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**Political Elites in Federalized Countries:  
The Case of Spain (1980-2005)<sup>1</sup>**

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Abstract

This paper explores the social profile of the regional elite that has emerged in Spain since the democratization and federalization of the country. For the first time, researchers present data about crucial variables like gender, place of birth, age, education, and profession. They make inter-regional comparisons, put their data on an international perspective, and try to explain some unexpected findings, such as the behavior of political elites in Catalonia and Castile-La Mancha. The authors compare also the social profile of MPs of the two largest parties and show that the gap between society and political elite has been reduced over the years. The paper offers a research agenda.

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

More than a quarter of a century after the creation of regional governments and parliaments in Spain little, if anything, is known of the political elite holding a seat in regional assemblies. This group of politicians is increasingly relevant as they have a growing impact on citizens' lives. They have more power, control a larger budget, have become a nursery for national politicians, are usually closer to citizens than national representatives and yet we barely know who they are or what they do in their parliaments.

This chapter presents original data that addresses the question of who the regional politicians in Spain are. Gathering biographical information about relevant variables such as gender, age, place of birth, education and profession, the researchers analyze the social profile of these politicians, make territorial and party comparisons, and study the changes that, over time, have taken place in the political elite against the background of larger social changes. The paper is descriptive and analytical, relying more on sociological theories to explain reality rather than building theories out of the data gathered.

All the information on which this paper is built comes from official sources obtained from regional parliaments, Senate or Congress of Deputies. We have identified a political elite composed of 4,354 individuals. The information we have gathered is unequal. We have 100 percent of information for the gender variable, 86 percent for age and place of birth, 72 percent for education, and 77 percent for profession. Because this information is distributed somehow unequally with respect regions and legislatures, whenever possible we have tried to make general statements qualified by particular cases for which we do not have enough information. For instance, the reader will see that, except for gender, we lack basic information on MPs in the Basque Country and the Balearic Islands. However, biographical information in, say, Andalusia,

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Catalonia or Madrid is quite complete. Regretfully, in some cases we have left the Basque Country and Balearic Islands out of the analysis.

The first and second sections of this paper review the federalization of Spain and its major consequence for our purposes: the emergence of a regional political elite with growing political and economic relevance. The third section analyzes the social profile of regional politicians based on the aforementioned variables. The fourth section studies the differences between the major parties (PSOE, socialists, and PP, *populares*, a center to right or right party), since they have obtained around 70 percent of the seats at stake in the period 1980-2005. The last section deals with the differences between elite and society, and presents a measure of these differences known as the index of social disproportion or bias index. This indicator allows us to understand how society has changed and whether political elites have also changed over time, closing or widening the gap with society. Finally, the paper ends with a research agenda the authors hope will be useful for readers.

### Federalization of Spain

Spain successfully completed the transition to democracy from an authoritarian regime and, at the same time, decentralized a state whose modern centralized origins go back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Democratization and federalization were parallel political processes that have been completed with remarkable success.<sup>2</sup> The 1978 Constitution created what is known as the State of Autonomies, a federal arrangement based on the creation of seventeen autonomous communities and two autonomous cities (Ceuta and Melilla), as is shown in Figure 1.<sup>3</sup> The territorial organization of the State was largely based on historical internal borders reflecting the cultural and linguistic plurality of Spain.

The State of Autonomies is a federal State that transfers powers and resources to the newly created regional governments. The resulting system has been called “imperfect federalism” (Moreno 1994) or “semi-federalism” (Lijphart 1999:189).<sup>4</sup> In fact, Spain has a de facto asymmetrical federal system, very much in line with modern multinational, multilingual

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<sup>2</sup>There had been other decentralizing experiences during the first third of the twentieth century, but they failed. The last one took place during the Second Republic (1931-36) with the *Estado Integral* consecrated in the 1931 constitution. Back then, different leftist governments granted autonomy to Catalonia (1932), Basque Country (1936, at the beginning of the Civil War) and Galicia was on its way. The transferring of power to some regions was soon perceived as the breakdown of Spain and experts list this perception as one of the causes contributing to the bloody civil war (1936-39) that put an end to the democratic and decentralizing experiment in Spain. The current federalization process might be considered the heir of the failed 1931 attempt.

<sup>3</sup>At the beginning of the transition, before the constitution was written, Suárez’s government enacted some decrees that meant the creation of some regional governments that paved the way for the institutionalization of regions during the constitution-writing process (see Suárez 1978:59). For the transition to democracy and the federalization process, see Maravall and Santamaría (1986), Linz (1989), Linz and Stepan (1996), and Powell (2001).

<sup>4</sup>Lijphart (1999:189, 193) places Spain in the middle category of federal systems below Germany, the US, Switzerland, Canada, Austria, Belgium, Australia, India, and at the same level as Israel, The Netherlands and Belgium before 1993. Although this classification might not be fully correct (The Netherlands and Israel are unitary countries), the Spanish case seems to fit in the “semi-federalism” category with a strong tendency towards federalism.

federations (i.e., Canada, Belgium, and India). Some communities received more powers and did so faster than other regions that followed a slower path.<sup>5</sup> Although this difference has been partly overcome thanks to the slow but continuous transfer of power to the regional governments, there remain significant differences among the two groups of communities. One of these differences at the symbolic level is that presidents of the government of the “historic” regions can dismiss the regional parliaments and call for new elections at will. As a result, four autonomous communities have different electoral cycles than the others, as can be seen in Table 1 (page 4).

**Figure 1. Map of Spain, Autonomous Communities, and Provinces**



<sup>5</sup>As in other federal states, in Spain there are some areas which are the exclusive responsibility of the central government (defense, international relations, fiscal policy and the like), some others are controlled by regional governments and still others are shared. This arrangement is not stable since some regional governments have negotiated with the central government for the transfer of more powers. Unlike other federal states, Spain’s federal system is asymmetric. There are inequalities among three types of autonomous communities. One block is known as the *historic* communities, which enjoy a high level of decentralization—Galicia, Basque Country, Catalonia, and Andalusia. The first three are the truly historic communities, meaning that they are those which during the Second Republic (1931-36) were granted autonomy or passed a Statute of Autonomy. Andalusia’s inclusion in this group is the result of a referendum in which citizens decided to follow the path of maximum autonomy as provided for in the Constitution. The second block is composed of those regions (Valencia and the Canary Islands) that were assimilated to the historic ones in terms of regional powers although with some differences and symbolic limitations. For instance, their presidents cannot dismiss the regional parliament and call for elections. The third group is composed of the rest of the regions, which generally have a lower level of power.

**Table 1. Electoral cycles in Spain**

	Legislatures													
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats	Date	Seats
Andalusia	1982	109	1986	109	1990	109	1994	109	1996	109	2000	109	2004	109
Aragon	1983	66	1987	67	1991	67	1995	67	1999	67	2003	67	--	--
Asturias	1983	45	1987	45	1991	45	1995	45	1999	45	2003	45	--	--
Canary Isl.	1983	60	1987	60	1991	60	1995	60	1999	60	2003	60	--	--
Cantabria	1983	35	1987	39	1991	39	1995	39	1999	39	2003	39	--	--
Castilla y Leon	1983	84	1987	84	1991	84	1995	84	1999	83	2003	82	--	--
C-La Mancha	1983	44	1987	47	1991	47	1995	47	1999	47	2003	47	--	--
Catalonia	1980	135	1984	135	1988	135	1992	135	1995	135	1999	135	2003	135
C. Valenciana	1983	89	1987	89	1991	89	1995	89	1999	89	2003	89	--	--
Extremadura	1983	65	1987	65	1991	65	1995	65	1999	65	2003	65	--	--
Galicia	1981	71	1985	71	1989	75	1993	75	1997	75	2001	75	2005	75
Balearic Isl.	1983	54	1987	59	1991	59	1995	59	1999	59	2003	59	--	--
La Rioja	1983	35	1987	33	1991	33	1995	33	1999	33	2003	33	--	--
Madrid	1983	94	1987	96	1991	101	1995	103	1999	102	2003	111	--	--
Murcia	1983	43	1987	45	1991	45	1995	45	1999	45	2003	45	--	--
Navarra	1983	50	1987	50	1991	50	1995	50	1999	50	2003	50	--	--
Basque Count.	1980	60	1984	75	1986	75	1990	75	1994	75	1998	75	2001	75
Congress	1979	350	1982	350	1986	350	1989	350	1993	350	1996	350	2000	350

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

**Notes:** 1. For the rest of the analysis it should be taken into account that different regions have different electoral cycles. For instance, legislature III in the Basque Country begins in 1986, two years earlier than in Catalonia, four years earlier than in Andalusia, and five years earlier than in the rest of regions. We need to be aware of this time gap in the analysis of the evolution of, let's say, presence of women or internal migrants in parliaments.

The political and economic relevance of autonomous communities has grown since their creation, thanks to the transferring of powers and responsibilities from the central government. The newly created regional institutions have originated a form of intermediate government between the local and national levels (a mesogovernment) whose growing impact and relevance shows what Sharpe (1993:30) believes is a "form of democratic maturation." Because of the growing relevance of this mesogovernment, between 1980 and 2000 the regions consolidated a bureaucratic structure that employed around one million civil servants, some of whom were transferred from the central government in the early years of the *Estado de las Autonomías* and others were hired to fulfill newly created positions. In the early eighties, according to data presented by López *et al.* (2006:15), regions received a total of almost thirteen billion euros (€ 12,762,268,000) from the central government, while at the turn of the century the money at the disposal of the regional governments was more than sixty eight billion euros (€ 68,276,086,000). In less than twenty years, the budget of the regions has grown by a factor of five. To put it another way, when the federalization process had just started in 1981, the total expenditure of the

State was that of a centralized polity: the central government accounted for 87.3 percent of the expenditure, whereas regional governments for 3 percent and municipalities for 9.7 percent. More than twenty years later, in 2003, the distribution had changed and the central government's share of total expenditure was 54 percent, regional governments 31 percent and municipalities 15 percent.<sup>6</sup> The economic and political relevance of regional institutions continues to grow and most likely their weight will keep growing as the central government transfers more powers and responsibilities.

### **Emergence of a regional political elite**

The federalization of Spain has meant the emergence and consolidation of a regional political elite occupying the new institutions of representation and government. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to highlight that the creation of the State of Autonomies meant the opening of 1,139 new seats in all seventeen regional parliaments for each election. Taking into account that, between 1980 and 2005, there have been six legislatures in each "non-historic region," seven in Catalonia and Galicia, and eight in the Basque Country, as can be seen in Table 1, the total number of regional seats opened to election for the period 1980-2005 was 7,424.<sup>7</sup> At first glance, this number might seem small, but compare it to the 3,906 seats for which politicians have competed for in national elections since 1979 for both Congress and Senate, when the first legislature after the constitution was opened.<sup>8</sup> In numerical terms, the regional political-institutional elite almost doubles the national one. However, in terms of relevance and perceived importance there are still differences in favor of Members of Parliament (MPs) in Congress but not necessarily the Senate. The results of recent research indicate that politicians place Congress and regional parliaments above the Senate in the ranking of relevant political institutions (Coller 2003a:278, 2003b:106).

More attention should be paid to this new regional political elite, given that we know little about them and certainly they are increasingly important for their fellow citizens in federalizing countries. They are, in Best and Cotta's (2000:7) words, at the core of democratic systems. Regional politicians have an enormous impact on their respective societies insofar as they gather more power and responsibilities to regulate more areas that affect citizen's lives. This "shaping of society" is complemented by their responsiveness function. Regional politicians are usually in much closer contact with citizens than national leaders are and are thus better positioned to bring citizens' concerns and claims to regional parliaments. However, it remains to be seen whether they are more or less responsible: Do they favor the interests of their party, their constituency or their voters rather than the general public interest or the interest of larger seg-

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<sup>6</sup>For the process of transferring powers to the regions and the building of the Estado de las Autonomías, see Linz (1989), Subirats and Gallego (2002), and Agranoff and Ramos (1998). See Merry del Val (2005) and Toboso (2005) for the evolution of the economic resources transferred to the regions. For the growth of the regional bureaucracy, see Ramió and Salvador (2002).

<sup>7</sup>We do not take into account that, in 2003, regional elections in Madrid had to be repeated because of a corruption scandal few months after the legislature was elected. We also do not count the eighth legislature in Catalonia that began at the end of 2006.

<sup>8</sup>This amount includes the 350 seats of Congress and 208 seats at the Senate. The first democratic election took place in 1977. The constitution was passed in 1978, and new elections were called in 1979. Experts call the first democratic legislature the "constitutional" one, and the legislature beginning in 1979, the first one. We have followed this tradition.

ments of the population? Further research is needed in this area because it also affects the quality of our democracies.

Regional politicians are crucial in the functioning of democracy since their actions and behaviors, perhaps amplified by their closeness to citizens and by the effect of local and regional media, affect citizens' perceptions of democracy and consequently its quality and legitimacy. In large part, regional politicians set the political agenda, raising issues to which mass media and citizens will pay attention. Foremost, regional elites usually constitute the nursery from which national political leaders emerge. A good number of ministers and national leaders in the government or the opposition began their careers in the regional parliaments in Spain.<sup>9</sup> The creation of regional institutions of power has also affected the internal life of political parties, whose national leadership must now pay attention to the demands of the regional branches and especially to those regional organizations that might host a future national leader.

For these reasons, it is worth paying attention to these politicians. Despite their relevance in federal countries, political elites, and particularly regional elites, are largely unknown (Linz 1997:123-4), especially in some countries. After reviewing an impressive number of empirical studies about recruitment in European parliaments, Patzelt (2002:96) pointed out that Italy, Portugal and Spain were considerably behind other countries like Germany, Britain or even France in terms of knowledge of their political elites. It is certainly surprising that after twenty-five years of regional politics there is no study in Spain that focuses on the social profile of politicians or on their activities in parliaments.

The research on which this paper is based is focused on political elites holding seats in regional parliaments during the period 1980-2005. Being aware of the problems of the positional analysis applied here, we believe that choosing regional MPs as the object of study helps to set clear limits on who should be considered part of the elite – those who have been, at some point, members of a regional institution of representation.<sup>10</sup> However, it is true that there might be other people who are part of the political elite and who are not included here because they have never held a seat in a regional parliament. Two notorious cases will illustrate the point. Felipe González and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, no doubt, are part of the political elite. They have been Prime Ministers, leaders of their parties, and their decisions have had a huge impact on society. Nonetheless, since they have not been present in regional parliaments, they are not considered here part of the regional political elite.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>For instance, Linz et al. (2003:103) show that 4.6 percent of ministers during the democratic period (excluding the transition) had also been regional MPs and 7.7 percent had been regional presidents or councilors, usually also members of regional chambers. Therefore, more than a tenth of the members of the pinnacle of institutional power come from regional parliaments. The largest group (70 percent), though, were members of the Congress of Deputies (53.8 percent) or Senate (16.2 percent). Multiple codes were applied for positions held by ministers.

<sup>10</sup>In this respect, the political elite analyzed here might be considered an important segment, certainly, the institutional one, of the political elite as defined by Higley and Burton (2006:7), namely, the group of "persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations and movements, to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially [...] Put most simply, elites are persons and groups who have the *organized capacity* to make real and continuing political trouble." For the problems of positional analysis in elite research, see Putnam (1976:16).

<sup>11</sup>Notwithstanding, some of the ministers in their governments have been included in this elite since they held a seat in regional parliaments, namely Joan Lerma, Manuel Chaves, Jerónimo Saavedra or Magdalena Álvarez, among others. José María Aznar, Mariano Rajoy, his successor in the leadership of the

Consequently, it could be argued that positional analysis might leave out some people who have been influential in politics as leaders of parties at the local, regional or national level. However, given the prominent role that parties play in nurturing institutions of representation in Spain, and since party leaders are usually placed in these institutions, most likely the group of politicians who have held a seat in regional parliaments since 1980 constitute a good portion of the institutional political power elite in democratic Spain. They are a part of what Suzanne Keller (1963) identified as a “strategic elite.” The group studied, it should be noted, also includes MPs who have not been relevant or influential and have had no real power at all despite holding a regional seat.

### **Social background of politicians**

The regional elite for the period 1980-2005 is composed of 4,354 individuals.<sup>12</sup> As with any political elite, they share many social features but also present strong internal differences. If we had to summarize the social features of the regional elite, we would say the group is mainly composed of young men born in the region they serve, highly educated, mostly lawyers and educators, and with relevant social differences due to party and territory. In this respect, the regional political elite is similar to other political elites that have been studied over the years.<sup>13</sup> This section deals with the social profile of politicians according to five variables: gender, place of birth, age, education, and profession.

Men have largely dominated regional politics between 1980 and 2005 to the point that, considering all regions for the whole period, women barely pass the 20 percent mark in terms of participation in the political elite, as can be seen in Table 2 (page 8). Over twenty-five years of federal democratic politics, the parliaments most open to women have been those of Castile-La Mancha, Madrid, Cantabria, Andalusia, Valencia, and Baleares, while those where women’s participation is minimal have been those of Murcia, Canary Islands, Aragon, and Catalonia.

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Popular Party, and some members of Aznar’s governments like Javier Arenas, Francisco Álvarez Cascos, Josep Piqué, or Miguel Arias Cañete, are also included because either before or after participating in national politics they were active in regional parliaments. Also, national leaders of the leftist opposition coalition Izquierda Unida, like Julio Anguita, Francisco Frutos, or Gaspar Llamazares, are part of the regional elite for the same reason.

<sup>12</sup>The number is larger since there are people who are elected and leave the chamber before the legislature ends. The MP then is substituted for by another person. In these cases, we have counted only the person who has served longest in the chamber to avoid problems of repetition. Thus, the total number is 4,354 politicians.

<sup>13</sup>See, for instance, Norris (1999) for the European Parliament, Best and Cotta (2000) for a historical look at MPs in Europe between 1848 and 2000, including one on Spanish MPs by Linz et al. (2000), Norris and Lovenduski (1995) for the case of the British Parliament, Putnam (1976) and Aberback et al. (1981) for interesting but outdated reviews, Valiente et al. (2003) for the case of the Spanish Congress of Deputies in the seventh legislature, Martínez (2000) for the case of the Spanish representatives in the European Parliament, Genieys (1998) for the case of Catalan and Andalusian elites, and an excellent review in Spanish by Uriarte (1997). All these works review a number of studies where the conclusion is very similar to what concerns the social origins of political elites.



Table 2. Proportion of women in each legislature

	TOTAL 1980- 2005		I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Andalusia	24	410	5	109	7	109	13	109	24	109	30	109	36	109	38	109
Aragon	18	243	6	66	1	67	7	67	12	67	28	67	33	67	--	--
Asturias	23	154	9	45	13	45	22	45	18	45	33	45	31	45	--	--
Canary Isl.	16	220	2	60	2	60	7	60	10	60	28	60	35	60	--	--
Cantabria	25	138	9	35	8	39	3	39	15	39	38	39	44	39	--	--
Castilla - Leon	20	308	4	84	4	84	8	84	20	84	28	83	35	82	--	--
C-La Mancha	28	197	2	44	8	47	19	47	21	47	38	47	49	47	--	--
Catalonia	17	520	6	135	9	135	11	135	13	135	13	135	24	135	30	135
C. Valenciana	24	311	6	89	6	89	13	89	29	89	40	89	42	89	--	--
Extrema- dura	20	216	5	65	3	65	14	65	17	65	26	65	32	65	--	--
Galicia	18	302	4	71	1	71	9	75	11	75	21	75	33	75	33	75
Balearic Isl.	24	200	6	54	12	59	19	59	27	59	30	59	36	59	--	--
La Rioja	22	128	11	35	12	33	22	33	21	33	30	33	40	33	--	--
Madrid	26	357	13	94	17	96	21	101	26	103	32	102	40	111	--	--
Murcia	15	178	5	43	0	45	11	45	18	45	18	45	26	46	--	--
Navarra	20	198	4	50	8	50	12	50	24	50	22	50	32	50	--	--
Basque Count.	23	274	7	60	11	75	12	75	21	75	25	75	29	75	33	75
TOTAL	21	4354	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

**Note:** Totals in each autonomous community for the period (N) do not equal the total number of seats because there are MPs who have been elected more than once. Percentages rounded.

Although politics has been mainly managed by men, women increasingly tended to be incorporated into regional parliaments over the years. This is a common trend in the Congress of Deputies of Spain and other European parliaments, paralleling important changes in society.<sup>14</sup> For instance, according to data in Table 2, at the beginning of the 1980s, the proportion of women in regional parliaments barely reached 10 percent (except in Madrid and la Rioja) while by the beginning of the twenty-first century (sixth legislature) the proportion in most parliaments was over 30 percent and in some cases (like Castile-La Mancha) almost reached 50 percent.<sup>15</sup> There is a case (Murcia in 1987) where no woman was present in the regional assembly.

<sup>14</sup>See Uriarte and Ruiz (1999), Valiente et al. (2003), and the study of European parliaments carried out by Mateo Díaz (2005).

<sup>15</sup>According to data presented by Valiente and her associates (2003:185), in 1977 there were 6 percent of women elected at the Congress of Deputies, 5 percent in 1982, and 28 percent in the eighth legislature (2000-04). Similar data for the Spanish representatives in the European Parliament presented by Martínez (2000:271) indicate that in 1986 there were 8 percent of women, in 1989 there were 15 percent, 28 percent

In twenty-five years of regional politics there has been a change that, although not dramatic, shows women participating more in politics and, perhaps, this trend will consolidate in the future. Using Dahlerup's (1988) terminology, as quoted by Mateo Díaz (2005:119), this trend can be illustrated by a change from *skewed* assemblies at the beginning of the 1980s, to *tilted* ones at the turn of the twenty-first century. The cases of the last legislature of Rioja, Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha, Madrid, and Valencia show a *balanced* chamber.<sup>16</sup>

Regional parliaments can be grouped in four types according to the timing and strength of the incorporation of women. There are the *pioneers*, those in which women participate earlier and proportionally more (almost double) than in any other region—Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Rioja and the Basque Country. There are the *laggards*, those parliaments where women participate proportionally less and tend to be incorporated later than in other chambers. These are the cases of Murcia and, surprisingly, Catalonia. There are also the *slow starters* that catch up at the end of the period studied (like Galicia and Cantabria, but especially Valencia), and the *champions*, those which begin early and keep a steady growth of women's participation—Madrid and La Rioja.

This variety poses the following question: why are some regional parliaments more reluctant than others to incorporate women? There are reasons to explain the incorporation of women in politics, usually associated with the growing presence of women in the public arena interplaying with a political culture prone to gender equality (Mateo Díaz 2005:224).<sup>17</sup> However, there are not so obvious reasons to explain why some regions are more open to women in parliaments than others. Valiente and her associates (2003) found for the case of the Congress that leftist parties incorporate more women and earlier than conservative ones, the difference being statistically relevant. This is a reflection of the leading role taken by the socialist party (PSOE) after the 1988 congress in which the party passed a resolution mandating that 25 percent of ruling positions in the party should be reserved for women. The measure was extended to electoral lists. Other parties followed the lead, contributing thus to the growing presence of women in regional chambers.<sup>18</sup> Still, our findings suggest that, in some regions, the ideological cleavage plays a secondary role. To demonstrate this, we offer an analysis of two opposed cases, a champion (Madrid) and a quite counterintuitive laggard (Catalonia), and we will add a third case (Basque Country) to find an explanation to the puzzle of Catalonia.

Madrid is a unique case in that it is a pioneer and the proportional participation of women shows a steady, high growth rate throughout the period. This evolution is common to conservative and leftist parties, which should qualify Valiente et al.'s (2003) findings concerning the differences between parties in women's participation in institutional politics. As can be seen in

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in 1994, and in 1999 there were already 34 percent of women. This shows that women were incorporated into regional parliaments earlier than into Congress and the Spanish delegation at the European Parliament.

<sup>16</sup>Skewed chambers refer to those which have less than 15 percent of MPs of a particular group (i.e. women); tilted assemblies have between 15 percent and 40 percent of a group; and a balanced chamber has between 60 percent and 40 percent of MPs of a group.

<sup>17</sup>For the factors explaining women's incorporation into politics, see Uriarte and Ruiz (1999:212), Valiente et al. (2003:197-203), and Mateo Díaz (2005:224). See as well Verge 2006.

<sup>18</sup>In some regions the socialists have lately implemented the "zipper list," alternating men and women, or mandated a minimum and maximum for the presence of both genders in the electoral lists (40 percent and 60 percent, respectively).

Table 3 (page 9), the proportion of women in the three largest parties in Madrid is the same for the whole period, indicating that there are no differences between leftist and rightist parties (apart from the evolution of the incorporation process), and showing that parties in Madrid have been more open to women's participation than in other regions.

**Table 3. Proportion of women in each legislature in Madrid, Catalonia, and Basque Country**

	TOTAL 1980-2005		I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Madrid																
PP	27	160	12	34	19	32	21	47	24	54	29	55	44	57	--	--
PSOE	27	134	14	51	17	40	21	34	31	32	36	39	38	45	--	--
IU	27	48	11	9	14	7	31	13	23	17	37	8	33	9	--	--
Catalonia																
CiU	14	182	7	43	8	72	10	69	13	70	13	60	14	56	19	46
ERC	14	50	0	14	0	5	0	6	0	11	0	13	8	12	30	23
PSC	23	138	6	33	12	41	14	42	15	40	18	34	33	52	38	42
IC	24	49	12	25	17	6	11	9	29	7	18	11	33	3	44	9
PP	17	47	0	0	0	11	17	6	14	7	12	17	42	12	27	15
Basque C.																
PNV-EA	27	110	12	25	16	32	17	30	22	31	30	30	30	27	50	22
HB	17	46	9	11	9	11	8	13	15	13	27	11	29	14	14	7
PSE	23	52	0	9	5	19	10	19	19	16	25	12	28	14	46	13
IU	18	11	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	6	0	2	33	3
PP	20	35	0	2	14	7	0	2	0	6	18	11	31	16	46	13

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

**Notes:** 1. Percentages rounded. 2. We have selected only the largest parties that are present in most of the legislatures and neglected those parties that have been short-lived. 3. In the Basque Country, we have collapsed PNV and EA since EA appeared in the second legislature (1984), created by some prominent affiliates that left the PNV, although made an electoral alliance with the PNV for the seventh legislature (2001). 4. Total refers to the number of individuals holding a seat. Some MPs have been present in more than one legislature.

The evolution of the presence of women in the regional chamber is quite similar with two differences. With minor variations, PSOE and PP show similar proportions of women until the fourth legislature (1995), when the socialists' increment in the presence of women is higher than the *populares'*, although the latter catch up in the sixth legislature. IU begins incorporating more women earlier than the two other parties (in the third legislature) and keeps a high level, although the presence of women suffers a minor set back in the fourth legislature. It seems that in the case of Madrid, all three parties have made a similar effort to incorporate women onto the electoral list in winning positions and, consequently, have contributed to make this community both a "pioneer" and a "champion."

Contrary to Madrid, Catalonia is a counterintuitive case. This is a region highly developed in economic and cultural terms, and a high presence of women in the political elite can be expected to be a reflection of this development. However, contrary to expectations, Catalonia becomes a "laggard" in terms of women's incorporation into politics, as can be seen in Table 2. The reason is to be found in the different behavior towards women that parties have had over

twenty-five years of regional politics. However, the divide in Catalonia is not found in the ideological cleavage but in the nationalistic one.

Considering the whole period, the proportion of women present in *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) is the same as in *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC), as can be seen in Table 3. Both nationalist parties, however, show a different evolution. By the early eighties, the presence of women was minimal in both groups. ERC blocked women's presence until the sixth legislature (1999), when a single woman obtained a seat in the regional parliament (constituting only 8 percent of the group). The turning point was 2003 (seventh legislature), when ERC incorporated almost a third of women into its parliamentary group, following an earlier change in leadership that imparted a mildly leftist outlook to the party. Contrarily, there is no turning point for CiU, but a steady and slow evolution that brings the proportion of women in this parliamentary group from 7 percent to 19 percent in the seventh legislature. In any case, CiU has never placed more than ten women in its parliamentary group.

A different picture emerges when we examine the behavior of the nominally non-nationalist parties concerning the presence of women in their parliamentary groups. According to data in Table 3, the socialist *PSC* and the former communist *IC* have similar proportions of women during the period considered (almost a fourth), and even the conservative *PP* has proportionally more women than the nationalist groups. The evolution of these three parties is similar. The *PP* consistently had a lower proportion of women than the leftist groups until the sixth legislature (1999), when the five women elected made almost half of this group. A few years later and after a change in the leadership, the presence of women was reduced to a fourth in the seventh legislature (2003). Leftist parties have proportionally incorporated more women than the *populares* over the period studied, although they have also experienced a turning point in the sixth legislature, when a third of each parliamentary group was women. Then, in the seventh legislature the proportion grew within *IC* to 44 percent and to 38 percent among the socialists.

It seems that Catalonia being a laggard in regional politics is due more to the low presence of women in nationalist parties vis-à-vis non-nationalist ones. Is there anything among nationalist parties that prevents them from incorporating women into their electoral lists or is it just a matter of the Catalan nationalist parties? A comparison between Catalonia and the Basque Country, both with large, powerful, influential and ruling nationalist parties, could help to answer the question. Data in Table 3 indicate that the largest nationalist party in the Basque Country (*PNV-EA*) also has the largest proportion of women in its parliamentary group. To the contrary, the self-proclaimed leftist nationalist *HB-EH* (whose name has changed several times for legal problems related to its association with the terrorist group *ETA*), has the lowest proportion of women in its ranks at the regional chamber. In the middle we find the non-nationalist parties *PSOE*, *PP*, and *IU* (called there *Ezkerda Batua*). It is difficult to talk about a nationalist or even an ideological divide in the case of gender in the Basque Country. The evolution of the participation of women in parliamentary politics also shows relevant differences. In Catalonia, leftist parties, and lately the *PP*, led the incorporation of women into the regional chamber. In the Basque Country, it seems that nationalist parties have led this transformation.

Therefore, Catalonia being a counterintuitive case is largely the result of the policies of nationalist parties which do not place women in winning positions in the electoral list. Given the electoral system in Spain, holding a seat in any assembly is a function of the position in a closed electoral list, and since these lists are made by parties, the research question then should

focus the attention on to what is called the *selectorates*, those members of a party who decide the internal composition of the electoral list. Surprisingly (and regretfully), our empirical knowledge about these bodies is quite low. Further research should inquire comparatively about the cognitive framework of selectorates and the internal politics of parties.

**Table 4. Proportion of internal migrants in each legislature**

	TOTAL 1980-2005		I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Andalusia	4	402	5	105	4	106	4	109	4	107	1	107	1	109	8	109
Aragon	18	239	15	65	18	66	20	66	12	66	19	67	18	67	--	--
Asturias	12	68	17	12	13	15	11	27	11	45	4	27	4	27	--	--
Canary Isl.	7	201	5	60	5	56	5	60	9	58	2	48	7	55	--	--
Cantabria	17	137	23	35	18	38	18	38	18	38	10	39	10	39	--	--
Castilla y Leon	11	286	9	84	12	84	8	84	9	73	15	73	10	77	--	--
C-La Mancha	27	192	30	43	30	47	23	47	30	43	19	47	17	47	--	--
Catalonia	11	489	14	135	8	135	9	135	7	135	7	135	7	133	10	104
C. Valenciana	18	302	20	86	18	89	19	89	17	82	14	88	16	89	--	--
Extrema- dura	10	185	19	43	16	64	10	62	7	60	11	64	6	65	--	--
Galicia	7	284	1	68	3	69	11	72	11	74	9	70	3	68	4	75
Balearic Isl.	19	199	15	54	21	58	22	59	24	59	20	59	19	59	--	--
La Rioja	23	128	29	35	21	33	21	33	9	33	15	33	18	33	--	--
Madrid	43	334	50	91	40	95	41	95	35	64.9	36	99	38	105	--	--
Murcia	17	91	25	16	18	39	20	25	6	18	17	23	13	45	--	--
Navarra	16	197	12	50	16	50	12	50	16	50	12	49	16	50	--	--
Basque Count.	17	24	12	8	18	11	20	10	0	6	33	6	33	6	40	5
TOTAL	16	3758	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

**Note:** Totals in each autonomous community for the period (N) does not equal the total number of seats because there are MPs who have been elected more than once. Percentages rounded.

The regional politician has been born in the region s/he serves in 84 percent of the cases, which, overall, has left little room for internal migrants to join the political elite of their host regions.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, over the years, internal migrants' presence in regional chambers has diminished substantially, except perhaps in the case of Aragon (see Table 4 above). The scarcity of internal migrant participation in the political elite should not be surprising in some regions that have traditionally exported labor force to other areas within Spain. For instance, many inhabitants of Andalusia, Extremadura, Castile-Leon, Castile-La Mancha, and Galicia have traditionally been nurturing the industries and services of other regions in Spain and have attracted proportionally fewer individuals to work and live there. As a result, these regions, together with the Canary Islands, show a lower proportion of internal migrants both in 1981 and 2001 accord-

<sup>19</sup>Internal migrants refer here to those individuals who have been born in Spain, but not in the region where they live.

ing to the data of the official census (INE 1985, 2001).<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, Catalonia, Madrid, Basque Country, Balears and Valencia have been a pole of attraction for Spaniards migrating to work from other regions. As a result, these regions have the largest (but decreasing) proportions of internal migrants in Spain both in 1981 and 2001.<sup>21</sup>

It is expected that the presence of internal migrants in regional parliaments will reflect the trends of migration. This is the case in most of the aforementioned regions. For example, Andalusia, Galicia, Extremadura and Castile-Leon are regions that have “exported” labor force rather than becoming areas of attraction, and they also reflect low levels of internal migrants in their regional parliaments, as can be seen in Table 4. The political elite of the Canary Islands being in this group, also reflecting the low rate of migrants going from the peninsula to the islands to work. The deviant case here is Castile-La Mancha, whose political elite seems to be more open to internal migrants than others, since their parties incorporate to parliament more non-natives than can be proportionally found in the population.

Among the regions with the largest share of internal migrants, expectations are met in most of the cases. For example, Madrid appears as one of the regions whose parliament has been more open to internal migrants, reflecting the high proportion of non-natives living in the region. To a lesser extent, the Basque Country (an unreliable case because of the lack of information), Balearic Islands, and Valencia show high levels of internal migrants in their regional parliaments as is reflective of their status as recipients of internal migrants. The counter case here is Catalonia, being in the group of parliaments with low levels of non-natives while having a large share of internal migrants in the population.

Contrary to the cases of other developed regions, why are there so few non-native politicians in Catalonia if the population there has a large share of internal migrants? Similarly, why does Castile-La Mancha have a larger proportion of non-native politicians than would be expected from their share of the population?

Castile-La Mancha is a counterintuitive case. According to census data, in 1981 there were 10 percent of internal migrants in this community while in 2001 the proportion was 14 percent. Ibe can expect, thus, a similar proportion in the elite. However, data in Table 5 (page 14) show that the political elite of this region has been consistently more open to non-natives than their fellow politicians from other autonomous communities. This is a region where internal migrants are overrepresented in the political elite. Certainly, the two major parties contribute to this situation in a similar way. PP contributes with a larger share of internal migrants than the PSOE for the whole period, although over the years non-natives in the PP reduce their presence more strongly than in the PSOE. This reduction is similar across Spain. Why have the selectorates of both parties consistently placed a larger proportion of internal migrants in the electoral list over the years? Perhaps, for the political elite, place of birth is not relevant, although our guess

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<sup>20</sup>The proportion of internal migrants in these regions are as follows (1981, 2001): Galicia (6.5 percent, 4.6 percent), Andalusia (6.7 percent, 6.3 percent), Extremadura (7.8 percent, 8.9 percent), Canary Islands (9.5 percent, 8.4 percent), Castile-Leon (9.7 percent, 9.9 percent), Castile-La Mancha (10.4 percent, 14.3 percent).

<sup>21</sup>The proportion of internal migrants in these regions are as follows (1981, 2001): Madrid (45.7 percent, 33 percent), Catalonia (36.2 percent, 25.9 percent), Basque Country (32.5 percent, 24.7 percent), Balears (26.8 percent, 26.9 percent) and Valencia (25.2 percent, 20.7 percent).

is that it might become more and more important to the extent that decentralization progresses, associated with the emergence and consolidation of regional identities.

**Table 5. Proportion of internal migrants in each legislature in Catalonia and Castile-La Mancha**

	TOTAL 1980-2005		I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Catalonia																
CiU	5	195	0	43	1.4	72	3	69	4	70	7	60	7	54	9	28
ERC	0	48	0	14	0	5	0	6	0	11	0	13	0	12	0	21
PSC	20	137	33	33	22	41	14	42	12	40	6	34	10	52	19	41
IC	17	48	20	25	17	6	11	9	14	7	9	11	33	3	0	8
PP	10	38	0	--	0	11	33	6	0	7	12	17	0	12	0	6
Castile-LM																
PSOE	22	111	23	22	24	25	26	27	30	23	27	26	14	29	--	--
PP	33	76	38	21	39	18	21	19	32	19	9	21	22	18	--	--

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

**Notes:** 1. Percentages rounded. 2. We have selected only the largest parties that are present in most of the legislatures and neglected those parties that have been short lived. 3. The total is not the sum of the Ns of the seven legislatures since there have been some repetitions. The total is the number of MPs for whom we have information.

Contrarily, Catalonia has been a pole of attraction for many Spaniards who have been moving there to work since the nineteenth century. As a consequence, more than a third of the Catalan population in 1981 and a fourth in 2001 was born elsewhere in Spain. However, their share in the political elite for the period considered is only a tenth (11 percent), and over the years the presence of internal migrants in the regional chamber has been reduced at a faster and deeper rate than in the population. This evolution does not have a reflection in the composition of the political elite. To the contrary, Catalonia appears as one of the communities where the disparity between elite and social structure is among the largest. This makes Catalonia a counterintuitive case. The reason is to be found in the nationalist policies followed by nationalist and non-nationalist parties alike.

As the data in Table 5 indicate, only the so-called non-nationalist parties (socialists and former communist IC on the left, and *populares*, on the center-right) present some relevant proportion of internal migrants in the political elite for the period under study. However, the difference between right and left is marked: non-nationalist leftist parties seem to be more open to society in what geographical origins is concerned by a margin of almost two to one. Nationalist parties, nevertheless, are the least open to society and those who contribute the least to the presence of internal migrants in the regional chamber. The extreme case is ERC, whose parliamentary groups during the period have been composed of "Catalan natives only" while moderately conservative CiU has contributed with 5 percent of its MPs to the diversity of the regional chamber.

There are opposing trends. Over the years, CiU has been incorporating more non-natives, up to the 9 percent level reached during the seventh legislature. The PP seems to have an erratic path that could be due to changes in leadership and, consequently, changes in the composition of the electoral list. However, as data in Table 5 show, leftist parties have steadily

been closing the doors of the Catalan Parliament to non-natives, increasing thus the distance between society and parliamentary groups. IC goes from 20 percent in the early 1980s to 0 percent in 2003 with a pick of 33 percent (that is, one single MP) in the sixth legislature. This group has gone through a number of crises of identity whose outcome has been a more Catalanist approach to politics.

But the most dramatic closure to non-natives is the one experienced by the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC). Table 5 shows that the composition of its parliamentary group went from a third of internal migrants in 1980, mirroring the situation in society, to a steady diminishment of non-natives until the fifth legislature (6 percent), far from the Catalan society and especially the traditional socialist electorate composed largely of non-native workers. This showed that the Catalan socialists have increasingly placed natives in the electoral list, showing a movement of the PSC towards a more nationalist outlook that has been very well studied by Miley (2004, 2006). A number of changes, including the rise of local leaders of immigrant origins to the leadership of the party, also affected the internal composition of the electoral list, provoking a growth in the proportion of internal migrants in the sixth and seventh legislatures. It remains to be seen whether these changes mean the party is opening the electoral lists to wider segments of society.

**Table 6. Average age of politicians in each legislature**

	TOTAL 1980-2005		I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N
Andalusia	40.7	404	40.1	105	40.3	107	41.1	109	43.2	109	42.6	109	44.1	109	44.9	109
Aragon	43.7	239	40.4	65	44.1	66	45.0	66	45.3	66	47.5	67	44.2	67	--	--
Asturias	41.3	67	40.4	12	39.5	15	39.4	27	43.7	44	43.8	26	45.4	27	--	--
Canary Isl.	44.1	213	40.1	60	43.8	57	44.4	60	46.0	59	46.3	58	45.6	58	--	--
Cantabria	45.2	137	43.4	35	46.8	38	45.4	38	48.0	38	45.4	39	45.6	39	--	--
Castilla y Leon	45.4	298	43.6	84	44.0	84	45.5	84	48.0	83	47.6	74	45.6	80	--	--
C-La Mancha	43.6	192	42.4	44	43.2	47	43.7	46	45.7	43	44.2	47	43.4	47	--	--
Catalonia	44.6	487	45.3	132	45.8	135	44.5	135	45.0	134	45.2	135	46.8	133	46.9	107
C. Valenciana	42.5	298	40.3	86	41.0	89	44.0	89	44.6	81	43.7	87	44.6	86	--	--
Extrema- dura	41.7	193	40.2	44	41.9	65	42.2	64	44.4	64	43.8	65	44.9	65	--	--
Galicia	44.9	265	45.9	44	46.2	69	43.6	73	46.4	74	46.3	70	48.2	71	51.7	51
Balearic Isl.	42.4	194	40.8	51	43.2	56	43.8	58	41.4	59	44.5	59	45.5	59	--	--
La Rioja	41.8	128	40.0	35	40.0	33	41.8	33	41.8	33	44.0	33	42.0	33	--	--
Madrid	43.6	337	42.3	94	43.1	95	43.0	95	43.9	97	46.9	98	46.6	105	--	--
Murcia	41.3	78	36.3	12	41.2	27	44.0	16	44.3	16	47.0	23	46.4	45	--	--
Navarra	43.0	197	40.4	50	42.5	50	41.8	50	43.6	50	44.0	49	46.9	50	--	--
Basque Count.	45.2	25	43.7	9	38.2	12	41.0	10	36.8	6	41.8	6	44.7	6	48.0	5
TOTAL	43.3	3749	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Source: Our own based on official sources.



**Note:** 1. The seventh legislature is not counted for the averages. 2. Totals in each autonomous community for the period (N) does not equal the total number of seats because there are MPs who have been elected more than once.

The age distribution of the political elite is an important component of their social background; age profile can be an indicator not only of human capital, but it also can show the openness of the political structure to newcomers. Following Inglehart (1990), young MPs can incorporate a good deal of new values and priorities to the legislative process and the political debate that may seem alien to veteran politicians from older generations. However, young politicians may be more inexperienced, lack social ties with their rivals, be less pragmatic and consequently less inclined to consensus or to reach pacts with their political rivals. The influx of young politicians is well noted in the regional parliaments.

As the information in Table 6 (page 15) suggests, the regional parliaments are not the arena for gerontocrats. The average regional politician in Spain is 43.3 years old at the time of his/her first entrance. This average aligns the regional politicians with the age distribution of members of parliament of most Western European democracies, who are on the 40-49 age range, and certainly below the average age of ministers in Western European democracies from 1945 to the mid-1980s, which is 48 (Blondel and Thiébault 1991: 21, 71). Although Blondel (1973: 77), in what is considered a classic of research on parliaments, indicated that "it is natural that legislators should be older than the 'average' citizen of a country," the fact is that in the case of Spain the average regional politician is younger than the average citizen of voting age, who was 44.5 in 1981 and 46.6 in 2001, according to census data collected by INE (1985, 2001). Compared to other politicians, including the Congress of Deputies, this is largely a young elite at the point of entry.<sup>22</sup> Young politicians are quite common in the similarly young Spanish democracy. Consider Adolfo Suárez (43), Felipe González (40), José María Aznar (43), and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (43), presidents of government who were closer to their forties than to their fifties when they took office.

The youth of regional politicians reflects the democratic pathways to the regional parliaments. Before the consolidation of democracy in Spain, the average age of politicians fell to the fifties age group. A study by Equipo Data (1969), analyzing the background of MPs in the Spanish Congress in the late sixties, revealed that the average age of MPs at the time was 52. In the same vein, Linz et al. (2003:87) found that ministers were 44.7 years old on average for the democratic period, much younger than the average age of ministers during the transition to democracy (51) and the Franco regime (51).<sup>23</sup> These findings suggest that under authoritarian regimes the age profile of the political elites is higher than in post-transition democracies. This trend occurs in part because under such regimes a good portion of the political elites are drawn from the armed forces, where senior hierarchy is the most important recruitment criterion. Vis-à-vis authoritarian regimes, democratic institutions incorporate younger people into the political process and this has a reflection in the average age of politicians in regional parliaments.

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<sup>22</sup>According to data presented by Linz et al. (2000:441), the average age of Congresspersons goes from 44.1 in 1977 to 46.6 in 1996, being around 44 in most of the legislatures.

<sup>23</sup>Lewis (1972) reaches similar findings in the historical analysis of the Spanish ministerial elites in the Council of Ministers during Franco's regime.

The pattern of age distribution among the regional politicians shows some slight differences across the regions. In general, younger politicians can be found in the first legislatures. Many young politicians (especially in the socialist party) began their careers in the regional arena. Some remained there and others went to national politics. Also, young politicians are found when the majority in parliament changes. That means the party obtaining the largest plurality of seats has placed in the electoral list a number of politicians younger on average than their predecessors. While the older politicians, on average, come from Castile-Leon, Cantabria, the Basque Country, Galicia, and Catalonia, the younger politicians are found in Andalusia, Asturias, Murcia, La Rioja, and Extremadura.<sup>24</sup> The small but significant age gap between the regional MPs belonging to the PSOE (average of 43.1) and to the PP (average of 45.6), could explain such age profile differences among the regions. For example, the autonomous communities with the youngest politicians were often governed by the PSOE while the communities with the oldest politicians are strongholds of the PP. The exceptions are the Basque Country and Catalonia, ruled by conservative nationalist parties enjoying large majorities of seats. Thus, it might be the case that conservative parties tend to place older politicians in the electoral list than leftist parties, who may recruit future MPs from younger segments of the population. Again, the difference in age between PSOE and PP shows this ideological divide.

With regard to the age of the first-time MPs of the regional parliament in the first autonomous parliamentary elections, the majority of them were less than 41 years old. Nonetheless, an interesting trend to note is that the regions holding the first regional elections (the Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, and Andalusia) have on average more veteran MPs (43.7) than the rest of the autonomous communities (40.8), which held their first elections in 1983. As a general pattern, the age of the first-time MPs in the regional parliament increased overtime. The exception to this pattern is the Basque Country, although the unfortunate lack of information renders the data for this case unreliable.

Regional politicians are well educated, with 85 percent holding a university degree. Around a tenth (11 percent) finished their studies at high school and 3.4 percent finished only primary school or have no education. Few hold a Ph.D. degree (8 percent), while the vast majority (60 percent) has a *licenciatura*. The remaining 17 percent obtained a university degree after three years of education.<sup>25</sup> Certainly, it seems that Keller (1963:121) was right indicating that "education is the single most important entrance requirement into the higher circles."<sup>26</sup> In comparative terms, there are regions whose elite is more educated than others. We can obtain an indication of the education level of the regional elite by assigning numeric codes in the following way: 1= up to primary school, 2 = secondary school, 3= diplomatura, 4 = licenciatura, 5 = Ph.D. The average is 3.58, which places the elite at the university level, a bit over the *diplomatura* or three-year degree. Regions with more educated elites on average are the Canary Islands, Madrid and Catalonia, while the less educated elites, in comparative terms, are those of Extremadura, Aragon and Navarre.

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<sup>24</sup>Lack of information for the Basque Country, Asturias, and Murcia renders the average age unreliable.

<sup>25</sup>The Spanish university system is divided among *diplomaturas* or technical schools and *licenciaturas*. The former require three years of education and the latter require five years. Later reforms have changed the years of schooling needed to obtain a university degree.

<sup>26</sup>Quoted in Putnam (1976:27).

**Table 7. Proportion of university-trained politicians in each legislature**

	TOTAL		I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	1980-2005		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Andalusia	83	316	80	86	77	88	86	81	88	83	83	77	92	78	91	77
Aragon	76	228	83	58	73	60	82	65	77	64	77	64	79	66	--	--
Asturias	86	65	90	10	90	10	91	21	83	35	82	28	87	32	--	--
Canary Isl.	96	185	98	56	98	51	93	58	100	51	100	48	96	48	--	--
Cantabria	85	118	81	31	83	36	93	29	84	31	86	35	86	36	--	--
Castilla y Leon	84	257	78	60	78	78	75	76	88	68	87	72	88	77	--	--
C-La Mancha	91	157	86	36	92	36	97	38	89	35	90	41	93	41	--	--
Catalonia	87	441	93	121	82	120	84	122	91	119	91	122	88	118	95	98
C. Valenciana	84	245	81	65	80	84	91	77	89	75	85	79	82	67	--	--
Extremadura	74	164	78	37	78	54	69	52	67	60	70	56	76	62	--	--
Galicia	89	228	85	65	87	63	87	69	96	71	93	69	93	66	89	27
Balearic Isl.	75	12	60	5	57	7	80	5	100	3	100	2	100	3	--	--
La Rioja	93	86	95	22	96	24	96	24	87	23	87	30	87	23	--	--
Madrid	84	312	82	89	87	91	83	86	89	87	83	90	87	94	--	--
Murcia	91	76	86	14	87	37	92	25	83	12	94	17	100	33	--	--
Navarra	79	147	77	39	80	45	91	43	95	39	74	38	88	33	--	--
Basque Country	92	101	92	13	96	24	95	19	93	28	90	39	91	54	91	59
TOTAL	85	3138	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

**Note:** Totals in each autonomous community for the period (N) does not equal the total number of seats because there are MPs who have been elected more than once. Percentages rounded.

One could think that the higher the level of power, the higher the educational credentials of the politician. In other words, the pinnacle of power could also correspond with the pinnacle of education. Thus, ministers could be expected to be more educated than national MPs, who might be more educated than regional parliamentarians and local councilors. However, this “rule” needs to be qualified with available data presented in Table 7 above. Certainly, ministers of governments during the democratic period are highly educated since, according to Linz et al. (2003:92), 97 percent hold a university degree. However, it is not as clear that regional parliamentarians have lower credentials than other representatives. The proportion of university graduates in the regional political elite is larger than in the European Parliament where, according to Norris (1999:97), the proportion was 75 percent. Furthermore, regional politicians with a university degree are proportionally similar to the Spanish representatives in the European Parliament, where university graduates are in every legislature over 85 percent (Martínez 2000). The political elite in the regions show similar levels of university graduates as the Congress of Deputies.<sup>27</sup> This group of regional politicians is more educated than local councilors in Spain,

<sup>27</sup>The proportion of university trained MPs in the eight legislature was 84 percent, according to data presented by Valiente et al. (2003:191). In the seventh legislature, the proportion was 75 percent, according to data presented by Uriarte and Ruiz (1999:215). Note that, according to Norris (1997:214), Spanish MPs are among the most educated in Europe, along with those of Britain and France.

since only 10 percent of these have finished higher education (Capo 1992:140). Consequently, the idea that education is positively correlated with the level of representation seems to somehow fail here—regional politicians are highly educated and certainly, university training is as common for them as it is for national representatives and even proportionally more common than for European parliamentarians.

As we indicated earlier, there are minor and somewhat irrelevant differences among regions concerning the level of education of MPs. Data in Table 7 show the proportion of politicians who obtained a university degree. Regions with higher proportion of university-trained politicians are Canary Islands, Rioja, Castile-La Mancha, Murcia and the Basque Country, although lack of information makes this proportion unreliable for the last two cases. Surprisingly, these are not the most economically advanced regions in Spain. One can expect that economic progress is related to high education levels among the population and, therefore, political elites in economically developed areas will have higher educational credentials. Contrary, in less developed regions one can expect a lower proportion of highly educated people and, consequently, the elite might also reflect this situation. This is the case, for instance, in Extremadura and Aragon, regions with low levels of economic development (relatively speaking since we are talking about a highly developed and wealthy country) and the lower proportion of university-trained politicians. Note, though, that we are talking of two-thirds of MPs holding a university degree in these “less developed” regions. However, Castile-La Mancha, Rioja or Canary Islands are not among the overdeveloped regions. Why do they have the larger proportion of highly educated politicians?

A good reason is that, historically, some of the less developed regions have had a high proportion of educated people because of the presence of old universities and Catholic seminaries (see Kagan 1974). Another reason is that elites tend to be, everywhere, highly educated, no matter the level of development of the region they represent. This is because elite formation follows the law of increasing disproportion formulated by Putnam (1976:33 and ff.): political elites tend to be drawn from privileged backgrounds, including high educational credentials, irrespective of the wealth of the areas where they live.

Blondel (1973:81) indicated that there were three models of parliaments according to the predominance of the professions. The “lawyers’ paradise” was characteristic of the industrialized world. Parliaments in the communist countries were dominated by workers, peasants and the intelligentsia, while parliaments in developing countries saw the emergence of civil servants, teachers and managers as the dominant professional groups. Spanish regional parliaments are a combination of the first and third models, with clear tendencies aligned with the normal development of modern parliaments: the opening of seats to professional groups other than lawyers.

The profession of politicians for the period considered is in line with what is expected. Liberal professions are the largest group and, among them, law-related professionals are the most common (19 percent). Although relevant professional groups, physicians (6.3 percent),<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>It is remarkable the large presence of physicians in the political elite, certainly a feature not common in other countries. Physicians are in close contact to people, especially in rural areas. They know their problems firsthand and may be a social reference for many electors. Perhaps, desires of changes or cooptation by parties to benefit from their usually wide social networks might explain their large presence in the political elite. It goes without saying that in Spain there is a tradition of physicians involved in politics that

architects (1.2 percent), engineers (3.9 percent) or economists (3.7 percent) are not as frequent among politicians as those professions related to the legal system. The largest group is that of educators (21 percent), with workers (11 percent), and managers and owners (13 percent) receiving a good share of power. Civil servants (excluding professors) comprise 4 percent of the elite. This elite is distinctively different from the one composed of municipal politicians in which, according to data presented by Botella (1992:155), the largest professional groups are farmers (34 percent) and industrial workers (18 percent). It is also slightly different from politicians of the Congress of Deputies, whose proportion of educators tend to be higher (between 17 percent in 1977 and 32 percent in 1996), that of managers and entrepreneurs lower (around 5 percent in the same period), that of civil servants higher (between 7 percent in 1977 and 25 percent in 1996), and the proportion of workers lower (between 16 percent in 1977 and 6 percent in 1996), according to Linz et al. (2000:442).

**Table 8. Profession of politicians I. Proportion of law related professionals in each legislature**

	TOTAL 1980-2005		I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Andalusia	16	328	21	91	17	90	11	89	16	83	16	89	19	84	18	90
Aragon	8	233	9	65	6	66	11	66	12	66	8	66	5	61	--	--
Asturias	16	64	30	10	10	10	10	19	10	29	12	24	16	31	--	--
Canary Isl.	26	197	29	59	24	55	10	59	22	59	29	52	32	50	--	--
Cantabria	11	120	18	34	8	36	9	35	5	38	9	35	13	31	--	--
Castilla y Leon	14	279	7	82	11	81	7	82	17	78	16	67	29	70	--	--
C-La Mancha	21	186	26	43	15	46	14	44	17	42	25	44	30	46	--	--
Catalonia	17	441	13	128	16	129	9	126	10	121	16	121	20	113	23	87
C. Valenciana	18	258	15	78	19	78	18	79	21	70	16	75	25	68	--	--
Extrema- dura	15	179	14	44	14	62	11	64	18	62	18	61	20	60	--	--
Galicia	29	227	35	62	31	65	26	68	31	72	14	66	23	66	29	28
Balearic Isl.	19	16	14	7	0	8	17	6	0	4	33	3	25	4	--	--
La Rioja	13	126	14	35	21	33	15	33	12	33	21	33	13	31	--	--
Madrid	27	306	24	87	33	88	27	84	33	86	31	89	25	89	--	--
Murcia	8	89	0	16	2	42	20	25	12	16	15	20	5	40	--	--
Navarra	19	189	23	48	20	49	29	48	21	47	15	46	20	46	--	--
Basque Count.	39	103	82	11	44	25	10	20	55	29	45	40	37	59	36	59
TOTAL	19	3341	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

**Note:** Totals in each autonomous community for the period (N) does not equal the total number of seats because there are MPs who have been elected more than once. Percentages rounded.

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links with the “humanist physician,” doctors who show interest for the arts and humanities, for the intellectual world, and easily trespass the frontier between the scientist and the politician.

Law seems to be the cradle for many representative and executive jobs in politics, as a number of studies have demonstrated.<sup>29</sup> In the regional political elite, lawyers get a good share of power as well (19 percent of the total, as can be seen in Table 8), and contrary to what happens in other parliaments, their relative weight has grown over the years (see Table 11, page 27).<sup>30</sup> The Basque Country, Galicia, Madrid and the Canary Islands are those regions whose parliaments have a larger proportion of law-related professionals in the whole period considered.<sup>31</sup> On the contrary, Aragon, Murcia and Cantabria are those areas whose regional assemblies have a lower proportion of lawyers and related professions.

Data in Table 8 also suggest a relevant trend. For most autonomous communities (except Catalonia, Castile-Leon, Valencia, Rioja and Madrid) the proportion of lawyers in the first legislature is slightly higher than in the second. The first legislature is crucial since regional institutions are built and developed. Law-related professionals have a say in this process (perhaps they are the most qualified ones) and this might be the reason that their presence in the first legislature is higher than in others. However, in the second legislature the institutional building is complete and largely developed, making the role of the lawyer more dispensable in Parliaments. Generally speaking, contrary to what has happened historically in the majority of chambers (Best and Cotta 2000), data in Table 7 indicate a growing presence of law-related professionals in regional parliaments between 1980 and 2005, although there are differences accounted by party—the proportion of law related professionals in the PP for the whole period almost doubles (25 percent) that of the socialist party (13 percent).

The presence of lawyers is still quite high compared to other professions. This occurs in most countries. Why are there consistently so many lawyers in the political elite? There are three explanations—elective affinity, dispensability, and professional benefits. Already Weber (1946:95) had pointed out that there is an elective affinity between lawyers and politicians and Bell (1994) found that politicians who participated in the legislative process of the regime created by the French Revolution were predominantly lawyers, initiating a trend that persists today (see Eulau and Sprague 1964). This should not be much of a surprise. Usually lawyers are familiar with the legislative process (making laws, debating, arguing, negotiating) so they bring some sort of know-how to parliaments.

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<sup>29</sup>See Norris and Lovenduski (1995) for the case of the British Parliament, Norris (1999:93) for the European Parliament, Martínez (2000:274) for Spanish Europarliamentarians; Del Campo et al. (1982:143), Uriarte (2000:118), Jerez (1997), and Linz et al (2000) for the Spanish Congress of Deputies; Cuenca and Miranda (1987:139) and Lewis (1972) for Franco's Ministers, Linz et al. (2003:97) for Ministers in different Spanish governments. For an overall historic appraisal of the profession of politicians and the role of law related professionals, see the collective work edited by Best and Cotta (2000).

<sup>30</sup>The impressive historical study of Best and Cotta (2000) about parliamentarians in Europe highlights the fact that the proportion of lawyers in the political elite tends to diminish as democracies age. Over a period of more than 150 years, they find that the political elite is increasingly composed of middle-class citizens with some political experience (in local or party offices). However, they detect a reduction in the proportion of lawyers, a steady proportion of businessmen and managers over the years, a growing presence of civil servants (mainly teachers), and an increment in the proportion of people holding social science and humanities degrees. Similarly, Uriarte (2000:118), following Jerez (1997), indicates that the relative presence of lawyers diminishes in the Congress of Deputies. To the contrary, in the regional political elite, the overall proportion of lawyers mildly grows in the period considered.

<sup>31</sup>Missing information in the Basque Country renders this proportion unreliable.

Unlike other professionals, lawyers are quite dispensable, and dispensability is crucial to understanding modern politics. For Weber (1946:85), “the professional politician must also be economically ‘dispensable,’ that is, his income must not depend upon the fact that he constantly and personally places his ability and thinking entirely, or at least by far predominantly, in the service of economic acquisition.” Lawyers are more dispensable than other groups like doctors, journalists or workers, largely because their professional practice can be easily taken over by some partner who keeps the business running while in parliament. Furthermore, contrary to the experiences of doctors, engineers, architects or other liberal professionals returning to their professional practice after serving in parliament, the lawyer may benefit from contacts and specialized knowledge acquired during his political career in parliament. Consequently, it is less costly for them to return to their profession after some years of service in parliament or the executive.

No matter how important the group of law-related professionals in the political elite, it is outnumbered by that of educators—21 percent of the regional elite are university professors or teachers at either a high school or primary school.<sup>32</sup> The growing presence of educators in parliaments over time has already been emphasized in other studies. In the case of the regions of Spain, the relative weight of this group has increased like that of lawyers. Data in Table 8 indicate that Andalusia is the region with the highest proportion of educators, followed by Murcia, Asturias and Valencia. To the contrary, Balearic Islands, Madrid, Navarre, and Rioja and Aragon are the regions whose parliaments have the lowest proportions of educators.<sup>33</sup> Those regions where leftist parties have enjoyed large majorities of seats show as well a large proportion of educators. This is consistent with the fact that for the whole period considered, the presence of educators in the socialist party almost doubles (28 percent) that of the PP (16 percent).

Why are there so many educators in the political elite? Uriarte (1997:269), following Norris and Lovenduski (1995), suggests that educators, like lawyers and journalists, are part of the “talking professions” who master the use of words both in speeches and in writing. These skills are relevant for parliamentary duties: debate, argue, convince, negotiate and write laws. However, if Norris and Lovenduski are fully right, how can we explain the relevant absence of journalists in the regional elite?<sup>34</sup> Although the “mastering of words” is an important explanation for the presence of educators, it can be complemented with another factor. In our opinion, the important proportion of educators in the political elite can also be accounted for their dispensability. A large majority of educators in Spain are civil servants and, as such, they have some privileges in terms of tenureship. Unlike other professionals, their jobs are secure. Consequently, they can easily begin a career in politics and come back to the university or the school if their political career fails or is interrupted. The costs they may face when they come back to the uni-

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<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, the available information does not always make a difference between university professor and teachers at high or primary school.

<sup>33</sup>Missing information in Murcia and in the Balearic Islands for some legislatures renders this proportion unreliable.

<sup>34</sup>The relative absence of journalists should not be a surprise. Already Weber found that journalists, whom he (1946:96) considered a “pariah caste, which is always estimated by ‘society’ in terms of its ethically lowest representative,” could not easily enter politics except in the socialist party. “The reason,” explained Weber (1946:97), “lies in the strongly increased ‘indispensability’ of the journalist, above all, and the property less and hence professionally bound journalist, an indispensability which is determined by the tremendously increased intensity and tempo of journalistic operations. The necessity of gaining one’s livelihood by the writing of daily or at least weekly articles is like lead on the feet of the politicians.”

versity or the school are low in comparison with that of, say, workers or architects. Their relatively secure professional future helps professors (and also civil servants) to participate in the political elite, but more often in leftist parties than in conservative ones, as will be seen shortly.

**Table 9. Profession of politicians II. Proportion of educators in each legislature**

	TOTAL 1980-2005		I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Andalusia	36	328	34	91	37	90	46	89	42	83	36	89	40	84	30	90
Aragon	15	233	9	65	15	66	23	66	15	66	17	66	16	61	--	--
Asturias	28	64	40	10	20	10	32	19	24	29	21	24	32	31	--	--
Canary Isl.	23	197	24	59	22	55	34	59	30	59	19	52	24	50	--	--
Cantabria	20	120	9	34	17	36	23	35	24	38	23	35	26	31	--	--
Castilla y Leon	23	279	21	82	21	81	26	82	22	78	25	67	21	70	--	--
C-La Mancha	26	186	21	43	22	46	36	44	38	42	32	44	24	46	--	--
Catalonia	18	441	13	128	10	129	15	126	20	121	22	121	22	113	21	87
C. Valenciana	26	258	23	78	29	78	38	79	30	70	24	75	21	68	--	--
Extrema- dura	23	179	27	44	26	62	27	64	31	62	25	61	18	60	--	--
Galicia	21	227	11	62	9	65	22	68	26	72	35	66	29	66	21	28
Balearic Isl.	12	16	0	7	2	8	33	6	0	4	0	3	0	4	--	--
La Rioja	15	126	11	35	12	33	12	33	9	33	24	33	13	31	--	--
Madrid	14	306	16	87	14	88	18	84	9	86	12	89	12	89	--	--
Murcia	28	89	25	16	36	42	40	25	25	16	35	20	32	40	--	--
Navarra	14	189	15	48	31	49	12	48	13	47	15	46	20	46	--	--
Basque Count.	15	103	9	11	16	25	15	20	10	29	17	40	37	59	14	59
TOTAL	21	3341	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

**Note:** Totals in each autonomous community for the period (N) does not equal the total number of seats because there are MPs who have been elected more than once. Percentages rounded.

### Party differences

Does the party to which the politician belongs make any difference for the social profile of the political elite? According to Putnam (1976:37), "the degree to which an elite diverges from the independence model of statistically perfect representation is closely related to its ideological orientation. The more conservative a party or regime, the greater the overrepresentation of upper-status social groups within its leadership." In the case of the regional political elite, there are relevant differences among parties that may account for a differentiated social profile of politicians. We turn now to this topic.

There have been around thirty parties present in the seventeen regional parliaments. The majority of them are regional parties which are active in just one region and sometimes in as much as one or two legislatures. This complicates the analysis and might make it useless, given the smallness and little relevance of some parties. Thus, we will focus our analysis on the two



national parties with representatives in all regional parliaments during the period 1980-2005: the socialist party (PSOE, center-left) and the popular party (PP, center-right or right). Both are the major contenders in national and most regional elections. The exception is the Basque country and Catalonia, where the major parties are the Basque Nationalist Party and *Convergència i Unió*. The socialist and popular parties are either in the opposition or part of the minority government in these regions. All in all, both national parties gather 70 percent of the 4,354 regional MPs that served between 1980 and 2006.

Considering the period under study and the two major parties, we can find some differences and similarities, as can be seen in Table 10. The socialist party has been traditionally more open to women than the conservative party. The PP incorporated women to the electoral lists much later than the PSOE, whose leaders followed a policy of affirmative action for women reserving quotas in the electoral list. Later, some socialist regional leaders introduced the “zipper list” consisting of alternating men and women in the electoral list. These measures promoted a larger presence of socialist women in regional parliaments. Soon, the conservative party followed and began placing women in the electoral list, but without a formal policy of affirmative action.

**Table 10. Party differences in the regional political elite in Spain, 1980-2005 (in %)**

	PSOE	PP	Total elite
Women	25	21	21
Age	43.1	45.6	44
Immigrants	17	16	16
Workers	18	5	11
Owners	4	12	13
Managers	2	6	
Lawyers	13	25	19
Educators	28	16	21
Average education	3.52	3.66	3.57
University graduates	52	67	85

**Source:** Our own based on official sources.

The average conservative MP is slightly older than the socialist one across all legislatures. The difference is stronger in the earliest legislatures, when a generation of young politicians in the PSOE controlled a large part of regional parliaments. For instance, in the early eighties, the average socialist MP was 38.4 years old, while the average conservative politician was 45.4. However, twenty years later, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the difference is not significant, since both socialist and conservative MPs are 45 years old on average. In the case of the PP, a group of young politicians led first by Antonio Hernández Mancha, and more successfully later by José María Aznar, took power in the party by the early 1990s initiating a generational renovation, accounting for the reduction in the age gap. Conversely, early socialist MPs tended to stay longer in parliaments (Coller 2002), contributing to the aging process of MPs.

Both parties are equally open to immigrants, although the major differences are related to education and professions. On average, conservative regional MPs are slightly more educated than the socialist ones, as can be seen in Table 10. Certainly, there are more conservative than socialist MPs holding a university degree.<sup>35</sup> This might have a consequence on the quality of the legislative work of the regional parliaments, an issue that should deserve more attention by researchers of the quality of democracy.

The only element common to both parties is the liberal professionals (architects, engineers, doctors, economists, etc.), a large group whose presence in the regional political elite seems to be independent of party. The exception seems to be the law related professions: the conservative party doubles the proportion of lawyers of the socialist party. The reason might be that the socialist political elite is more open to other professional groups than the conservative one and thus the traditional professional source nurturing the elite loses weight and begins to be replaced by other professionals. This would be a remarkable fact pointing to a higher diversity on the socialist side, especially taking into account that the proportion of lawyers in the regional political elite in Spain has grown, contrary to the situation in other countries. However, contrary to a higher diversity, the socialist side is professionally dominated by educators. The difference with the conservative field is significant and might be explained by the fact that educators are usually civil servants and consequently it is not costly for them to devote some time to politics in terms of professional career. Usually, leftist parties nurture a good portion of their ranks in parliaments with dispensable professionals employed by the State more often than conservative parties, whose politicians' dispensability usually stems from their professional status as liberal professionals, owners, managers and entrepreneurs. Another explanation is that there might be an elective affinity between education and politics. For some MPs, the function of the politician could be perceived to be that of educating the masses.

A final major difference concerning professional groups is related to the traditional sources of recruitment of politicians for leftist and conservative parties. Data in Table 10 show that the socialist party tends to recruit regional politicians from workers more often than the conservative party. Conversely, the conservative party tends to recruit from owners and managers for a good deal of their politicians and certainly more often than the socialists. According to the odds ratio, it is 10.8 times more likely that the conservative party places an owner or manager in parliament than the socialist party. The odds of a worker entering parliament through the PP are 0.09. Thus, considering the four major professional groups, workers and educators tend to be present in the socialist party more often than in the PP, a party whose sources of recruitment are more associated to the legal system and to owners, managers and entrepreneurs.

### **Social bias: Elite and society**

Notwithstanding differences among territories and parties, the homogeneity of the political elite sharply contrasts with the heterogeneity of Spanish society. Certainly, this is not an elite that mirrors the social features and cleavages of the society. No political elite does, since in parliaments we find people with social features that are scarce in society. This situation is the result of what Robert Putnam (1976:33 and ff.) named the law of increasing disproportion: "the

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<sup>35</sup>In some countries, conservative MPs are more educated than leftist ones, showing a differentiated source of politicians and also a different level of social diversity in the elite (see Norris and Lovenduski 1995:101).

higher the level of political authority, the greater the representation for high-status social groups." These groups share social features that are infrequent in the rest of the population. As a consequence, the composition of parliaments tends to follow what Sartori et al. (1963:317), as quoted in DiPalma and Cotta (1986:51), call the "rule of distance," meaning that people from more underprivileged backgrounds usually have to "travel" a longer social distance if they are going to be selected.

The question that still remains is why some people enter the political elite while others do not, and why those who enter the group tend to have some similar social features.<sup>36</sup> Actually, political elites tend to fit in what Putnam (1976:22), following Lasswell (1965:9), named the agglutination model as opposed to the independence model. In the latter, citizens have similar chances of entering the elite, and therefore it reflects the basic social cleavages that can be found in society. In the former, the elite is composed of people sharing some features that go together and are uncommon in society: high educational level, prestigious professions, wealth and the like. While the outcome of the independence model is a political elite that reproduces the social structure of society, the result of the agglutination model is a parliament whose members usually come from privileged backgrounds. Behind the independence model there is what Norris and Lovenduski (1995:93-5) refer to the "demographic" or "microcosmic" notion of representation according to which a truly representative parliament mirrors the social structure of the population, thus becoming a microcosm of the society which it represents. They (1995:289) give examples of nine countries that reserve seats for different groups in society,<sup>37</sup> thus making their parliaments close to the microcosm model. Advocates of this conception of representation, as Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996:21) indicate, "have used arguments of pure fairness or equality as a complement to the more functional reasoning that good social representativeness leads to more democratic and effective decision-making."<sup>38</sup>

However, study after study has shown that the independence model does not exist and that the reality of parliaments is closer to the agglutination model—citizens who share some social features have more chances to get into the elite than others. There are trends, though, toward making chambers a "microcosm" following a "minority representation" model. Democratization and the evolution of societies have made parliaments more open to groups that, say, fifty or seventy-five years ago were largely absent (i.e., women and workers, see Cotta and Best 2000), although the truth is that parliaments do not tend to be mirrors of society and therefore are socially biased.

Thus, as Blondel (1973:77) suggested, "the only question that arises is how vast is the distortion between the composition of the country and the composition of the legislature." This

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<sup>36</sup>Explanations tend to focus on both the demand and the supply side. Putnam (1976:46) indicates that the process is self-selecting such that only those interested in public matters and with some vocation of public service will devote time to politics if the structure of opportunity favors it. See also Uriarte (2000) for an analysis of the motivation of Spanish politicians. Certainly, one of the answers in democratic politics mediated by parties lies in the role played by different selectorates that choose among a pool of possible candidates to make the electoral lists. The strong tendency towards catch-all parties in modern democratic politics accounts as well for the increasing homogeneity of the elite in terms of social background.

<sup>37</sup>Singapore, Croatia, Ireland, Bhutan, Indonesia, Morocco, Slovenia, Belarus, and Tanzania.

<sup>38</sup>See Mateo Díaz (2005:109-22) for a discussion of these arguments applied to the role of women in parliaments. It remains to be seen whether these arguments would hold for other groups like immigrants, young or old people and professional groups.

means asking to what extent the parliamentary elite is socially biased. In order to find out the level of distortion between the society and the elite, we will compare the regional political elite and the population on five accounts: gender, age, place of origin, studies and profession. For a better understanding and a systematic comparison, we introduce a measure of the disproportion, the “social bias index” or “social disproportion index,” which is an adaptation of what Pipa Norris (1995:96) calls the “index of electoral bias” after Ross’s (1944) works.<sup>39</sup> We believe this index is more informative and straightforward than the simple difference in proportions between the population and the elite, as used by Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996:22) and Linz et al. (2003:91), a measure that notwithstanding also helps to highlight the gap between elite and society.

**Table 11. Evolution of social background of MPs and population**

	First legislature			Last legislature			MPs 1980-05
	MPs	Population	Bias index	MPs	Population	Bias index	
% Women	6	50.9	0.11	34	51	0.66	21
% Internal migrants	17	11	1.54	13	17.2	0.59	16
Average age	42.0	44.5	0.94	45.6	46.6	0.98	43.3
Average education	3.61	--	--	3.63	--	--	3.57
% university trained	83	4.8	17.29	88	15	5.86	85
% Lawyers	19	0.3	63.3	22	0.83	26.5	19
% Workers	12	76	0.15	11	68.2	0.16	11
% Owners & managers	16	5.6	2.85	10	5.7	1.7	13
% Educators	19	3.5	5.42	23	4.7	4.89	21

**Note:** For computation purposes, the last legislature refers to the sixth legislature in all regions.

**Sources.** Data for MPs are our own. Data for the population come from the 1981 and 2001 census. For the professions, the base is the active population having a job (over 10.7 million people in 1981 and over 16 million people in 2001). For the age, the base is the population 18+ years old. “Workers” category is the result of the aggregation of different census categories that are not liberal professions, managers, owners, rentiers, educators, and the like.

Data presented in Table 11 show the evolution of the proportion of women from the first legislature (around 1980-83) to the last one (at the turn of the century). Women have multiplied their presence in the regional political elite by a factor of almost 6, being proportionally more than in the Congress of Deputies, where the presence of women does not reach a third of the total members. Although the index of bias has gone from 0.11 to 0.66, there is still a long way to reach equal representation, which seems to be the trademark of what Best and Cotta (2000) call

<sup>39</sup>This index is the ratio between the proportion of a particular group in the elite (say, women, internal migrants, university trained people) and the same group in the electorate. Rather than choosing the electorate, we have relied on the data for the population as counted in the Spanish census, except for the variable “age” where we counted people over eighteen. If there is a similar proportion in the elite and the population, the index will be close to 1. If the index is over 1, the group in question is overrepresented in the elite while if the index is below 1, the group is underrepresented. The further the index departs from 1, the more under or overrepresented the group analyzed.

“minority representation.” In any case, the growing presence of women during the period has reduced the gap between the elite and the population very much in line with what has happened in other parliaments at the national and European level. As was seen earlier, there are strong differences among parties, and also among territories.

Comparing the population with the elite, one realizes that while the proportion of internal migrants has doubled in Spain, its presence in the political elite has been reduced in twenty-five years, as can be seen in Table 11. A higher mobility and the incorporation of foreigners account for a larger proportion of the population living in a region where they were not born. However, the political elite of the regions has closed the door to those internal migrants, although some more than others. The changes in the bias index support this claim. By the 1980s, internal migrants were overrepresented (1.54), while by the turn of the century the index was 0.59. Certainly, this bias index is lower than the one of women, which suggests that, if a “minority representation” approach is to be adopted, the number of non-natives should be increased in regional parliaments. Although there are important territorial and party differences, generally speaking, regional politics is increasingly becoming a matter of native politicians.

Surprisingly, and contrary to other findings, the regional political elite tends to be very similar in terms of age to the average citizen over eighteen. As can be seen in Table 11, the bias index is almost 1 and over the years it has been slightly reduced. In large part this is due to the fact that the aging process of the population is paralleled by a growing average age among regional politicians. However, as it was indicated earlier, regional politicians seem to be quite young when compared to senators, congresspersons, and ministers. This might mean that regional politics is an arena for young politicians to gain some experience before entering central institutions of representation.

Although the educational level of the regional elite has remained more or less the same, with some territorial and party differences, the index bias shown in Table 11 indicates that the disproportion among university educated politicians and the population has been dramatically reduced by a third. However the proportion of educated politicians has grown over the twenty-five years of the period considered. The explanation lies in the growth of university-educated citizens Spain has experienced since the early eighties. As an indicator of the modernization of the country, the proportion of people with higher educational credentials tripled, leaving the bias index into a 5.86. Despite these changes people with university degrees still are overrepresented overall in the elite.

A similar situation can be found among law-related professionals. The bias index diminishes almost by half in the period considered. This reduction is accounted for by the growth of lawyers in society, which multiplies by a factor of three between the early 1981 and 2001. Still, law related professionals are the group that is proportionally more overrepresented in the regional political elite. They have, also, incremented their relative presence among politicians, contrary to the trends observed in other countries (Best and Cotta 2000).

Educators are the professional group that grows more among the ones considered here in the political elite. They are also consistently overrepresented in the elite, although in a lower proportion than lawyers. The bias index barely changes, indicating that the overrepresentation of educators is stable over the years, contrary to what happened to the law-related profession-

als. Largely, this is a reflection of changes in society, where the proportion of educators grew slightly in twenty-five years.

A different picture emerges when we consider two opposed professional groups – workers on the one hand, and owners and managers on the other. We can see in Table 11 that the proportion of workers remains stable in the political elite over the period considered while the proportion of workers in the social structure of Spain diminishes in the same period. This evolution renders a similar bias index (0.15) in the two moments considered. Still, workers are, as a professional group, the most underrepresented in the political elite. The contrary seems to happen to owners and managers. Their presence in the elite diminishes during the period considered, although their relative weight in the structure of occupations in society remains stable. The consequence is a diminishing overrepresentation but, yet, this group is still overrepresented in the political elite. According to these data presented in Table 11, it seems that being a businessperson is a better avenue to participate in politics than being a worker. Dispensability is a key explanatory factor, although the opportunity of using one's political position to make (or help to make) business while in office is also an element that should be further researched.

### **Conclusions and research agenda**

This research provides a longitudinal assessment of the background of the regional political elites while shedding light into the pattern of elite recruitment and embeddedness with society. The overall research findings are uncontroversial: Being a man born in the region, well educated and working as educator or in the legal system is one of the most frequent avenues to become part of the regional political elite in Spain. Despite these general trends, over the years, women have seen a rise in their chances of entering the regional political elite, while it has gotten harder for internal migrants. Therefore, parliaments seem to progressively open to women but close their doors to non-natives. While workers seem to have the same barriers over the years to play politics in regional parliaments, managers and owners find it is relatively easier to enter institutional politics. Overall, and contrary to what happens in other parliaments (Wessels 1997:85), regional chambers in Spain have reduced the gap between the elite and society in the period 1980-2005 in some respects. As Table 11 shows, the disproportion index diminishes in most groups considered, although the bias still exists, as is expected in every political elite. The narrowing of the gap between elite and society shows also an opening of the elite to a variety of social groups. However, as Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2006) indicate for the U.S. case, despite a somewhat higher diversity, in the political regional elite being a male, native, educated and lawyer or educator are important factors to make it into parliaments.

Diversity does not obscure that there are relevant differences according to party and region. Castile-La Mancha and Catalonia are two quite unexpected cases in which both factors explain the peculiarities of their political elites. Castile-La Mancha seems more open to women and internal migrants than Catalonia, a region that has clearly become a counter case in several respects. If we take into account that in Castile-La Mancha the socialist party has always had the absolute majority and in Catalonia a regional conservative coalition has enjoyed a similar number of absolute majorities, then we may suggest that the different contribution of parties to the social profile of the elite makes an important difference. We think we have proved this showing the relevance of the ideological and nationalist divide in some communities.

In professional terms, regional parliaments have seen a mild growth of law-related professionals, contrary to what has happened in other parliaments. After the first legislature when the building of the regional institutions of government took place, the relative presence of lawyers diminished, showing an opening to other professional groups. Presumably, lawyers will keep playing an important role in the future, although it is also foreseeable that other groups (like educators) will consolidate their presence and still others, like civil servants, will grow. This growing recruitment of professionals in more diversified areas points towards the professionalization of the political elites, which is a process that reflects the engagement of politicians on area-specific issues and activities (Best and Edinger, 2005:501).

Contrary to the heterogeneity of the population, social similarities in the political elite are the outcome of the recruitment of politicians privileging some social features and discriminating against others. Thus, women, internal migrants, lesser educated, very young and very old people seem to be more absent from the elite than other social groups, which makes the elite's social profile a highly similar one. This homogeneity, however, should not hide the different role played by the two major parties in Spain. As we have demonstrated, both the socialists and the conservatives (but also some nationalist parties) contribute differently to the diversity of the elite.

The question of the relationship between elite recruitment and the outcome of the democratic decision making process should not be overlooked. This "output" question —is there a relationship between the social background of politicians and political outputs?—should be pursued. A few years ago, Blondel (1973:76) indicated that "we know that, *in some way*, the backgrounds, career aspirations, and ideologies, as well as the personality characteristics of legislators will affect the nature of the process by which legislatures come to influence decision making."<sup>40</sup> However, Putnam (1976:42), after reviewing a number of studies, qualified the statement, indicating that "the link between background and behavior is neither simple nor direct," a point that was also emphasized by Patzelt (2002:85ff). Furthermore, according to Matthews (1985:25), the evidence presented in a number of studies is ambiguous and inconclusive.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, we cannot make the claim that the social background of politicians will have an effect on legislation or the effectiveness of a political institution.

However, Norris and Lovenduski (1995) found some evidence supporting the relationship between gender and legislative behavior, suggesting that women may promote a number of distinctive issues being discussed in parliament.<sup>42</sup> Also, Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2006:7), analyzing the power elite in the United States (including politicians) contend that "class backgrounds, current roles, and future aspirations are more powerful in shaping behavior in the power elite than gender, ethnicity, race or sexual orientation." We think that, quite reasonably,

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<sup>40</sup>Emphasis in the original.

<sup>41</sup>See, for instance, Edinger and Searing (1967) as a case of ambiguous results. The authors conclude that some social background variables perform better than others, and under certain circumstances, to predict elite attitudes and behavior. This point is reinforced by Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996:34) when they indicate that "socioeconomic factors in most cases correlate very weakly (or not at all) with Swedish MPs' views on policy questions."

<sup>42</sup>See Norris (1999) for a list of references. It might well be the case that in modern politics, with closed electoral lists controlled by the party, party officials might think that laws related to social issues could be better defended by women MPs, rendering the relationship between gender and legislative behavior spurious.

Best and Cotta (2000:18) qualify these conclusions indicating that the social background of politicians may make a difference in political outputs “if members of different parliamentary parties are recruited from mutually exclusive social settings and devoted to divergent political norms if it comes to parliamentary compromising and the formation of coalitions.”

Consequently, it would be worthwhile to investigate whether there are differences between regional parliaments in lawmaking and, furthermore, whether some regional parliaments pass bills with more or less consensus or conflict. Adopting consensus as the dependent variable, then we could investigate whether the social profile of the elite, or even that of the core elite that makes decisions in parliaments, has any effect in legislative output. The core elite in parliaments (those who really make decisions) is an unknown group of people. They occupy crucial positions like the presidency of the regional assembly, the leadership of the parliamentary group, the presidency of working committees whose function is to make law proposals. Despite their relevance, we know almost nothing of who they are. Perhaps some research should be focused on this group.

For a federalized polity such as Spain it is of great importance to unravel the modes of interaction between the national, regional and local political elites. The network of interactions between political elites reveals the intricacies of central-regional power relations. Dupoirier (1995:28-30) reminds us that the French regional political elites, upon their rather recent creation, became the bearers of regional autonomy. The background analysis of the regional political elites represents an important milestone towards understanding territorial and intergovernmental relations. For example, the regional differences regarding social profile and level of circulation could indicate the type of political opportunity structures created with the institutionalization of the regional parliaments in Spain. As Genieys (2003:261) demonstrates, the Spanish regions and their respective elites have different rapport strategies vis-à-vis central institutions. The political career paths and the nature of political ambitions shaped by the regional parliaments throughout these years might account for such elite attitudinal differences. Schlesinger's (1966) seminal research on the political elite's ambitions in the nineteenth-century United States acknowledges that North-American politicians perceive that they have more relative power in the municipal political institutions to pursue their ambitions. With the purpose of linking politician's career goals and federalism, Samuels (2003) shows that ambitious politicians in Brazil, given the political institutional structures, prefer subnational state and municipal level political posts, such as governors and mayors, than national posts. He (2003:15) contends that “the possibility that the subnational positions could hold significant attractions to career-minded politicians, including those who have already reached the national legislature” is overlooked. In short, regional and local political institutions might be more attractive than central institutions and this can influence center-local relationship. In this regard, there are some questions to raise concerning the Spanish case: are the regional parliaments the home of the most ambitious politicians? Do different regional parliaments increase/decrease the relative power of their political elites vis-à-vis the center? And to what extent did the federalization of Spain favor making the regional parliament the top of the political career ladder?

The research agenda could follow these additional suggestions. More attention should be also paid to the differences according to party, especially in an era in which the catch-all party model seems to consolidate. Catch-all parties may require an opening of the electoral list to different social groups in order to make the list more attractive to the electorate, increasing then the chances of getting more votes. If this is true, electoral lists of different parties might show a



similar composition in terms of the social background of its members. Further research needs to check this expectation. It is also important to look at the structural transformation of the nationwide parties. As Biezen (2003:93) points out, Spanish left parties granted a considerable degree of autonomy to their regional organizations. The extent to which this trend affects political recruitment has yet to be tested. This paper has demonstrated that there are significant differences among parties in terms of their contribution to social diversity and further research needs to check and consolidate these findings.

We know that regional politicians might be more responsive to the citizens' needs since they usually are closer than national representatives. However, it remains to be seen whether regional politicians are more or less responsible and defend the general interest of the country, the region, their constituency, their voters, their parties or their own. Attention should be also paid to the conflict between the interests of two or more region and the behavior of regional politicians (and their parties) in these conflicts.

Finally, we know almost nothing about selectorates, those bodies which select candidates for the electoral list. Ultimately, they are responsible for the proportion of women, internal migrants, educators, young people, and the like, in parliaments. Who takes part in those selectorates? What social features do they have? What criteria do they use to select candidates? What is the process of selection in each party? These are questions that need to be answered to better understand the functioning and the quality of democracies.

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