

**Latin America**  
**Tiffany D. Barnes and Mark P. Jones**

In Women in Executive Power  
A global overview

Edited by: Gretchen Bauer and Manon Tremblay

2011

# **Women in Executive Power**

A global overview

**Edited by**

**Gretchen Bauer and Manon Tremblay**

First published 2011  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square Milton Park Abingdon Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2011 Selection and editorial matter, Gretchen Bauer and Manon Tremblay; individual contributors, their contribution

The right of the editors to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-415-60380-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-203-82998-0 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman  
by Werset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear  
Printed and bound by TJI Digital, Padstow, Cornwall

# 7 Latin America

*Tiffany D. Barnes and Mark P. Jones*

## **Introduction**

As late as the second half of the 1980s, there were, for all intents and purposes, no women in executive positions (president, vice president, cabinet minister) in Latin America. For instance, in 1987 there were no women presidents among the region's democracies, there was a single "second" vice president (in Costa Rica), and an average of only 2 percent women in cabinets, with the median and modal number of cabinet ministers in the region's countries zero (Htun 1997; Iturbe de Blanco 2003; PROLID 2007). By the 1990s, however, women had begun, slowly but steadily, to occupy a larger share of executive branch positions in the region, although the record was mixed, with advances more prominent in appointed cabinet posts than among directly elected presidents and vice presidents.

This chapter begins by evaluating progress in the presence of women in executive branch in 18 Latin American democracies from 1998 to 2008.<sup>1</sup> It then provides an in-depth focus on the evolution of women's presence in executive positions since World War II in two influential cases, Argentina and Chile, examining both the election of women presidents and vice presidents and the presence of women in cabinets. In line with the general regional trends, the presence of women in executive positions prior to the 1990s was minimal in these two countries (with the important exception of the presidency of Isabel Perón [1974–6] in Argentina), but has improved notably in the past decade, with both Argentina and Chile governed in December 2009 by a democratically elected female president whose respective cabinets contained noteworthy numbers of female ministers.

## **Regional overview**

This section evaluates the evolution of women's presence in Latin American executive branches by comparing women's leadership in 1998 to that in 2008.<sup>2</sup> Data from the mid-point year of 2003 are also utilized in order to provide a better assessment of trends, as well as to serve as a reliability check on the data in those cases where the small number could potentially result in a high level of volatility with a value at one specific point in time possibly not representative of

recent general trends in that category. The fundamental question driving this evaluation is to what extent women's presence in principal executive offices of the region's countries has improved during this time frame.

In 1998, none of the region's 18 countries had a female president (see Table 7.1).<sup>3</sup> By contrast, in 2008, the region had two female presidents, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina and Michelle Bachelet of Chile. While an increase from zero to two presidents is not to be minimized, it is important to note that the percentage of women presidents in Latin America remained a paltry 11 percent in 2008.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, this increase in the number/percentage of women presidents is not statistically significant, with the number of women presidents in 2008 statistically indistinct from that in 1998.<sup>5</sup>

For the purpose of this study, the top three presidential candidates (in terms of the number of votes won in the first or only round of the presidential election) are considered relevant, as long as they received at least 10 percent of the popular vote. Coincidentally, across the 18 countries there were a total of 47 relevant candidates in both 1998 and 2008 (in 2003 there were 48). In 1998, two women had been relevant presidential candidates in their country's most recent presidential election.<sup>6</sup> In Honduras, Alba Gúnera de Melgar was the candidate of the National Party, but lost the presidential contest to Carlos Flores of the Liberal Party. Gúnera de Melgar was the widow of former Honduran President Juan Alberto Melgar (1975–8). In Panama, Mireya Moscoso was the candidate of the Arnulfista Party (PA) dominated Democratic Alliance, but narrowly lost the election to Ernesto Pérez Balladares of the Democratic Revolutionary Party. Moscoso was the widow of PA founder, and three-time president (1940–1, 1949–51, 1968), Arnulfo Arias.

Between 1998 and 2008 the number of relevant/main women presidential candidates increased from two to five.<sup>7</sup> The most noteworthy case was Argentina, where in 2007 the winning presidential candidate and the first runner-up were women. In addition to the victorious Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Front for Victory), Elisa Carrió (Civic Coalition) placed second in the election. In Paraguay, Blanca Ovelar of the National Republican Association finished second in the 2008 presidential election to Fernando Lugo of the Patriotic Alliance for Change. In Peru, Lourdes Flores of the National Unity coalition placed third in the first round of the 2006 election behind Ollanta Humala (Union for Peru) and Alan García (Peruvian Aprista Party). The final case of a relevant female presidential candidate in the 2008 era was that of Michelle Bachelet of Chile, who was the victor in the January 2006 runoff.

Overall, while the respective increase in the number of women presidents from zero to two and of relevant female presidential candidates from two to five does certainly represent movement in a positive direction, the fact that in 2008 women represented merely one out of ten presidents and relevant presidential candidates cannot be considered a positive state of affairs. When examining the period 1998 to 2008 it is difficult to conclude that there was significant advancement in the presence of women in the most powerful and influential (Stein and Tommasi 2008) political posts in Latin America.

Table 7.1 Presidents, presidential candidates and vice presidents in selected Latin American countries, 1998, 2003 and 2008

<i>Office</i>	<i>1998 Nb (%)</i>	<i>2003 Nb (%)</i>	<i>2008 Nb (%)</i>	<i>2008 vs. 1998 difference</i>	<i>Significant difference<sup>b</sup></i>
President (18, 18, 18)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.0)	2 (11.0)	2 (11.0)	No
Main presidential candidates (47, 48, 47) <sup>a</sup>	2 (4.0)	2 (4.0)	5 (11.0)	3 (7.0)	No
All presidential candidates (197, 141, 159)	18 (9.0)	12 (9.0)	17 (11.0)	-1 (2.0)	No
Vice president (15, 15, 16)	1 (7.0)	2 (13.0)	2 (13.0)	1 (6.0)	No

Source: *The Europa World Book* (1998, 2003, 2008).

Notes

a Top three candidates (excluding any candidates with less than 10 percent of the vote).

b Significant at the 0.05 level for a two-tailed test.

In late 2009, 16 of the 18 Latin American countries possessed vice presidents.<sup>8</sup> Overall (see Table 7.1), there was a very minor increase of 6 percent (not statistically significant) in women vice presidents in Latin America between 1998 and 2008.<sup>9</sup> In 1998, there was one woman vice president, Rosalía Arteaga of Ecuador (elected in 1996). In 2008, there were two female vice presidents, Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica and Ana Vilma Albanez de Escobar of El Salvador, who were elected in 2006 and 2004, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

Drawing on the lists of cabinet ministers contained in the 1998, 2003 and 2008 editions of *The Europa World Year Book*, Table 7.2 lists the percentage of cabinet ministers who were women in 1998, 2003 and 2008 for the 18 countries. Overall in the region, the percentage of women cabinet ministers grew from 8 percent of all cabinet ministers in 1998 to 25 percent in 2008, an increase that is highly significant.<sup>11</sup> In sum, we can state with extreme confidence that there was a statistically significant rise in the proportion of female cabinet ministers between 1998 and 2008. This improvement is best explained by two factors. The first factor is a combination of the progressive trend in voter preferences, generational replacement of sexist voters with less sexist voters, international commitments made by political leaders to gender equality, the adoption of formal or informal quota legislation for cabinet ministers, and the replacement of center-right presidents by left and center-left presidents (Buvinic and Roza 2004; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005; Schwindt-Bayer 2007). The

*Table 7.2* Percentage of female cabinet ministers in selected Latin American countries, 1998, 2003 and 2008

	1998	2003	2008	2008 vs. 1998 difference
Argentina	10.0	27.0	25.0	15.0
Bolivia	7.0	0.0	25.0	18.0
Brazil	5.0	13.0	8.0	3.0
Chile	15.0	18.0	41.0	26.0
Colombia	19.0	50.0	23.0	4.0
Costa Rica	6.0	40.0	35.0	29.0
Dominican Republic	7.0	17.0	14.0	7.0
Ecuador	7.0	24.0	35.0	28.0
El Salvador	8.0	8.0	23.0	15.0
Guatemala	0.0	23.0	8.0	8.0
Honduras	6.0	20.0	33.0	27.0
Mexico	13.0	11.0	17.0	4.0
Nicaragua	12.0	8.0	50.0	38.0
Panama	8.0	31.0	25.0	17.0
Paraguay	8.0	0.0	10.0	2.0
Peru	6.0	6.0	23.0	17.0
Uruguay	8.0	0.0	31.0	23.0
Venezuela	8.0	27.0	25.0	17.0
Region average	8.0	16.0	25.0	17.0

Source: *The Europa World Book* (1998, 2003, 2008).

second factor is the considerable autonomy enjoyed by the president in naming her or his cabinet in the Latin American presidential democracies (Payne *et al.* 2007).

There also existed a wide range in levels of female representation in cabinets in the region in 2008. One extreme was represented by Nicaragua (with 50 percent women in cabinet) and Chile (with 41 percent women in cabinet), where half or nearly half of the ministers were women – the result of explicit, albeit informal, policies by the countries' respective presidents (Daniel Ortega and Michelle Bachelet) to promote gender parity in their cabinets. The other extreme was represented by Guatemala and Brazil (both with 8 percent women in cabinet), where slightly less than one of every ten cabinet ministers was a woman.

In sum, we found strong and significant improvement between 1998 and 2008 in women's appointment to cabinet posts. At the same time, while positive growth was detected in the presence of women in uni-personal executive positions (president, vice president, relevant presidential candidates), these increases were statistically insignificant. Furthermore, in contrast to the case for cabinets where robust improvement in the status of women leaders was uncovered, it is difficult to view the minimal increases which took place in these uni-personal posts from 1998 to 2008 as signs of substantial progress in women's access to political leadership positions in Latin America.

## **Country cases: Argentina and Chile**

### *Description of the political regimes*

The 1945 to 2009 period in Argentina witnessed several democratic presidential elections (1946, 1973, 1983, 1989, 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007), semi-democratic presidential elections (1951, 1958, 1963 and 1973) and military coups (1955, 1962, 1966 and 1976). Over these more than 60 years, the regimes that have governed Argentina have been fully democratic (1946–51, 1973–6, 1983–), semi-democratic (1951–5, 1958–66) and dictatorial (1955–8, 1966–73, 1976–83). Since 1983, however, Argentina has enjoyed uninterrupted democracy, and, as of 2009, it is safe to say that the current Argentine democratic regime is quite consolidated, and that the country faces no short- or medium-term risk of a democratic breakdown.

During the post-World War II era Argentina has been a federal republic with a presidential form of government. Since the return to democracy Argentine presidents have been empowered to name and remove the members of their cabinets without consulting Congress (or any other countervailing power), with the very partial exception of the position of Chief of Cabinet Ministers (since 1994) who can be removed by an absolute majority of the members of each chamber of the country's bicameral legislature. During the 1983–2009 period Argentina's executive ranged from eight to 14 cabinet ministers (including the Cabinet Chief of Ministers since the 1994 constitutional reform). Ministers in Argentina

normally have ties to (or are members of) the president's political party or the party of allied parties that helped elect the president, or else they are independent technocrats chosen for their expertise in the area covered by their ministry. There is no requirement that ministers be members of Congress; in fact, holding a position in the executive branch is incompatible with occupying a seat in Congress (though it is possible for sitting deputies to take a leave of absence).

Since 1945, the president has at times been elected via an electoral college (1946, 1958, 1963, 1983, 1989) and at other times been elected directly (1951, 1973, 1973, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007). At all times the national legislature has been bicameral (Chamber of Deputies and Senate); at present the Chamber is elected from multi-member districts using closed and blocked lists with seats allocated using proportional representation (PR) and the Senate is elected from closed and blocked lists with two seats going to the plurality list and one seat to the first runner-up (Jones 2008).

Similar to Argentina, Chile has experienced some (albeit less) democratic cycling since 1945. From World War II until 2009 Chile held eight democratic presidential elections (1952, 1958, 1964, 1970, 1989, 1993, 1999, 2005), interrupted by a military coup in 1973, which was then followed by almost 17 years of uninterrupted dictatorship until 1990. Since its return to democracy in 1989 (when democratic elections were held), Chile has been quite stable and, like Argentina, can at present safely be considered a consolidated democracy, with no risk of a short- or medium-term democratic breakdown.

Since World War II Chile has been a presidential republic. Chilean presidents are able to name and remove the members of their cabinet without consulting Congress (or any other countervailing power). Between 1990 and 2009, Chile's executive has had between 14 and 20 cabinet ministers. During the period covered by this chapter, the Concertation Alliance controlled the presidency. Under the four Concertation presidents, cabinet members were almost exclusively drawn from members of the constituent parties which made up the Concertation, although at times independent technocrats also occupied cabinet positions. There is no requirement that ministers be members of Congress; as in Argentina, holding a position in the executive branch is incompatible with occupying a seat in Congress. The bicameral legislature consists of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate which, since 1989, have been elected using a binomial electoral system (Navia 2008). All electoral districts contain two members, who are elected using closed and unblocked lists, with seats allocated between the coalitions of parties using PR and within the coalitions using the plurality formula.

### *The evolution of women's presence in the executive*

With one exception, women were conspicuously absent from the executive branch in Argentina during the post-World War II era until the late 1990s (Iturbe de Blanco 2003; PROLID 2007). In 1973, Isabel Perón (Juan Perón's third wife) was elected as vice president on a ticket with her husband. Following Perón's death, she assumed office on 1 July 1974, becoming the world's first female

president. She then presided over an increasingly conflict-ridden and economically distressed Argentina, until being removed from office on 24 March 1976 by a military coup.

The most influential female politician in Argentine history never occupied a formal executive post. Eva “Evita” Perón (Perón’s second wife), between the election of Perón as president in 1946 and her death in 1952, was responsible for profound advances in the promotion of women’s political rights and in the design and implementation of public policies that benefited women (Fraser and Navarro 1996; Rock 1987).

It was not until May 1989 that Argentina had its first female cabinet minister. However, Susana Ruiz Cerruti (a career foreign service officer) was merely a placeholder, occupying the post of Minister of Foreign Relations for the final six weeks of President Raúl Alfonsín’s term in office following the resignation of Alfonsín’s long-time (1983–9) Minister of Foreign Relations, Dante Caputo. The first female cabinet member to occupy a ministry in full capacity was Susana Decibe, who was the Minister of Education from 1996 until the end of the second term of President Carlos Menem (1989–95, 1995–9) in 1999.

Figure 7.1 charts the evolution of the presence of women in Argentine cabinet positions as well as in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies (percentage elected in that year’s partial renovation of the Chamber) using data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2009b), *The Europa World Year Book* (multiple years), and Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2005). The values reflect the percentage of women cabinet members as of January of that year as well as the percentage of women deputies elected that year.

The presence of women in the Argentine cabinet paralleled that of women in the Chamber of Deputies from 1983 to 1991, with an extremely low percentage

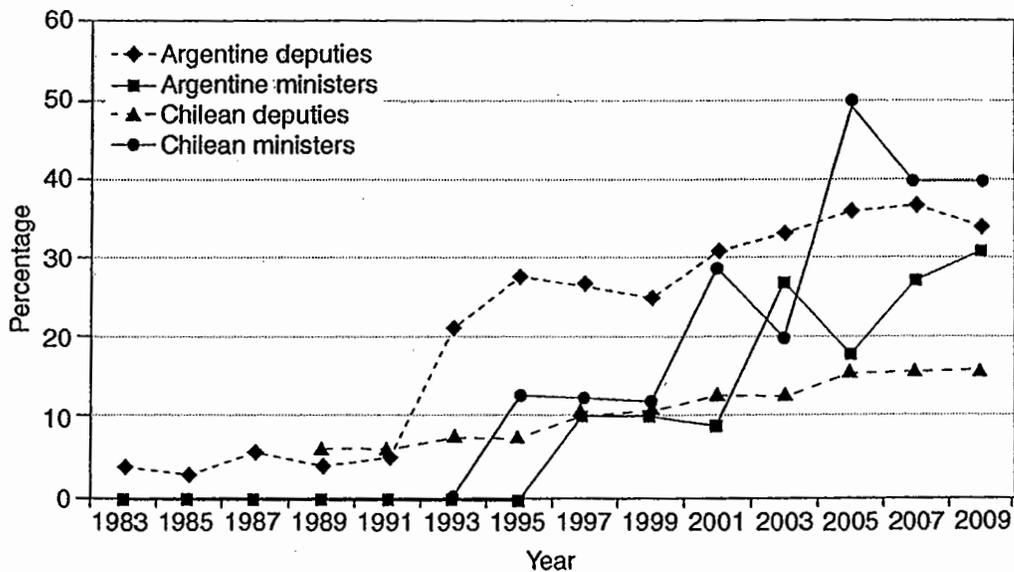


Figure 7.1 Percentage of women deputies elected and cabinet ministers in office in Argentina and Chile, 1983–2009.

(0 percent) of female cabinet ministers. In the late 1990s, the percentage of women cabinet ministers registered above zero for the first time (11 percent, one minister), before beginning an upward climb during the presidencies of Eduardo Duhalde (2002–3), Néstor Kirchner (2003–7) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007–).<sup>12</sup> With an approximately ten-year lag, the percentage of female cabinet ministers has moved in recent years to a level that comes close (albeit slightly below) that for women in the Chamber of Deputies, where an effective gender quota law had been in force for Chamber elections since 1993 (Jones 1996).

Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was selected (hand-picked) as the governing Front for Victory's (Peronist Party) 2007 presidential candidate by her spouse, then President Néstor Kirchner (2003–7). Fernández de Kirchner had previously obtained and occupied a series of important political positions (ranging from provincial deputy to national senator) with the assistance of Néstor Kirchner, and while in office (first as a provincial legislator and then as a national deputy and national senator) built a reputation as an accomplished and skillful politician (constructing, by 2007, a considerable level of autonomous political capital). Elected in October 2007 for a four-year term, Fernández de Kirchner, however, struggled during the first two years of her term in office, with her approval ratings plummeting from 60 percent in January 2008 to 20 percent in December 2009. Moreover, her role as chief executive has been often overshadowed by the prominent (if not pre-eminent) role in governance occupied by her husband Néstor Kirchner until his death in late 2010.

Women did not play a pronounced role in Chile's executive branch prior to the mid 1990s, though a few token females received ministerial posts prior to this period. Chile's first female minister was Adriana Olgún de Baltra, Minister of Justice (PROLID 2007). She was appointed at the very end of President Gabriel González Videla's (1946–52) term in 1952, only serving a short period of time. When President Carlos Ibáñez del Campo (1952–8) assumed power later that year, he appointed María Teresa del Canto as the Minister of Education (1952–3). In the following years women were occasionally appointed to serve as ministers. But women never played a prominent role in the executive branch. This same trend continued under the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet (1973–90). Women were scarcely involved in his regime, with few exceptions, one being Marie Therese Infante Barros, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs during the dictatorship's final year (1989–90).

After the transition to democracy in 1990, women were absent from the Chilean executive branch for several consecutive years.<sup>13</sup> In 1995 Adriana Del-Piano Puelma and Soledad Alvear were appointed to the Chilean cabinet as Minister of National Resources and Minister of Justice, respectively. They remained the only two women to have served in the Chilean cabinet during the post-1990 era until 2001, when President Ricardo Lagos assumed office and dramatically reversed this trend. During his campaign, Lagos faced significant pressure from social movements (Ríos Tobar 2008) and a few political insiders from within the governing Concertation coalition (Franceschet 2008) to increase

women's representation in the executive branch. As a result, following his electoral victory, Lagos named five women (36 percent) to his first cabinet. These appointments paved the way for women (two in particular, Michelle Bachelet and Soledad Alvear) to increase their political presence and gain popularity within the electorate, thus positioning them for future political opportunities (Franceschet 2008; Ríos Tobar 2008; Segovia 2005).<sup>14</sup>

Figure 7.1 also charts the evolution of the presence of women in Chilean cabinet positions as well as in the Chilean Chamber of Deputies using data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2009b), *The Europa World Year Book* (multiple years) and Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2005). The percentage of deputies reflects the total percentage of female deputies elected to the Chamber that year. The cabinet data reveal the percentage of women cabinet members as of January of that year.

As detailed in Figure 7.1, women have successfully increased their representation in the Chilean executive branch over time. They were absent from the executive branch immediately after the transition to democracy in 1989. They made moderate progress under President Eduardo Frei (1994–2000), who appointed two women to his cabinet (approximately 12 percent). In 2000 President Ricardo Lagos (2000–6) nominated five women to his cabinet, thus increasing the percentage of women in the executive branch to 36 percent in January 2001. Finally, when President Michelle Bachelet assumed office in 2006 she appointed an executive cabinet with gender parity (50 percent male and 50 percent female).

The trends in female representation in the Chilean Chamber of Deputies and Chilean executive branch are distinct from those in Argentina. Unlike Argentina, where women gained ground in the legislative branch before making inroads into the executive branch, Chile has not experienced significant legislative gains for women. Unlike Argentina, Chile does not have any national level institutional mechanisms to aid the progress of women in the legislature (i.e. gender quota legislation; Jones 2009). Rather, the relationship observed here can be primarily credited to elite political women entrepreneurs who explicitly sought to increase women's representation in the executive branch (Franceschet 2008), with Michelle Bachelet representing the pinnacle of these efforts. As a result, in the past decade, Chile has made great strides in increasing the presence of women in the executive branch, whereas the legislative branch continues to fall short in its level of female representation.

On 11 March 2006 Michelle Bachelet became Chile's first female president. Unlike all directly elected Latin American female presidents who preceded her, Bachelet did not have personal connections to a politically relevant man who helped (directly or indirectly) advance her political career. Bachelet first began to gain political visibility when she was appointed Minister of Health in 2001. After holding this portfolio for two years, she was appointed to a more prestigious post, Minister of Defense, the first woman in Chile to hold a cabinet position of this stature. Her service in the Lagos administration was crucial toward the development of her reputation as a skilled politician, allowing her to

successfully climb the political ladder within the Concertation. Most importantly, these political appointments provided Bachelet with the opportunity to increase her name recognition and popularity. By December 2004, 35 percent of the population reported they would like to see Bachelet as the next president (Segovia 2005). Her popularity continued to rise until she was clearly the strongest candidate for the governing Concertation alliance and her opponent (Soledad Alvear) dropped out of the Concertation's primary election rather than suffer a certain loss to Bachelet. This is one of the most unique aspects of Bachelet's political success. Bachelet owes her success primarily to her own popularity and ability, not to other political elites (Ríos Tobar 2007).

### *Factors explaining women's access to the executive*

The penultimate portion of this section is devoted to a systematic analysis of the factors that influence the appointment of women to cabinet ministries in Argentina and Chile. We analyze time-series sample populations for the Argentine and Chilean cabinets from 1991 to 2009. Given that the number of women cabinet ministers was consistently zero prior to 1991 in both countries and that Chile was a dictatorship between 1973 and 1990, we exclude these years from our analysis. Our dependent variable is the percentage of female ministers in each respective cabinet at time  $t$  (January of the year in question). Given the temporal nature of our data we first employ a Generalized Least Squares model (i.e. Prais-Winsten) and then an autoregressive integrated moving average model (ARIMA, AR1 process).

Our time-series analysis first considered a host of factors potentially related to variance in the presence of women in the Argentine and Chilean executive branches. Given the small number of cases (19 in each country), however, we could not analyze more than a handful of variables at once. Moreover, many potential variables of interest were either completely or practically invariant. In all, after the analysis of multiple preliminary models, we selected the variables and econometric procedures discussed in detail below.<sup>15</sup> Compared to large  $N$  cross-national analysis, the type of time-series analysis conducted here provides the advantage of allowing us to better identify causal relations (e.g. the percentage of women deputies' impact on the percentage of women cabinet ministers), since it is difficult in the former analysis to adequately control for country-level fixed effects which are often invariant over short to medium periods of time (e.g. level of gender egalitarianism, political culture, religion, religiosity, the strength of the women's movement). The downside of this time-series approach, however, is that many variables of interest in the study of women's representation are essentially invariant in the short to medium term, thereby inhibiting efforts to determine their impact, in contrast to the case in cross-sectional (or time-series cross-sectional) studies where there exists inter-country variation for these variables. Another difficulty with time-series analysis in the two cases examined here is the limited number of temporal observations (19).

First, we examine the impact of the presence of women in the national legislature via a variable which accounts for the percentage of women in the lower

chamber. Second, we examine the effect of the level of gender development in the country using the United Nations Development Programme's (2009a) Gender-related Development Index (GDI). The GDI is an unweighted average of three gender indices which measure gender equality in the areas of life expectancy, education (both adult literacy rate [accounting for two-thirds of the education component of the index] and percentage of pupils in tertiary education [one-third]) and estimated earned income. As a measure of gender inequality, the GDI has many advantages in terms of validity and reliability over examining all of its constituent elements separately (Schüler 2006; United Nations Development Programme 1995).

Third, we include a variable which assesses the influence of the ideological position of the president for each cabinet appointed in our sample. Between 1990 and 2009, Argentina elected presidents with conservative (Menem [1989–9]), centrist (De la Rúa [2000–1], Duhalde [2002–3]) and progressive (Kirchner [2004–7], Fernández [2008–9]) ideological orientations. Thus our analysis for Argentina includes two separate dummy variables, one variable for centrist presidents (coded one) and another variable for progressive presidents (coded one). The conservative president serves as the baseline category. Chile, by contrast, only elected centrist (Alywin [1990–3], Frei [1994–2000]) and progressive (Lagos [2001–6], Bachelet [2007–9]) presidents during this time frame. Thus, in the Chile models we include a dummy variable for progressive presidents (coded one) and exclude the centrists as the baseline category.

Finally, we incorporate a binary variable to account for the president's sex. For each year, this variable is coded one if the president who appointed the cabinet was female, and zero otherwise. In both the Argentina and Chile sample one of the two presidents with a progressive ideology was also a female president. Thus, we estimate two separate models for each country and econometric approach (GLS, ARIMA). In all, there are four models that include the binary variable for female presidents and four models that include binary variables for presidential ideological orientation.

Table 7.3 provides an analysis of the impact of these socioeconomic and political variables on the percentage of cabinet members who were female. All eight of the models indicate that the percentage of women in the lower house has no effect on the percentage of females who are appointed to cabinet posts. Further, the estimated coefficients in six of the eight models are in the opposite direction of what we would expect if the percentage of women in the legislature were positively influencing cabinet composition. While we do not report the results here, other specifications of the model explored the lagged effect of women in the legislature. Given that the composition of the legislature changes every two years in Argentina and every four years in Chile, we considered the effect of two-, four-, six- and eight-year lags. This lagged analysis revealed no significant relationship between the percentage of women in the legislature and cabinet composition. Given the consistency of our findings, we can be reasonably confident in concluding that the percentage of women in the legislature is unrelated to the percentage of women in cabinet posts in Argentina and Chile.

Table 7.3 Determinants of the presence of women in the Argentine and Chilean cabinets, 1991–2009<sup>a</sup>

Independent variables	Argentina				Chile			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Percentage of women in chamber	-0.338– (0.340)	-0.339– (1.438)	-0.323– (0.310)	-0.322– (1.118)	1.127– (1.590)	1.193– (1.833)	-0.507– (1.364)	-0.507– (2.301)
Gender Development Index– (GDI)	2.680 <sup>c</sup> – (1.059)	2.685– (3.208)	3.059 <sup>b</sup> – (0.770)	3.057– (1.683)	0.582– (1.589)	0.580– (3.182)	2.792 <sup>c</sup> – (1.169)	2.793 (2.096)
Progressive president	4.800– (6.163)	4.748– (13.31)			16.916– (8.001)	16.352– (13.364)		
Centrist president	5.353– (5.723)	5.367– (11.79)						
Female president			13.130– (7.148)	13.130– (14.507)			23.080 <sup>b</sup> – (6.115)	23.060 <sup>c</sup> – (9.396)
Constant	-203.301 <sup>c</sup> – (79.781)	-203.703– (228.78)	-233.300 <sup>b</sup> – (56.449)	-233.242 <sup>c</sup> – (111.296)	-48.892– (117.258)	-49.181– (245.188)	-209.515 <sup>c</sup> – (83.484)	-209.725– (152.721)
Sigma		6.421 <sup>b</sup> – (1.052)		5.980 <sup>b</sup> – (0.940)		6.887 <sup>b</sup> – (1.225)		5.461 <sup>b</sup> – (1.338)
R-squared	0.755		0.779		0.639		0.848	
Observations	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Model type	GLS	ARIMA– (AR1)	GLS	ARIMA– (AR1)	GLS	ARIMA– (AR1)	GLS	ARIMA– (AR1)

Notes

a Standard errors are in parentheses.

b  $p < 0.01$ .

c  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test).

That is, increases in the percentage of legislators (concurrently or lagged) were unrelated to increases in the percentage of female cabinet ministers in these two countries between 1991 and 2009.

Three of the four GLS models and one of the ARIMA models report that GDI has a positive and significant impact on the percentage of women who occupy cabinet posts in Argentina and Chile. The results for GDI presented in the models for Argentina are robust for both of the GLS models (Models 1 and 3). However, neither of the ARIMA models provides similar significant results, though both do possess a GDI estimated coefficient that is in the hypothesized direction, with that in Model 4 significant at the 0.10 level.

In Chile, in Model 7 there exists a significant positive relationship between GDI and the percentage of women in the cabinet. This relationship does not hold for any of the other models, however. As a consequence, we cannot draw any firm conclusions about the relationship between GDI and the percentage of women in cabinet positions in Chile.

Models 1 and 2 for Argentina and Models 5 and 6 for Chile account for the ideological orientation of the president. The analysis for both countries demonstrates that there exists no significant relationship between presidential ideology and the percentage of cabinet ministers who are female.

Finally, Models 3, 4, 7 and 8 control for the presence of a female president. In Argentina, the existence of a female president appears unrelated to the proportion of female cabinet members. In Chile, however, the relationship between the sex of the president and the percentage of female cabinet ministers is much stronger. In the GLS and ARIMA specifications (Models 7 and 8), the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and 0.05 level, respectively. Overall, though, given the presence of only one female president in each country, it is not possible to draw any credible conclusions from these data regarding the general relationship between presidential gender and cabinet composition. For instance, with the present data we cannot conclusively know whether the impact of presidential sex in Chile is due to the fact that Michelle Bachelet was a woman or to the fact that Michelle Bachelet was Michelle Bachelet, although it would be reasonable to assume that Bachelet's sex had an impact on her decision to appoint a parity cabinet (initially, and maintain a near-parity cabinet over time).

In sum, this analysis, hampered by small sample size, uncovered only a tenuous relationship between several key socioeconomic and political variables and women's cabinet representation in Argentina and Chile over the past 20 years. Some of the findings differ somewhat from those of Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2005) (e.g. the impact of the percentage of women legislators and the effect of presidential ideology). However, given the different models, populations and time periods examined by them and us, we have no reason to doubt the overall veracity of the substantive conclusions made by Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2005) regarding the relationship between these variables and the presence of female cabinet ministers in Latin America.<sup>16</sup>

In the analysis presented here, none of the significant results are what one could call robust over space in time, although the findings for GDI in Argentina

and for a female president in Chile do suggest that those variables may be relevant for understanding variance in the proportion of female cabinet ministers, although additional data and enhanced variance in the variables (e.g. additional female presidents) will be needed before any more definitive conclusions can be made.

### **Do women executives represent women?**

The presidencies of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and of Michelle Bachelet differ markedly in the extent to which the president represents women's interests. Upon assuming office in December 2007, President Fernández de Kirchner developed a governance style in which she was the visible face of the government, while a majority of the principal political and policy decisions were made by Néstor Kirchner (though most commonly in consultation with her). Other than a minor increase in the number of female cabinet ministers, there are few, if any, ways in which President Fernández de Kirchner has actively worked to improve the status of women in Argentina. Furthermore, by allowing her husband to govern from the shadows, President Fernández de Kirchner does not serve as a positive role model to future generations of Argentine female politicians in the same way that Chilean President Michelle Bachelet did.

From the moment she assumed office in 2006, Bachelet worked to actively promote gender equality in Chile. This was most visible in her cabinet appointments. Bachelet appointed Latin America's first gender parity cabinet composed of ten male ministers and ten female ministers. Furthermore, her gender parity initiative was not restricted to cabinet level appointments. Rather, Bachelet implemented the parity initiative in all her political appointments, including undersecretaries, regional governors and other high-ranking state officials (Ríos Tobar 2007). Finally, Bachelet's commitment to gender equality was not limited to her political appointments; rather it pervaded her political rhetoric and public policy priorities. In her first annual address to Congress she used the word "woman" 36 times and cited two prominent feminist figures (Ríos Tobar 2007). Bachelet's policy priorities included a pension overhaul to increase payouts to homemakers, free childcare for working parents with children under the age of four, and several advances in women's reproductive rights. For example, in 2006, Bachelet's Ministry of Health approved the new National Norms on Fertility Regulation, allowing for the distribution of emergency contraception to all females 14 years or older without parental consent. She also signed a law to make sexual education mandatory in all government regulated schools.

Finally, it may be argued that Bachelet also served as a more positive role model than her Argentine counterpart due to the fact that her presidency was viewed as successful by a large majority of the Chilean population, leaving office with an approval rating of approximately 85 percent in March 2010. This is a sharp contrast to Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's approval rating, which hovered in the 20 to 30 percent range for all but the first five months of her presidency. The sustained political popularity of Bachelet and her commitment

to gender equality is an archetype for future generations of female political leaders.

## **Conclusion**

In her mid 1990s diagnosis of the status of women's political leadership in Latin America, Htun (1997) found that women were woefully under-represented in the region's executive branches. Fast-forwarding to 2008, it is clear that women were still, on average, woefully under-represented in political leadership positions in the region. At the same time, between 1998 and 2008 there were several important advances in women's political leadership in Latin America (e.g. into cabinets and national legislatures). Nevertheless, in other critical areas progress was extremely limited (e.g. the presidency, vice presidency, relevant presidential candidacies).

Women dramatically increased their presence in the cabinets and national legislatures of Latin America during this period. The percentage of women ministers jumped from an anemic 8 percent in 1998 to 25 percent in 2008. To date, we lack a comprehensive explanation for this increase, although it is most likely the consequence of a combination of factors including the continuing trend of feminization of Latin American democracy (Buvinic and Roza 2004; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005), the decision (and ability due to the lack of congressional approval of ministerial appointments) by presidents to appoint a cabinet that better reflects the diversity of their country's citizenry, and a replacement of primarily center-right governments (which were predominant in the region *c.* 1998) by primarily center-left and left governments (which were predominant *c.* 2008).

Similar to the case for cabinet ministers, the proportion of national legislators who were female increased in Latin America from 10 percent to 18 percent between 1998 and 2008. Here, the principal explanation for this growth is the adoption of well-designed gender quota legislation by a sub-set of countries in the region (Jones 2009).

In the area of directly elected executive posts, considerable challenges continue to thwart significant advances by women in Latin America. Between 1998 and 2008, the number of women presidents and relevant female presidential candidates did not increase significantly. Furthermore, as of 2008 only one in ten presidents and relevant presidential candidates were women. A similar story holds for the category of vice president, where the percentage of women did not change significantly over this time frame. Nonetheless, while there was not a significant increase in women's presence in any of these categories between 1998 and 2008, in all categories the percentage of women did increase during this period, albeit only modestly.

The two case studies in this chapter focused on Argentina and Chile. They underscored the limited presence of women in the executive branch in each country prior to the first decade of the twenty-first century, but also highlighted the recent election of women presidents in both countries (in 2007 in Argentina

and 2005 in Chile). With regard to the representation of women's interests, the mandates of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Michelle Bachelet clearly differed. During her four years in office, President Bachelet actively worked to enhance the status of women in Chile and served as an outstanding role model. In contrast, President Fernández de Kirchner has done virtually nothing to enhance the status of women in Argentina during her two-and-a-half years as president, and the secondary role in governance that she played to her spouse (former President Néstor Kirchner), along with the severe operational deficiencies of her government, make her a less than stellar role model for the country's younger generations.

## Notes

- 1 That is Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Only since 1995/6 were all 18 of these countries functioning democracies.
- 2 1998 is chosen as the base year since it is ten years prior to the most recent year for which complete data using this study's methodology are available. A majority of the data and information for the comparisons were drawn from the 1998, 2003 and 2008 editions of *The Europa World Year Book*, which in turn reported the occupants of the various posts as of the first semester (on dates ranging from January to May) of that year. Where data from elections were utilized, the elections reported in *The Europa World Year Book* were employed (i.e. the elections were the ones held closest to 1998, 2003 and 2008 respectively, but not later than the first semester of that year). Where *The Europa World Year Book* data were incomplete, additional sources were consulted, but following the first semester of 1998/2003/2008 criteria for inclusion utilized by *The Europa World Year Book*.
- 3 Prior to 1998, only one woman had been directly elected president in Latin America (Schwindt-Bayer 2008). Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (the widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the assassinated editor of the newspaper *La Prensa*) was elected president of Nicaragua in 1990, and held office from 1990 to 1997. In addition to Barrios de Chamorro, three women had (prior to 1998) served as an interim president for periods ranging from two days (Rosalía Arteaga in Ecuador [1997]) to almost 21 months (Isabel Martínez de Perón [1974–6] in Argentina; the first female president in Latin American history). Bolivia's Lidia Gueiler (1979–80) served as interim president for eight months.
- 4 Between 1998 and 2008, one additional woman was directly elected as president in the region. In 1999, Mireya Moscoso (1999–2004) was elected president of Panama as the candidate of the Arnulfist Party.
- 5 Only those differences at a 0.05 level or above for a two-tail test are considered to be statistically significant. Depending on the executive position, the statistical analysis consisted either of a difference of means test or a binary logit regression.
- 6 For the 2003 mid-point, two women had been a relevant candidate in the most recent presidential election. Mireya Moscoso won in Panama, while in Peru Lourdes Flores finished a close third.
- 7 This modest increase from 4 percent to 11 percent of the relevant presidential candidates in the region cannot be considered statistically significant.
- 8 The office of vice president does not exist in Chile and Mexico, nor did it exist in Venezuela in 1998. At the time of the 2003 mid-point the office of vice president was vacant in Argentina. A handful of Latin American countries have multiple vice presidents, although only the first vice president is included in this analysis.

- 9 Prior to 1998, four women had served as vice president in Latin America. Of these four, only one was directly elected as the first in line for presidential succession (Isabel Perón, Argentina, 1973–4).
- 10 In 2003 there were also two female vice presidents, Astrid Fischel Volio of Costa Rica and Milagros Ortiz Bosch of the Dominican Republic.
- 11 For 2003, the percentage of women cabinet ministers in the region was 16 percent.
- 12 Fernando de la Rúa (1999–2001) assumed office on December 10, 1999, Eduardo Duhalde on January 1, 2002, Néstor Kirchner on May 25, 2003, and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner on December 10, 2007.
- 13 In 1991 President Patricio Aylwin created the National Women's Service and appointed Soledad Alvear as its director, although at this time this post was not considered to be a formal cabinet position (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005).
- 14 In 2006 Michelle Bachelet and Soledad Alvear were the two leading internal presidential candidates for the governing Concertation (a coalition composed of four parties). Bachelet was supported by her own Socialist Party, the Party for Democracy, and the Social Democratic Radical Party. Alvear was backed by her own Chilean Christian Democratic Party.
- 15 Among the other variables which were examined but not included in the final models were popular attitudes toward women political leaders, a variable which, for instance, worsened slightly in Chile and increased only modestly in Argentina during this time period.
- 16 When discussing the relationship between presidential ideology in Latin America and the presence of women cabinet ministers, it is important to keep in mind, that unlike in Western Europe (e.g. Davis 1997), most Latin American political party systems tend to be highly personalist and/or clientelist in orientation, a notable contrast to the generally programmatic party systems found in Europe (Payne *et al.* 2007; Stein and Tommasi 2008). This distinction is especially stark when one considers that in these Latin American presidential systems, the unit of analysis is an individual president in contrast to an institutionalized and programmatic political party as is generally the case in Europe.

## References

- Buvinic, Mayra, and Vivian Roza. 2004. "La Mujer, La Política, y el Futuro Democrático de América Latina," WID-108, Technical Papers Series, Sustainable Development Department, Social Development Division, Inter-American Development Bank. [http://www.iadb.org/SDS/PROLEAD/index\\_s.htm](http://www.iadb.org/SDS/PROLEAD/index_s.htm).
- Davis, Rebecca Howard. 1997. *Women and Power in Parliament: Cabinet Appointments in Western Europe: 1968-1992*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Escobar-Lemmon, Maria and Michelle Taylor-Robinson. 2005. "Women Ministers in Latin American Government: Where, When, and Why?," *American Journal of Political Science* 49(4): 829-44.
- Europa World Year Book, The*. 1998. New York: Routledge.
- Europa World Year Book, The*. 2003. New York: Routledge.
- Europa World Year Book, The*. 2008. New York: Routledge.
- Franceschet, Susan. 2008. "La Representación Política de las Mujeres en un País sin Ley de Cuotas: El Caso de Chile," in Nélica Archenti and María Inés Tula, eds., *Mujeres Y Política en América Latina: Sistemas Electorales Y Cuotas de Género*. Buenos Aires: Heliasta, pp. 191-209.
- Fraser, Nicholas, and Marysa Navarro. 1996. *Evita: The Real Life of Eva Perón*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Htun, Mala N. 1997. "Moving into Power: Expanding Women's Opportunities for Leadership in Latin America and the Caribbean," WID97-103, Women in Development Program Unit, Social Programs and Sustainable Development Department, Inter-American Development Bank.

Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2009. *Women in National Parliaments*. [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org).

Accessed, December, 2009.

Iturbe de Blanco, Eglé. 2003. "Las Mujeres Latinoamericanas en la Alta Gestión Pública: Logros y Desafíos," SGC-103, Serie de Buenas Prácticas, Departamento de Desarrollo Sostenible, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.

Jones, Mark P. 2009. "Gender Quotas, Electoral Laws, and the Election of Women: Evidence from the Latin American Vanguard," *Comparative Political Studies* 42(1): 56-81.

Jones, Mark P. 2008. "The Recruitment and Selection of Legislative Candidates in Argentina," in Peter M. Siavelis and Scott Morgenstern, eds., *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 41-75.

Jones, Mark P. 1996. "Increasing Women's Representation Via Gender Quotas: The Argentine Ley de Cupos," *Women & Politics* 16(4): 75-98.

Navia, Patricio. 2008. "Legislative Candidate Selection in Chile," in Peter M. Siavelis and Scott Morgenstern, eds., *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 92-188.

Payne, J. Mark, Daniel Zovatto G., and Mercedes Mateo Díaz. 2007. *Democracies in Development: Politics and Reform in Latin America* (Expanded and Updated Edition). Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank.

PROLID. 2007. "Base de Datos de Ministras de Estado en América Latina." Washington, D.C.: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.

[http://www.iadb.org/SDS/PROLEAD/index\\_s.htm](http://www.iadb.org/SDS/PROLEAD/index_s.htm).

- Ríos Tobar, Marcela. 2008. "Seizing a Window of Opportunity: The Election of President Bachelet in Chile," *Politics & Gender* 4(4): 509-19.
- Ríos Tobar, Marcela. 2007. "Chilean Feminism and Social Democracy for the Democratic Transition to Bachelet," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 40(2): 25-29.
- Rock, David. 1987. *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Schüler, Dana. 2006. "The Uses and Misuses of the Gender-related Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Human Development* 7: 161-81.
- Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie A. 2008. "Women and Power in the Americas: A Report Card," in *Women in the Americas: Paths to Political Power, A Report Card on Women in Political Leadership*. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, pp. 5-18.  
<http://www.thedialogue.org/page.cfm?pageID=5>
- Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie A. 2007. "Women in Power: How Presence Affects Politics," paper prepared for the Inter-American Dialogue, Inter-American Development Bank, League of Women Voters of the United States, and Organization of American States sponsored conference "Women in the Americas: Paths to Political Power", Washington, D.C., March 28.
- Segovia, Carolina. 2005. "Hacia la Presidencial del 2005. Cambios en las Preferencias de la Opinión Pública 2001-2004," in *Centro de Estudios Públicos Puntos de Referencia* 277. <http://www.cepchile.cl> (October 30, 2009)

Stein, Ernesto, and Mariano Tommasi, Editors (with Pablo T. Spiller and Carlos Scartascini).

2008. *Policymaking in Latin America: How Politics Shapes Policies*. Washington, D.C.:

Inter-American Development Bank.

United Nations Development Programme. 2009. *Human Development Reports*.

[hdr.undp.org.en](http://hdr.undp.org/en).

United Nations Development Programme. 1995. *Human Development Report: Gender and*

*Human Development*. [hdr.undp.org.en](http://hdr.undp.org/en).