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Moving Beyond Divisive Discourse: Latin American Women in Politics

Abstract

On June 25, 1993 the United Nations General Assembly held the World Conference on Human Rights, which adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action that states, "The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community." On September 18, 2008 The New York Times quoted Senator Cecilia López Montaña of Colombia, when speaking of women in positions of political power, "You have to be three times more intelligent, you have to be four times more transparent, you have to have everything more than men. We still have a male chauvinist society. It will continue this way until the „democratic deficit“ is closed," meaning equal representation for men and women (MacFarquhar 2008).

Keywords

Human rights, Latin America, Women's rights, Political participation, Civil rights

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Moving Beyond Divisive Discourse: Latin American Women in Politics

By Ursula Miniszewski

On June 25, 1993 the United Nations General Assembly held the World Conference on Human Rights, which adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action that states, “The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.” On September 18, 2008 *The New York Times* quoted Senator Cecilia López Montaña of Colombia, when speaking of women in positions of political power, “You have to be three times more intelligent, you have to be four times more transparent, you have to have everything more than men. We still have a male chauvinist society. It will continue this way until the ‘democratic deficit’ is closed,” meaning equal representation for men and women (MacFarquhar 2008).

Since the 1970s, women in Central and Latin America have made great strides in attaining political representation and advancing human rights platforms (within which women’s rights are included) and legislation. Despite this progress, Latin American women continue to face challenges in gaining gender parity within the political sphere. Ideological barriers and cultural assumptions about women and their traditional roles continue to be pervasive throughout Central and Latin America. These assumptions are exacerbated by a lingering and divisive feminine versus feminist discourse started in the women’s movements during the 1970s that continues to thwart women’s advances in gender parity within politics.

During the women’s movement in Latin America in the 1970s, self-labeling by movement activists resulted in the division of women’s movements into feminist movements (challenging women’s gender oppression) and grassroots or more “feminine” women’s movements (focus on helping women fulfill their traditional gender roles) (Stephen 1995). Some women in politics were viewed as pursuing a more “feminist” strategy, or the advancement of women’s rights and their position within the political sphere, and assuming more masculine characteristics to achieve parity with men. Alternately, there were the more “feminine” motivations for pursuing political positions, such as advancing human rights for children or improving healthcare. Both groups had a common goal of achieving more, if not equal, female representation within government. Yet this division between feminine and feminist damaged the strength of the women’s movement because opposing ideology and rhetoric began to trump achieving the goal that initially unified them. The dichotomy that originated within the women’s movements still exists today and is a significant yet subtle obstacle women face in pursuing a political career. I argue though, that this ongoing separation and categorization of motivations and platforms is actually exacerbating the deeper issue of a state not ready to see women as equally capable of exercising political power as men. In the following article I highlight three main areas in which women face significant challenges in achieving political representation due to the ongoing cultural assertion that women do not belong in the political sphere. The three areas include education, roles in political parties and participation, and the efficacy of quotas. The divisive discourse regarding feminine versus feminist only intensifies this deeper problem.

Education

In many rural Central and Latin American regions, girls' access to education remains limited for several reasons. One reason is lack of time. If girls are brought up in an agricultural environment, they may not have time to attend school because of the kinds of chores and responsibilities assigned to them. In addition to lack of time, rural economics play a large role in girls' access to education. Oftentimes it is not a priority for rural families to send their daughters to school if they are needed in the home for domestic work that contributes to a household economy—such as producing a product to sell. A third obstacle is in regions of civil instability, such as in rural Colombia, where the FARC and the government are still at war. In these areas, teachers will sometimes not show up at school for months at a time depending on the level of danger to their person that is involved in traveling to rural schools to teach. Conflict in rural regions also poses a dilemma for girls who do not have access to safe transportation to and from school.

Girls from indigenous and afro-descent populations face the most significant obstacles to education, necessary in the pursuit of attaining any position of political power. Over half of the indigenous girls in Bolivia and Guatemala have dropped out of school by age fourteen. Indigenous women are most likely to work in low-paid, informal jobs in Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru, compared to non-indigenous women; the same holds for afrodescendent compared to white women in Brazil (Buvinic and Roza 2004:13).

At a recent Harvard-sponsored conference on education in Central America, the absence of a space to discuss gender issues was noteworthy, as were the informal comments of various conference members. A participant from Costa Rica confided that feminists made her uncomfortable with their insistence on putting gender into every conversation (Parker 1999). Exacerbating the problem of sexism that still exists within education is the assumption that addressing it in a gendered way is “feminist,” and in this case, a negative approach. Because of strongly held beliefs about women and their position within the Latin American social structure, emphasis on access to education for girls continues to not be a priority.

Political Parties

Women began attaining the position of head of executive and legislative branches in Latin America as early as 1974 with Isabel Peron. The head of state is not, however, an accurate position with which to measure women's political power. With the help of quotas, women in Central and Latin America hold approximately 17 percent of political positions in the lower houses of Congress (Htun 2005). The percentage decreases 14 percent when looking at the number of women in ministerial positions, or more “leadership” positions. The most salient reason for this phenomenon can be traced to the way in which political parties are structured.

One of the most significant obstacles to women in Latin America attaining positions of political leadership is within political parties. In order to be elected into a prominent political position, women have to first gain status within the political parties and therein hold leadership positions. However, women have not had equal access to those roles within the parties as men, (even though they make up over half of most political parties). Instead, they have typically been accepted as members of the “women's bureaus” of political parties that mobilizes voters and supports male candidates by hosting meetings and fundraisers (Htun 2005). Because they are operating in these

“bureaus,” women do not have the same opportunities to advance their own platforms as men and instead end up advancing the campaigns of the men who are in more powerful positions within the party. Evidence of this phenomenon can be seen in the results of the Gallup Poll completed in 2000 that found that only about half of those polled had ever had an opportunity to vote for a woman, that is, have ever seen any woman’s name on a ballot (Gallup 2000), despite active participation in political parties.

Once women do reach positions of significant political status within their party, they often face criticism from within the party and from their constituents as well. Women’s political motivations are still categorized as either more “feminine” or “feminist,” which leaves women in a type of catch-22 in terms of parity within the political sphere. If women choose to promote a more gendered platform, they are exacerbating the assumptions and stereotypes that limited their access to the political sphere in the first place. Conversely, if women abandon a more gendered platform to prove they have an individual presence as a politician who can choose the basis of her platform, she risks alienating women and the issues for which she may have originally fought. No matter how you look at the debate, women stand to lose something and cannot exist, as men do, as simply a woman in politics.

Quotas

Since 1991, eleven Latin American countries have adopted quota laws establishing minimum levels for women’s participation. According to the 2008 Report on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the proportion of women in the lower house (or single chamber) of parliaments in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean has increased from 11.9 percent in 1990 to 22.2 percent. This is an improvement primarily due to quota laws stipulating minimum ratios of women to men as candidates in national elections and results (Valente 2008). Unfortunately, quota laws do not address the deeper cultural assumptions that women are not equal participants in the political sphere.

Political parties have worked hard to get by allowing the bare minimum of female representatives required by law, but no more. In fact, in some cases where quota laws are not enforced, the requirements are simply not met. Alternatively, as in Bolivia, men sometimes use women’s names in order to fill the required quota on paper. The men who win through this method proceed to fill the position and go unpunished for falsifying their name just to prevent a woman from filling a political position required by a quota law. In addition, there is a debate among women in politics about the inherent usefulness of quotas. Some argue that although they may work in the short term to help women penetrate historic barriers, quotas have the potential of being detrimental in the long term if they reinforce cultural assumptions that women do not really belong in the political sphere if they need quotas to help them achieve positions.

Because the deeper issue of historic and institutionalized sexism in Latin America will take years and willingness from all sectors of the current social structure to overcome, ending the divisive discourse that worsen the issue can be a place to start the process of equal access to political representation. In exploring the lack of representation of the female experience within western ethics, feminist philosophers Rosemarie Tong and Nancy Williams conclude that it is probably a mistake for feminist ethicists to leave the policy table without suggesting policies that are able to

serve the *most important* interests of the *widest* range of women (Tong and Williams 2008: 23). In order to achieve the goal of serving the most important interests of the widest range of women by eliminating the polarizing feminist vs. feminine debate, and without weakening the cause by an overemphasis on universalism, Latin American women and men must come to a consensus about their cause and present a united front. It is the strength of this unified front that will pose a legitimate threat to any ideological or historical resistance and may begin to shift a stubborn and harmful paradigm of inequality.

Annotations

Abbassi, Jennifer, and Sheryl L. Lutjens (eds.). 2002. Rereading Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: the Political Economy of Gender. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Annotation: This collection of texts/essays covers a broad range of topics and is divided into three parts: Women, Work, and Development; Politics, Policies, and the State; Culture, History, and Feminisms. The essays in each part usually include case studies from a particular state, and comprise a unique collection of relatively current themes. Each essay is written by a different author and provides a helpful historical context for the particular issue. The collection of essays provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand, but fail to address more forward-looking themes, such as how women's participation in different movements or spheres might shape the future of Latin America.

Asher, Kiran. 2004. "Texts in Context: Afro-Colombian Women's Activism in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia." *Feminist Review* 78: 38-55.

Annotation: Trained as a wildlife biologist, but attempting to produce a "more enabling reading of postcolonial feminist theory," the author begins this article by examining the implications of feminist thought on women in development, and on developing nations, during the 1980s. The author then exemplifies these implications through a case study with the Afro-Colombian women in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia. These women have always been politically "active" and involved, but only recently have their actions been recognized and politicized due to the burgeoning movement for the inclusion women in the public and political spheres. Although Asher presents an interesting case study, the original emphasis on postcolonial feminist theory is not maintained fully throughout the work.

Baldez, Lisa. 2003. "Women's Movements and Democratic Transition in Chile, Brazil, East Germany, and Poland." *Comparative Politics* 25 (3): 253-272.

Annotation: By comparing Chile, Brazil, East Germany, and Poland, Baldez offers a perspective on the nexus between women's movements and democratization. The author argues that women have tended to disregard individual differences within a movement in favor of unity based on their gender identity. Though general in theory, Baldez delves deeper into the argument by detailing each case study, which is helpful in defending the original thesis. The article is effective at providing a larger world-view of women and

democratization without diminishing the experience in the individual country. Unfortunately, the argument is proven right only temporarily, as Baldez finds. An honest analysis reveals that while gender can unify initially, most women's movements separate into disparate groups based on conflicting interests.

Bunch, Charlotte, and Samantha Frost. 2000. "Women's Human Rights," in Cheri Kramarae and Dale Spender (eds.), Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge. New York City: Routledge.
<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/whr.html>.

Annotation: This is an introduction to the concept of women's rights as human rights. Historically, the authors argue, women's rights were not included in the generally accepted definition of human rights. This was because it was not until recently that it was recognized that women had specific needs and that a universal interpretation of human rights that barely mentioned women did not suffice. The overview is helpful and provides the historical context for the issue as well as a clearly cited progression that explains how women's rights are viewed today within the human rights discourse.

Buvinic, Mayra, and Vivian Roza. 2004. "Women, Politics and Democratic Prospects in Latin America." Sustainable Development Department Technical Papers Series. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank.

Annotation: This is an informative overview of the current status of women in political leadership roles in Latin America, and of the factors that drove them to attain positions of political influence. Latin America is described in a much more favorable light than in many of the research articles and books in this particular field. The authors begin by recalling women's gains thus far, highlighting the generally non-gender biased education girls have access to in Latin America. Simple yet significant data are provided, which the authors use to analyze the kind of impact women have made in the political sphere. This is a unique perspective, as it examines the types of issues women in politics have chosen to promote such as childcare, health, and other more traditionally based women's issues. The authors then discuss the theories associated with women in politics, including women against other women, and whether women truly do bring something unique to democracy. The text concludes with an important examination of the potential challenges women face as they continue to build influence within the political sphere.

Chong, Natividad Gutiérrez (ed.). 2007. Women, Ethnicity and Nationalisms in Latin America. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Limited.

Annotation: This is a compilation of essays by Latin American scholars who explore the relationship between gender and nationalism in Latin America. The essays include topics that range from women and nation building to women's influence and impact on cultural identity. The essays tend to focus more on how culture affects nationalism rather than emphasizing the political perspective. The book offers an interesting cross-section of women

in Latin America, but with such specific case studies, it is difficult to gain a broader understanding of the issues listed in the title.

Christensen, Martin K.I. "Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership."
<http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/index.html>.

Annotation: This is an informative website created by a Danish academic who has a specific interest in women's roles throughout history. Included on the website are lists of women from around the world who hold powerful leadership positions within their country's governing body. The site is updated regularly and provides helpful information at a brief glance.

Craske, Nikki. 1999. Women and Politics in Latin America. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Annotation: In this incredibly comprehensive overview, Craske includes an in depth analysis of topics related to women's citizenship and influence in Latin America. The book begins with an essential introduction to the issues of women struggling for citizenship, leads us through women in the workplace, social movements, and feminism, and concludes with an eye to the future. It is an essential guide for anyone interested in the topic of women and how their contributions to society may be of great significance to the political sphere, but how such women have been historically "systematically excluded." Her argument is that it is women's traditional "maternal" concerns that have motivated their entrance into the more political/public sphere. She presents clear and convincing evidence thereof.

Craske, Nikki, and Maxine Molyneux (eds.). 2002. Gender and the Politics of Rights and Democracy in Latin America. New York: Palgrave.

Annotation: This book is a collection of texts written by Latin American experts who explore the impact of women's movements in the democratization of Latin America. The essays touch on issues surrounding women's growing political identities as more powerful citizens in these democracies, but are more effective at delving into the consequences of women's participation rather than the motivations behind it. In addition, some essays blur the distinction between analyzing the issues for which women traditionally fight, such as poverty and healthcare, with the specific topic of women in politics. This seems to be a theme in the literature about women and politics, so perhaps the success of the essays is in demonstrating that these two issues are not mutually exclusive.

Dahlerup, Drude. 2002. "Increasing Women's Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas." In Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers, a Revised Edition by Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds.). International IDEA: 141-153.

Annotation: This is an informative chapter in the book Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers. It focuses on the definition of quotas and how they have been used to increase

the presence of women in the international political sphere. The author begins by defining different types of quotas, both enforced and voluntary, and then goes on to establish the perceived pros and cons to having quotas at all. After providing numbers that portray the impact certain types of quotas have in female representation, the author then boils the argument down to the enforcement of the quota. Ultimately, the argument is drilled down to quotas needing to be more effectively enforced. Overall, the chapter is an informative introduction to the complexities of the issues surrounding quotas.

Del Campo, Esther. 2005. "Women and Politics in Latin America: Perspectives and Limits of the Institutional Aspects of Women's Political Representation." *Social Forces* 83 (4): 1698-1725.

Annotation: This article is a sociological investigation (both empirical and theoretical) into the progress women have made in the political sphere in Latin America, mainly in terms of representation and holding office. Del Campo is not out to prove a theory or hypothesis, but instead to compile metrics with which one can measure factors involved in female representation in politics, and based on the data, form a conclusion. This article provides a non-biased, scientific perspective on women in the political sphere in Latin America.

Domínguez, Jorge I. 2000. "Women Political Leaders: Political Roles, Bases of Support, and Strategies." In *Politics Matter: A Dialogue of Women Political Leaders*. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Dialogue and the International Center for Research on Women.

Annotation: Dominguez, the Director of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, outlines the most effective way for Latin American women to advance their position in the political arena: how they promote issues. Dominguez seems somewhat contradictory, at times calling for "women not forgetting their are women" while at the same time advising them to appeal to the broadest base possible, moving away from achieving popularity purely through the promotion of more gendered issues. The author argues that this strategy is not contradictory if the issues are framed in a broader context that could appeal to an audience regardless of gender or political affiliation. This is an informative article, in that it highlights the deep complexities women face when becoming involved in politics in Latin America.

El-Bushra, Judy and Cécile Mukarubuga. 1995. "Women, War and Transition." *Gender and Development* (3): 16-22.

Annotation: This article is a brief overview of the specific experience of women during war and post conflict reconstruction. The authors include short explanations of issues such as rape, women's identity, and psychological affects, all within the context of conflict in a developing nation. They then present the case study of Rwanda. While it touches on several aspects of this significant issue, the article was written at a time when gendered responses and roles in conflict within developing nations was still an uncharted territory. Thus, it is more helpful as an introduction and high level overview of the topic of women and post conflict rebuilding in developing nations.

Feldmann, Linda et al., 1998. "Around the World, Women Find Very Different Roads to Wider Rights." *Christian Science Monitor*, <http://www.csmonitor.com/1998/0722/072298.us.us.2.html>.

Annotation: This article highlights a unique aspect of women's growing participation in the political sphere that is not often researched. That is, women's participation does not always have progressive or positive outcomes, but instead can incite radical reactions and attract movements in opposition to the intended goal. The article provides examples of this phenomenon, such as in Afghanistan and Eastern Europe, where the result of women's movements toward political participation has created religious, economic, and political backlash. The article also provides cases in different developing nations in which women are wielding political power through more neutral approaches, such as through active participation in the church. This is an important article for countering the assumption that political progress for women can only beget equality and positive change.

Fitzsimmons, Tracy. 2000. Beyond the Barricades: Women, Civil Society, and Participation After Democratization in Latin America. New York: Garland Publications.

Annotation: Trained as a political scientist, the author begins this book with an introduction to a more theoretical view of democratization and its political consequences in Latin America. Fitzsimmons effectively avoids constantly contextualizing her theories within a gendered approach, which can be helpful in creating a more objective base from which to view the topic. However, the absence of discussion regarding women becomes apparent; it turns out that she only spends one portion of the book focusing on women. This would normally not be problematic, but because the title of the book includes the word "women," the reader assumes, incorrectly, that it will be a pervasive topic throughout the text.

Franceschet, Susan. 2001. "Women in Politics in Post-Transitional Democracies: the Chilean Case." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3 (2): 207-236.

Annotation: This article is an in-depth look at how issues such as the lack of an institutional political system and a promotion of a "feminist" platform can prevent women from achieving legitimized roles within Chilean politics. Franceschet begins by providing a historical introduction into Chile's political framework, leads the reader through the male dominated political sphere of the 1990s, and offers strategies for women in politics, provides an exploratory analysis of "women's interests." The author concludes by clarifying that while Chile is a specific case, we can take from the challenges and think about them in terms of other Latin American nations as well.

Gallup Latin American Women Leadership Study, and Inter American Dialogue. 2000. "Latin American Women Leadership Study: A Look at the Changing Attitudes of Latin Americans toward Gender and Women's Leadership Capabilities" in Politics Matter: A Dialogue of Women Political Leaders. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Dialogue and the International Center for Research on Women.

Annotation: This is an empirical look at assumptions and beliefs regarding women in positions of political leadership based on a survey that Gallup performed in Latin America in 2000. It must be read in its true form, assumptions a sample group, but the findings are a helpful supplement in the more theory based research in this field. The findings show a generally positive attitude toward women in politics, and even that women are trusted more, and are believed to handle larger issues better than men. The article is also helpful because it summarizes some of the more major findings in order to aid in the interpretation of the numbers. The reader can also view the questions and the style in which each question was asked that elicited the results that are summarized in the article.

Gonzalez, Victoria, and Karen Kampwirth (eds.). 2001. Radical Women in Latin America: Left and Right. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Annotation: A compilation of case studies by experts on Latin America and Political Science, this is a helpful collection that aids in understanding the role of women in more “radical” (in this case meaning unconventional) politics in Latin America. What sets this collection apart from other Latin American anthologies is that it includes analysis of both right and left radicalism and political movements instead of the traditional left-leaning text that is often found in more revolutionary leaning literature.

Gould, Carol C. 2004. Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Annotation: This book is a densely theoretical analysis of the manifestation of human rights and how they are realized in democracy. The author takes this analysis a step further and looks at how these rights can exist on a global level within democratic societies. The most helpful chapters in terms of women in political positions and the “public sphere,” are chapters three and six. These chapters address the idea of embodiment within democracy and conceptualizing women’s human rights.

Haas, Peter M. 1997. “Do Regimes Matter? Epistemic Communities and Mediterranean Pollution Control,” in G. T. Crane and A. Amawi (eds.), Theoretical Evolution of International Political Economy. New York: Oxford University Press.

Annotation: In this article, Haas argues that regimes, or groups of people that have collaborated on a certain idea, can directly impact the way in which a state, or group of states, forms their international economic policy, despite the policy not having a directly positive impact on the state economically or monetarily. It is an important argument in a field that has traditionally reflected the more realist argument that states will act only in their economic interest, or that unless the regime can prove to have a positive economic impact on the state, they will be obsolete.

Htun, Mala. 1998. “Case Study: Latin America Women, Political Parties and Electoral Systems in Latin America” In *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* by J. Ballington and A. Karam (eds.).

Stockholm: The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

Annotation: In this article, Htun focuses on how the electoral system, political parties, and quotas impact the roles that Central and Latin American women attain in politics. Following the author's style of other articles on this topic, they include several helpful, quantitative tables and percentage breakdowns. The article is informative and provides useful information as an explanatory device for the situation of women in politics in Latin America.

Htun, Mala N. 2002. "Women in Political Power in Latin America" in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* by J. Ballington and A. Karam (eds.). Stockholm: The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

Annotation: Htun, a political scientist, explores the different issues involved with Latin American women in politics. These issues include obstacles in attaining political power, public perception, efficacy of electoral systems, and quotas. The author provides an informative and explanatory analysis of what women and politics looks like in Latin America. The analysis includes tables and quantitative information that supplements the article. Htun suggests an argument in the conclusion and calls for solutions by the end of the article but the content of the rest of the article does not strongly support this argument.

Inter-American Development Bank. 2006. "The Winning Voice of Women in Latin American Politics." (January 17).
<http://www.iadb.org/news/articledetail.cfm?language=English&ARTID=2709>.

Annotation: This article relays the story of Michelle Bachelet's victory in 2006 as Chile's first female president. The article provides a brief overview of the trend in Latin America, which is seemingly favorable thus far toward electing women as political figureheads. Beginning in the 1990s, women in Latin America have begun to fill more legislative and politically influential positions than women in more "developed" states such as the United States. This trend can be attributed to several factors, including organized women's movements in 1980s pushing more political representation and rights, quotas the state is required to fill regarding female representation, and improved education for women. The article is a helpful glimpse of the current state of Latin American women in politics.

Kampwirth, Karen. 1998. "Feminism, Antifeminism, and Electoral Politics in Postwar Nicaragua and El Salvador." *Political Science Quarterly* 113 (2): 259-279.

Annotation: Kampwirth is a prominent scholar in the area of women, Latin America, and political movements. In this article, she juxtaposes the involvement of feminist movements in politics leading up to the elections in Nicaragua and El Salvador during the 1990s. The author chose these cases because in Nicaragua, the feminist movement failed to achieve an ideological shift in definitions of female identity. Conversely, in El Salvador, the feminist movement was actively involved in defining what gender meant within politics. Kampwirth's case studies are important, as they demonstrate that pre-election involvement of feminist

movements had a great impact on the post electoral framework of politics. Additionally, Kampwirth's examination of feminine vs. feminist definitions and discussion around 'women's interests' and antifeminism provides a useful context in which to understand the literature in this field.

Karam, Azza, and Joni Lovenduski. 2005. "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference." *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* by J. Ballington and A. Karam (eds.). Stockholm: The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA): 187-212.

Annotation: The authors of this article offer a unique and refreshing addition to the literature on Latin American women in politics. Instead of overemphasizing the historical aspects of the issue, the authors offer a contemporary and forward looking perspective that asks many crucial questions, including "now what?" The article is a successful blend of criticism and pragmatic recommendations that can inform the future for Latin American women in politics.

Karl, Marilee, William I. Lindley, L. Van Crowder, and Nathaniel Doron. 1997. "Higher Agricultural Education and Opportunities in Rural Development for Women. An Overview and Summary of Five Case-Studies." Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), http://www.fao.org/docrep/w6038e/w6038e02.htm#P363_24359.

Annotation: This is a helpful article about the challenges women face in accessing education when they live in an agricultural and/or rural environment. Although the case studies do not include Latin America, the general conclusions found are almost parallel to some of the issues that Latin American women face in rural environments. The article provides helpful statistics and tables to support the claims and is effective at highlighting significant findings and presenting the issues clearly, the causes, and potential solutions. This is a more empirical study rather than theoretical.

Kaufman, Michael, and Haroldo Dilla Alfonso (eds.). 1997. Community Power and Grassroots Democracy: the Transformation of Social Life. London: Zed Books.

Annotation: This collection of essays covers topics of community development, neighborhood organizations, housing committees Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Chile. Although they do not bring anything particularly new to the discussion surrounding the success of local democracy influencing the larger political democratic domain, the authors still effectively highlight the challenges of micro versus macro politics.

MacFarquhar, Neil. 2008. "UN Study Finds More Women in Politics." *The New York Times*. (September 18). <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/19/world/19nations.html>.

Annotation: This is an informative and very recent article that reinforces the fact that even though women have made great strides internationally in gaining political power, there is still

much work to be done. The article includes recent numbers of women in political parties and percentages compared to that of men. The article also makes the important distinction between women in positions of political representation and political power. The distinction is important because the number of women in positions of political power decreases a considerable amount relative to the number of women represented within the parties. It is an informative article that gives a balanced and realistic glance of the state of women in politics around the world.

McDonagh, Eileen. 2002. "Political Citizenship and Democratization: The Gender Paradox." *The American Political Science Review* 96 (3): 535-552.

Annotation: In this article, McDonagh, a political scientist, presents an original perspective of the relationship between women and citizenship, and more specifically, in newly democratized states. The author provides a gender paradox in which it is beneficial for women to gain status as citizens within both the identity as an "other" as well as an equal. This is an original proposal, as most literature regarding women's roles in democratizing nations reflects the notion that women are fighting for "equal rights." And though this may be the case, McDonagh details why this may not always work to a woman's advantage as a political citizen and that the state must be made up of "women's dual, if not paradoxical, identities as productive laborers who are the 'same' as men and as reproductive laborers who are 'different' than men." The article, while original and thought-provoking is mostly theoretical and it is sometimes difficult to imagine how exactly one goes about achieving the aforementioned paradox.

Montaño, Sonia, and María Nieves Rico. 2007. "Women's Contribution to Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean." In Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Quito, Ecuador: United Nations.

Annotation: This is a study of gender parity in Latin America and the Caribbean that includes an updated picture of women in politics, labor equality, and recommendations for a policy agenda. The study provides a concise overview of the issues that surround women politics, such as movements, feminism, and the personal becoming the political. It also highlights significant occasions and specific progress such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, signed by all states in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2000 that shows clear progress for gender parity. The quantitative data included in the study is also helpful and clearly displayed.

Montecinos, Verónica. 2001. "Feminists and Technocrats in the Democratization of Latin America: A Prolegomenon." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15 (1): 175-199.

Annotation: In this article, the author attempts to prove that one of the primary reasons there are not more Latin American women in government is because the movement toward a more democratic state has been dominated by male economists who, the author asserts, view women unfavorably. Montecinos, a sociologist, includes an ambitious range of topics in the article, including democratization, economics, technocratic ideology, and feminism. The

article concludes with a recommendation and call for more women to enter into economics in Latin America, which will result in more women in government. The article is too broad-reaching to present enough focused justification for the final conclusion.

Moser, Caroline O.N., and Fiona C. Clark. 2001. "Gender, Conflict and Building Sustainable Peace: Recent Lessons from Latin America." *Gender and Development* 9 (3): 29-39.

Annotation: This paper calls for a more gendered analysis of conflict resolution. This has not been the case in the past, thus ignoring the nuanced needs of men and women in post conflict reconstruction. Also ignored has been the type of impact that the conflict has had on men and women. The article covers a broad range of topics included in conflict and reconstruction, and the language is abrupt. However, the author is successful at providing a practical perspective and concrete methods for understanding the complexities in a gendered picture of conflict. The ideas would be applicable for humanitarian aid workers, human rights advocates, and others working in the field.

Okeke-Ihejirika, Philomina E., and Susan Franceschet. 2002. "Democratization and State Feminism: Gender Politics in Africa and Latin America." *Development and Change* 33 (3): 439-466.

Annotation: The authors of this article compare Chile and Nigeria in an attempt to answer the question of why the kind of political feminism that developed in Chile during its transition into a democracy did not happen in Nigeria, when they were experiencing a similar transition. The authors frame their study in three areas of transition: women's movements under democratization, patterns of women's access to political institutions, and gender ideologies. Although a comprehensive analysis of each of these areas is provided, the article does not provide unique insights into these countries by asking the questions regarding the success of feminist movements or the progress of women in the political arena. The outcome is that the political, economic, and social history of Nigeria seems to be too dissimilar to that of Chile to have engendered the feminist movement within politics.

Safa, Helen Icken. 1990. "Women's Social Movements in Latin America." *Gender and Society* 4 (No. 3, Special Issue: Women and Development in the Third World): 354-369.

Annotation: This article explores the participation of poor women in social movements in Latin America. Safa weaves case studies from different countries together effectively without relativizing their individual characteristics. We see the recurring theme that, initially, these movements are spurred by the women in defense of their more 'traditional' domestic role, but they soon find themselves gaining legitimacy within the political sphere. Safa's argument that women will continue to fight for the goals of the movements instead of being a fleeting political fad is well founded based on the findings in his article. Unfortunately, his findings are, at this point, outdated and written from a second wave feminism perspective.

Saint-Germain, Michelle A., and Cynthia Chavez Metoyer. 2008. Women Legislators in Central America: Politics, Democracy, and Policy. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Annotation: Written by two political scientists, this book is a comparative study of the factors that gave rise to a certain era of women legislators in five countries in Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The authors present a convincing argument, asserting that factors such as the presence of women with political savvy, and the state of affairs at the time created an environment that was ripe for female political influence and impact. The book includes questions that are crucial in our understanding of women's participation and impact in the political sphere in all of Latin America. The authors include helpful tables, graphs, and other quantitative tools in the book to supplement the text.

Stephen, Lynn. 1995. "Women's Rights Are Human Rights: The Merging of Feminine and Feminist Interests among El Salvador's Mothers of the Disappeared (CO-MADRES)." *American Ethnologist* 22 (4): 807-827.

Annotation: This article is about the women who created the Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador "Monseior Romero" (CO-MADRES) in 1977 in El Salvador. Stephen tells the story behind the formation of the group and completes an in depth analysis of how the group's participants "blurred lines between resistance and accommodation." The author asserts that Latin American activists have created a division of women's movements between feminist movements and grassroots women's movements, which has led social scientists and others in the field to follow suit. However, Stephen argues, this is not an accurate division and that in dividing the movements, their depth and complexity is lost.

_____. 2001. "Gender, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity." *Latin American Perspectives* 28 (6): 54-69.

Annotation: Pursuing a more precise study of identity and women in Latin American social and political movements, Stephen presents two case studies to present the case. The author argues that the external image the movements convey to the public do not accurately reflect the complexity of the participants' individual intentions within the movement. Using the examples of the Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador "Monsignor Romero" (CO-MADRES) in El Salvador and the indigenous women's movement in Mexico as the case studies, Stephen successfully articulates the argument. The author effectively pushes the gendered perspective of political movements in Latin America to a more dynamic level than others in the field.

Stromquist, Nelly P. 1995. "Romancing the State: Gender and Power in Education." *Comparative Education Review* 39 (4): 423-454.

Annotation: A bit outdated, this article outlines important relationships between education and the state in both industrialized and more developing states. A significant argument that the author makes is that, despite the advancements in gender equality in education that traditional feminists made, it is not a sustainable way of affecting change. The author argues

that because general populations are not trained to understand gender nuances within education, the general public will not typically support such nuanced platforms. It is not until a more broad based understanding of gender inequality and what may have been more “feminist” ideals become more widely accepted that needed change will occur in a consistent and effective manner.

Tong, Rosemarie, and Nancy Williams. 2006. “Feminist Ethics.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/feminism-ethics/>.

Annotation: In this discussion of feminist ethics, the authors attempt to “rethink aspects of traditional western ethics that devalue women’s moral experience.” The authors spend the majority of the article mapping out the different approaches to ethics that have been established in regards to the female experience. This is an introduction to the many ways one can approach feminist ethics. The ultimate conclusion the authors come to is that in order for women to advance any sort of parity in western ethics, the disparate types of approaches have to unify and present a strong and consolidated argument for a revision of traditional western ethics.

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). 2006. “Promoting Women’s Autonomy in Latin America and the Caribbean to Fulfill the Rights of Children.” Edited by Isabel Benlloch. http://www.unicef.org/media/media_37510.html?q=printme#.

Annotation: This is a brief news release on the United Nations Children’s Fund website that describes children’s rights as an extension of women’s rights. It is an interesting article because it exemplifies how crucial it is to establish women’s rights in order to advance other types of “human rights” like children’s rights. The article alludes to women in positions of power being more likely to promote issues such as the advancement of children’s rights. Thus, continued work on improving the accessibility of education to women and therein providing a non gender biased curriculum is essential many human rights causes including that of children. Though not comprehensive, the article is an important reminder that women still face challenges in attaining education and it is not until they attain the needed education that they can be considered eligible for influential positions within politics where they can further the children’s rights campaign, for example.

United Nations General Assembly. 1993. “Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.” Paper Read at *World Conference on Human Rights at Vienna, Austria*. [http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.CONF.157.23.En](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.CONF.157.23.En)

Annotation: This document is a result of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993. It is a seminal document in the international community in terms of a formalized acknowledgement of specific human rights. Particularly significant is #18 that formally acknowledges that women’s rights are human rights. “The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural

life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.”

United Nations Security Council. 2000. “Resolution 1325.” www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf.

Annotation: Passed unanimously in October of 2000 by the United Nations, Resolution 1325 is the first resolution passed by the United Nations Security Council that addresses women and the role they play not only as a group that has different needs in time of war and rebuilding but also as a group that is integral to peace building and post conflict reconstruction. “Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.”

Waylen, Georgina. 1998. “Policy Arena Gender and Governance: Democratic Consolidation and Economic Reform.” *Journal of International Development* (10): 957-967.

Annotation: The author begins this article by highlighting the significance of including a gendered analysis when analyzing the democratization of three Latin American countries: Argentina, Chile, and Peru. The author chose these three countries because of their varying circumstances under which they participated in the process of democratization. One of Waylen’s stated reasons for the study is the lack of literature that includes a gendered analysis, so this portion of the argument seems outdated. Despite this, the reasons the author gives for the importance of gendered perspective are still pertinent to a contemporary study of the countries in relation to democratization. Democratic consolidation and economic reform are the two main themes for which Waylen provides this gendered analysis and offers objective accounts of women’s roles, for example in a political movement and whether their involvement helped realize intended outcomes. The weakness of the article is that, in attempting to cover a lot of ground in a short article, Waylen spends more time on emphasizing the lack of research in the different areas where instead, she could take a deeper look at the issue.

_____. 2000. “Gender and Democratic Politics: A Comparative Analysis of Consolidation in Argentina and Chile.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32 (3).

Annotation: In this article, Waylen analyzes the impact that gender has on the recently ‘consolidated democracies’ in Chile and Argentina. The author argues that in order for women to play a significant role in a newly democratized nation, preconditions must exist, such as women outside the political arena supporting women in leadership roles and an institutionalized party system. Waylen is successful in justifying her argument but the recurring theme throughout the article of gender parity takes away from the strength of political argument at times.

_____. 2008. "Enhancing the Substantive Representation of Women: Lessons from Transitions to Democracy." *Parliamentary Affairs* 61 (No. 3): 518-534.

Annotation: This article explores whether third wave democratization has enhanced the role of women in the political sphere. Using a comparative approach and integrating case studies from Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America, Waylen tries to find correlations between several movements from different eras, which tends to weaken her argument rather than substantiate it. However, Waylen brings to light an argument not often found in the literature on this topic. She argues that it takes more than just a female in a leadership position to affect gender policy, and, in fact sometimes requires entire conceptual shift in the country's politics in general.

Women Waging Peace. 2004. "In the Midst of War: Women's Contributions to Peace in Colombia." Policy Commission (April).
www.peacewomen.org/resources/Colombia/WWPColombiaExecSummary.pdf

Annotation: This is a brief report on the contribution of women pursuing peace after decades of civil war in Colombia. While it is not a deep analysis, this report is an excellent tool as case study of women's civic participation in the "rebuilding" of a nation. With a short timeline, key findings, recommendations, and discussion of the issue, the report provides a hopeful perspective on the change that women are affecting in Latin America, and more specifically Colombia.