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## Understanding Institutional Change – A Gender Perspective E-Newsletter, Issue 8, December 2016



Welcome to our winter newsletter. It details our activities over the last six months and some of our future plans in the final six months of the project, including our exciting conference in April.

This issue includes final thoughts from Carmen Sepúlveda who will be leaving us at the end of December, we wish her well and she will continue to be associated with the project. In other staffing news, Leah Culhane is acting as a project Research Associate as Faith Armitage is currently on maternity leave after giving birth to baby Vivian Ivy in September.

We wish you a pleasant festive season! Best wishes, The UIC Project Team

### Final Thoughts: Carmen Sepúlveda

My research on institutions and gender under Michelle Bachelet's second mandate is now coming to an end. The past two years have provided a unique opportunity to explore the themes I had prioritized for my research: the legalisation of same-sex civil partnerships, the attempt to legalise abortion (albeit under limited circumstances), the creation of the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality and the introduction of quotas as part of electoral reform.

After its successful first year in which many reforms were passed, the Bachelet administration has suffered from low approval rates and internal divisions within *Nueva Mayoría*, the ruling coalition. This has left the executive in a very weak position. Popular support is at its lowest level and Bachelet has been criticised for not reversing this situation. Meanwhile the electoral race within her coalition had started by the end of her second year in office. Former president Ricardo Lagos, as well as other prominent coalition senators and politicians, have started competing – for example by criticising the executive - leaving Bachelet isolated and having to respond to all criticisms of *Nueva Mayoría*. The opposition has taken advantage of any mistakes and opportunities to derail the administration. Bachelet recently had another minor cabinet reshuffle showing how vulnerable her administration is.



As a result, the government has limited itself to some items agreed during the first year to avoid further conflict. This has led to criticism of its inability to deliver crucial reforms such as education and abortion. In the case of abortion, Bachelet and her government have faced an increasing opposition from the far-right UDI and the centre-right factions of the Christian Democrat Party (PDC) within Bachelet's own coalition, in Congress, and the media. Although the bill has passed in the lower house,

there is still a danger that the PDC might derail it in its final stages in the Senate. Sernam – which has now become the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity – and the executive appear ready to fight any case that conservative MPs might bring to the Constitutional Tribunal, a logical next step for the opposition that dominates that institution. Before becoming a Ministry, Sernam had set for itself four priorities for this administration: passing a bill to create the ministry, launching a new national action plan on violence against women, legalising abortion, and reforming family law that discriminates



against women's financial and property rights. Although the Ministry has had a slow start, it seems determined to achieve all of its agenda. In fact, the new VAW action plan is ready and the bill on family law should be sent to Congress next year. The executive is determined that abortion will be legalised even if it means fighting until the end of this

presidential term, and a bill for same-sex marriage - building on the already approved same-sex civil unions act – could be sent to Congress next year. In her previous administration, Bachelet faced strong opposition to her gender policies and used the final year of her administration and the presidential race to her advantage. But it is yet to be seen if this strategy could pay off this time around.

### APSA Conference – Feminist Institutionalism after 10 years panel

Together with the Women and Politics Research section, the PSA sponsored a panel at APSA Annual Meeting on Feminist Institutionalism at 10 years. The paper givers included Leah Culhane, University of



Manchester, Claire Annesley, University of Sussex, Francesca Gains, University of Manchester, Vivien Lowndes, University of Birmingham and Georgina Waylen, University of Manchester. The session was chaired by Vivien Schmidt (Boston University) and Laurel Weldon (Purdue University) acted as discussant. We were pleased to see that, despite being allocated the first slot of the conference at 8.00am on Thursday morning, there appeared to be considerable interest in feminist institutionalism.

The panel provided a showcase for all the research that is currently being undertaken using some form of feminist institutionalist approach and ranged widely over different forms of institution, assessing the impact of formal and informal institutional legacies on the operation and outcomes of processes of institutional transformation. Francesca Gains and Vivien Lowndes presented some findings from their on-going research on Police and Crime Commissioners and the likelihood that they advocate policies to address violence against women and girls. Claire Annesley presented a comparative paper that drew on her international collaborative project on ministerial recruitment (with Susan Franceschet and Karen Beckwith). Leah Culhane used a feminist institutionalist lens to analyse the formal and informal norms of political recruitment in Ireland while Georgina Waylen presented a gendered analysis of the UK parliamentary expenses scandal.

## Gender and Informal Institutions book

An edited collection arising from our June 2016 workshop on 'Gender and Informal Institutions' will be published by Rowman and Littlefield in May 2017. It contains chapters by Louise Chappell and Fiona Mackay, Leah Culhane, Louise Chappell and Natalie Galea, Tania Verge and Silvia Claveria, Susan Franceschet, Jennifer Piscopo, Sohela Nazneen, Magda Hinojosa, Elin Bjarnegård and Meryl Kenny and Georgina Waylen.

For further details see the [Rowman and Littlefield website](#).

### New Project Working Papers

Laura McLeod, [Gendering the 1991-95 Bosnian Peace Process: Current Research and Future Directions](#), No. 5, December 2016

Francesca Gains and Vivien Lowndes, [How is Gender implicated in institutional design and change? The role of informal institutions: A case study of Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales](#), No. 6, December 2016

## Analysing Gender Quotas in the Irish Parliament

Report by Leah Culhane

Over the past three years I have been examining the introduction of legislative gender quotas in the Republic of Ireland, a new formal rule which has attempted to challenge male-over-representation in Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Irish parliament. My research has been concerned with examining this process of change, analysing the impact of the new rule on the traditionally masculinised institutions surrounding candidate recruitment and selection. Since my last newsletter update, the 2016 general election took place, the first election whereby the new legislation applied. The results of the 2016 election show us that the new rules have challenged patterns of male over-representation. With each of the main parties fulfilling the quota requirements, the new legislation achieved its main purpose and almost doubled the number of women who ran for election. In the 2011 general election, only 86 (15.2 percent) of the 566 election candidates were female. Following the new legislation, overall female candidacy levels have risen to 29.6 percent with a record number of 163 women contesting the election, almost double that of 2011. Moreover, this translated into a greater number of female TDs in Dáil Éireann. Overall, the percentage of female TDs has risen from 16 to 22.2 percent with a historical 35 women now taking their place in Dáil Éireann.



Although the new rule did alter gendered patterns of representation, these figures tell us little about how male dominance was challenged within political parties or what change to recruitment and selection occurred. Moreover, the thirty per cent quota did not translate into thirty percent female representation and these results fail to tell the story of how masculinised privilege and power were both maintained and perhaps more interestingly, reimagined, in the face of formal attempts at change. Directing attention to the experience of political actors under the new rule, it is evident that resistance to gender quotas emerged in a variety of ways. Owing to the highly localised and democratized nature of the selection process, it was predicted that resistance would largely be wielded at the local party level. Indeed long-standing local male party members did use their sway at selection conventions to select their preferred male candidate and 'local democracy, as both a practice and as a narrative, was used to delegitimise female aspirants under the new quota. Thus, parties did need to employ some

centralized powers in order to allow women access to the ticket, namely through the addition of candidates and the use of party directives which specified that a constituency must choose a woman.

This however only paints half the story. Central strategy committees had an equal interest in maintaining the status quo with national parties intervening in constituencies and applying the new rules based on gendered dynasties and existing incumbents. Implementation strategies devised by the national parties were therefore predicated on a compromise between traditional gendered perceptions of 'electability' and a desire to reach the thirty per cent quota. Overall, the research reflects the findings of other feminist institutionalist analysis that points to processes of change as a negotiation between the old and the new. However, it also highlights the interplay between actors and existing institutions and the leeway afforded to certain actors in determining how far male dominance is challenged and consciously upheld.

### Conference and Workshop Presentations

- Leah Culhane gave a paper entitled, '[Male Over-Representation in the Republic of Ireland](#)' at the 24<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Political Science which took place in Poznan, Poland between 23<sup>rd</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> July 2016.
- Carmen gave a paper entitled 'Del Sernam al Ministerio de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género: un análisis feminista institucional de la agenda de género del segundo gobierno de Michelle Bachelet' at the Chilean Political Science Association (ACCP) Conference in Pucon between the 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> October 2017
- Georgina Waylen gave the paper 'Gender and Corruption: the UK expenses scandal' at the Center for European Studies, Harvard on 14<sup>th</sup> September and at the Center for Global Affairs, New York University on December 5<sup>th</sup>
- Georgina Waylen also presented a paper entitled 'Women and Political Leadership: the case of Bachelet' at Rutgers University on December 2<sup>nd</sup>

### International Conference: Gender, Institutions and Change: Feminist Institutionalism after 10 years 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017 Samuel Alexander Building, University of Manchester

Our final conference will take place on 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> April 2017. We have had a large number of very high quality abstracts for our conference and will be opening registration early in the New Year. Further details can be found on our [conference website](#) or by contacting Lisa Jenkins at [lisa.jenkins@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.jenkins@manchester.ac.uk) for further details.



Congratulations to Faith and Neal on the birth of baby Vivian!

Best wishes from all the project team!

