



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Gender, Institutions, and Change in Bachelet's Chile by Georgina Waylen

Review by: Jane S. Jaquette

Source: *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Winter 2017), pp. 149-152

Published by: Distributed by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Miami

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44684376>

Accessed: 12-04-2023 00:07 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Miami, Cambridge University Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to Latin American Politics and Society

JSTOR

In fact, as Bruno reminds us, prison is the perfect place for criminals to manage the affairs of the drug trade because they do not have to fear being killed in shootouts with police or rivals and they have acquired sufficient control over these institutions and their personnel to make their situations bearable.

Without significant prison reform and an end to high rates of incarceration (Brazil's prison population has multiplied more than 5 times in the last 25 years), it is unlikely that Brazilian authorities can control the violence that threatens to destabilize much of the country, much less rehabilitate the lives of hundreds of thousands of men who, as Gay argues in the conclusion, have chosen illegal and violent means to gain the respect and recognition they desperately desire.

The importance of Gay's book rests not only on how Bruno's story is representative of the Brazilian criminal justice system but on how it is exceptional. Bruno's capacity not only to understand his own plight but to reflect on the social, historical, and political dynamics of the environments in which he has been placed is astonishing. His account, as Gay has correctly perceived, needs little analysis or exposition on the author's part to make it useful and enlightening for Brazilian scholars.

The choice to provide readers direct access to Bruno's words, mostly unfiltered, is an interesting and welcome addition to the scholarship on the drug trade and is a testament to Gay's devotion to the ethnographic endeavor. His numerous research trips to Brazil over the course of several decades and the intimate and long-term relationships he has developed with his subjects are exemplary. Moreover, allowing Bruno, and Lucia before him, to tell their own stories is an important reminder for social scientists that part of our task is to amplify the voices of our research subjects so that their experiences and perspectives can reach a large and broad audience.

That said, I finished the book wanting to hear more directly from Gay. Although he closes each chapter with a short (one-to-two-page) summary of the places and dynamics mentioned in Bruno's testimony, I wanted more analysis from Gay to help parse the insights that his conversations with Bruno have provided. In this regard, I look forward to Gay's articles, scholarly and otherwise, that I hope will accompany this book project.

Nicholas Barnes
Watson Institute for Public Affairs
Brown University

Georgina Waylen, ed., *Gender, Institutions, and Change in Bachelet's Chile*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Figure, tables, bibliographies, index, 259 pp.; hardcover \$105, ebook \$79.99.

Michelle Bachelet's presidency in Chile offers an extraordinarily rich case for gender analysis. This book is an illustrative account of the strategies and pitfalls that marked a presidency unusual in its commitment to gender reform but limited in its ability to produce change. It also provides a revealing window into contemporary Chilean politics.

Bachelet was elected in 2006 with 53 percent of the vote in the second round. Her platform promised to make gender equity a priority. She began by naming an

initial cabinet with as many women as men and undertook various reforms to advance gender equity. Bachelet left office in 2010 with an 80 percent approval rating, and was elected to a second four-year term in 2013.

Georgina Waylen's introduction reviews recent trends in women's political participation in Latin America, noting that gender quotas have substantially increased the number of women in national legislatures but that efforts to implement the goals articulated by women's and feminist groups have fallen short. To assess why the election of women to public office and the establishment of women's policy agencies in the executive branch (including SERNAM in Chile) have not met expectations, Waylen turns to feminist institutional (FI) analysis, which highlights how informal practices can undermine the implementation of progressive legislation.

Peter Siavelis provides a detailed but concise discussion of the political context in Chile following the transition from Augusto Pinochet's autocratic regime to democratic governance in 1989–90. Although many "authoritarian enclaves" created then have become attenuated over the years, Chile's unusual "binomial" electoral system, which strongly reinforced the formation of two centrist coalitions on the left and right, remained in effect until 2015. Chile's "neoliberal" economic reforms, introduced by Pinochet but largely continued by subsequent governments, produced economic growth and reduced poverty, yet Chile remains one of the most unequal countries in Latin America.

Siavelis argues that Chile's formal and informal rules have "consistently privileged stability and governability" over "representation, accountability and legitimacy" (40). Elites in the five parties of the center-left *Concertación* that governed Chile from 1990 until 2010 became increasingly isolated from their bases. Bachelet's gender contributed to her success. A divorced, single mother and an agnostic, she was expected to bring new ideas and "new faces" to politics; her personal history as the daughter of an air force general who opposed Pinochet and died in prison made her "a living example of the elusive reconciliation" many Chileans sought (42).

Siavelis and Waylen both maintain that Bachelet's first government lost an opportunity to reform the neoliberal system, and that this had political consequences. Although 87 percent of Chileans identified with political parties in 1992, by 2008 only 43 percent did, and by 2014 only 29 percent (46). In 2013, Bachelet campaigned on an agenda of constitutional and electoral reform, promising to overhaul the tax, labor, and pension systems, as well as the educational system, which perpetuates Chile's hierarchical social structure and has been the object of social protests for nearly a decade. In 2013 she was elected with 63 percent of the second-round vote.

At the core of this volume are five chapters focused on Bachelet's gender policies. Susan Franceschet argues that the unprecedented gender-parity cabinet Bachelet appointed in 2006 was not a total break with the past. Bachelet adhered to the informal rules governing cabinet formation, including the *cuoteo*, by which cabinet positions are distributed among coalition parties and in close consultation with *Concertación* leaders. She did, however, change the criteria for selection, going beyond the well-known names to favor youth, gender, and expertise over political skills. Bachelet's success here (and in other initiatives) also depended on an informal

rule: deference to the president. In 2014, her cabinet (now negotiated among the seven parties of the *Nueva Mayoría* or New Majority coalition, was 39 percent women; the leadership of SERNAM went to a member of the Communist Party.

Gwynn Thomas's chapter on gender equality in the executive emphasizes that Bachelet kept many of her campaign promises during the first term. Legislation in Chile originates with the executive, and Bachelet's "feminist leadership" style and her powers of appointment made a significant difference. Using SERNAM's research and its mandate to coordinate gender policies across ministries, Bachelet's government passed several gender-related reforms, and her powers of appointment extended the principle of parity to "undersecretaries," as well as regional governors and other important state officials (106). The attempt by her successor, Sebastián Piñera (2010–14), to reduce SERNAM's role met with popular protests and was abandoned, and Bachelet gave SERNAM full ministerial status in her second term, an attempt at institutionalization that a future president could reverse.

Silke Staab emphasizes that "neoliberal policies" had negative effects on workers, including precarious employment, low levels of unionization, and the privatization of social security. Although Bachelet was able to add some government-funded programs to address poverty and gender imbalances in social security and childcare, the privatized pension system favored workers with formal sector, long-term, and well-reimbursed jobs (126). Privatization created vested interests that resisted reforms to establish a universal, rights-based social-protection system.

In Jasmine Gideon and Gabriela Álvarez Minte's view, the health system in Chile is "framed around reproduction"; women are eligible for health services "as dependents of men—or as indigents" (151). Seventy-two percent of the population is covered by government programs under FONASA and 17 percent by private insurers (organized as ISAPRES). A health reform under President Ricardo Lagos (2000–2005) created universal access for many services but did not include maternity care. Bachelet's efforts to reduce gender bias and increase women's access often brought her administration into conflict with ISAPRES. Her most important initiative, a law making access to emergency contraception available (even to minors) through the public health system, ran into strong conservative opposition from the Catholic Church and the right-of-center Alianza. In her chapter, Carmen Sepúlveda-Zelaya shows how Bachelet's government used tactics that relied heavily on presidential prerogatives to defend the law, which survived various legal and political challenges.

Waylen's concluding chapter and a postscript by María de los Ángeles Fernández Ramil point out that although Bachelet came into her second term (2014–18) with strong electoral support (based in part on the failures of her Alianza predecessor, Piñera) and an impressive agenda of proposed reforms, her political capital largely dissipated in the wake of a sharp decline in Chile's economy in 2014 and a corruption scandal involving her son. The scandal was deeply felt in a country that has historically received Transparency International's highest ranking in Latin America for lack of corruption.

Bachelet has made some progress on her agenda, but in many cases at the expense of softening her administration's original demands. The binomial electoral system has

been reformed, although it is too early to gauge its effects, and there is a (weak) gender quota for the national legislature, although its implementation is contested. A compromise tax reform has passed, and bills to approve civil unions and therapeutic abortions have been sent to Congress. But as Fernández Ramil notes, there is widespread uncertainty, and many initiatives have stalled. Bachelet's compromises satisfied neither the next generation on the left nor the current generation on the right. The debate over reforming the constitution reveals that Chile remains very polarized.

This collection's use of the feminist institutional lens gives it coherence and depth, and the authors have drawn on a rich literature on posttransition Chile and have interviewed many of the key players. The book's focus on gender policies leaves out educational reform, however, although it was a major challenge to Bachelet in both her first and second terms and may be more critical than constitutional reform in shaping the country's future. The chapters on health and reproductive rights cover much of the same ground. It might have been useful to wait another year or two to evaluate Bachelet's second term.

This study suggests how valuable it would be to compare Bachelet with the two other South American female presidents, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, whose terms overlapped hers. For example, did the fact that Bachelet is a woman make the corruption scandal more damaging to her than it would have been to a man? Or is gender much less important than political context? Public disenchantment with Bachelet has revealed the lack of grassroots popular support for the Nueva Mayoría, and can be contrasted with the capacity of *Peronistas* to bring people into the streets to rally for Cristina and the popular protests against Dilma's impeachment, even when her personal popularity had plummeted. These three presidents also have very different political styles, illustrating a range of options for female leaders. Furthermore, the feminist institutional framework, which argues that both formal and informal institutions are gendered, could also be used to analyze the advantages and constraints that shape the prospects for all women presidents, not only those who pursue policies related to gender.

Jane S. Jaquette
Occidental College

Dickie Davis, David Kilcullen, Greg Mills, and David Spencer, *A Great Perhaps? Colombia: Conflict and Convergence*. London: Hurst, 2015. Maps, figures, tables, notes, bibliography, index, 288 pp.; hardcover \$39.40.

After more than four years of peace talks in Havana, the government of President Juan Manuel Santos and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) signed a peace agreement on November 24, 2016, ending the longest internal conflict in Latin America. The members of the FARC-EP, which was founded in 1964, committed themselves to hand over their weapons and to initiate a demobilization and reintegration process into civic life. The government, for its part, agreed to begin a series of reforms in electoral procedures, justice, land redistribution, and