

# Are socialists a woman's best friend? Equality policies in the Spanish regions

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**ABSTRACT** This paper challenges the dominant thesis that social democracy is the principal impetus behind gender equality policy. The delegation of gender equality policy to the Spanish regional governments in the 1980s offers an unusually good experimental set-up to test competing theories: two decades of rich and comparable data. The interaction between the federal state structure, the parties in office, and women in power explains the development of equality policy in Spain. The difference between conservative and socialist governments at the regional level has been small and is declining. Furthermore, the party effect on policy is not a direct result of left-wing ideology, but an indirect result of a) the preferential treatment of similarly colored regional governments by the central administration; and b) the Socialists' commitment to placing women in power, which prompted other parties to follow suit. A direct link between women in power and improved equality policy is established.

**KEY WORDS** Autonomous communities; equality; gender; left; social policy; Spain.

## INTRODUCTION

Decades after the second wave of feminist movements has subsided in western Europe, the time has come to sort out fact from fiction, and re-examine the determinants of gender equality policy. Although the wealth of writing on national feminist movements, on the efforts of social democratic governments, and on the preferences of women in office and in the electorate offers exciting hypotheses, the comparative research necessary to confirm or disconfirm these hypotheses is rare. National structural particularities make many cross-national comparisons challenging. In the area of gender politics, these difficulties are compounded by culture-specific understandings of female empowerment, and thus of the very measures of policy success.

Even when researchers set aside definitional debates and use any available indicator, data limitations are severe. Researchers who have tried to overcome such challenges and perform cross-national analyses, such as Evelyne Huber and John D. Stephens, have resorted to indirect measures of equality policy success (2000). This paper illustrates why problematic empirical choices cast doubt on dominant theoretical conclusions.

This paper tests key insights from the literature in women's studies, social policy, and federalism, to shed light on an exciting case of gender equality policy – Spain from the 1980s to the present. Spain delegated equality policy to its seventeen autonomous communities in the early 1980s, and thus offers a unique natural experiment. Although a data set of equality policy efforts in the Spanish autonomous communities was not available when this project began, it was possible to collect data on various dimensions of regional equality policy and create measures appropriate for comparing these. A pooled cross-sectional time series set-up permits the researcher to control for cultural and structural variation across Spanish regions, and to examine two decades of choices made by regional governments.

I begin with the theoretical debates on equality policy, applied to the Spanish context. Next, the research design of this project is developed. The subsequent section presents the main results, and explores the three key features of the Spanish political system – party politics, women in office and federalism<sup>1</sup> – that shape equality policies. The results section begins with a regression model and then explores each of the independent variables in greater depth, using qualitative evidence and the secondary literature to specify the mechanisms underpinning the regression results. The concluding section explores the limitations and implications of this research.

## WHY DO STATES ENACT DIFFERENT EQUALITY POLICIES? THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Why do states enact different equality policies? Distinct literatures offer four different answers. The first answer connects societal preferences to policy; the second emphasizes the role of the left; the third links women in power to policy; and the fourth conceptualizes the state as an autonomous actor and focuses on intra-state dynamics such as federalism. The first, but surprisingly understudied, answer posits a direct link between the preferences of a society and its gender policy. While the existence of a gender gap – a systematic difference in the attitudes of men and women – is well documented within individual nations and across policy arenas (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Howell and Day 2000; Schlesinger and Heldman 2001), this finding cannot be used directly to explain cross-national differences. The few cross-national studies of this phenomenon indicate that the gender gap may be comparable in magnitude across nations, at least on the issues of abortion and women's employment (Scott 1998; Panayotova and Brayfield 1997). Furthermore, comparative studies connecting the composition and levels of support for

equality policy to policy outcomes have not yet been completed. Thus, in many comparative models, the link between societal preferences and policies is not modeled but is instead the interpretation given to a national residual. In a rare effort to make this link explicit, Huber and Stephens link certain welfare systems to the number of women in the labor force (2000). However, a correlation between welfare provision and size of the female workforce, absent other controls, does not demonstrate that such benefits exist because women voters have been pressuring for more care facilities. In this paper, I improve upon the Huber and Stephens test in two ways. First, I introduce additional controls, and, second, I focus on a much narrower dependent variable – welfare policies clearly labeled as gender equality policies. If the simpler and direct links hypothesized to exist between such policies and women's needs are found to exist, then broader hypotheses connecting preferences for equality policy and welfare provision become more plausible. If the simple, direct links are not found, connections between the broader variables come into question.

A second answer to the question on cross-national differences in equality policies is offered by the power resources approach from the field of welfare politics. This approach attributes social policy development to working class mobilization and left-wing governments (Lange and Garrett 1985; Korpi 1989; Esping-Andersen 1990; Huber *et al.* 1993). Administratively, equality policy is part of social assistance, situated alongside policies such as minimum income guarantees and non-contributory pensions. It could be thus analyzed directly through the power resources perspective. This materialist understanding of equality policy, however, might underestimate the policy's symbolic and ideological importance.

Whether equality policy is understood as social policy, or as ideological policy, feminist and welfare scholars coincide on the important role of the left. Social democracy has been linked with feminist politics across time (1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s) and space (western Europe broadly defined) (Huber and Stephens 2000; Ruiz 1999; Katzenstein 1987). Indeed, the Spanish case is no exception (Valiente 2001). Monica Threlfall goes so far as to claim that the Spanish women's movement found itself in a uniquely favorable position:

It is doubtful that any other European country experienced a comparable phenomenon, not just because the government that acted as its patron was re-elected four times, but because the earlier European reigns of social democracy occurred *before* second wave feminism was in full swing.

(Threlfall 1996: 124; emphasis in original)

From this literature, one would expect a very strong relationship between left-wing governments and equality policy.

And yet, in the Spanish case, no radical backtracking has occurred since the right came to power at the national level in 1996. While some have attributed this to European pressures (Bustelo 1999), Antonia Ruiz adopts a more radical revisionism. Her study of the electoral manifestos of the main right-wing

party<sup>2</sup> suggests that it had not only incorporated 'demands of liberal feminism' early on, but had gone so far as to include positions of 'marxist feminism: measures of support (basically social services) that permit a real equality of women' (1999: 457). This paper tests the importance of socialist government by looking at cases where the right had power, both in the 1980s and the 1990s.

The third perspective explains variation in equality policy with arguments about policy-maker identity. Studies of women in office consistently indicate that women's demographic, ideological and policy preferences differ from those of their male counterparts. These distinct preferences frequently translate into different policy choices: arguments that have met with empirical support include claims that women in office are more likely to introduce and support bills dealing with issues of women and families, health care and education (Thomas 1991, 1994; Darcy *et al.* 1994; Erickson 1997; Norris 1999; Wangnerud 2000); use a vocabulary different from that of their male colleagues (Kelley *et al.* 1991); and instill greater interest in politics in female voters (High-Pippert and Comer 1998). Although cross-cultural and cross-country differences prohibit the direct transfer of these findings to Spain, they can serve as useful working hypotheses.

As Celia Valiente's overview of the state of research on women and politics in Spain indicates, this is not a well-developed area (1998). The EU Expert Network on Women in Decision-Making and the Spanish Women's Institute regularly provide data and commission significant numbers of studies. This information and work by Edurne Uriarte and Artanxa Elizondo provide useful demographic information on female Spanish officeholders (Uriarte and Elizondo 1997). Although the effect of women officeholders on policy outcomes has not been studied extensively, the work examining the impact of the Spanish women's movement and of the National Women's Institute on policy outcomes provides a useful starting point for a researcher wishing to link women in power to particular policy outcomes (Valiente 1995; Threlfall 1996).

The fourth approach to explaining international differences in equality policy focuses on the state as an autonomous actor. According to this approach, policy does not mirror the balance of societal interests, but is to a large extent determined by the institutional interests of policy-makers (Evans *et al.* 1985). The most useful application of such an approach to the Spanish case models equality policy as a product of Spanish federalism. The Spanish state is 'a federation "in progress"', with increasing devolution of power to the regional governments (Agranoff 1996: 386). The central government's share of public expenditure fell from almost 90 percent in 1981, the year in which decentralization began, to barely over 50 percent in 1999, with regional governments picking up most of the difference (Moreno and Arriba 1999). Gender equality policy was transferred to the autonomous communities in the 1981–86 period.

Unfortunately, theories on federalism offer conflicting predictions. Paul Pierson's analysis of this literature highlights a variety of policy dynamics that may emerge through competition between the central and regional govern-

ments, including competitive deregulation, competitive state-building, policy preemption, policy innovation, and petitions to national government for intervention (1995).

In summary, the four types of arguments might explain variation in equality policy: societal preferences, a strong left, women in office and federalism. Of these hypotheses, the power resources hypothesis, linking equality with the left, and the identity hypothesis, linking equality to women in power, have met with considerable theoretical and empirical support.

### **METHODS: MEASURING EQUALITY POLICY AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL**

This investigation combines quantitative and qualitative analysis. Summary measures, such as the money allocated to women's projects, the dates at which key policies were introduced and indicators of policy effectiveness, permit broad comparisons over time and space. At the same time, more detailed analysis of particular communities is necessary to determine whether the processes implied by statistical correlations are in fact present. Three regions – Catalonia, Andalusia and Galicia – were chosen for in-depth study on the basis of two criteria. First, given that devolution in Spain is a two-track process, three cases from the same 'fast-track' group were selected, to control for the overall development of regional governance. Second, given this important control, the regions were chosen in order to offer variety on a number of different criteria, permitting paired comparisons of socialist/conservative politics, regionalist/non-regionalist orientations, agricultural/industrial economies and wealthy/poor regions.

I use two main dependent variables to evaluate equality policies quantitatively. The first is a measure of the amount of money spent by the regional equality institute on these policies. Table 1 presents estimates of spending on equality policy in each community over a four-year legislative period, in 2001 pesetas per inhabitant.<sup>3</sup> The second measure is a more global index, consisting of both budget data and other measures through which the communities' efforts can be compared.

#### **Index of equality policies**

While a reasonable indicator, budget figures in and of themselves cannot offer a complete picture. For example, per capita values probably over-estimate the efforts of small communities, insofar as equality policies may have fixed costs. Furthermore, no adjustments are made for the uses to which this money is put.

I therefore created an index, composed of three types of data. I present the index components and values here, and elaborate on the particular coding decisions for each community in Appendix II. The first component is spending, as analyzed above. Communities gain one index point for every 1,000 pesetas per inhabitant per four-year period. The second index component is the

Table 1 Spending on regional equality policies (2001 pesetas per inhabitant)

	1984-87	1988-91	1992-95	1996-99	2000-03
Andalucía	417	668	1,066	1,299	1,837
Aragón	0	285	423	789	1,148
Asturias	194	379	915	749	1,206
Baleares	0	102	525	613	1,274
Canarias	0	114	698	779	1,402
Cantabria	0	336	339	799	2,086
Castilla la Mancha	0	156	931	950	3,393
Castilla y León	0	516	604	846	1,746
Cataluña	0	154	379	298	958
Extremadura	0	188	822	694	1,599
Galicia	129	0	573	974	1,557
Madrid	120	1,576	2,122	2,283	4,117
Navarra	0	320	1,086	1,544	1,205
País Vasco	0	548	681	660	994
Valencia	76	173	550	513	1,097

Sources: Author's adaptation of autonomous community budgets (various years) and data provided in Barea Tejeiro (1997).

position of the equality organism within the bureaucracy. Maria Bustelo highlights the institute's autonomy and the ministry or department to which the institute belongs as key determinants of the institute's importance and capacity (1999). Thus autonomous organisms are privileged, as they have greater liberty in their day-to-day decision-making and more stability over time. Similarly, organisms placed under the presidency are better situated than bodies placed under other departments, since they can better co-ordinate and lobby other parts of the government. Using these two criteria, I rate the status of the organism for each of the periods under study, giving a 3 to the best situated and a 0 to the worst situated bureaus.

The final component of the index is period-specific information that helps one to compare the activities of one autonomous community relative to others in the same time period. Although introducing such considerations reduces the homogeneity of the index, the validity of the index increases substantially. These adjustments for the individual periods all have mean zero, to minimize problems with between-period comparability. Communities are not rated for the first legislative period, from 1984 to 1987, since no data besides spending data are available, as this period preceded the creation of women's institutes. For the second legislative period I use the foundation date of the regional women's institute, and the date when the first equality plan began. For the third period I use the starting date of the second equality plan and examine whether the process of evaluating equality plans had begun. For the fourth and fifth legislatures, I use expert opinions as an additional information source,

Table 2 Index of equality policies

	1988-91	1992-95	1996-99	2000-03
Andalucía	6.0	5.5	5.5	6.0
Aragón	0.5	3.5	3.0	3.5
Asturias	-1.5	2.0	0	4.5
Baleares	0.5	1.5	1.0	3.5
Canarias	-1.5	3.0	3.0	3.5
Cantabria	1.5	0	2.0	3.5
Castilla la Mancha	2.5	1.5	1.5	3.5
Castilla y León	-1.0	1.0	0.5	2.0
Cataluña	4.5	4.5	4.5	5.0
Extremadura	1.5	1.0	1.0	2.0
Galicia	0	4.0	3.0	4.0
Madrid	5.0	4.5	2.5	4.5
Navarra	-0.5	1.0	4.0	3.5
País Vasco	5.0	5.5	5.0	5.0
Valencia	2.5	0.5	1.0	1.5

opinions collected through interviews with policy-makers and experts in the field and through a review of the published literature. Table 2 presents the index values for each of the communities and periods. Appendix II contains further details.

### Qualitative evidence: equality plans

Qualitative research to supplement the above analysis took a variety of forms, from interviews (see Appendix I), to reviews of the secondary literature, to analyses of the documents produced by the various equality organizations. Equality plans are especially important among such documents, as they express a government's overall strategy to redress gender inequities in a specified time period. They typically list steps to be taken in areas such as legislation, health, education, culture and social services, with topics such as women in rural areas and women and the environment figuring more prominently in recent years. As space does not permit a detailed presentation of the qualitative evidence, I draw upon this source of evidence selectively in the subsequent discussion. The interested reader can find many of these documents on women's institutes' web-pages, or refer to Bustelo's excellent analysis of autonomous community plans (1999).

## RESULTS

First, a quantitative model that summarizes the effects of key variables is presented. Next, each explanatory variable is discussed in greater depth. The

interaction between three factors explains the pattern of regional policies presented above: party politics, women in office and federalism. More specifically, although the existing literature explains equality policy in Spain as a result of left-wing ideology, I find that the difference between conservative and socialist governments at the regional level has always been smaller than expected and is now declining. I further argue that the party effect is not primarily a direct result of left-wing ideology, but an indirect result of a) preferential treatment of similarly colored regional governments by the central administration; and b) socialists' commitment to placing women in power, which prompted other parties to follow suit. The presence of women in government in turn caused the expansion of equality policies. Federalism matters as it generates a competitive dynamic of imitation and innovation diffusion across regions.

Although variations in community policies are discussed in depth below, two striking common patterns are presented first. The first is a dramatic increase in spending over time and a parallel, though much less marked, increase in the overall quality of equality programs. The second pattern is of slower growth rates in the spending and especially the index values of the pioneering communities, resulting in convergence. These observations are consistent with hypotheses about policy learning developed below.

The following regressions test the hypotheses that a) the party in power, and b) the number of women in parliament influences policy on women. The party in power is proxied by a dummy that equals 1 when there was a PSOE government in power and 0 otherwise.<sup>4</sup> The number of women in parliament is measured as a fraction of the total number of legislators, and can range from 0 to 1. Two control variables suggested by the literature, the region's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, measured in euros per inhabitant, and the region's female activity rate, a fraction that can range from 0 to 1, are also included.<sup>5</sup> For both these measures, values in the year prior to the beginning of the legislative period were used (i.e. 1991 for the 1992–95 legislative period). The dependent variable is measured first by spending and next by the equality policy index.

Since the data are collected in different time periods in several communities, pooled cross-sectional time-series models are used, as the ordinary least squares (OLS) assumptions of homoscedastic and uncorrelated errors may not hold. Although feasible generalized least squares methods produce the most efficient estimates for such processes when the variance–covariance structure is correctly specified, these methods produce unacceptably optimistic estimates for many political science data sets (Beck and Katz 1995). As the data used here suffer from the common limitation that gave rise to the critique of the use of feasible generalized least squares in political science, that is, a low ratio of observations over time relative to observations over space, the panel-corrected standard errors method advocated by Nathaniel Beck and Jonathan Katz is used. Additionally, a one period lag of the dependent variable was included. Finally, as the independent variables may not adequately control for regional

Table 3 Key

Variable	Source
SW	Spending on Women's Policy
I	Index of Equality Policy
FP	Share of Females in Parliament
PSOE	Dummy for PSOE government
GDP	Regional GDP per capita
AR	Female Activity Rate

Table 4 Regression results

Pooled time-series regression coefficients (standard error)						
I	$SW_t = -273 + 0.52*SW_{t-1} + 2645*FP_t + 122PSOE_t + 0.007GDP_t + 1309AR_t + \text{dummies}$					
	(681)	(0.21)	(730)	(112)	(0.032)	(3026)
II	$I_t = 4.14 - 0.13*I_{t-1} + 7.17*FP + 0.95*PSOE_t + 0.0002*GDP_t - 9.2AR_t + \text{dummies}$					
	(1.74)	(0.06)	(1.50)	(0.29)	(0.00006)	(7.57)

particularities, dummies for all (but one) of the autonomous communities were also included in the estimation.

Table 3 is a key of the variables entered into the regressions and Table 4 presents the regression results.

As the models in Table 4 show, the effect of women in parliament on equality policy is consistently large and significant. A change from the minimum to the maximum in this independent variable would produce a change of more than half, if not the full, range of the dependent variable. For example, according to model I, an increase in the share of women in parliament from 10 percent to 20 percent would increase spending by 264 pesetas per capita – a shift almost equivalent to moving from what Catalonia was spending in 1984–87 to what it was spending in 1996–99. According to model II, an increase in the number of women in parliament from 10 percent to 24 percent would improve a community's policy score by one index point – an improvement equivalent to moving an institute under the department of social services to the department of the presidency.

None of the other explanatory variables is consistently significant across models. The female activity rate is never found to be significant. Huber and Stephens use this metric as a proxy for public support for social policy (2000); admittedly, this may not be the optimal proxy; repeated regional surveys on attitudes towards equality policy might convey much more reliable information. However, absent evidence that the mobilization of popular sentiment was in any way related to the creation of regional equality bureaus, the presumption against this hypothesis holds. The effects of PSOE and GDP per capita appear

significant when the index of equality policies, rather than spending alone, is used as a dependent variable. Nonetheless, caution is warranted in interpreting these findings, as the index necessarily introduces subjectivity. Furthermore, even if these effects were fully certain, they are much smaller than the effects of women in parliament. Both the effects of women in parliament and the effects of left-wing government are measured on a 0 to 1 scale, so one can compare them directly. A tremendous increase in regional income from 5,000 euros per capita (the Spanish average for 1982) to 13,000 euros per capita (the Spanish average for 1998) would increase the index of equality policy by 1.6 points. Additionally, qualitative evidence indicates that very developed equality programs can be found at both the very poor end of the spectrum (Andalusia) and the very rich (Catalonia). As equality programs are not conceived of as essentially redistributive and as they form a small fraction of a region's budget, it is safe to conclude that while richer communities have an advantage, this advantage cannot fully account for differences in equality policy.

In the subsequent sections, the effects of the key independent variables are discussed in greater detail, and the mechanisms connecting them to the dependent variables are examined.

### Parties

As the small and uncertain effect of partisan politics reported above is incongruent with much of the existing literature, additional investigation was necessary. Besides the above regressions, I conducted bivariate comparisons of the values of the two dependent variables in regions controlled by PSOE and regions controlled by PP governments, both overall and in each legislature (results not shown). In every period PSOE-controlled regions spent more than PP-controlled ones, but the difference declines over time and is never significant. Index scores revealed the same pattern. The regression results presented above, in combination with the bivariate comparisons, suggest that party might matter slightly, but is far from being the dominant determinant of outcomes, as the literature suggests.

Qualitative evidence supports this view of a very moderate party ideology effect. A comparison of the equality plans of Galicia, a conservative stronghold, and Andalusia, a socialist one, indicates few differences that could be tied to ideology. The only difference I could attribute to left-right conservatism was a greater emphasis on family planning in the II Andalusian plan, a topic which was present but not stressed as much in the II Galician plan. Andalusian and Galician plans have much more in common, for instance, than either of these sets of plans share with the Catalan ones. Thus, it does not seem that party ideology is the key differentiator. The subsequent section illustrates that a part of party effect is pure partisanship – socialist regions were better placed to pursue equality policy because they received more aid from a similarly minded national administration.

Table 5 Ratio of transfer spending

Year	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990	1989
Ratio	1.18	1.08	1.40	1.55	0.87	1.65	1.37	1.39	1.42	1.57	1.45	1.45

Source: Author's elaboration of *Boletín Oficial del Estado* data, *Memoria del Instituto de la Mujer* (various years), and internal IM document data.

### Monetary transfers from the National Women's Institute to regional women's institutes

Each year since 1989, the National Women's Institute has allocated part of its budget to projects in various autonomous communities. While the total size of this budget is not huge, it can make a difference if allocated to a few communities. Thus, for example, in 1989, 88 percent of the 63 million pesetas allocated to all autonomous communities was given to build a center for battered women in Andalusia. The amount corresponded to 14 percent of the total budget of the Andalusian Women's Institute for that year. The importance of this money is even greater for regions with smaller women's institutes. Furthermore, it is likely that regions receiving direct monetary transfers are also co-operating more closely with the central government in general, and receiving many types of other aid, not apparent in the statistics, be it expertise, training, or resource loaning. This aid has been distributed according to partisan criteria. Over the twelve-year period during which aid was given, regions governed by the party in power nationally received, on average, more than three times as much money per inhabitant as regions ruled by other parties, a difference significant at the 0.001 level.

Table 5 indicates the ratio of funds given to regions governed by the party in power in central government to the transfers given to people living in regions governed by the main opposition party.<sup>6</sup> The contrast indicates that this form of patronage was practiced both when the socialists were in power and when the right came to power, with 1996, the transition year, marking the only aberration. This pattern may explain why socialist regions were likelier in the past to have pursued women-friendly policy – simply put, they were prodded in this direction. Similarly, the closing gap may be a function of recent disproportionate spending on conservative regions.

### Women in government

The regression model (Table 4) shows the fraction of women in regional parliaments to be an important predictor of regional equality policy. In this section, I elaborate upon the connection between the Socialist party and women in office, discuss the choice of studying women in parliament rather than women in other positions of authority, and present further evidence that the link between women in power and policy is a causal one.

PSOE helped to promote equality policies in an important indirect way: by spurring the rise of women in politics. A key decision in 1988 to introduce a quota, binding PSOE to allocate at least 25 percent of all places to women in candidate lists and positions of responsibility within the party, prompted much debate and imitation.<sup>7</sup> Although the Conservatives are still ideologically opposed to quotas, they responded to the PSOE challenge by introducing a large number of women on their candidate lists (Valiente 1998), and by giving several ministries to women in both of their national administrations. Although as late as 1999 PSOE still had more female legislators in autonomous parliaments than other large parties, with 26 percent of its delegates being female, its antagonists were catching up, with 19.6 percent of regional PP delegates and 23.3 percent of regional IU delegates being female. Regionalist parties did fairly well on this front too, with 16.7 percent of CiU delegates, 22.7 percent of PNV delegates, 27.3 percent of HB delegates and 62.5 percent of EA delegates being female (*Hacia una Democracia Paritaria* 1999).

Why focus on women in parliament, rather than on women at other levels of the regional administration? Undoubtedly, particular women in government placed in relevant positions have had an impact on policy. Thus, for example, the director of the Galician Women's Institute estimates that their institute gets much more attention than it otherwise would, given that they are placed under the only department headed by a woman (interview with Marco Schulke). Similarly, the director of the Andalusian Women's Institute believes that it has been especially easy to co-operate with departments headed by women (interview with Jiménez Vilchez). Nonetheless, two reasons justify studying the impact of women in parliament. First, this number fluctuates meaningfully, whereas the number of women in government, oscillating between one and two in each community in each of the recent administrations, is subject to much random variation. Second, the types of decisions examined are mostly made in parliament. For example, the decision to approve or modify a budget, as well as the decision to create or change the status of a bureau for women are made in parliament. Even initiatives developed by the women's institute are frequently spurred by questions in parliament (interview with Gualdá). These questions are usually asked by female delegates of opposition parties, as a study on the Basque parliament on this matter illustrates (Martínez Hernández 1999).

However, the possibility of a spurious relationship between women in parliament and equality policy remains. For instance, progressive communities might elect many women in parliament and independently desire more measures for equality, measures promoted by progressive male delegates. If certain communities translated their distinct political cultures into electing few (or many) women to power, there ought to be a pattern of low (or high) women's representation in particular communities over electoral bodies. Table 6 shows the average correlation between the share of women elected in particular years to various government bodies for each autonomous community.<sup>8</sup>

Correlations that are far from one, vary much, and are sometimes negative

Table 6 Average correlations between the share of women in different decision-making bodies

	<i>National parliament – lower chamber</i>	<i>Autonomous government</i>	<i>Autonomous parliament</i>
Autonomous government	0.07		
Autonomous parliament	–0.06	0.40	
Mayors	–0.32	0.08	0.55

Source: Author's elaboration of data from *Mujeres en Cifras* (various years) and Corto Fernández (1997).

make it unlikely that particular communities consistently elect high or low numbers of women to all bodies. The absence of such a 'regional culture' effect increases the plausibility of a causal link between women in parliament and equality policy. Although a replication of Eva Martínez Hernández' study in all the regional parliaments, supplemented by careful process-tracing, would provide ideal evidence, the interview, secondary literature and quantitative correlations presented here strongly support the claim that women in parliament shape equality policy (Martínez Hernández 1999).

### Federalism

A presentation of equality policy in Spain would be incomplete and biased without an analysis of federal dynamics. Although a comparison of equality policies in federal and non-federal systems would be necessary for definitive statements on how federalism matters, I venture to suggest some plausible hypotheses about the effects of federalism in the Spanish regions, and sketch preliminary evidence in their support.<sup>9</sup> First, I suggest that federalism decoupled voter preferences from policy outcomes. Second, it placed learning and imitation at center stage. Third, it generated competition between regions, and between regions and the central government.

Traditional analyses of policy-making present a bottom-up process, where society brings issues to the attention of the government. In matters of equality policy, Outshoorn outlines a series of steps that must precede policy adoption. First, the silence must be broken; then desires must be converted into political demands; then the problem must be formulated; then a decision taken; then implemented; and finally evaluated (Outshoorn 1991). It seems that late-comers follow a different path. Spanish feminism adapted the ideas of other western movements, thus simplifying the first steps of the policy-making process (Valiente 2001). In the case of policy at the subnational level, more than a simplification of the first steps took place. In many communities, they were skipped altogether. There is little evidence that grass-roots actors in various communities were influenced by policies and actors in other communities.

Instead, the policies themselves were transported in the absence of real bottom-up demands.<sup>10</sup>

Second, perhaps the most striking (if not surprising) observation in studying regional equality policy is the degree of similarity across communities in its structure and content. All Spanish regions have an equality organism; in turn each equality organism co-ordinates the efforts of the regional government on gender issues through equality plans. The content of these plans is in many cases very similar; regions copy one another's initiatives, as well as the national and European equality plans. Distinct research traditions offer rich theoretical lenses through which to explore these processes. The sociological literature on organizational isomorphism suggests that some organizational forms are adopted as much for their fit with dominant cultural myths as for their functional appropriateness and contribution to efficiency (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Meyer *et al.* 1997). Network theories examine the activities of individual entrepreneurs and epistemic communities in shaping and spreading policies (Zito 2001). The literature on policy transfer incorporates some of these insights, and examines how they modify traditional analyses of policy-making in a variety of fields (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Radaelli 2000). Although further research is necessary to test such hypotheses, my preliminary evidence indicates that the diffusion, success and survival of equality organisms in Spain was in a large measure because of the legitimacy that EU and national equality policies conferred on this organizational structure, rather than evaluations of their success.

Third, the dynamics of political competition between the regions, and between the regions and the central government, were critical in the development of equality policy. Pierson suggests the possibility of competitive race-to-the-bottom policy-making within a federalist system, as well as the countervailing possibility of credit-claiming via social policy-making, which could presumably lead to a race-to-the-top (1995). In Spain, races-to-the-bottom have not been observed in the sphere of public policy-making. Spanish regional policy is explicitly designed to prevent such regional inequalities: spending is decentralized, but for the most part taxation is not.<sup>11</sup> Thus, an important instrument for adjusting local wants to local needs and generating a race-to-the-bottom is absent. Additionally, although social assistance is transferred to the regions, it seems possible that the central state could intervene if provisions became very unequal, invoking its constitutional duty to protect the equality of Spaniards. Furthermore, a generous inter-regional compensation fund transfers money to the poorer communities. These aspects of the federal structure severely limit the possibilities for a downward spiral.

Yet, we have witnessed more than the absence of a downward dynamic. In some cases, regions have competed to introduce new social policies. The introduction of a minimum income, for example, began as the effort of an individual region, the Basque Country, which was quickly copied by the remaining regions, in an effort to battle the central government (Aguilar *et al.* 1995). Given that the logic of political credit-claiming, rather than some form

of economic gain, dominates this dynamic, it is not surprising that regions which already have substantial powers and a desire to increase them are the ones to initiate competition within the established system. Data on spending and policy-making in matters of equality policy are consistent with such a dynamic. Latecomers in a federal system face greater pressures than the pioneers to act, while at the same time they are offered ready-made models. The higher growth rates in the spending of late starters, and the more rapid improvement in their index scores over time, are consistent with this argument. It is plausible that this type of inter-regional competition increased the aggregate sum spent on equality policy in Spain, but comparisons with other non-federal systems would be necessary to substantiate such a claim.

Federalism appears to have shaped the development of the Spanish equality policy regime, explaining why a dearth of pressures from below did not prohibit the development of extensive equality programs, and similarities in the form that these policies took. A final important anecdote illustrates why it is critical to explore party politics taking into account the Spanish federal structure. Within the federal structure, the creation of the first regional equality institute was crucial, as this spurred other regions to follow suit. PSOE was not responsible for this institute. The first equality institute was established in 1989 in the Basque Country, notably through a bill developed and supported by all the parties in parliament (Martínez Hernández 1997).

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper tests the dominant argument that equality policy is the product of social democracy, through a research design that permits an unusually high degree of control over alternative explanations. Left-wing ideology is not the single and dominant predictor of equality policy. Instead, the interaction of federal structures, party politics and women in politics accounts for the path that equality policy took in the Spanish regions. In this concluding section, I hypothesize about parts of these arguments that may extend to other settings.

To what degree does policy-making on equality resemble other types of policy-making? Traditional analyses of policy-making model the likelihood of policy adoption on the distribution of policy costs and benefits (Lowi 1964). Institutionalists of many persuasions argue that the way in which bureaucracies organize their work critically shapes policy outcomes. In terms of its costs and benefits, equality policy is different from most forms of social policy, and may bear parallels to areas such as culture policy, which have both low and diffuse costs, and low and diffuse benefits. However, to the extent that bureaucracies tend to structure their functions in similar ways, equality policy should resemble the other forms of social policy with which it is grouped administratively. Finally, it may resemble other areas where the European Union has been active from an early date.

This paper finds that, in areas of equality policy in Spain, socialist government matters, but not primarily through the commonly assumed pathway of

left-wing ideology. Instead, it is the interaction between party politics and a federal system that matters. In areas of gender policy, similarly colored regions benefited most, opposition regions much less, while regions led by regional parties almost not at all. The rapidity of shifts in funding following the change in central government, on this issue of little monetary significance, hints that these partisan dynamics are likely to be extremely common.

What does the relationship between equality policy and women in power imply about other policy areas? The size of the effect of women in power on equality policy probably represents a maximum – women in politics are likely to make a bigger difference in matters of equality policy than in other matters that affect women less directly. At the same time, the effect observed was quite large, leaving room for these less direct pathways to matter. Similarly, given these findings, it would not be surprising if politicians with other types of group identities were found to have an impact on policies that benefit their group.

The dual dynamics of center-region competition and horizontal mimetism probably apply to a variety of national federal settings. As international organizations such as the European Union move towards federalism, this mode of analysis becomes useful in studying cross-national learning, especially given EU efforts to facilitate learning, such as the open method of co-ordination. In conclusion, it appears that although a particular interaction of federalism, party politics and women in power explain Spanish regional equality policies, parts of these arguments are transferable to many different policy areas.

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## APPENDIX I

### Interviews and acknowledgements

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## APPENDIX II

This appendix describes how the two dependent variables were created. As outlined in the text, the key problem with budget figures was missing data. Although list-wise deletion is a conventional way of handling this problem, this procedure is both wasteful and leads to biased results, if missingness is not random (King *et al.* 2001). Thus, AMELIA multiple imputation software was used to provide better estimates. Imputing missing data is especially sensible in the case of budget information, given the incremental nature of the budget-making process. Table A1 presents annual budget figures, with imputed values in bold. These figures are adjusted for inflation (using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as reported by the Economist Intelligence Unit and 2001 as a base year), and for the population of each community (using Eurostat *New Chronos*).

### Index of equality policies

#### *Index component 1: per capita spending*

As outlined in the text, the index of equality policy has three components, which were summed to compose the index. The first component is per capita spending, with the index increasing by 0.5 points for every 500 pesetas per capita increase (see Table 1).

#### *Index component 2: institute position within the regional bureaucracy*

The second index component is the position of the institute within the regional bureaucracy. A score of 3 was given to communities with autonomous institutes under the department of the presidency, 2 to communities with autonomous institutes under other departments, 1 to communities with institutes that were not autonomous but were under the department of the

Table A1 Budgets of equality organizations (2001 pesetas per capita)

	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Andalucía	464	455	461	363	342	355	240	253	265	308	251	227	91	99	92	117
Aragón	302	272	249	246	208	181	154	170	76	23	83	66	63	73	0	0
Asturias	326	277	161	177	216	214	142	<b>149</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>215</b>	52	54	58	43	54
Baleares	253	<b>384</b>	<b>332</b>	50	57	<b>255</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>214</b>	61	0	102	0	0	0	0	0
Canarias	357	<b>344</b>	373	288	185	170	136	<b>173</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>114</b>	0	0	0	0	0
Cantabria	568	<b>475</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>153</b>	49	58	76	0	0
Castilla la Mancha	703	994	<b>501</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>79</b>	31	46	0	0	0
Castilla y León	<b>490</b>	383	335	262	202	<b>181</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>92</b>	193	123	109	0	0
Cataluña	<b>336</b>	<b>143</b>	70	64	67	73	95	98	96	91	80	74	0	0	0	0
Extremadura	406	393	<b>290</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>217</b>	261	<b>188</b>	0	0	0	0	0
Galicia	420	359	366	302	232	237	203	156	153	61	<b>0</b>	0	1	5	32	32
Madrid	1,042	1,017	869	686	557	526	513	521	532	557	563	690	254	69	60	0
Navarra	<b>262</b>	<b>341</b>	501	470	395	400	<b>279</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>289</b>	250	<b>151</b>	53	56	60	0	0
País Vasco	<b>323</b>	174	164	167	165	167	162	156	169	195	195	194	158	2	0	0
Valencia	300	249	160	145	127	119	123	129	133	165	75	45	31	22	12	26

Sources: Author's adaptation of autonomous community budgets (various years) and data provided in Barea Tejeiro (1997).

Table A2 Institute position within regional bureaucracy

	1988-91	1992-95	1996-99	2000-03
Andalucía	3	3	3	3
Aragón	0	3	3	3
Asturias	0	0	0	3
Baleares	1	1	1	2
Canarias	0	2	2	2
Cantabria	0	0	1	1
Castilla la Mancha	0	0	0	0
Castilla y León	0	0	0	0
Cataluña	3	3	3	3
Extremadura	0	0	0	0
Galicia	0	2	2	2
Madrid	1	1	0	0
Navarra	0	0	2	2
País Vasco	3	3	3	3
Valencia	0	0	0	0

Sources: Instituto de la Mujer 1993; Bustelo 1999; Consejo de la Mujer de la Comunidad de Madrid 2000; women's institute web-pages.

presidency and 0 to communities whose institutes were neither under the presidency department, nor autonomous. For the 1988-91 period, zeros also correspond to communities that did not have institutes. If an institute changed status within a term, the final status is recorded as this best represents the efforts of the legislature during that term.

### *Index component 3: period specific adjustments*

The third component of the index was individual period criteria. Although introducing such considerations reduces the homogeneity of the index, the validity of the index increases substantially. These adjustments for the individual periods all have mean zero, so as to minimize problems with between-period comparability.

For the second legislative period, 1988-91, the date of the foundation of the institute and the date of the first equality plan were used to estimate community effort on equality policy, as presented in Table A3. A score of 1 was given to institutes founded in 1990 or earlier, 0 to institutes founded between 1991 and 1993, and -1 to institutes founded in 1994 or later. A score of 1 was given to regions whose equality plans were developed in 1990 or earlier, 0 to plans written between 1991 and 1993, and -1 to plans written in 1994 or later. The date of institute foundation score was added to the date of first equality plan score to produce the total score for this period.

Period 3 scores were adjusted using information on the starting date of the second equality plan, as well as information on whether the communities had

Table A3 Period 2 adjustment scores

	<i>Date of institute foundation</i>	<i>Date of first equality plan</i>	<i>Total score</i>
Andalucía	1	1	2
Aragón	0	0	0
Asturias	-1	-1	-2
Baleares	0	0	-1
Canarias	-1	-1	-2
Cantabria	1	0	1
Castilla la Mancha	1	1	2
Castilla y León	-1	-1	-2
Cataluña	1	1	1
Extremadura	1	0	1
Galicia	0	0	0
Madrid	1	1	2
Navarra	0	-1	-1
País Vasco	1	0	1
Valencia	1	1	2

Table A4 Period 3 adjustment scores

	<i>Evaluation score</i>	<i>Date of second equality plan</i>	<i>Total</i>
Andalucía	0	1	1
Aragón	0	0	0
Asturias	0	1	1
Baleares	-0.5	0	-0.5
Canarias	0	0	0
Cantabria	-0.5	0	-0.5
Castilla la Mancha	-0.5	1	0.5
Castilla y León	0	0	0
Cataluña	0	1	1
Extremadura	0	0	0
Galicia	0	1	1
Madrid	0	1	1
Navarra	-0.5	0	-0.5
País Vasco	0.5	1	1.5
Valencia	-0.5	0	-0.5

began to evaluate their equality plans, as presented in Bustelo (1999). Table A4 presents this information.

For the two most recent periods, I combined the opinions of policy-makers and researchers whom I spoke to with the existing literature, to develop what I term 'expert opinion'. Although policy-makers in particular were especially

Table A5 Individual period adjustment scores

	1988-91 <i>Institute foundation/ equality plan date</i>	1992-95 <i>Plan evaluations (Bustelo) second equality plan</i>	1996-99 <i>Expert opinion</i>	2000-03 <i>Expert opinion</i>
Andalucía	2	1	1	1
Aragón	0	0	-1	-1
Asturias	-2	1	-1	0
Baleares	-1	-0.5	-1	0
Canarias	-2	0	0	0
Cantabria	1	-0.5	0	0
Castilla la Mancha	2	0.5	0	0
Castilla y León	-2	0	0	0
Cataluña	1	1	1	1
Extremadura	1	0	0	0
Galicia	0	1	0	0
Madrid	2	1	0	0
Murcia	0	-0.5	0	0
Navarra	-1	1	0	0
Rioja	1	-0.5	-1	-1
País Vasco	1	1.5	1	1
Valencia	2	-0.5	0	0

keen on preserving the anonymity of their evaluations, there was a high degree of consensus, especially on the leading communities. These scores are presented in Table A5, along with the cumulative adjustment scores for the other periods. Table 2 sums the three components of the index for every period, providing the overall values for the equality policy index.

## NOTES

- 1 Since the Spanish Senate is not fully territorial, there is disagreement about whether federalism is the correct term to describe the Spanish state. I have chosen this term because, for the purposes of understanding equality policies, there is little difference between 'federalism' and the possibly more accurate but burdensome alternatives of 'quasi-federalism' and 'state of the autonomies'.
- 2 Now known as Partido Popular (PP), it had previous incarnations as Alianza Popular and Coalición Popular. PP is used throughout for simplicity. The main national parties in Spain, from right to left, are: Popular Party (PP), Social Democratic Center (CDS), Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), Socialist Democracy Party (DS), Spanish Communist Party (PCE), United Left (IU). Important regional parties referred to in the text are: in Catalonia: Convergence and Unity (CiU); in the Basque Country: the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), Basque Solidarity (EA), Basque Popular Unity (HB), and the Basque Socialist Party (PSE).
- 3 These figures come from regional budgets, and represent the budget of the women's

organization and/or the money earmarked for equality promotion, where budgets were sufficiently detailed. Where data were missing, values were imputed using the AMELIA multiple imputation software, as the alternative, list-wise deletion, is both wasteful and leads to biased results, if missingness is not random (King *et al.* 2001). As I only had data until 1990 for the very small communities of Murcia (pop. 1 million) and La Rioja (pop. 260,000), I excluded them from the analysis rather than base an imputation on very limited information. Figures for 2000–01 and for 1986–87 have been multiplied by 2 to estimate spending for the entire four-year term under study. I do not present figures as a percentage of the autonomous community budget as these budgets vary significantly according to the degree of autonomy, and thus the functions transferred to the community. See Appendix II for greater detail.

- 4 In most autonomous communities, elections for the regional parliaments were held in 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995 and 1999. Andalusia, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia are exceptions, in that their first elections were held prior to 1983, and thus their cycles are off. However, the five periods of regional government marked by elections in the remaining communities (1983–86/1987–91/1992–95/1996–99/2000–present) are used for all communities, to allow comparisons about money and policy in particular years. This is unlikely to modify arguments about the effects of parties on policy, as the four regions with individual electoral cycles are essentially one-party regions. Andalusia has been ruled continuously by PSOE and Galicia has been governed by the conservative party continuously, excluding a 1989–90 interlude. The PNV has been in power throughout the history of the Basque Country, while CiU has led coalitions in Catalonia throughout the period under study. For this paper, the socialists and conservatives are considered to be in government regardless of whether they have an absolute majority or govern in coalitions.
- 5 A measure of community wealth is included in the model, because equality policy may be a function of resources, and because diffusion studies use such a measure to proxy for different community characteristics associated with the ability to innovate. Huber and Stephens find that the female activity rate is correlated with greater welfare spending, and hypothesize that the increased needs of women in the workforce create pressures for state-provided care (2000); thus, this measure is included. Controls for the labor union and women's movement strength are not included as there is no indication that these had a substantial impact on regional equality policy (Threlfall 1996; Valiente 1998). Dummy variables for each region control for other potential regional particularities.
- 6 This table only compares regions in which either the PP or PSOE was in the regional government. The contrast becomes even starker when regions governed solely by regional parties are included, as these have received almost no transfer money.
- 7 This quota was raised to 40 percent in the 1997 party conference.
- 8 As data are available for different numbers of years for different periods for different electoral bodies, correlations are averages over available periods. Data presented in Corto Fernández (1997), as well in IM *Mujeres en Cifras* (various years) are used. When elections were not held in the same year for different bodies, the closest years were compared.
- 9 Indeed, the quantitative model described above makes two specific, but very plausible, assumptions about the effects of federalism. First, it assumes that equality policy is implemented through similar instruments in each of the communities; a very different type of model would be needed if, for instance, some communities decided against targeting any money for equality promotion. Second, the model assumes that the levels at which the instruments are set in one community are independent of the levels at which they are set in other communities.

- 10 Although it is difficult to find research on weak or non-movements, the lack of references to feminist movements in narratives of the creation of regional equality policy is indicative of their limited importance. Elena Granados Vaquero considers this possibility in her analysis of the creation of the Andalusian Women's Institute, and argues that feminists were unimportant in its creation, a fact further illustrated by their scarcity among the institute's early bureaucrats (1999).
- 11 Since 1997, autonomous communities have had the right to vary some features of the part of income tax that corresponds to them (15 percent), but within clear limits established by the central government, and with a guarantee of additional central government funds if the autonomous community is unable to fulfill its functions. A somewhat different regime applies to Navarra and the Basque Country, which administer their own systems of tax collection.
- the part of income tax that corresponds to them (15 percent), but within clear limits established by the central government, and with a guarantee of additional central government funds if the autonomous community is unable to fulfill its functions. A somewhat different regime applies to Navarra and the Basque Country, which administer their own systems of tax collection.

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