Women in Spain: Many Goals Still to Be Reached

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This essay provides the cultural, social, political, and economic context for understanding the roles of women in contemporary Spain. An immense advancement in the degree of gender equality has taken place at least in the past 30 years; however, some serious gender inequalities still persist. First, the essay presents a historical overview. Second, a synthesis of the values and women’s place in society is provided. Third, data on political participation and representation are presented and limits to women’s presence in politics are identified. Fourth, data on economic participation and pinpoint limits to women’s presence in the economic arena are summarized. Fifth, a succinct analysis is provided of the feminist and nonfeminist branches of the Spanish women’s movement, the impact of transnational feminism, and women’s presence in civil society. Finally, various gender equality policies at the central-state level are discussed briefly and a more in-depth analysis of the measures aimed at increasing women’s access to political decision making is offered.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Between the late 1930s and 1975, Spain was governed by a right-wing authoritarian regime headed by General Francisco Franco, which actively opposed the advancement of women’s rights and status and established restrictive policies and regulations regarding girls and women. For example, girls were enrolled in the education system in considerably lower proportions than boys. Mixed schooling was forbidden by Francoist authorities in 1939. In general, though with exceptions, girls and boys not only attended sex-segregated schools but were also taught a different curriculum. The

Facing page: Two women and a dog watch a sunset in Spain. (MaxPhoto/Shutterstock)

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girls’ curriculum included domestic skills (mainly sewing) and fewer academic subjects than did the boys’ curriculum. It was only in 1970 that mixed schools were permitted. In addition, the principle of inequality between spouses was embedded in family law. For instance, until 1975 article 57 of the Civil Code established that husbands had to protect their wives, and wives had to obey their husbands. Moreover, many civil rights were not recognized for married women; for example, until 1975 a married woman needed her husband’s permission to sign a labor contract or engage in trade.

Motherhood was defined by official discourse not only as the main family duty of women but also as women’s main obligation toward state and society. The role of mothering was perceived as incompatible with other activities, such as waged work. During Franco’s first rule (between the second part of the 1930s and the early 1960s), the state took measures to prevent women’s labor outside the home, such as barring married women from working or prohibiting women from entering certain professions, including medicine and law. Women’s participation in the labor market in Spain was among the lowest in the Western world. In 1960, the female labor force as a percentage of the female population from 15 to 64 years old was 26 percent in Spain, 43 percent in the United States, and 46 percent in all countries studied by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 1992, 39). Divorce was abolished, and selling and advertising contraceptives was criminalized. Abortion was defined as a crime punishable by imprisonment. During Franco’s second rule (from the late 1950s or early 1960s to 1975), policy makers approved some liberalization measures related to women’s status, such as the abolishment of some obstacles to paid employment (e.g., the aforementioned marriage bars and prohibitions against women entering some professions in the field of law). Liberalization, however, did not take place in the area of regulation of sexuality and reproduction (Gallego Méndez 1983; Nash 1991).

Social conceptions of gender roles were quite nongenitalitarian. In the late 1970s, the view that women (especially married women) belong in the home and not in the public realm was prevalent. In 1975, slightly more than two-thirds of adult Spaniards (68 percent) thought “women’s education should be aimed principally at raising a family rather than exercising a profession” (De Pablo Masa 1976, 377). Less than a third of the adult population (29 percent) believed “women should work outside the home even if it was not necessary for the economic support of the household” (De Pablo Masa 1976, 372). Slightly more than two thirds (69 percent) of adult Spaniards thought that “without marital permission, women should not engage in activities outside the home such as belonging to associations, attending meetings or lectures” (De Pablo Masa 1976, 377).

VALUES AND WOMEN’S PLACE IN SOCIETY

Regarding social conceptions of gender roles, the situation in Spain today could not be more different from the situation under Franco. Most citizens now hold egalitarian views on women’s place in society. The overwhelming majority of adult Spaniards (94 percent) affirm that they support “full equality between men and women.” Perceiving gender inequality is the first step toward eroding gender hierarchies, and most Spaniards are aware of gender imbalances. More than half of the adult Spanish population (56 percent) thinks inequalities between men and women are very big or big.
More concretely, around four of five adult Spaniards think women are worse off than men regarding salaries (80 percent), the combination of work and family (78 percent), and access to decision-making positions in companies (72 percent). Around two-thirds of Spaniards aged 18 or older affirm that women are worse off than men when trying to find a job (68 percent) or attempting to be promoted (66 percent). Slightly more than half of the adult population believes women in Spain are worse off than men in respect to access to political decision-making positions (55 percent). By contrast, the overwhelming majority of Spaniards aged 18 or older (84 percent) state that the situation of women and men is the same regarding access to education (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2006, March 2006 data).

Even though the majority of adult Spaniards hold egalitarian views on women’s place in society, a minority still holds traditional ideas, and these traditional ideas are a barrier for the advancement of women. For instance, 29 percent of Spaniards aged 18 or older agree with the statement “when jobs are scarce, men are more entitled to have a job than women,” and 12 percent neither agree nor disagree (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2006, March 2006 data).

The majority of Spanish citizens not only have egalitarian gender views but they also support many policies that attempt to erode gender inequality. For example, most Spaniards are in favor of flexible work schedules for working parents to help them combine work and personal life (92 percent), punishments to companies that pay women less than men for the same work (90 percent), preferential loans for female employers and entrepreneurs (87 percent), the promotion of women’s employment in
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professions in which they are underrepresented (77 percent), and a law that fosters the access of women to decision-making positions in companies (61 percent). In contrast, preferential hiring is not backed by broad sectors of the Spanish public: for instance, only 37 percent of adult women and 21 percent of adult men would support hiring a woman instead of a man if both are equally qualified for a job (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2006, March 2006 data).

Given space constraints, women's place in Spanish society may be illustrated by focusing on families and education. In postauthoritarian Spain, family law has been modified dramatically, and women and men are now treated equally. Currently, both have equal obligations and rights within marriage, unlike in the Francoist past. Men and women also have the same obligations and rights with respect to their children: parental authority is held by both parents and not just by the father, as was previously the case.

Regarding decision making, marked changes have occurred in most Spanish families in the past three decades. Family life is currently based much less on wives' and children's obedience to husbands and fathers and more on dialogue and negotiation between family members. In contrast, however equally noticeable transformations have not occurred in the gender division of labor within families. In Spain, large percentages of both sexes believe household and caring tasks should be shared between both members of the couple. However, in practice, the main (or sole) family responsibility of many men is to serve as the breadwinner, whereas women (whether workers or homemakers) take responsibility for most domestic and care work. Thus, the combination of professional and family responsibilities is an acute problem for many Spanish women of working age (Meil Landverlin 1999).

In the sphere of education, there was an enormous drive toward gender equality after the dictatorship. In today's Spain, for the 2005–2006 academic year women outnumbered men among students who graduated from non-mandatory secondary education (bachillerato) (58 percent). In 2006–2007 women also outnumbered men among university students (54 percent), students who graduated from university (61 percent), and doctoral students (52 percent). The choice of field of study is still differentiated by sex, although to a considerably lower extent than in the past. For instance, in 2006–2007 women outnumbered men among doctoral students in the experimental and health sciences (60 percent), humanities (57 percent), and social and legal sciences (52 percent), whereas men outnumbered women among doctoral students in engineering and technology (28 percent women) (calculation based on data from Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2008b).

In short, schools and universities allow women to encounter equal treatment to a higher degree than in other social arenas, such as the labor market. Nonetheless, researchers have identified at least seven areas where sexist practices still hinder girls and women: textbooks, curriculum, teachers' actions in the classroom, interaction among students, students' academic options, the feminization of the teaching profession, and students' positions in the labor market after completing their studies (Bonal 1997).

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION**

In the first democratic elections in Spain, higher proportions of women than men preferred conservative political options. This difference between the voting patterns of men and women eroded and now have completely disappeared (Verge 2005, 1–2). The
absence of gender differences regarding voting in Spain contrasts with other countries, such as the United States, where the expression “the gender gap” describes women’s tendency to vote for more liberal political options than men since the 1980s.

As shown next, political representation is one area in which women have made outstanding progress in postauthoritarian Spain. At the central-state level, the head of state is a constitutional monarch. Men have precedence over women in the inheritance of the Crown, but the government formed in 2004 by the social democratic Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, or PSOE) announced a future reform of this rule to apply to the offspring of the current heir to the throne. No woman has ever occupied the position of prime minister in contemporary Spain. The proportion of women in the Spanish Council of Ministers formed in 2008 is 53 percent. One of the two vice presidents is a woman: María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, who is also a well-known feminist. Spain ranks ninth among countries in the world regarding the presence of women in the lower chamber of Parliament (the Congress of Deputies), with 36 percent of deputies. Women make up 30 percent of the representatives of the upper chamber, the Senate (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008). The policy-making capacity of the Congress of Deputies is considerably higher than that of the Senate.1

As for the judiciary, the presence of women is quite pronounced, although less so in the upper levels. In 2006, 43 percent of magistrates and 63 percent of judges were women. The president of the Constitutional Court (Tribunal Constitucional, or TC) is a woman. The vice president is a man, and one of the 10 remaining justices is a woman (Instituto de la Mujer 2008, 2008 data). The TC has a responsibility equivalent to that of the Supreme Court in the United States—that is, to be the highest court for constitutional matters and to rule on whether laws are unconstitutional or invalid. The president of the Tribunal Supremo (TS) is a man. In 2008, only 7 percent of TS magistrates were women (Instituto de la Mujer 2008). The TS is the highest court in Spain except for constitutional issues.

In the realm of public administration, the presence of women in senior grades is important but still lower than that of men. In 2007, women made up slightly more than half (53 percent) of civil servants (funcionarios de carrera) but slightly more than a third (39 percent) of group A civil servants (Instituto de la Mujer 2008).2

The main nationally based parties are the PSOE, the conservative People’s Party (Partido Popular, or PP), and the electoral coalition to the left of the PSOE called the United Left (Izquierda Unida, or IU). The proportion of female members in the three parties was approximately a third: 33 percent in the PP (in 2001) and 32 percent in the IU (in 2002) and the PSOE (in 2005). No woman has ever occupied the highest position in party leadership of a major political party in contemporary Spain. The proportion of women in top posts (the highest committee) is noticeable but smaller than that of men. In 2004, women accounted for 35 percent of the members of the PSOE Comisión Ejecutiva Federal, 34 percent of the members of the IU Presidencia Ejecutiva Federal, and 27 percent of the members of the PP Comité Ejecutivo Federal (Instituto de la Mujer 2008).

At the regional level, only 1 of the 17 regional presidents is a woman: Esperanza Aguirre, who is the president of the region of Madrid and belongs to the conservative PP. In general, though with exceptions, the presence of women in regional executives is remarkable. In 2006, in the region of Andalusia, women outnumbered men as members of the regional cabinet (57 percent), and in two other regions (Galicia and Castile-La Mancha) the situation was of full parity (50 percent women and 50 percent men). In three regions (Asturias, Balearic Islands, and the Basque Country), the proportion of

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women among regional cabinet members was between 40 and 49 percent, and in eight regions (Aragon, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Castile and Leon, Catalonia, Extremadura, Madrid, and Murcia) the proportion was between 30 and 39 percent. Only three regions have regional executives with female representation below 30 percent: La Rioja (22 percent), Valencia (20 percent), and Navarre (9 percent) (Instituto de la Mujer 2006). The presence of women in regional parliaments has increased through the democratic period and is now remarkable: in 2005, women accounted for 37 percent of all members of regional parliaments. Although differences among regions existed, the proportion of women among regional members of Parliament (MPs) was higher than 30 percent in all regions. In two regions, female regional parliamentarians outnumbered male regional parliamentarians: Castile-La Mancha (53 percent) and the Basque Country (52 percent) (Instituto de la Mujer 2006).

At the local level, the presence of women in the leadership and the assembly is lower than at the regional and central-state level. In 2007, only 16 percent of mayors were women. In 2003, only 26 percent of town councilors were women (Instituto de la Mujer 2008). The differences between the local and other levels merit attention, as it is often assumed that women have more chances to enter the political elite at the local level.

In spite of the fact that by international standards women’s presence in the Spanish political elite is outstanding, it is still smaller than women’s proportion in the general population. Social scientists have investigated why this is the case. Most academic works on gender and the Spanish political elite support the demand-side explanation, which states that on the whole women are discriminated against while trying to reach high political office. In contrast, supply-side explanations of the weak presence of women among the political elite maintain that women as a group do not have enough resources to obtain an egalitarian representation in political institutions. These resources include, among others, education, time, money, political experience, and ambition. Studies provide some evidence that corroborates the supply-side thesis (Valiente, Ramiro, and Morales 2005, 193–195).

**ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION**

In the past three decades, the Spanish female employment rate has constantly increased, and it is now 55 percent. (The female employment rate is the proportion of employed women in each age group, 15–64 years in this case.) This is an important advancement, because the overwhelming majority of the people of working age acquire economic autonomy only through paid employment. However, the Spanish female employment rate is four points below the EU average (59 percent). Moreover, the Spanish female employment rate (55 percent) is 21 points below the Spanish male employment rate (76 percent) (Romans 2008, 3; 4th quarter 2007 data).

Other gender inequalities persist in the Spanish labor market. On average, women’s salaries are lower than men’s. In 2002, the average yearly gross salary was €19,802 for people of both sexes but €15,768 for women (Instituto de la Mujer 2008). Part-time work is mainly a female phenomenon. Part-time employment rates were 4 percent for Spanish men and 23 percent for Spanish women (Romans 2008, 4; 4th quarter
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2007 data). Women are also overrepresented among workers with shorter working records, workers employed in the underground economy, and workers who work at home. Women are overcrowded in some jobs and professions, whereas men perform a wider range of jobs and professions (Cousins 2005).

Spain has two main trade unions: the General Workers’ Union (Unión General de Trabajadores, UGT) and the Workers’ Commissions (Comisiones Obreras, CCOO). About a third of members of both unions are women: 32 percent of the UGT members in 2006, and 36 percent of CCOO members in 2006 (Instituto de la Mujer 2008). No woman has ever occupied the position of general secretary of any union in contemporary Spain. The presence of women in the top posts of unions is very marked but nonetheless smaller than that of men. In September 2006, the proportion of women in the highest committee (the Federal Executive Commission) was 46 percent in the UGT and 30 percent in the CCOO (Comisiones Obreras 2008; Unión General de Trabajadores 2008).

If women now form a critical mass in the labor market and the rank-and-file and hierarchy of trade unions, the presence of women in economic decision making is still reduced (IMOP-Encuestas 1999; Barberà et al 2000). In 2007, women accounted for only 3 percent of presidents, 4 percent of vice presidents, and 8 percent of board members of the 35 most important companies in the Spanish stock market (Instituto de la Mujer 2008). In the second quarter of 2008, women made up slightly below a quarter (22 percent) of the presidents of companies with 10 or more workers, slightly above a quarter (28 percent) of presidents of companies with 9 or fewer workers, and almost half (48 percent) of presidents of companies that did not employ any workers (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2008a). As for the country’s central bank (Banco de España, BN), no woman has ever occupied the position of BN governor in Spain. In 2008, the BN deputy governor was a man, but two of the remaining eight members of the governing council were women (Banco de España 2008).

To explain women’s subordinate position in the Spanish labor market and identify limits to women’s economic participation, researchers have elaborated two types of explanations: supply-side and demand-side arguments (Moltó and Domingo 1998). Supply-side accounts argue that women and men are different kinds of employees in terms of their working potential to employers. For instance, women have different educational backgrounds than men or have more domestic and caring responsibilities at home. As a result of these and other differences, women’s and men’s prospects in the labor market are dissimilar. In contrast, demand-side analysts propose that in the labor market, women are discriminated against, and that discrimination is the main factor that explains the unequal position of female and male workers.

A caveat is necessary at this point. Spanish feminist scholars have insisted that prevailing notions of economic participation and work reflect male experiences of presence in the labor market in exchange for wages and salaries. Women perform enormous amounts of work that are not considered as such because they are unpaid. The unpaid domestic and care work performed by a high proportion of Spanish homemakers (and by employed women doing their second shift) provides enormous doses of welfare to individuals of all ages in Spain today (Cousins 2005; Moltó and Domingo 1998).
THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT AND
WOMEN IN CIVIL SOCIETY

The women’s movement in Spain is composed of an explicitly feminist branch and a nonfeminist branch. The political environment influenced the feminist branch of the women’s movement (hereafter “the feminist movement”) regarding its political allies, goals, organizational structures, and activities, among other dimensions. The second wave of feminist collective activism appeared during the 1960s and 1970s in opposition to the authoritarian regime, where it encountered mainly (illegal) left-wing political parties and trade unions. These have been the political allies of the feminist movement ever since. A significant number of the goals of the feminist movement have been instrumental (as opposed to expressive). The feminist movement has also demanded the democratization of the country. The movement was unable to establish strong and long-lasting umbrella organizations in part because of the close links between women’s groups and parties. The interest in political reform and the close alliance with the political left gave feminists incentives to use conventional forms of collective action because these were the preferred forms of action for left-wing parties and trade unions (feminists’ allies) to reach political aims. Since the 1970s, the fact that the state did not provide women with some services that they needed, such as sexual information, contraceptives, and legal advice, made Spanish feminists willing to invest considerable energy in providing services. The feminists’ commitment to providing services has increased since the 1980s (to the detriment of identity-oriented activities), when the state started giving subsidies for women’s organizations that provide services (Threlfall 2005b; Valiente 2003b).

Foreign feminist literature has been of crucial importance in Spain since the 1960s. Second-wave Spanish feminists intensively (and selectively) used the works of foreign feminist authors as a source of inspiration to understand gender inequality and fight collectively against gender hierarchies. Up to the 1990s, many Spanish feminists used French feminist literature because most of the feminists who mastered a foreign language were fluent in French and France is geographically next to Spain. The influence of Anglo-Saxon literature has been more prevalent since the 1990s, as the new generations of feminists are more familiar with English. Because most feminists in society, politics, and the academic world were either members of left-wing political parties or sympathetic to the left, Marxist feminism has been central in the Spanish feminist movement and research, while liberal feminism and radical feminism have been less important (although not negligible). Therefore, priority issues for Marxist feminists, such as women’s work, have been more intensively analyzed and prioritized as arenas for mobilization than other topics, such as sexuality, which is a central concern for radical feminists.

Spain joined the European Union (EU) in 1986. Because some national power has been transferred to the EU, Spanish feminists have reoriented some of their actions to this supra-national realm. The EU has provided Spanish feminists with money and arenas for activism. The mobilization to demand more access to political decision making for women is a case in point. In 1990, the European Women’s Lobby was established. It includes Europe-wide women’s groups and women’s umbrella organizations from each EU member state. The purpose of this lobby is to promote women’s interests at the level
of the EU. The Spanish Association to Support the European Women’s Lobby, founded in 1993, is an umbrella association of nationally based Spanish feminist groups funded mainly with European money and with close ties to the social democratic PSOE. Feminists active in left-wing parties with parliamentary representation have increasingly mobilized through this association in the battle for higher numbers of women in political decision-making positions (Jenson and Valiente 2003).

The nonfeminist branch of the women’s movement is composed of women who mobilized as women but not as feminists. This branch includes housewives’ organizations, widows’ associations, mothers’ groups, and cultural and religious associations, among others. This branch has hardly been researched (but for studies in English, see Ortbals 2004; Radcliffe 2002; Valiente 2003a). This scarcity of research is regrettable because most women who belong to women’s organizations in civil society and mobilize through them are not members of feminist groups.

Women are increasingly present in organizations of civil society whether in women-only groups or in mixed associations. For example, on average, women outnumber men in the so-called third sector dedicated to social causes (Pérez-Díaz and López Novo 2003, 214–217, 231–233, 241–242). This presence means women now constitute a visible mass public that politicians often keep in mind when calculating what policies they support or oppose.

WOMEN’S POLICIES

After 1975, policymakers began to dismantle the discriminatory legislation inherited from Franco’s time and promote women’s rights and status. The 1978 Constitution explicitly states that women and men are equal before the law, and sex discrimination is prohibited. Because of space constraints, even a mere enumeration of the main gender equality policies in postauthoritarian Spain is an impossible task, but several policies instituted by the central state (not by the regions or the local powers) are illustrative. The selling and advertising of contraceptives was decriminalized in 1978. Divorce for civil marriages was permitted in 1981. A partial decriminalization of abortion took place in 1985. Since then, abortion has been a crime punishable by the Penal Code except on three grounds: when the woman has been raped, when pregnancy seriously endangers the physical and mental health of the mother, and when the fetus is deformed. However, in practice, the mental health clause is used as an (imperfect) proxy for abortion on demand (Blofield 2006, 92). As for child care, since 1975 the main central-state policy has been to supply an ever-increasing number of free, full-time educational preschool programs for children between the ages of three and five (mandatory schooling starts at six). In part as a result of this policy, in the academic year 2003–2004 school attendance rates for three-, four-, and five-year-olds were comparatively high in Spain at 96, 100, and 100 percent, respectively (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 2005). In contrast, the proportion of Spanish children aged two or younger who are cared for in public or private centers is comparatively low: 3 percent for children younger than one year, 12 percent of children aged one year, and 24 percent for two-year-olds (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 2006).
In short, in postauthoritarian Spain, policymakers at the central-state level have been advocating gender-equality policies in line with the policies of other EU member states. Some of these policies were promoted by the coalition of center-right parties, the Unión de Centro Democrático, which governed the country between 1977 and 1982. Although many gender-equality policies were installed under the first period of social democratic government (1982–1996), some of them were sustained by conservative governments (1996–2004). Gender-equality policymaking received an additional push after the electoral victory of the social democratic PSOE in spring 2004. In 2004, a comprehensive Act on Integral Protection against Gender Violence was passed with the support of all parliamentary groups (hereafter the “Gender Violence Act”). It contains a full package of prevention, protection, and punishment of violence against women. Since 2005, article 68 of the Civil Code mandates that both spouses perform household chores and caring tasks. In 2007, a comprehensive gender-equality act was passed. It increased the length of time off work at full pay from 2 to 13 days for working men who became fathers. It mandated that all companies of more than 250 workers negotiate firm-level gender equality plans, and it required a quota of 40 percent for women in all electoral lists.

A deficit of implementation is the pending problem of Spanish central-state policies on gender equality. For instance, a report by Amnesty International (2005) denounced the Gender Violence Act because it was being put in practice with grave shortcomings. The state failed to protect some victims who identified their aggressors and were murdered by them afterwards. The inadequate application of policies in favor of women is a very serious problem that should not be underemphasized. However, the weak execution of gender-equality measures does not invalidate the intrinsic worth of the measures themselves. Moreover, policies toward women were also badly implemented during the Francoist period, but scholars unanimously disregard this fact while asserting that Francoist policies severely curtailed women’s status (Gallego Méndez 1983; Nash 1991).

Not all gender-equality policies have been promoted by the state or have been weakly implemented. As shown in the sidebar “Political Representation and Party Quotas in Left-Wing Parties,” the increasing presence of women in political decision-making positions is mainly the result of women’s quotas adopted voluntarily by left-wing political parties, especially by the social democratic PSOE (Astelarra 2005, 272–273; Threlfall 2005a, 8–9; 2005c, 125, 148–149).

The conservative PP, which formed a government between 1996 and 2004 and was the main opposition party during PSOE rule (1982–1996 and since 2004), has always vehemently opposed quotas (Jenson and Valiente 2003, 86; Verge 2005, 6). As seen in Tables 1 and 2, the proportion of women among PP deputies was 11 percent or below in the first five parliamentary terms (1977, 1979, 1982, 1986, and 1989). Afterward, this proportion increased to 28 percent in 2004 and 30 percent in 2008. The proportion of female PP senators was 11 percent or below in the first seven parliamentary elections. In the 2000 election this proportion almost tripled at 31 percent, and then decreased to 26 percent in the 2004 election. It increased again in 2008 to 29 percent. The increase of PP women in elected positions has been explained by a mimetic effect of the PSOE quotas in a context of intense electoral competition between the PSOE and the PP (Astelarra 2005, 164–66; Ruiz 2002; Verge 2005, 1).
POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTY QUOTAS IN LEFT-WING PARTIES

The approval and implementation of women's quotas in left-wing political parties is the main causal factor that explains why Spain ranks ninth among countries in the world regarding the presence of women in the lower chamber of Parliament (the Congress of Deputies), where 36 percent of deputies are female (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008). The social democratic PSOE formed governments between 1982 and 1996 and again in 2004 and 2008. During the whole democratic period, when not in government, the PSOE was the main opposition party. As Tables 1 and 2 show, in the first four democratic elections (1977, 1979, 1982, and 1986), only 10 percent or less of PSOE deputies and 8 percent or less of PSOE senators were women. As a result of intense pressure from PSOE feminists, during January 22-24, 1988, the 31st PSOE Federal Congress discussed and passed the 25 percent women's quota for party positions and electoral lists. As a result, in 1989, the proportion of female PSOE deputies and senators rose to 19 percent and 18 percent, respectively. As a result of renewed PSOE feminist pressure, delegates at the 34th PSOE federal congress (June 20-22, 1997) debated and approved the increase of the internal and electoral women's party quota to 40 percent. Subsequently, as Tables 1 and 2 show, the proportion of women who became PSOE deputies and senators increased most of the time.

The third electoral force in most elections has been the electoral coalition to the left of the PSOE, the IU, which was formed in 1986 and included, among others, the Spanish Communist Party (Partido Comunista de España, PCE). In the late 1980s, an

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**POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTY QUOTAS IN LEFT-WING PARTIES, Continued**

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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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</table>

NA = not available.


Internal IU debate on women's political presence finished with the 1989 commitment to a women's quota of 30 percent for internal party positions and on party electoral lists. Two other IU discussions culminated in the adoption of new women's quotas of 35 percent and 40 percent in 1990 and 1997, respectively (Ramiro 2000, 225–226). As shown in Table 1, the proportion of women among PCE-IU deputies followed a more discontinuous pattern than that of PSOE deputies.

In numerous countries, quotas have been adopted but not implemented (Matland 2006, 278). What is special about Spain is that in general, though with important exceptions, PSOE quotas have been implemented (however imperfectly). Thus, quotas have produced a substantial increase in the presence of women in Parliament and in politics in general (Threlfall 2005a; 2005c; Verge 2005, 5, 8–9). PSOE feminists mobilized endlessly within the party at the national and subnational level to ensure that quotas were not only approved but also put into effect. PSOE feminists organized training sessions for female members, activists, and leaders. PSOE feminists tried to convince female members and activists that they were ready for public office and had to demand their inclusion in electoral lists (Astelarra 2005, 162–163; Verge 2005, 8). In some elections, PSOE feminists were members of the party commissions that approved electoral lists. These feminists convinced the remaining members of the commissions to reject lists from subnational party structures that did not comply with the quota requirement (Jenson and Valiente 2003, 90). In their efforts to make sure that the quota was implemented, PSOE feminists found powerful male allies. For instance, circulars and recommendations signed by the PSOE general secretary supporting the recruitment of women to decision-making positions were sent to the different structures of the party (Astelarra 2005, 162).
CONCLUSION

In the past 30 years, there has been enormous progress regarding gender equality in Spain. Today, the overwhelming majority of Spaniards hold egalitarian views on gender roles. By international standards, the presence of women in high political decision-making positions is very relevant. Most women of working age participate in the labor market, but the presence of women in economic decision-making roles is less pronounced than in political decision-making roles. Women have not only formed a vibrant women’s movement but are increasingly present in civil society. Gender-equality policymaking is firmly on the political agenda at the central-state level regardless of the ideological color of the party in office.

Current Spanish gender-equality measures still have to produce societal change, as these attempt to tackle entrenched gender hierarchies. In international assessments on gender equality by country, Spain is not at the vanguard of the world. For example, according to the assessment made by the World Economic Forum (2005), Spain occupies position 22 among the 30 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries regarding gender equality. This study measures the extent to which women have achieved full equality with men in five areas: economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, and health and well-being. Given the marked gender inequalities that persist in the Spanish society, the past 30 years of gender-equality policy making, and the progressive features of the last gender equality measures, it is time to ask whether the solution to the problem of gender hierarchies lies in gender-equality policies, in public policies in general, or in other realms.

NOTES

1. Members of the Congress of Deputies are elected by proportional representation under the d’Hondt system with closed and blocked lists. The province serves as the constituency. The vast majority of senators are elected by a majority system. The province is again the constituency, and each province elects four senators. Each voter casts only three votes. The remaining senators are elected from among the members of regional parliaments according to the population of the regions and the political composition of regional parliaments (Magone 2004, 79–85).

2. Group A civil servants perform high management functions. The minimum educational requirement for group A is a four-year university degree.

REFERENCES


