalist, Spanish repression. This does not mean that religion is bad, our perspective is: regarding religion do what you want, but public institutions cannot be connected to religion (April 21, 2022, Barcelona).

On the one hand, within this quote we can see how people in Catalonia have a negative image regarding the church, despite the different role of the church during the independence process in Catalonia. The church is seen as a repressor of liberty. Also, the gender aspect is very much included in the critique of the church. As women’s bodies were controlled by the church, there is a feeling amongst feminists that it should be broken free from. On the other hand, we can see how within the quote from Patri, secularism is seen as a right and linked to liberty and gender equality. This connects with the study from Enguix Grau (2021) who also argued that within Catalonia, secularism is connected to liberty (p. 7). Within the next section I will elaborate more upon the secularist stance of these women.

5.6 Secularism

As argued above, the women in Catalonia that I spoke to have a high preference for secularism. When asked what secularism meant for them, participant Marta from FxI, responded: “I think it's a right, it's a matter of law, especially in matters of education, in matters that are public” (April 4, 2022, Barcelona).

Within both quotes from participants Sofia and Marta one can see how there is a distinction made between the public and the private sphere. Religion is regarded as a private matter that should stay away from the public sphere, whilst secularism is seen as reliable and neutral and therefore prioritized. As has been mentioned in the literature review, according to Scott (2018) this has its roots within the formation of the feminized private sphere during the separation of religion and politics. Within this sense, the public sphere is connected to characteristics linked to masculinity such as strength and rationality, whilst the private sphere is connected to characteristics linked to femininity such as passion and emotion. Another area in which the church is regarded as being repressive, is the area of sexuality and especially abortion. Participant Emma from Hora Bruixa explains:

The Church has been a repressive institution, especially with women. With the issue of abortion, with the issue of sexuality in general. So, in fact, a couple of years ago we also did the March 8 manifestation against the church for what they did (April 6, 2022).

Here we can see how the church is being blamed for the problems that Catalonia faces regarding abortion, which have been described in the previous chapter. Within the abortion debate, these women take a secularist stance against the Catholic church. However, as has been described in the literature review, according to Klassen (2019) it can be regarded as paradoxical that very private matters such as abortion have shifted to the public sphere under the notion of secularism, as secularism has been perceived to separate the public from the private (p. 22). This shows us again that a clear distinction between the private and the public is not possible.

Furthermore, as has been noted in the literature review, Morcillo (2010) argues that within Spain, because of the distrust by the clergy towards women, features concerning the woman's body are controlled by moralizing codes written by men (p. 11). This idea regarding the church and abortion can also be observed amongst the women that I interviewed. They argue that women's bodies cannot and should not be regulated by the church or the state. This can be seen in the following quote from participant Marta from FxI: “Religion, judges and the State. Who

are they to say what a woman has to do? The ministry of life? It's just not possible. The right to decide should be to the woman. No one can decide for her” (April 4, 2022, Barcelona). This quote shows us how abortion is regarded as a right of self-determination of women, by regulating this, their agency is taken away from them. Hence, regulations by the church and state are perceived in a negative way.

Regarding the conscientious objection, all women that I spoke to were very critical of it. Participant Alba from CUP and FxI even said that she felt that if you do not want to abort you should not become a doctor (April 9, 2022, Barcelona). Furthermore, conscientious objection is not the only problem that women face regarding abortion in Catalonia. In Catalonia there is a difference in reproductive patterns between Catalan women and immigrant women. Whilst the birth and abortion rates are higher amongst immigrant women, crude fertility and abortion rates are also 1.4 and 3 times higher (Gispert Magarolas et al., 2008). Participant Emma from Hora Bruixa explained argues:

Let's not think only of the women from here who can't have an abortion, but also those who also don't have papers. Not only does it happen to them that when they go, they can't have an abortion, but they can't go elsewhere either because they don't have access to healthcare (April 6, 2022, Barcelona).

Thus, we can see how multiple oppressions are present within this situation as, migrant women face multiple oppressions in Catalonia. As there is the conscientious objection, as a woman these migrant women face challenges to abort, but because they are migrant, they also face challenges to legally be able to benefit from healthcare in general. Therefore, it is very important to take an intersectional approach, to also take these women in mind.

5.7 Rituals and Customs

Another aspect that I will elaborate upon are rituals and customs that were present within the organizations that I have interviewed and might question the neutrality of secularism. As has been elaborate upon before, there is a high preference for secularism. However, in practice I found that a clear-cut distinction between the religious private sphere and the secular public sphere was not self-evident. The women define themselves as secular, but do have certain customs and rituals that might challenge this distinction. At first sight it seemed like it was not really present in their lives and organizations. Participant Martina from FxI told me: “Within

Ca la Dona there is not much room for religion or spirituality, they are still very marked by the struggles against Franco” (April 25, 2022, Barcelona).

As the Franco period had such an impact upon the lives of people that it resulted in a negative association with the church and religion all together. Within Ca la Dona, which is a common place in Barcelona where all feminist groups could meet and start initiatives, there are a lot of different groups with intersections between feminism and all other things, but not with religion or spirituality. Nevertheless, participant Marta from FxI argues that there is a certain type of spirituality within feminism, which is not connected to the Catholic church. She argues:

I don't believe in the Catholic Church. However, spirituality seems very respectable to me, the part of some kind of transcendence. I think that feminism has a lot of spirituality, perhaps because women give birth to children and that is still a mystery, it is like all things allow us to have this spirituality (Marta, April 4, 2022, Barcelona).

Hence, Marta disconnects spirituality from religion and more specifically the Catholic Church. Therefore, according to her, spirituality can be liberating and is even regarded as an essential part of feminism. Furthermore, some ritual elements might be observed in Hora Bruixa. Hora Bruixa literally means ‘witch hour’ and they have a witch hat as logo, because according to participant Mia from Hora Bruixa, at a historical level the witch is the symbol of a disobedient (April 6, 2022, Barcelona). Besides, they use fire within their demonstrations, such as during the 8-march demonstration against the Catholic church (see figure 4). According to participant Emma from Hora Bruixa this is because fire is: “a combative symbol, because in the end fire is like burning” (April 6, 2022, Barcelona). However, the women of Hora Bruixa do not identify themselves as being spiritual nor do they treat the subject in their organization.



Figure 4. March 8, 2021 Manifestation, Sant Cugat (Source: Hora Bruixa, n.d).

Still, there are some women that did identify their traditions with a certain type of spirituality. This challenges the idea that there is a strict separation between the secular and the religious. Participant Sofia from Endavant makes a distinction between spirituality in the academic sense and a spirituality that is connected more to rituals and practices of intersectional activism in Catalonia. She says:

The pro-independence left comes from Marxism, and has had a rejection of religion. Here, there is a hatred of what the church did to our people, but that does not mean that we don't have some kind of rituals, of spirituality, but in another way. It is a tribute to the companions who have fallen for the struggle, remembering our history, with the flags, with the national anthems. It is a kind of spirituality, because it is connecting you with other things, which religion also does, with an afterlife, or with a community (Sofia, April 21, 2022, Barcelona).

Within this quote we can see how at first sight spirituality is not present within these organizations as they are linked to Marxism and this essentially rejects all forms of religion. However, Sofia herself does interpret some of their rituals and actions as spiritual as it connects them with an afterlife and community. It is interesting to see what secularism, religion and spirituality mean for these women and how they experience this. Within the next section I will focus a bit more upon other factors which are important for these women within the way they experience and practice their intersectional feminism.

5.8 Class

This thesis focuses upon intersectional feminism in Catalonia and specifically upon gender, nationalism and religion. However, within intersectional feminism there are more factors that play a very important role. Due to the scope of this research I will not take them into account as thoroughly as gender, nationalism and religion. However, in order to understand the contextual situation, I will elaborate upon them to some extent within this chapter. A very important factor for most women that I spoke to was class liberation, anti-capitalism and socialism. In opposition to Franco, socialism rose during this rule, therefore class struggle is regarded as inevitable in order to reach an independent and feminist Catalan state. This is illustrated in the following quote of participant Sofia from Endavant:

For us they are the three axes; independence of the Catalan countries, socialism and feminism. Our symbols are the Estelada, the hammer sickle and the feminist symbol. The red and lilac flag shows our political line, which is

total liberation of humanity through communism. It is achieved through the independence of the Catalan countries into a socialist and feminist state (April 21, 2022, Barcelona).



Figure 5. May 1st, 2022, Labor Day Manifestation, Barcelona (own photo).

An example of how the class liberation struggle is interconnected with independentism and feminism could be seen in the 1st of may manifestation that I visited (see figure 5). There were large protests in the streets with a lot of flags. Within the image of the demonstration, the red flag is that of Arran, which is part of EI and also very independentist and Marxist. The Estalada (the independentist yellow and red flag) is also seen in the right corner of the image. Besides, the LGBTQ+ flag is also present, which illustrates that these struggles go hand in hand and a manifestation for labor is also a ground for other struggles.

5.9 Pacifism, Anti-racism and Environmentalism

Other important struggles that the women that I interviewed named were pacifism, environmentalism and anti-racism. Participant Agnès from FxI explained to me that in the early days, environmentalism already played an important role, that it is one of the bases. Pacifism is also regarded as essential and a reaction to militarism, which is regarded as patriarchal and masculine. It is considered as a form of passive disobedience and part of the DNA of feminists (Gibernau Mitjana, p. 29, 30). Within Ca la Dona, every week there are demonstrations against the war and militarism in Ukraine. This demonstration was also joined by the women of FxI after one of their meetings in Ca la Dona (see figure 6). Anti-Racism is also regarded as an integral part of intersectional feminism. According to participant Marta from FxI, the right to decide is as important as the problem of racism and class difference (April 4, 2022, Barcelona).

However, I noticed that whilst all women were in favor of an anti-racist struggle, it was not very much part of their activist discourse as the majority of their members consisted of non-immigrant women.



Figure 6. Manifestation ‘No a la Guerra’, March 24, 2022, Barcelona (own photo).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be noted that the women I have spoken to demonstrate that they are aware that intersectional marginalization influenced their lives and integrate this in their activism. On a theoretical level they are very aware of what intersectionality entails. Their struggle for feminism is inherently tied to their struggle for independence. On a practical level, this can be seen during manifestations and the different flags and specific colors and symbols that are shown. However, I noticed that on a theoretical level intersectionality can be explained very well by these women, but that in practice it is sometimes difficult to show how it works out with concrete examples.

Besides, what stood out in the conversation I had and the events that I visited is the importance of the Catalan language. The Spanish language is seen as being oppressive and the Catalan language is seen as an essential part of preserving the Catalan culture. Besides, another important factor is that Catalonia is often compared to Latin America. As Catalonia is seen as the last oppressed country by Spain, they feel related to the Latin American people who have experienced the same.

Furthermore, what stood out in this chapter is that most women have a negative association with religion, which was fueled by the role of the church during the Franco dictatorship. Besides, the interlinkage with Marxism also causes a distance from religion, as Marxism rejects

all forms of religion. Furthermore, the abortion law of 2010 with the conscientious objection resulted in a negative stance regarding the influence of the church with women's bodies and a removal of religion from the public sphere is requested. The women that I spoke to see secularism as neutral and therefore they feel that it should belong to the public sphere. However, in practice it turned out that even though they defined themselves as secular, they did have certain traditions and customs that they understood themselves as spiritual. This challenges a sharp distinction between secularism and religion and the public and private sphere. Furthermore, I have elaborated upon other important factors within intersectional Catalan feminism are pacifism, environmentalism and racism.

Chapter 6 Conflicts & Differences

Introduction

Within this chapter I will elaborate upon the differences and tensions between different forms of feminism in Spain and Catalonia. Within the first section I will elaborate upon the differences that arise between Spanish feminists and Catalan feminists. I will argue that Spanish feminism can be seen as closer related to second-wave feminism, whilst Catalan feminism is more intersectional. This will be demonstrated with two concrete examples of the transsexuality debate in the second section and the prostitution debate in the third. The fourth section of this chapter will focus more upon the differences and tensions between independentist feminists and hegemonic feminists in Catalonia. The fifth and sixth sections will elaborate more upon the different visions that feminists and Catalonia regarding independentism. Besides, in the final section I will elaborate upon the importance of age and institutionalism for understanding these differences. I will end with a conclusion. For this chapter I have used the primary literature from in-depth interviews, participation and observation within the organizations elaborated upon in the introduction. Besides, as secondary data I have used literature on gender, nationalism and religion in Catalonia.

6.1 Differences between Spanish & Catalan feminists

As has been described within the literature review, feminists had for a long time a negative association with nationalism, as it linked to the heteropatriarchal family (Rodó-Zárate, 2020, p. 611). Within many nationalist projects, gender has been used in the form of producing certain notions of femininity and masculinity (p. 229). Thus, whilst some feminists have negative associations with nationalism because of this, there are also women within political activist organizations, such as those in Catalonia, that have challenged this notion, by proving that their activism went beyond mere symbolism (Rodó-Zárate, 2020).

When looking at the national conflict in Catalonia these dynamics can also be seen. The struggle for independence in Catalonia has caused some frictions between feminists who support the independence of Catalonia and others who do not. This causes frictions on a state level between so as to say ‘Spanish’ feminists and ‘Catalan’ feminists. When it comes to the question whether to mobilize or not, the issue of independentism causes friction. The Spanish

feminists are not really aware of the Catalan struggle for independence and therefore do not want to mention it. They are against militarization, but they do not want to take an explicit stance towards the Catalan situation within the 8th of March manifestations. This causes frictions, because Catalan feminists cannot understand how their struggle can be excluded (Roqueta-Fernández, personal communication, march 31, 2022, Barcelona).

As has been elaborated upon in chapter four, because of the multiple oppressions that women in Catalonia have faced, they have created a more intersectional and mobilized form of feminism. In contrast to this, Spanish feminism can be explained as being more related to second wave feminism. I noticed these dynamics myself as well when I was for some days in Madrid, just after the situation around abortion in America. There was a huge demonstration going on, which passed by my hostel. When I looked what it was about, I noticed that it was a pro-life demonstration. People were holding boards saying: ‘Cada vida importa’ (every life matters), ‘derecho de vivir’ (right to live) and ‘stop feminazi’s’. Also, the Spanish flag was all around present (see figure 7). This was for me a huge contrast compared to the manifestations I encountered in Barcelona, which were very leftist. This again illustrated to me that Madrid was a more Catholic, Spanish nationalist and traditional city compared to Barcelona, as such a pro-life demonstration was not present there. This, also adds to the observation that non-intersectional and non-leftist manifestations or views are not really tolerated in Barcelona.



Figure 7. Pro-life Manifestation, June 26, 2022, Madrid (own photo).

I will also demonstrate this stance by two other debates that are currently going on in Catalonia and Spain, the transsexual debate and the prostitution debate. In Spain, the current transphobic

and abolitionist position is quite widespread because it is linked to feminists from the orbit of the PSOE, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. This movement is not as strong in Catalonia. In Catalonia, the inclusion of trans people and sex workers has not faced such a powerful and well-organized abolitionist and anti-trans discourse (Roqueta-Fernández, personal communication, may 16, 2022, Barcelona). Within the next section I will elaborate upon the transsexuality debate.

6.2 Transsexuality Debate

Barcelona is known to be the pioneer regarding trans-activism in Spain, since its emergence in 1970 (Coll-Planas & Missé, 2021, p. 23). This can be illustrated by certain events: in 1977, the first demonstration for sexual freedom was held there. Besides, in 1978 the first transsexual association was founded there. Furthermore, in 2007 it was where the first trans-demonstration in Spain took place. Finally, in 2009 the international campaign Stop Trans Pathologization also started there (p. 25). According to participant Sofia from Endavant, this openness has its roots in the Franco period. She argues:

The struggle of trans people has been closely linked to the territory here, with the anti-Franco struggle. There are very good alliances of trans and gay people, because of the Spanish 1977 Amnesty Law, which replaced the 1970 law of Dangers of Social Life. Therefore, the trans struggle is an integral part of our feminist movement (Sofia, April 21, 2022, Barcelona).

Within this quote we can see how the historical situation of Catalonia has resulted in a stronger leftist movement in which several struggles, such as the feminist, the independentist and the transsexual, are interrelated. The other women that I spoke to were also very open and accepting of transsexuality. Even though most of the feminist social initiatives are non-mixed such as Hora Bruixa and FxI, they do have a broader definition than only allowing women. Participant Emma from Hora Bruixa explained to me: “Non-mixed spaces have been specified as for women, lesbians and trans, this is a terminology that has been used a lot here” (April 6, 2022, Barcelona). Thus, within this quote we can see that the Catalan feminists have included a broader definition of non-mixed than only allowing women in.

The incorporation of transsexuality within the feminist and independentist movement can also be noticed in demonstrations. Within a trans demonstration that I participated in; one can see how different flags are represented (see figure 7). The one on the left (blue pink white) is the trans flag, the ones on the right are the Pride flag and the non-binary flag. Furthermore,

during the manifestation different slogans were shouted which included: ‘I - independència’ and ‘Boti boti boti, espanyol qui no boti’, which are both pro-independence slogans. This, shows us how within transsexual manifestations, the independence issue is also interrelated.



Figure 8. Trans Manifestation, March 31, 2022, Barcelona (own photo).

In conclusion, compared to the rest of Spain, Barcelona and Catalonia are very open and inclusive about transsexuality. Within the feminism of the women that I spoke to, transsexuality is explicitly included in their activism, which makes Catalan feminism more intersectional than types of feminism that only include women in the traditional sense. Within the next section, I will elaborate upon the different perceptions regarding the prostitution debate.

6.3 Prostitution Debate

Within feminist studies, the issue of prostitution has caused great debates and has given rise to intense discussions in feminist movements. On the one hand there are abolitionists who support the eradication of prostitution as it is perceived as a violence against women. On the other hand, there are sex worker’s rights movements who fight for the recognition of sex worker’s rights (Arce Becerra, 2018, p. 1199). Participant Marta from FxI told me that at a meeting at Ca la Dona there were some feminists from Madrid that were abolitionists and that they tried to divide the feminists in Ca la Dona (April 4, 2022, Barcelona). This is also argued by participant Martina from FxI, she said:

I don't mean that I am in favor of prostitution. But they [the abolitionists] put you like that. Are you with me or against me? I mean neither one nor the other. I am going to try to make the use of the body truly free in society. These women [the abolitionists] will tell you that it is free, but they [the prostitutes] are not free. I don't think they have chosen it, it's that they don't have any other choice (April 25, 2022, Barcelona).

Within this quote we can see that she takes a more open stance towards the issue of prostitution than the abolitionists. She argues that the women who prostitute do not really have a choice so she wants to protect them rather than only criminalize prostitution. She argues that abolitionists have a more black and white vision of prostitution, where you can only be against or in favor of it, while she tries to see the more intersectional perspective.

6.4 Tensions on Catalan Level

Furthermore, within Catalonia itself, different perceptions about the independence process have also resulted in certain challenges. Beside the fear for the patriarchal features of nationalism, for a long time feminists have also feared that it would pose a threat to women's solidarity (Alonso, 2018; Abdo, 1991). These fears can also be perceived amongst the women in Ca la Dona. As has been elaborated upon in the introduction, Ca la Dona is a place where several feminist organizations can meet independently, but there are some activities that are organized on a common level, such as the 8-march manifestation. Due to the scope of my research I have only spoken to the organization of FxI who meets within Ca la Dona. The following section will elaborate upon how the women of FxI feel within the shared place of Ca la Dona. According to the women of FxI, within Ca la Dona they distance themselves from the independentist debate by not treating the topic within common organized activities. However, because of this, Catalan independentist feminists feel excluded. They sense that independentism cannot be talked about in more hegemonic Catalan feminism. This is illustrated in the following quote by participant Agnès from FxI: "But another thing is that the other women in Ca la Dona tell you that you cannot speak. It is very important that we can all be in Ca la Dona" (March 31, 2022, Barcelona). The same sentiment can be seen in the quote of participant Martina from FxI, she argues that:

So, in [hegemonic Catalan] feminism I had the feeling that we have to be careful talking about independentism as it is regarded as politics. However, I believe the whole feminist movement is political. When the women from Ca la Dona say that we cannot talk about independence because it is politics, it is almost a right-wing perspective to me, because what they are actually saying is: we want to erase independence (April 25, 2022, Barcelona).

These quotes from Agnès and Martina illustrate how nationalism is treated with precaution within feminism. Independentism is argued to be too political and has therefore no place in feminism. However, Martina argues that politics cannot be separated from feminism. Besides, she argues that excluding independentism is actually working against the theme of liberty and therefore she criticizes hegemonic Catalan feminist movements that do this. Thus, within these quotes we can see that Catalan independentist feminism is in tension with the more hegemonic forms of feminism. These independentist feminists feel excluded because they are not allowed to share their political opinions within feminism. These quotes illustrate that hegemonic Catalan feminists try to distance themselves from politics in order to make it more inclusive.

Thus, these more hegemonic Catalan feminists try to make a distinction between public and private and see nationalist opinions as something private that should be kept away from the public feminist sphere. However, as has already been argued several times in this research, in practice this is not possible, as there is never a complete distinction between feminism and politics, just as you also cannot separate these. Thus, an intersectional approach is needed that includes all aspects of identity and all aspects of activism in order to be more inclusive. However, it does not necessarily mean that the independentist feminists are incorporating a more inclusive activism. This will be elaborated upon in the following section.

6.5 Independentist Feminism in Catalonia

In the previous section we have seen that Catalan feminism can be regarded as more intersectional whilst Spanish feminism can be regarded as closer related to second wave feminism. Besides, within *Ca la Dona* feminists are not keen on including the Catalan independentist struggle within feminist activism, because of their precaution for nationalism and women's solidarity. Catalan independentist feminists feel excluded because of this. Nevertheless, whilst Catalan independentist feminists accuse Spanish feminists and Catalan hegemonic feminists of being exclusionary, within the next section we will see that for some of the women I spoke to, their vision of intersectional feminism also does not allow for many differences.

For many of the women within independentist feminist organizations, independentism and feminism are intertwined. They feel that one cannot exist without the other. Also, they connect this to anti-capitalism. They argue that the independence process creates an opportunity to create an independentist state, whilst at the same time creating a feminist and anti-capitalist

state. As has been argued by Alonso (2018), it is very important to show that the struggle for independence also relates to broader social change. Therefore, feminist groups in Catalonia are so engaged within the independence movement, as for them it is an opportunity to change the status quo (p. 620). This can be illustrated in the following quote from Sofia from Endavant:

In our country, the exploitation of capitalism also has to do with gender and the national conflict. In reverse, the national conflict has to do with the exploitation of capitalism and gender. We cannot separate them. This is why it is contradictory to be a feminist and not independentist (April 21, 2022, Barcelona).

Within this quote we can see how Sofia experiences intersectionality. According to her all aspects of identity are interrelated and cannot be separated. She focuses upon the local and historical context and argues that because of the national conflict, independentism cannot be excluded from class and feminist liberation. As West (1997) has argued, it is important to recognize how these women themselves define feminism and nationalism and to understand the cultural and historical context in which it emerged (p. xv). Participant Alba from FxI and CUP also argued this. She says: “For me there is no feminism without class struggle. And in the current situation in my country, without its national liberation, either” (April 9, 2022, Barcelona). This shows how according to her, all political struggles intersect.

However, it also shows according to these women you cannot be feminist if you are not for a liberation of all minorities and struggles. The independentism of Catalonia is regarded as a theme of liberty. Therefore, according to these women, if you are against the independence of Catalonia, capitalism or feminism, you are against liberty. This means that there is not much space for different perspectives regarding feminism, the inclusion of the independentism process and anti-capitalism therein. The independentist women that I spoke to were very clear, it is not possible to call yourself a feminist if you are not in favor of these other struggles as well. Whilst their stance is understandable because of their lived reality, it also seems a bit black and white to me as it does not allow for many nuances.

6.6 Feminism does not need to go through Independentism

Furthermore, I noticed that the women that I spoke to who were active in feminist organizations, but which were not specifically linked to independentism, had different perceptions regarding feminism and independentism. According to them, independentism is not their priority in order to achieve feminist goals. However, they were very explicit about the incorporation of anti-

capitalism within feminism. Participant Emma from Hora Bruixa argues: “I don’t think the feminist revolution goes through independence, but it is also a point of conflict, because for some people feminism does go through there” (April 6, 2022, Barcelona). Within this quote we can see how for Emma, the feminist revolution is prioritized over other revolutions, thus for her, independentism is not an integral part. Also, it is argued that this causes conflict amongst Catalan feminists. Nevertheless, participant Sofia from Endavant argued that for her it is not necessarily a problem when Catalan feminists are not independentist, as long as they recognize the right to self-determination. However, she does argue that there would be a problem or difference if a collective is ‘espanolista’ (April 21, 2022, Barcelona).

Thus, opinions about whether one needs to be independentist to be feminist differ amongst these organizations and women. Some argue that independentism is essential and that it is contradictory not to be an independentist feminist. This stance can be seen in organizations that have a direct link to independentism such as FxI and Endavant and CUP. However, there are also women within these organizations who are more flexible and argue that acknowledging the right to self-determination is sufficient, as long as it is not Spanish. Besides, within organizations which do not focus explicitly upon independentism, such as Hora Bruixa, the women argue that independentism is not the priority for achieving feminist goals. Their focus is more upon anti-capitalism and feminism. This illustrates that these concepts are complex and fluid and that there is not a universal form of nationalism and feminism. Whilst the independentist process in Catalonia has fueled mobilization amongst feminists, it has also caused frictions. Within the next section I will elaborate more in-depth upon the issues of institutionalism and age difference to illustrate the difficulties that arise when different forms of identity politics intertwine.

6.7 Age and Institutionalism

According to Iveson (2019), it is important to adopt an inter- generational and intersectional approach in order to study different dynamics and to avoid homogenizing women. Therefore, I have also focused upon age differences within the different organizations. Today in Catalonia, the younger generation that is explicitly independentist assembles more in political parties such as Endavant and CUP, rather than in social movements such as FxI and Hora Bruixa. Within these feminist social movements there are different perceptions about the inclusion of independentism within feminism. On the one hand, it can be noticed that the women of FxI are

mostly of a somewhat older generation. They have experienced the Franco regime and as this has shaped their experiences, it also shapes their visions regarding religion, independentism and feminism. On the other hand, within younger feminist organizations such as Hora Bruixa, the priority is less on independentism, but more on anti-capitalism and feminism. They are critical of the feminist movement of the older generation and want to change what they could not achieve. As participants Emma and Mia from Hora Bruixa argue: “There are two generations of feminists, with a void in between. The older generation started their fight many years ago and their feminism is still closer to the institution” (April 6, 2022, Barcelona).

The institution that is mentioned within this quote refers to the process of feminist mobilization that has been described in chapter five. After the first wave of reforms feminists felt that they had achieved transformation started to demobilize. However, it turned out that these institutional changes were not enough to change the situation on the ground. This is why institutionalism has a negative association for these women, as there is a fear of feminists in Catalonia of being co-opted by public institutions (Rodó-Zárate, 2016). Within the quote we can see that there is made a separation in age and the type of feminism and activism that is practiced. The older generation is more linked to the institution, whilst the younger generation is linked more to mobilization. However, the critique of the younger generation feminists towards the older generation also causes some difficulties on the side of the older generation. As participant Lucía from FxI explains:

I also noticed at a March 8 demonstration, there were some banners from the younger girls, which said: "We are going to fight for what our grandmothers could not achieve." However, thanks to the grandmothers we are where we are. Of course, the fight is not over. It's not that they didn't advance things. They advanced a lot of things. Yes, it was a tough and important fight. They lived through a very harsh repression and that struggle was much more important (March 31, 2022, Barcelona).

This quote illustrates that the older generation feminists feel a bit betrayed by the slogans of the younger generation feminists. They do not feel valued for their contribution to the struggle. Also, Monica highlights the fact that the older generation feminists have experienced the Franco period and therefore had very different priorities. However, some of the older generation feminists, such as participant Marta from FxI, also told me that the younger generation is actually her hope for the future of intersectional feminism and that she is very happy to see them so mobilized (April 4, 2022, Barcelona). Besides, some of the younger generation feminists explained to me that they did acknowledge the important things that the feminists

before them achieved, but that it was now their turn to go on with that change, as it was not enough.

As has been described in chapter 5, the generation in between the younger and older generation found themselves in a period of less mobilization. Within the organizations that I spoke to, this generation was also less present. However, participant Alba from FxI and CUP explained to me that her mother, which is of the in-between generation, did join a group called the 'Vocalía de Dona'. These groups are only for women, but they are not linked to feminism. It is a place where women organize themselves to do activities and yoga for example (April 25, 2022, Barcelona). Thus, we can see that the younger and older generation have been and are still more mobilized than the generation in between. Between the younger and older generation, there are some frictions as the prior feels they have to fix what the older generation could not achieve, whilst the older generation feels that their experience during the Franco period is not understood enough.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have argued that there is a difference between Spanish feminists and Catalan feminists. Catalan feminism can be regarded as more intersectional, because of the multiple oppressions and struggles that Catalan women faced. Spanish feminism is more closely related to second-wave feminism and this plays out in debates over prostitution and transsexuality.

Besides, there are also differences between Catalan feminists, the independentist Catalan feminists feel excluded by the hegemonic Catalan feminists as independentism is not included in the main agenda. However, some of the independentist feminists that I talked to also excluded certain types of feminism, as according to them you cannot be feminist without being independentist and anti-capitalist. Whilst this stance is understandable, because of the lived experience and historical context of these women, it can also be regarded as exclusionary, as feminists that do not adhere to their perception cannot be regarded as feminists. However, there are also Catalan feminists who do not necessarily feel the feminist revolution needs to go through the independence of Catalonia.

These different perceptions can to some extent be explained by the age difference between these feminists which influenced the historical context that they grew up in. As the older generation feminists have experienced the Franco regime, they are more inclined to

independentism, whilst the younger generation has more negative associations with institutionalism and therefore does not have much faith a new independentist government either. They prefer feminist grass-root mobilization and anti-capitalism over independentism.

Conclusion

Within this research I have showed how nationalism, feminism and religion have different meanings in different local and historical contexts. Within Catalonia, because of the Nationalist-Catholic Franco regime, these concepts have different meanings attached to them, depending on the person you talk to. The feminist organizations that I have researched and the women that I have spoken to have showed how they have reclaimed their agency regarding nationalism, despite the multiple oppressions that they have faced and the negative associations that exist within feminism.

Within this research I have answered the following research question: *How do gender, nationalism and religion intersect within different feminist independentist organizations in Catalonia?* As has been elaborated upon in chapter 5, I argue that the multiple oppressions that women in Catalonia have faced have resulted in a more intersectional and mobilized form of feminist activism compared to the rest of Spain. Despite the negative association that existed within feminism regarding gender and nationalism and the patriarchal power relations that were present within leftist parties, these women still engaged with independentism and saw it as an opportunity to create a new, feminist and anti-capitalist state.

Within chapter 6, I have demonstrated that on a theoretical level, the women that I researched were very aware of the intersectional dynamics that are present. What stood out is the importance that intersectionality had for these women's lives and the way they practice their activism through the use of their body in the form of colors, symbols, flags and clothing within manifestations. Besides, regarding independentism, I have also argued that the preservation of the Catalan language plays an important role for these women and that they relate themselves to other oppressed countries by Spain, such as Latin America and even the Netherlands.

Furthermore, anti-capitalism is also an essential factor for these women in the construction of a feminist and independentist state. This is connected to the Marxist history of the leftist movements, which is connected to an anti-religious stance with a preference for secularism. This secularist stance is strengthened by the experiences of these Catalan women by the Nationalist-Catholic Franco regime and the 2010 abortion law, which resulted in a negative association towards religion. Despite the fact that the church in Catalonia actually played an important role in supporting the Catalan culture, it seemed like the negative associations regarding religion overruled. However, it might also be argued that the positive associations with secularism are just too strong, as secularism was without doubt described by many women as an integral part of democracy and liberty. Nevertheless, the sharp distinction

between religion and secularism and the public and private sphere are challenged by certain rituals and customs that are present within the organizations.

Furthermore, within chapter seven I have shown how the more intersectional Catalan feminism differs from the more second-wave form of Spanish feminism. This has been illustrated by the debates around transsexuality and prostitution. This difference does cause frictions as Catalan feminists cannot understand that open visions about Catalan independentism, transsexuality and prostitution are not included in Spanish feminism. This illustrates that Catalan feminists have difficulty understanding any other vision than an intersectional approach to feminism. These dynamics can also be seen between Catalan feminists. When it comes to questions as whether to mobilize or not, hegemonic Catalan feminists prefer to keep the independentist debate out of the feminist agenda. This causes pain amongst the independentist Catalan feminists, as they feel excluded. They argue that it is not possible to be a feminist without being independentist and anti-capitalist.

Therefore, I will argue that whilst Catalan independentist feminism is very intersectional, it also causes frictions and can be regarded as exclusionary for any form that does not conform with intersectionality. It seems that the women that I spoke to who had more open vision about the incorporation of various aspects into feminism, had more closed views if any of these aspects were not incorporated. Besides, I noticed that the difference in age also has an effect on different perceptions. As the older generation has experienced the Franco regime, their perceptions on gender, nationalism and religion are quite strong. However, the younger generation feels that the feminist struggle does not necessarily need to go through and independentist state, as they do not have much faith in institutions anyway. They would rather see an anti-capitalist and feminist struggle happen within grass-root mobilization.

This research has shown that being aware of local and historical contexts can pose a challenge to a more universal or western form of feminism. Catalan independentist feminists show how different aspects of identity intertwine and how multiple oppressions have resulted in their specific form of intersectional feminism. However, within this research I have also shown that there exist limitations and tensions within intersectional feminism, as the inclusion of certain perceptions, means the exclusion of others. Nevertheless, I do realize that I am in a privileged position as a researcher to observe these dynamics and that for people on the ground, their specific form of independentist Catalan feminism has its roots in their lived and oppressed experiences.

Besides, because of the Catalan language I was unfortunately not able to participate in every activity, nor understand every conversation that was held between the women when I was

around. Whilst this can be seen as a limitation for this study, I believe that it is important that research about Catalonia will extend the Catalan language and research area. I was surprised by how complex and delicate this conflict is and even more, that I was not even aware of it, despite the fact that the violence happened only a short time ago and so close to my home country. When asking around, I noticed this sentiment was shared amongst other non-Spanish people as well. However, I believe Catalan feminists demonstrate that intersectionality can also be very relevant as a theoretical lens on gender and feminist activism work, as has also been argued by Rodó-Zárate (2020). This is an addition to Crenshaw's (1991) method of intersectionality, which was used as a lens of exclusion only.

Therefore, it is important that further research will be done within this field, as the conflict is still going on and intersectionality is quite a new field. Especially within the European context, as Western universal feminism was for a long time dominant here. For further research it would also be interesting that the perspective of Spanish feminists and hegemonic Catalan feminists were researched. Furthermore, more research about the role of religion and secularism within feminist movements in Europe would be interesting to research in order to broaden to scope of intersectionality.

In conclusion, I believe more studies in historical and local contexts can teach us more about how intersectionality is already happening and experienced on the ground and hopefully contribute to a more inclusive form of feminism. has been argued by the 90-year-old participant Agnès from FxI: “Si la republica no es feminista, no serà” (If the republic is not feminist, it will not be) (March 31, 2022, Barcelona).

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